

3. How to find a property and what should it consist of?



In many cases, city / municipality (building, green space environmental department, district planning) or local church congregations lease low cost properties. But there are also home building societies and housing associations, socio-cultural and environmental education facilities with green areas, farmers, schools, allotment associations and private owners to be considered. Some garden projects have originated in parks. Do not be discouraged if the land search takes a while.

You can make use of the time, for example, in finding more fellow members.

If you have found a property, tell the owner exactly about your project, but especially with regards to any structures (garden sheds, compost toilet) and ask for conditions (e.g. landscape and nature conservation).

Make sure to find out about possible soil contamination. Best of all examine the ground, especially if it is an industrial wasteland. If the ground is completely or partly unsuitable for horticultural use you can - if there is no alternative space - garden in raised beds. Should there be a well on the grounds, it is recommended to determine the water quality. Not all wells have potable water.

Location

Plants need sun. A very shady place is not suitable. The garden should ideally be easily accessible on foot or at least by public transport. The proximity to home and easy accessibility are important. The nearness to home makes it easier to get to the garden and also to participate in projects and activities.

Moreover, not all gardeners have a bike and for some, even the cost of a bus ticket is prohibitive.

Experience shows that women feel especially uncomfortable and even unsafe if the garden is in an otherwise uninhabited and thus isolated location.

For the development of intercultural gardens an opening to the neighborhood is important. Intercultural gardens that are actively integrated into a neighborhood / district facilitate for some gardeners possible steps into society. The garden projects can also help to shape a neighborhood. This would enable adjacent facilities, e.g. schools or daycare centers, senior citizens and environmental organizations and local residents to cultivate a flower bed and be present at public events and celebrations, if the garden project is located in their vicinity. It is also important to look at the site and the immediate environment with respect to possible sources of danger for children (e.g., pond, stream, highway).

Garden and Area Design



If the piece of land allows it, the plots should be created where the most sunlight reaches them. Basically there is no optimum size for an intercultural garden area. There exist both (a few) very small and very large projects and all intermediate sizes are found in the Intercultural Gardens network. The design and layout of the garden area depends not only on the condition of the land and the soil and existing circumstances but crucially on the ideas, desires and capacities for the reclamation and cultivation by the garden

group.

Besides individual and possibly shared communal beds for growing vegetables, herbs, flowers and shrubs, there should be a (not too small) area of communication, for example, with seating, a children's play area, baking and grilling areas, a gazebo and garden shed could be provided. If one can't construct any buildings on the surface, the tools can also be housed in tool boxes and to protect against sun and rain tents can be erected.

Reclamation



Depending on the condition of the land, reclamation can be associated with considerable effort. It makes sense to negotiate with the property owners to receive some support in this area, as well as to appeal to endowments. The reclamation can be more protracted than one thinks e.g. with heavy, compacted, clayey and rocky soils. At the same time, however, such impediments can also have important team-building effects.

The following work may be necessary:

1. Cleaning, earthmoving, fencing, terracing
2. Tillage, soil improvement, natural fertilizers
3. Draining water ditches and laying water-pipes
4. Construction of sheds, gates and entrance ways, procurement and construction of garden furniture
5. Planting fruit trees and shrubs
6. Creating sandboxes and installation of playground equipment for children
7. Building protective structures for toilets.

Parcel Size and Assignment



The plot size should be decided by the garden group. It is sensible to ask the gardeners themselves what size they can manage and to clarify with each of them how much support they have. Do members of the family help? Are there elderly or ill gardeners who will need help with digging? Who maintains the communal area? Often there are several large parcels in the intercultural gardens. Plots between 15 sq.m. and 30 sq.m. are often large enough. In the intercultural gardens, the parcels vary from a few

to more than 100 square meters. Large plots can still be divided.

If possible there should be enough space between the plots to comfortably get by with a wheelbarrow.

It has been proven best not to give out all parcels immediately, but to keep some clear. Thus a communal patch can develop and there is also room for potential participants from the neighborhood, such as kindergartens, schools and seniors groups.

An important issue that needs to be clarified with the garden community: Should the cost of using the parcel vary by parcel size? Or should all pay the same fee?

What to do if the property has no water supply?



Check if a pump can be installed or drilled for. Get in touch with organizations in the neighborhood (e.g. associations, local office). Maybe you can use their water resources and share costs.

Intercultural gardens with often take water from public hydrants – using a stand pipe. In some cases, small streams nearby are used to gather water. In any case, it is advisable to collect rain water.

What to do if there are no toilets on the property?

Here too it is necessary to determine whether a neighborhood facility will grant access to toilets. The construction of a composting toilet can be considered. Experiences are available in the Intercultural Gardens network. One can also set up a chemical toilet (rent varies by location, model and vendor).