

Resources and Educational Programs

The Berks Conservancy offers educational programs about gardening and composting in Community Gardens.

For more information:



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Other Resources

Penn State Cooperative Extension
<http://extension.psu.edu/berks>

Berks County Horticulture Club
www.berkshortclub.org

PermaCultivate
<http://www.permacultivate.org>

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Tips and Ideas!

Green your Space

Brought to you by:



A RESOURCE FOR RESIDENTS
AND COMMUNITIES IN GREATER READING

Community Gardens

The Berks Conservancy's Berks Urban Greening (BUG) Community Gardening Program transforms vacant lots into healthy green community spaces & gardens.

This provides opportunities for residents to grow their own vegetables, herbs, & flowers.

Community gardens are attractive green spaces in urban areas for residents to enjoy.

A community garden changes the aesthetics & the spirit of a community.

South 10th Street (Amanda's Garden)
Largest garden to date with 70 plots available.

Eisenbrown Street Garden
Key role in bringing members of this community together.

Buttonwood Street (Eunie's Garden)
Occupied by the community in the 6th Ward.

Walnut Street (Garden of Good Thoughts)
Attractive pocket park with plants and benches.

Glenside Community Garden
34 plot garden for the residents of Glenside Homes. Nestled in the back corner, this garden provides a niche of green in a very developed area.

Kennedy Towers Community Garden
Many friendships started from residents working together in this community garden. Some plots are raised garden beds for wheelchair accessibility.

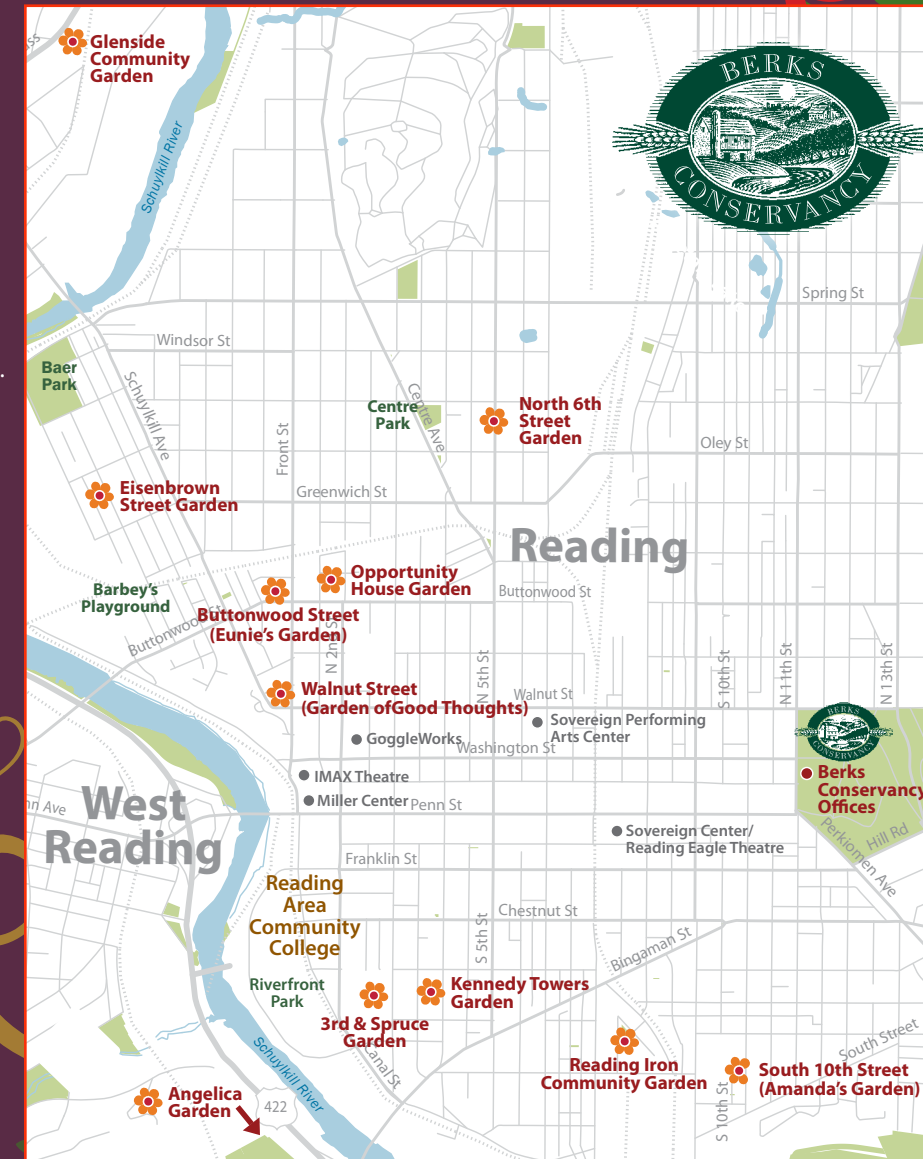
North 6th Street Garden
Located within the boundaries of the Centre Park Historic District.

Opportunity House Community Garden
Gathering site for local residents along with members of Opportunity House.

Reading Iron Community Garden
Provides residents a clean, safe place to commune and share gardening ideas and produce located next to the community playground.

3rd & Spruce Garden
Used for educational purposes, students from the Reading School District occupy the garden plots.

Angelica Garden
This garden located in Angelica Creek Park is presently utilized as a learning garden for the Berks Conservancy EcoAdventure Camp.



Create your own green space



No space is too small to become an urban oasis. Whether your personal garden is a window box, a front stoop, a back courtyard, a balcony, or a community garden, you can turn it into your own green space.

