

Community growing

a Guide for Community and Town Councils



Ariennir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
Funded by
Welsh Government

Social **Farms**
& **Gardens**
Ffermydd a Gerddi
Cymdeithasol



Un Llais Cymru



One Voice Wales

What can community growing do for our community?

Community growing projects foster wellbeing through healthy eating, exercise and time spent with others in nature – they are also fantastic for biodiversity. They tie in brilliantly with other projects like [community fridges](#), pantries and foodbanks – sharing food that would otherwise go to waste and cooking and eating together. Food is a wonderful way to connect.



What kind of growing project will work for us?

Community and town councils are well placed to foster new growing projects. Often they manage or own land, they know their communities well and are well networked with other helpful organisations who can offer support.

Depending on how much land you have available and who wants to get involved, community growing projects can range from a couple of raised beds of herbs or fruit, to an allotment site! Setting up a new allotment site is beyond the scope of this guide but you can find in depth advice in this guide we produced for the [Welsh Government](#)



Colwyn Bay Town Centre

Incredible Edible or Bwyd Bendigedig...

...is a very simple idea – you plant food that anyone can help themselves to! It can help to have signs for seasonal fruit and veg so people know when it's ready to pick. It's usually grown by a group of volunteers although residents and companies can adopt beds and commit to look after them. [Join the network](#) and find out more!

Sensory Gardens...

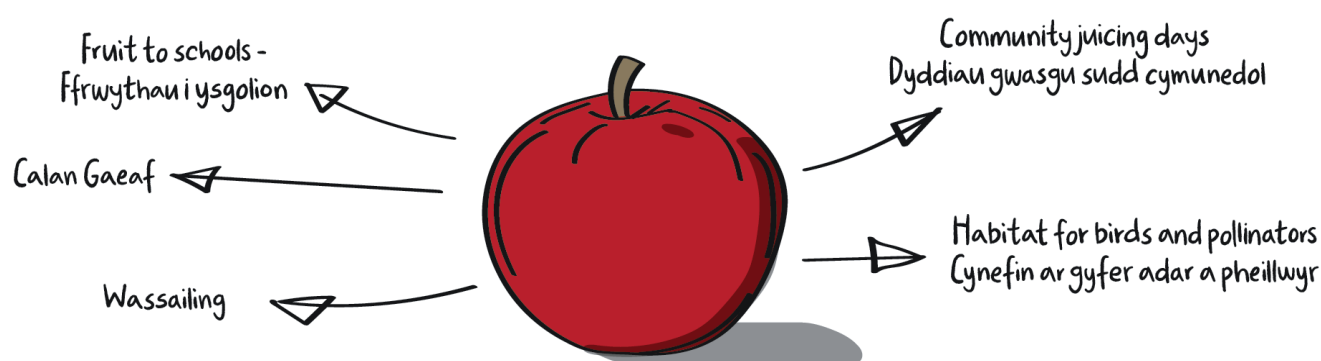
...are beautiful spaces that make use of our senses for wellbeing. Sometimes they are designed specifically for people with sensory disabilities such as partial sight or hearing. The sound of a breeze through silver birch leaves or running water, the scent of roses, jasmine and lavender. Running your hand through leaves and seeing the beauty all around can benefit everyone in your community.

Community Orchards...

...can be on one site or trees spread across the area. They afford opportunities for fantastic community events – like juicing with a community press – or wassailing. Fruit can be distributed to school and food banks, juiced and shared. Orchards are fantastic for biodiversity. You can plant Welsh heritage varieties which are often disease resistant and suit our climate, as well as having cultural value. You can find more information from organisations like [Social Farms and Gardens](#) or [The Orchard Project](#)

Community Gardens...

...where people can meet and grow together – as well as hold social events and celebrations – can create a fantastic focus for local residents. They are as varied as the places that host them! They are likely to need a fair bit of maintenance so a keen volunteer group is a must. You can incorporate raised beds for fruit and veg, fruit trees, pollinator patches and more. They can be open access or opened during daylight hours. It's well worth visiting some local community gardens to get an idea of what would work in your area. Contact One Voice Wales for support or experts [Social Farms and Gardens](#)



How do we find suitable land?

Community councils may own or manage suitable land – the land outside a community centre, or an unused area of a park. If a local authority owns land in the locality community councils are well placed to negotiate access. If you need advice contact the [Community Land Advisory Service \(CLAS\)](#). They can help with leases and licenses as well as clarifying liability. When you're looking for land bear in mind the aspect, access, safety and security, water and biodiversity.

