A community garden typically takes three years to build from the time we process and approve an application to completion of all built garden amenities. Over the past 10 years, the following steps have been adjusted and refined to achieve successful gardens in committed neighborhoods. It is no secret that the more energy a neighborhood has and the more effort they are willing to put into the implementation of the community garden, the easier and smoother the process becomes, and the faster their vision can become a reality.

Steps For Starting a Garden:

Step 1: The garden advocate fills out the application and returns it to DUG. In order for DUG to consider your project, you must demonstrate strong, varied commitment, support and need for the community garden (gardener’s, schools, churches, council persons). This is a minimum of 5 years. DUG has secured leases and use agreements with many different landowners including: Denver Public Schools, Denver Housing Authority, Denver Parks and Recreation, City of Denver (asset management) and corporations.

Step 2: With the help of DUG, determine the most suitable site for the community garden and arrange a long-term lease signed for a minimum of 5 years, preferably 10 years. DUG will inform you of the necessary minimum requirements. The full participation. DUG remains in a long-term support role by providing ongoing maintenance guidelines, the role of DUG in your community garden, and the necessary application materials needed to request a new community garden.

Step 3: Together, DUG and neighborhood participants design the community garden. This requires several workshops to brainstorm design concepts and time to draw up the design and revise as needed.

Step 4: The next step is to jointly raise funds to turn the site design into a real community garden. The cost to build a garden ranges based on site size and design complexity from (approximately) $20,000 to $50,000.

Step 5: Site-preparation with grading and soil testing. Most sites require clearing the site of debris, grading by heavy machinery, and con lulding a soil test to determine the composition and volume of soil amendments required. We’ll then layout and install other basic improvements during the initial on-site work, including fencing, pathways, compost bins, tool shed and community garden entry sign.

Step 6: Archeo same time, DUG will also invest in permanent irrigation systems for the community garden. This includes arrangements with the Water Department, installing a tap and backflow prevention, and distribution system to the garden beds and plots. Site preparation with grading and soil testing. Most sites require clearing the site of debris, grading by heavy machinery, and con lulding a soil test to determine the composition and volume of soil amendments required. We’ll then layout and install other basic improvements during the initial on-site work, including fencing, pathways, compost bins, tool shed and community garden entry sign.

Step 7: During the second and third years of construction, DUG will work with volunteers and community members on organized workdays to install community garden amenities, such as entry gates, benches, sandstone walks and courtyards, murals by local artists, shade arbors, information boards, trees, shrubs, perennial beds, etc.

Step 8: Once your garden is in its fourth year, construction is usually complete, and the focus of work shifts to the neighborhood’s efforts to maintain the community garden and full participation. DUG remains in a long-term support role by providing ongoing maintenance, garden leader and gardener support and a variety of programs such as the Master Composter program, Master Community Gardener program and Seeds and Transplants.

Suggested Construction Startup Schedule:

**September**

**Task 1: Design and Planning**
- Prepare layout plan to dimension and arrange physical site improvements.

**Task 2: Site Preparation**
- Stake and ink a site plan to locate trees, shrubs and seed areas, sizes and quantities.

**Task 3: Irrigation System**
- Install hose or pipe and hardware including valves, fittings as required.

**Task 4: Garden Plot Prep**
- Rough grade garden beds as per grading plan.

**Task 5: Surface Treatments, Paths**
- Obtain crusher fines and sandstone material.

**Task 6: Planting**
- Stake tree and shrub locations.

**Task 7: Vertical Structures**
- Build and install compost bins.

**Task 8: Signs**
- Design, order and install entry signs.

If you are interested in learning more about starting a community garden in your neighborhood you can request a comprehensive New Garden Information Packet from DUG. The Packet includes additional information on the role of garden leaders in the creation and maintenance of the community garden, recommended steering committee roles, community garden maintenance guidelines, the role of DUG in your community garden, and the necessary application materials needed to request a new community garden.

You can also see if your neighborhood already has an active community garden on DUG’s interactive garden map. If you are interested in joining an existing garden, you can refer to DUG’s website for step-by-step instructions on how to get started!