Backyard Gardens

Instead of mowing the grass in your backyard, turn some or all of your landscape into gardens - whether it be flowers, vegetables or herbs.

Gardening is not only a way to create something beautiful for people and animals to enjoy, it is a practical way to provide the family with fresh produce. Gardening also offers many health benefits that include increased strength and stamina, decreased stress, and improved flexibility.



Vertical Gardening

Vertical Gardening is a great new concept that allows you to grow almost anything on structures, including trellises, nets, cages, or stakes. Not only will you save valuable space, but growing container plants vertically can turn just about any nook or cranny into a beautiful garden spot.



Community Gardens

These gardens promote healthy urban areas and provide fresh and nutritious produce to families. The gardens and those who participate in community gardening contribute to the preservation of open space and often turn blighted vacant lots into green space for neighbors to enjoy. Community gardens strengthen community bonds, provide food, and create recreational and therapeutic opportunities for the community.

If interested, talk to your neighbors, local market, church or others and work together to create your own!

Container Gardens

Almost anything that will grow in a typical backyard garden can also do well in a container. The main ingredients are healthy soil, adequate sunlight, enough water, and good fertilizer. You can choose simple containers like buckets, baskets, tubs, or wooden boxes, or you can get creative and plant in shoes, recycled sinks and bathtubs, or even a kiddie pool. Whatever container you choose, you will want to make sure you match the type of plant you grow to the size of the container.

The material your container is made of is important. Plastic, glazed ceramic, and dark glass containers are nonporous and hold water better. Wood, unglazed ceramic (like terracotta) are all porous and lose moisture more quickly. You can plant in either porous or nonporous containers, but you will need to adjust how much you water your plants, and pay special attention to drainage. Make sure any container you use has several drain holes along the bottom edge.

Fill your containers with healthy soil, then direct seed or transplant seedlings into your containers. What comes next is the usual care and attention you would pay to any of your plants - regular watering and fertilizer.

Composting

Composting is a natural process that breaks down organic material into a rich, organic fertilizer. By composting, you can reduce the amount of garbage you send to the landfill, grow healthier plants, and save money. Composters can be purchased from a home improvement store or you can make on your own from wood pallets for example. By combining "green" materials such as grass clippings, hay, vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, and tea bags and "brown" materials such as straw, and shredded newspaper, over time it will turn into fertilizer which you can add to your garden.



Why green your space?

Environmental and Ecological Benefits

- ✦ Better water! Green spaces replace vacant blighted areas and prevent trash and pollutants from being washed into local waterways which will improve water quality.
- ✦ Better soil! Garden plants and flowers stabilize the ground and reduce soil erosion. Soils generated from composted organic wastes are useful in remediating depleted soils on vacant land.
- ✦ Organic waste composting is useful in reducing the production of methane gas, and prevents unwanted insects and rodents.
- ✦ Plantings and green spaces reduce your carbon footprint.
- ✦ Organic gardening prevents the use of harmful gardening pesticides and chemical fertilizers.
- ✦ Better habitat! Gardens provide habitat for a variety of birds, animals, and insects, while also providing greenways to link habitats for animals to roam.
- ✦ Better air! Trees absorb pollutants; as few as 20 trees can offset the pollution from a car driven 60 miles per day. Green spaces can also reduce noise pollution.



✦ Plants have been shown to reduce the urban heat island effect, where buildings, asphalt, and concrete absorb solar radiation and then reemit it as heat, causing the air temperature of the city to rise.

Share your Story with Us!
Email the Berks Conservancy photos of your project at info@berks-conservancy.org.
Remember to involve others, especially children, in any greening project you choose!

Green Space Social Benefits

- ✦ Provides recreational use such as a place to play, meditate, gather, or rest. Also provides a place to congregate and opportunities for positive social interaction and supportive friendly environments.
- ✦ Foster a connection between residents and the natural environment that surrounds them, thus allowing for a more livable city.
- ✦ Good air and water quality and scenic beauty will attract new residents, families and tourism.



Gardening Tips

Commitment

Gardens require at least some daily and weekly commitments. Make sure you are committed so you can reap the rewards.

Choose a Site

Flowers and plants require sunlight in order to grow. Remember that you will need to water your garden. Try to select a location that you will see the garden from the house as a reminder to take care of it.

Start small and plan your layout

Starting small will help guarantee a successful garden. At the end of the season, you can re-evaluate and add next spring. For flowers, organize the space to locate smaller plants in the front and larger in the back. Also account for shade and sun. For vegetables, plan to allow space to harvest and rotate crops to limit pest damage.

Soil

It's time to get down and dirty. Soil provides support for plants and contains the nutrients a plant needs to thrive. Materials added to soil such as compost, aged manure and mulch improve plant growth.

Planting/Seeding

If you start early enough, you can seed, but for your first season it might be best to buy plants from the local nursery. Dig a small hole, pop out the plant from the existing container, spread out their roots without breaking any, and carefully set them in the hole. Cover and firm the soil surrounding it. Water. NOTE: Make sure you give enough room between plants for them to grow without congestion.

Water your garden

Make sure the soil surrounding your plants is kept moist and well-watered. That being said, there is a fine line between well-watered and drowning. Use your own judgement.

Weeds

Pull weeds before they overwhelm your plants. Weed after a good rain or watering so they are easier to pull out with the roots.

Harvest and Enjoy!

Enjoy the food crops as part of your summertime meal. Extra harvest can be frozen, canned or donated to neighbors or the food bank.