

## Home & Garden

### Gardening in the Midcoast: Get your community garden plot ... before they're gone



Photo by Kathleen McLaughlin

Volunteers harvest carrots at the Tom Settlemire Community Garden in Brunswick.

by Kathleen McLaughlin  
Coastal Journal contributor

MIDCOAST — Maine's back to the land movement seems to have spawned a rise in community gardens across the Midcoast.

There are no official tallies, but communities from Freeport to Waldoboro have all added such gardens within the last decade or so. Bath now has two citizen gardens, and Brunswick, Boothbay, Damariscotta, Freeport and Wiscasset each have one; Waldoboro has a garden in the works. Some are run by the municipality, others by non-profit land trusts, and still others by private individuals or organizations.

Experts say community gar-

dens, which have waxed and waned in popularity through the decades, meet a wide range of needs. They provide space for those who have no room, inadequate soil or sunlight, or who aren't allowed to dig up the yard where they rent. They offer a place to socialize, exercise, and learn new gardening skills.

Most of all, community gardens offer individuals and groups a place to grow their own fresh, high-quality veggies for a fraction of the cost of what they'd normally pay at the market. And more and more, community gardens here are becoming a source of food for the food insecure.

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# Home Garden

## Plot

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### Bath

The City of Bath has a limited number of garden plots available behind the community center on Office Drive. Fees start at \$40 for residents and \$60 for nonresidents for a 10-foot-by-20-foot plot. Gardeners are asked to use organic growing methods and sign up for maintenance duties in exchange for use of the plot, compost and a convenient water supply.

To secure a garden plot, sign up at the Bath Parks and Recreation Department, 4 Sheridan Road or call 443-8360 for more information.

On the south side of the city, on the corner of Lemont and High streets, you can't miss the brightly colored sign for

the Leading Our Community in Agricultural Learning (L.O.C.A.L.) Garden.

Started in 2009, the 8,000-square-foot garden is run by Regional School Unit 1. It's used as an outdoor classroom to teach school children about organic growing methods, and it produces food for school cafeterias. Volunteers are always welcome, as are school and summer camp trips.

The contact is co-founder and RSU1 teacher Emily Dittmann at [edittmann@RSU1.org](mailto:edittmann@RSU1.org).

### Brunswick/Topsham

Brunswick's most well-known community garden is the Tom Settlemire Community Garden at Crystal Spring Farm, although it's only been in existence since 2012. It's been so popular, in fact, that all plots for the 2015 season have already

been leased, and there's already a waiting list for next year.

Volunteers are always welcome, however, especially at the Common Good Garden, an eighth-of-an-acre plot that produces food for Mid Coast Hunger Prevention Program. Find out more by calling the Brunswick Topsham Land Trust offices at 729-7694.

Senior citizens in Brunswick, meanwhile, can still apply for garden plots at the Senior Garden located next to the Brunswick Public Works Department on Industry Road. The People Plus Center allocates the garden plots. It can be reached at 729-0757.

In Topsham, the Topsham Public Library is becoming a hub for all things garden, although there are no garden plots available to rent. New efforts are underway for a verti-

cal garden and an edible forest garden on the library property at 25 Foreside Road.

Volunteer or find out more information by calling 725-1727 or visiting [topshamlibrary.org](http://topshamlibrary.org).

### Freeport

Time is running out to secure a community garden spot at Wolfe's Neck Farm at 184 Burnett Road, as the application deadline is May 1. Plots are between 150- and 200-square-feet and cost \$40 for nonmembers and \$30 for members.

Gardeners are encouraged to participate in the "Grow a Row" program and donate a row of fresh produce to Freeport Community Action.

For more information, call 865-4469, Ext. 106 or visit [wolfesneckfarm.org](http://wolfesneckfarm.org).

### Wiscasset

Morris Farm has a number of plots available for Lincoln and Sagadahoc county residents at the demonstration farm at 156 Gardener Road. The 10-foot-by-20-foot plots are available for a modest \$30 for the season.

Gardeners get access to water and garden tools, and are encouraged to volunteer in a central plot that provides produce for the Morris Farm store and area food pantries.

For more information, call Anne at 380-7154 or email [mf.comgardens@gmail.com](mailto:mf.comgardens@gmail.com). Applications are also available at Morris Farm.

### Damariscotta

How would you like to work a garden on a breezy hill overlooking the Great Salt Bay in

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# Plot

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Damariscotta? According to the Damariscotta River Association, people come from as far away as Freeport to rent plots in the picturesque community garden, located on its historic farm property at 110 Belvedere Road off Route 1. The plots are 350-square-foot and cost a very reasonable \$25 for the season. You get water and access to hoes and other tools. Organizers only ask for two hours of volunteer time over the summer for upkeep of the tool shed and other common areas.

## Boothbay

The Boothbay Peninsula's new community garden, entering its third season, is located at the Rittell Farm on Route 27, and its approach is unique. Gardeners are simply asked to donate their time and hard work there, in exchange for an ample personal supply of fresh vegetables. But most of the produce is donated to area food pantries.

To get involved or to rent space, contact Scott Rittell at 350-1059.

## Waldoboro

In Waldoboro, there is growing support for a public community garden. Town officials have been

considering possible sites in the village, but nothing definite has been decided.

Meanwhile, residents of the Meadowmak Mobile Home Cooperative off Bremen Road are hoping for a bountiful third season.

Last summer, the garden plots reportedly produced enough vegetables for anyone in the affordable housing complex who wanted them, and enough leftovers to make a sizeable donation to the local food pantry.

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