



## Basic Vegetable Gardening

### Lesson 1: Choosing a Site – Where to put your garden

#### Lesson Summary:

In this planning activity, members will discuss what makes a good place for a garden, analyze the space available for the garden, and rate and record what is good and bad about possible sites. Then they will select an official site for the garden.

#### Intended Learning Outcomes:

Members will be able to list several factors needed for plant survival.

Members will be able to understand what factors are important to consider when choosing a site for a club or home garden.

Members will be able to analyze different sites for a club garden.

#### Length: 60 minutes



Note: This lesson can easily be shortened by leaving out one of the group discussion activities. The trainer may cover the material by lecturing instead.

#### Materials:

One piece of paper and a pencil for every 3 members.

Chalkboard or large paper for the leader.

(For more information for the trainer, see the teachers' manual)

**Background:** Choosing a site for the garden is the first of several steps in garden production. The steps are:

1. Choosing a site: Where to put your garden
2. Preparing a site: Choose your garden design
3. Planting the garden
4. Tending the garden
5. Harvesting, preparing and eating the food

#### Lesson Steps

##### 1. (5 minutes) – Introduction

**1.1 Welcome the members and thank them for their participation** in the school or club garden planning process. Explain that the planning process is very important to the outcome of the garden and therefore, the planning process will be the topic of the next several meetings.

**1.2 Tell the members that there are 5 major steps in garden production.**

Step 1 – Choosing a Site – deciding where the garden will be located. This is the step that the members will complete today.

Step 2 – Preparing a site – choosing the garden design. During the next meeting, members will decide on a garden design such as raised beds, terraces, trenches or a different type of garden. They will also make a map that will determine where the plants will be planted. Members will decide on a list of vegetables, fruits and other crops to be planted in the garden.

Step 3 – Planting the Garden. Members will determine how good their seeds are by conducting a short germination test. Then, they will plant the vegetables, fruits, and other plants in the garden. Some seeds may be started indoors or in a nursery and transplanted outside in the garden after they have sprouted.

Step 4 – Tending the Garden. Members will work together to take care of their garden, including watering, weeding, composting, and general maintenance of the garden.

Step 5 – Harvesting, preparing and eating the food. Different vegetables and fruits will be ready to eat at different times throughout the season, so harvesting is an ongoing process.

Today the members will begin with Step 1 – choosing a site for the garden.

**2. (25 minutes) – Brainstorm to look at major questions about where to plant.**

**Question to investigate: What do plants need to survive?**

**2.1 (5 minutes) Group the members into groups of three.** Give each group a piece of paper and ask them to draw all of the things that are necessary for plant survival. Ask them to think very carefully and to be creative! Members may choose to explain their drawings with written words. As they begin to think about the question, listen to the conversations that members are having. Encourage members to explain their choices, and to discuss their ideas if they disagree with other members.

**Expected results:** Members may brainstorm that water, nutrients (or food), soil, and the sun are important for plant survival. They may think that other factors such as heat or warmth, human interaction, and animals such as insects or bats as pollinators are important. Note that not every plant needs every one of these factors. In fact, many plants can be grown without soil, some plants do not need pollinators, and some need very little water.



**2.2 (7 minutes) Tell each group that they will share their ideas** with the club by standing up, showing their drawings, and giving a short explanation of their drawings. Give each group about 1 minute to decide who will present and explain their drawings to the group. Each group will have 1 minute to present their drawings. As the groups present new ideas, the leader or a member can write the main ideas on the board (or on a large sheet of paper if no board is available) and discuss them.

**2.3 (2 minutes) Explain to the members that the first thing they must do is to choose a location for the garden.** It is important to locate the garden near water, in a place where there are options for planting in sunny areas and shady areas, and it is best if the soil is good, rich (fertile) soil.

**Question to investigate: What things are important to think about when choosing a site?**

**2.4 (5 minutes) Ask members to brainstorm** any other things besides water, sun and soil (and any other items they came up before) that they should think about when choosing the site for the garden. As members suggest ideas, write them on the board. Take a minute to discuss each one with the class and determine if it is an important topic to consider.

