

COMMUNITY RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT



VICTORY GARDENS SAN DIEGO

www.victorygardenssandiego.com

Victory Gardens San Diego (VGSD) is a program of San Diego Roots Sustainable Food Project, a 501c3 nonprofit organization. The mission of VGSD is **to help people start growing their own food**, through collaborative garden builds, hands-on garden education and community outreach. Launched publicly in Spring 2009, VGSD has become a recognized and active part of the local food community in San Diego County.



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Collaborative Garden Builds

Individuals, families, school groups, and community groups who are interested in having an edible garden but who need some help getting started can contact VGSD. VGSD contacts the individual or group, and visits the garden space to assess the most appropriate design, size, types of plants, etc.

Then VGSD draws on its large volunteer base to recruit 3-10 volunteers, depending on the size of the proposed garden build. They meet at the garden site with a VGSD Garden Guide and the site owner to build the garden. Builds typically take 3-5 hours – lots of hands make light work!

Garden builds are free of charge, but there is a suggested donation for garden recipients that can afford to donate. This helps “Grow it Forward”; donations go toward starting more edible gardens. New gardeners are also encouraged to volunteer at future garden builds. VGSD continues to be a resource for the new gardener over the next year or two, so if they get stuck with problems that arise they can ask for help. Many of the resources VGSD offers are available on its website.

Hands-on Garden Education

VGSD offers multi-class courses on edible gardening. Courses range from 3 to 8 classes in length, meeting weekly. Courses are offered at various locations around the county, usually on weekends or weekday evenings in summer and each class is usually 3 hours.

Classes are hands-on, informal and usually take place in a garden—learning by doing. With guidance, participants build raised beds, keyhole beds, herb spirals, compost bins, assemble irrigation systems, set up worm composting systems, plant seeds and transplants, and many other garden features. Active learning and sharing of knowledge among participants is encouraged. We don't claim to know everything, so we rely on our participants to contribute their knowledge during the course. Outside speakers are often brought in to teach/demonstrate their areas of particular expertise.

To cover the cost of materials and instructor fees, there is a nominal fee for courses. This is set at the ability level of participants to pay, and anyone who cannot afford it can enroll for free.

In Winter-Spring 2011, VGSD offered an expanded course on growing food AND starting a community garden. The experience of that course helped guide this curriculum. There are an increasing number of ‘regulars,’ i.e. course graduates who volunteer at garden builds, community outreach events, and vice versa.

Community Outreach

VGSD participates in many outreach activities such as the annual Balboa Park EarthFair and other community events. This increases awareness of VGSD activities, volunteer opportunities, and the fundamental idea that it is easy and fun to grow healthy food.

