10.4 Develop and Promote Community Growing Spaces

15 Points

Action Updates

This action is available for the **current certification cycle** and was newly added in 2021.

Objective

Promote health and wellness through community growing spaces and horticultural opportunities in your municipality.

Complementary Action:

- Develop Agriculture-Friendly Practices

What to Do

1. Develop and promote inclusive spaces and programs that provide opportunities for residents to engage in local farming, gardening, or other forms of horticulture or plant cultivation. If the spaces developed through this program are not located on municipal property, you must demonstrate that your municipality has provided financial, in-kind or other significant support to the farming, gardening, or other growing initiative. **(15 points)**

   Community growing spaces may include:

   - Greenhouses
   - Native plant gardens
   - Sidewalk "snack beds" or other food-growing gardens
   - Arboriculture
   - Therapeutic horticulture
   - Other

   Submit: A photo of at least one growing space and a description of what the spaces are and what's being grown, how you connected with residents and made them aware of the space(s), and how residents can access the space(s). If the space is not located on municipal property, provide evidence of in-kind and/or financial support from the municipality to the initiative's administrators.

   Timeframe for Credit: Eligible for new action credit and rolling credit. This action falls under the action type "Outreach, Education, Programs, Campaigns, Recognition/Designation in External Program, and Funding" (see "Timeframe for Credit" Guidance Document for submission requirements).

Timeframe for Credit

Actions can either be "New" or considered for "Rolling Credit."

New Action Credit. Any action completed within the past three years (from January 1 of the year seeking certification) is eligible for potential certification points. If you are applying for recertification in your year of

expiration, you may not claim New Action Credit for items that previously received credit.

Rolling Credit. For any action older than three years (from January 1 of the year seeking certification), you must demonstrate ongoing, currently relevant, and meaningful impact in your community to be considered for certification points. If you are applying for recertification in your year of expiration, you must apply for Rolling Credit for any item that previously received credit, even if it was completed within the past three years.

View the "Timeframe for Credit" Guidance Document for detailed submission requirements.

Engaging Partners

Sustainable CT encourages regional collaboration and other forms of partnership. For every action, please complete the "Partners" box in your submission, indicating the name(s) of any municipalities and/or organizations you partnered with (if any) and a brief description of your municipality's role. If you collaborate with other municipalities, each community will receive points. For additional information, please see the "Partners Guidance Document".

Potential Municipal and Community Collaborators

Staff from the town council, planning and zoning, public works, parks and recreation departments, landscaping businesses, and local land trusts could be helpful in implementing this action.

Funding

If available, below are potential funding sources specific to this Action. For a complete listing of potential funding opportunities to assist with implementing Sustainable CT Actions, please visit the Sustainable CT Grants Portal, which is searchable by Action. Please also visit the Support for Your Town page for opportunities for technical assistance and other supports.

- Restoration & Resilience COVID Recovery Fund
- Urban Green and Community Gardens Grant Program

Resources

Toolkits, Calculators, Guidance Documents

- CDC's Community Garden's Resource Library
- American Community Garden Association Resources
- Community Horticulture

Organizations and Relevant Programs

- The Last Green Valley
- The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station
- CT Department of Agriculture
- American Community Gardening Association
- Eastern Connecticut Community Garden Association
- KNOX Hartford
- Gather New Haven
- New Britain ROOTS
- CT NOFA
- Growing Spaces

Why This Matters

As the effects of food insecurity, climate change, and economic inequality continue to impact our communities, towns can promote and create impactful spaces that increase fresh food availability, sense of community, connection to food and the environment, and positive environmental effects. As the food insecurity rate in Connecticut is 11.3% and rising, it is imperative that we create consistent and reliable sources of local, healthy food for residents experiencing hunger.

Community-led and -maintained spaces for gardening, farming, or other forms of plant growing and horticulture are vital in combating alienation that results from our fast-paced and often isolationist culture by creating gathering spaces for social cohesion, discussion, and learning. These spaces have the potential to create safer, more livable communities by sharing food production and dietary knowledge with the broader community and by fostering physical activity and healthy movement.

Benefits

Opportunities for community gardening, farming, or other growing practices yield environmental, social, and health co-benefits for towns and their residents. Community growing spaces enhance the health of community members both by increasing physical activity through maintenance activities and by improving food security, dietary habits, and healthier food intake through education and fresh food availability. Creating opportunities for hands-on gardening and farming work incites community cohesion through new gathering places and educational opportunities while providing mental health benefits, relaxation for residents, and aesthetic improvements to the community. Environmental benefits of community growing spaces include the conservation and/or remediation of land, the improvement of air and soil quality, increased biodiversity of and habitat for plants and animals, reduced “food miles” required to transport nutritious food, reduced neighborhood waste through composting, and the improvement of the municipal micro-climate. Dedicated spaces for plant cultivation and horticulture also alleviate the local effect of climate change on agricultural output and fresh food unaffordability by making health food and plant products accessible.