



# From the Ground Up: Worksite Gardens

*Is there a patch of land at your worksite that is bathed in sunlight each day? How about an entrance or an exit or even some underutilized planters that could use some beatification? A worksite garden or even a few planted containers could help employees:*

- Gain new, practical skills they can apply at home.
- Re-energize and reduce stress during breaks.
- Collaborate with coworkers in a common interest.
- Encourage healthy eating with fresh local produce.
- Support the community by donating to local food banks.

## Things to Consider:

**Employee Interest:** Make sure this is a project that employees are interested in doing and that they will dedicate the time necessary for it to succeed.

- Send a companywide e-mail explaining what, why the worksite would like to have a garden, and the need for volunteers. For employees who don't have e-mail access, send as a payroll staffer.

**Garden Committee:** Select a few employees to ensure the garden's success by overseeing volunteers, installation, and maintenance of the garden.

- The [University of Illinois Extension Jackson County](#) can be an excellent resource when trouble shooting pests, and planting questions.

**Budget:** Decide how much the company is willing to pay to create this garden, and if employees will need to pay a small fee for a plot/pot/or a share of the harvest.

- Having participants bring/donate their own gardening tools,
- Approach local gardening stores or seed libraries can donate or lend seeds/plants/tools.

[Carbondale Tool Library.](#)

**Space:** Find a location that will provide enough sunlight, has a source of water, and is in a convenient spot for all employees to access during breaks or off the clock. [Make sure the soil is fit for gardening.](#) If the ground around the office building is not fit for gardening, consider container/raised bed gardening.

*Adapted from: The Heart of ULM Project:*

*Top 10 Things to Consider When Implementing a Worksite Garden*

**Liability:** While it doesn't happen often, it is important to decide who will be responsible if someone gets hurt working in the garden. Creating a waiver for participants is recommended.

## Volunteer Responsibility:

- What will participants' roles be?
- Can they have their own plot or share with co-workers?
- Decide when employees will be allowed to tend to the garden and pick plants.
- Will they need to use break time or work on the garden before and after work? Can they work on the garden on company time?
- *Out of Season:* There will be some maintenance before and after the growing season. Work out how who will be in charge.

**Design and Installation:** Figure out what type of garden employees want to tend:

- A Rain garden, or maybe (low water) xeriscaping?
- A Produce garden: if so, do they want it to be organic?
- A Pollinator/Natives garden?
- *Consider Paths:* make sure to create big enough paths between the rows so everybody can maneuver.

**Harvest:** Decide whether the company will donate some or all of the crops to a local food pantry.

If you keep some of the crops:

- Have a day where employees can share recipes that include crops from the garden.
- Host a farmers market where employees can sell some of the plants to their co-workers who were unable to participate.

**Evaluation:** Determine how you will measure the garden's success: A simple survey could accomplish this. Think of what you want to know about the garden or procedure and ask. For example, besides eating more fruits and vegetables, did employees find the time and effort it took to work in and maintain the garden worthwhile?

