10.4 Develop and Promote Community Growing Spaces

15 Points

Action Updates

This action was last updated in 2025. A version of this action from the prior program year is available for comparison. Edits are highlighted in yellow.

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. The growing space must be accessible to the general public, even if it is located on a property with limited public access, such as a school campus or a senior housing facility. **(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 growing space was established more than three years ago, please also describe what work is currently being done to keep your garden space relevant and engaging. 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.

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.

- Urban Act Grant Program
- Sustainable CT Community Match Fund
- State Funding Readiness Project
- Cultivating Connected Communities Prize Challenge
- Urban Green and Community Garden Grant Program

Resources

Toolkits, Calculators, Guidance Documents

- American Community Garden Association Resources
- Community Horticulture
- AARP, Creating Community Gardens for People of All Ages

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.

CT Success Stories

- Coventry - May 2022 Certification
- Ashford - Oct 2022 Certification
- Stonington - Oct 2022 Certification
- Vernon - Oct 2022 Certification
- Windsor - Oct 2022 Certification
- Barkhamsted - May 2024 Certification
- Ellington - May 2024 Certification
- Glastonbury - Oct 2024 Certification
- Groton - Oct 2024 Certification
- Litchfield - Oct 2024 Certification
- Milford - Oct 2024 Certification
- West Hartford - Oct 2024 Certification
- Cheshire - Oct 2025 Certification
- Ridgefield - Oct 2025 Certification
- Windsor - Oct 2025 Certification
- Cromwell - May 2026 Certification