If you don't have much land available don't worry! Small scraps of land can have a big impact with raised beds beside benches or on an unused corner with colourful planting – why not try a mix of perennial herbs and edible flowers like Calendula or Nasturtiums.

What about letting a volunteer group use our land?

If a group approaches you wanting access to land you own or manage you may have some reservations. What if they have an accident while on the land or create a hazard? What if they fail to maintain the site? These are understandable concerns, but they don't need to stop you from allowing what might be a really beneficial project to take place. Ask them to produce a proposal – with a design and some evidence of local consultation and their capacity to maintain the site. You should also ask them to write a Risk Assessment and hold public liability and employers' liability insurance.

The [Community Land Advisory Service \(CLAS\)](#) can help you draw up a license or lease with clauses that clearly lay out responsibilities and liabilities. If everything is very clear in the beginning, you're much less likely to run into problems down the line.



How can we encourage biodiversity?

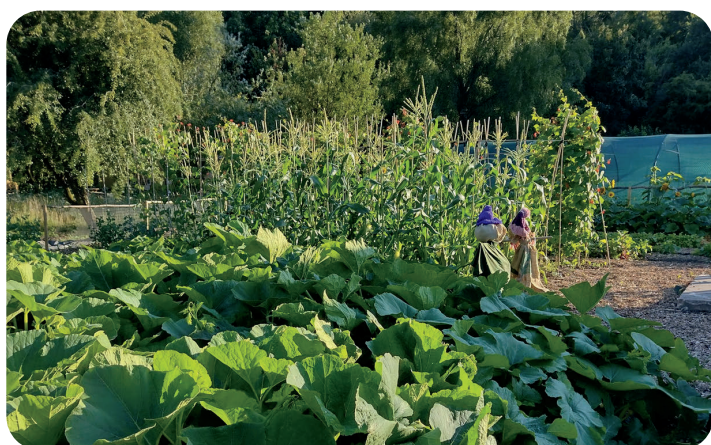
A wildflower meadow area is a boon for pollinators – over 97% of our wildflower meadows have been lost and many green spaces in towns and villages are ‘meadows in waiting’ with the native wildflower seed bank just waiting in the soil – these native plants are more beneficial than colourful annuals often sold as wildflower seed mixes. [Plantlife](#) have lots of great resources to help.

Hedges are so important for nature with habitat and food in abundance all year. Bat and bird boxes in trees can help provide homes and making them is an engaging activity. A nest box camera can engage everyone in the magical process of baby birds fledging. Insect hotels are fun to make and can be engaging and even beautiful!

Water adds a whole new dimension to a growing space. It can be difficult to manage risk in a public space but even shallow raised water features will attract an abundance of wildlife.

Should we grow organically?

Most community growing projects use organic principles, prioritising health and ecology. Building healthy soils and working with nature will benefit people and nature. Grow plants that suit your situation – rather than ones that need a lot of cossetting to survive – and use organic techniques like companion planting and polycultures to protect your produce. For more info on organic growing try the [Garden Organic](#) website.



Meadow Street Community Garden, Pontypridd Town Council

Signage and Artwork

Signage is important in any growing space – many people walking through won't necessarily know what's going on – beautiful signage will help them understand and engage.

Art enhances any community space – there are creative people in every community in Wales! Seek them out and encourage them to enhance your garden space with beautiful art and sculpture whether it's ephemeral or permanent.



Cae Crwn, Criccieth - artwork by Cynghorydd Ffion Gwyn, Criccieth Town Council

Insurance

If you already manage the land in question you will have public liability insurance in place – just run your plans by your insurer and write a Risk Assessment before you get started which you annually review. Any volunteer group will also need employers liability insurance. You can find out more about this on the Social Farms & Gardens website.

Please contact [One Voice Wales](#) for more support and advice with your community growing project.

Useful Links

- www.communityfridgemap.org.uk/about
- www.gov.wales/allotments-and-community-gardens
- www.incredibleedible.org.uk
- www.farmgarden.org.uk/your-area/wales
- www.theorchardproject.org.uk
- www.farmgarden.org.uk/clas
- www.farmgarden.org.uk/clas/wales
- www.gardenorganic.org.uk
- www.plantlife.org.uk
- www.farmgarden.org.uk/resources/insurance-key-issues-consider
- www.onevoicewales.org.uk/OVWeb/Default.aspx

