



Shape Up *Your* Workplace

A Monthly Series brought to you by Get Healthy CT

Workplace Wellness Idea #31: Encourage Gardening

Get Healthy CT aims to provide businesses with ideas that will facilitate healthy behaviors of their employees to improve employee satisfaction, productivity and showcase the employer as a role model for health. To support this, we will provide a “Workplace Wellness Idea” each month that employers can implement at low or no cost.

Grow Your Own Garden:

A green thumb and a lot of space are not necessary to benefit from planting your own garden. Even if you have very little space or experience, you can begin a garden with just a few houseplants or gardening containers. Growing fresh vegetables, herbs and fruit is an excellent way to improve your health and foster healthy eating practices. As an employer, you can encourage your employees to start their own garden by sharing these simple tips with them.

Benefits of Having Your Own Garden

Save Money

Save money each week by planting and growing fresh vegetables and fruit to use in your meals. Even small garden plots can produce significant amounts of food that can be enjoyed by the entire family.

Improve Health

It is much easier to include fruits and vegetables into your diet when they are right in your backyard. Eating more fruits and vegetables can help lower your risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, and cancer.

Increase Physical Activity

Working in a backyard garden is a great way to increase your daily physical activity and burn calories.

Share the Wealth

Gardens can tend to produce a lot in the summer months. A number of vegetables tend to be high yield. You can share the gift of fresh fruits and vegetables with neighbors, friends and coworkers. Pick a day at work and encourage everyone to bring in a healthy treat using what they’ve grown. Start a fruit and vegetable co-op and trade your crops with others to add variety to your diet.



See Page 2 for more helpful tips to get you started gardening today!

Step by Step Guide to Plan a Garden

- 1 Tender Plants:** Plants such as tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, basil etc. are the most fussy. Unless your climate is extremely warm you'll want to reserve the best sunny spots in your garden for these high-value crops so add them to your plan first. South facing walls can be particularly good for providing the heat that these plants like in order to produce an abundant harvest.
- 2 Roaming Plants:** Next place plants that like to send out vines that roam around the garden – melon, squash etc. These need to be situated at the edge of your vegetable beds so the broad leaves attached to the vines don't cover your other plants. Placing them at the edge lets them spread out across paths or grass.
- 3 Vertically Climbing Plants:** Anything that grows up supports – peas, beans and some squash such as cucumbers will need to be located where they won't shade other vegetables. The one exception is areas with very hot summers where some cool-season crops such as lettuce and spinach can benefit from shade in the heat of the day.
- 4 Irrigation:** Some plants perform badly in dry conditions – celery, onions, strawberries etc. Areas of your garden that are slightly lower will retain more moisture or you may need to plan to provide irrigation to get consistent growth.
- 5 Pollination:** Certain plants need to be near others in order to pollinate well and 'set fruit' (i.e. produce the edible portion). The main one you need to consider is sweet corn, which should be grown in blocks to ensure that it produces full cobs.
- 6 Accessibility:** What plants do you want to be able to regularly harvest? Herbs, salad, tomatoes etc.? These should all be placed as near to your kitchen as possible. Not only will you then be more likely to use them but it will help you to keep on top of the weeds and remove slugs regularly.
- 7 Succession Planting:** If you are short of space or want a crop throughout the season, consider using succession planting and intercropping.
- 8 Don't Overcrowd:** Finally, tempting though it is, be very careful not to overcrowd plants as you add in the remaining ones to your plan. This is the number 1 mistake made by new gardeners and it's easy to see why – plants look so small as seedlings and we all hate pulling up the result of our hard work to thin them out!

Source: <https://www.growveg.com/guides/how-to-plan-a-vegetable-garden-a-step-by-step-guide/>

For more information, please visit GetHealthyCT.org

Let's work together to help make the healthy choice the easy choice in the workplace!