**Expected results:** Members may think that it is important to plant on flat ground and not on a slope, that it be located in an area where people will not step on it, where it is safe from pests and people, and where it can be protected from natural elements such as floods.

**2.5 (6 minutes) Write the following words on the board** if they did not yet come up in the discussion: topography, traffic patterns, safety, and security. Discuss with the class the following points about each item that will be important for your garden.

Topography – is the layout of the land. If possible, choose land that is not on a slope. If it must be on a slope, locate the garden at the bottom of the slope. Special techniques will need to be used to reduce erosion and retain water.

Traffic Patterns – What is the purpose of your garden? Is it mostly for club members to learn from? Then think about where the best site is to locate the garden. It should be easy for the members to access, and centrally located. Think about who will be traveling near your garden, and what the garden will be near. If it is located near the latrines, it may not be a comfortable work place for the members, for example.



Is the purpose of the garden for the community to learn from? If so, put the garden in a spot that is easy for people to come and see it. That will increase support for the garden and get help from the community. Locate it as close to school as possible. The garden should be easy to enter and exit, and should have room for a large number of people. In the next lesson we will talk about different types of gardens. If the school has a small kitchen garden or sack gardens, then you may use different factors in choosing your site. For example, a kitchen garden may only need a only few square meters of space.

Safety – Consider the safety of the area you choose for your garden. Are there wells or anything else that could cause safety hazards?

Security – Think about the security of your garden and how visible it is to other people. Sometimes it is better if it is visible, and the community can help prevent damage from animals, theft or vandalism. You may need a barrier around the garden such as a fence to repel animals. If your garden is at a school, think about who will take care of the garden on the weekends or school holidays. Is it important to have the garden in a well traveled area so community members can watch over it?



Note: The time necessary to lead this activity will depend on your situation. If necessary, the leader can shorten the beginning of the lesson by summarizing the points instead of having group discussions.

- 3. (15 minutes) – Members analyze garden space at the school.**  
**3.1 Have each group turn their sheet of paper over to the back side and make the following chart.** (Write it on the blackboard.) Explain the chart. Save time by putting the chart on the board before the meeting. But do not list the factors until the members tell you what they are.

Factor	1 Poor	2 Somewhat poor	3 Not poor, not good	4 Somewhat good	5 Good	Comments
Water						
Sunlight						
Soil						
Topography						
Traffic patterns						
Safety						
Security						

**3.2 Have the members go outside and work in groups to choose an area** that they think would be best for the garden, based on the earlier discussion. After they choose the area, rate each factor from 1 to 5. Have them use the chart they just made to record their ratings. For example, if their chosen spot is located next to a water source, they would mark an X in the box of the column “5” in the first line.

**Example Chart**

Factor	1 Poor	2 Somewhat poor	3 Not poor, not good	4 Somewhat good	5 Good	Comments
Water	X					Water is very far from site
Sunlight			X			Very little shade
Soil				X		Good, fertile soil
Topography		X				Located on hill
Traffic patterns			X			Not in sight of walkway
Safety				X		Hidden from view
Security				X		Good place

**4. (10 minutes) - Members present choice to group**

**4.1 Each group should present their choice** to the entire club.

Have members defend their choices by telling what is important about the factors in their chosen site. They will also tell the drawbacks of that site.

**4.2 After each group has presented, finish the discussion by summarizing** the important points of the different sites. Members should contribute to the discussion by analyzing each different proposed site. Use this time to decide on a site for the garden by discussing each proposed site. Depending on your situation, there may be more than one practical site. If necessary, the group may vote on the best site to use.



**5. (5 minutes) - Summary and Debrief**

**Ask the members the following questions:**

- What did we do today?
- What are the most important factors to consider when deciding on a garden site?
- What did you find most interesting or surprising about today's lesson?
- When you plant a garden at home, would you use the same factors for deciding on a site? Which would be the same? Which would be different? Why?

**6. (1 minute) - Close**



**Thank the participants** for their good work and ideas and notify them of the next meeting date. Tell them at the next lesson they will select a garden plan and design, and decide what types of plants to plant in the garden.

Members can keep all of the drawings, notes and charts in their notebooks or record books. Or, the whole group can keep one large record book of all the class notes. Make sure to keep all notes to look back to during the planning process or in the future.

