

Get Started Gardening at Your Library

[Wells Public Library](#)

Adults

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Intergenerational

Get Started Gardening at Your Library

May 21, 2015

\$1,001-2,500

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Byline

Kristi Bryant, Adult Services Librarian, Wells (Maine) Public Library

The Wells Public Library is working with a master gardener from the [York County Cooperative Extension](#) office to offer a series of gardening programs. We are teaching basic gardening skills to foster a love of growing your own food, herbs and flowers. This is a series with lots of hands-on learning, and there is usually a take-away (such as a container garden, instructions for building raised beds, or bulbs that

have been forced). We are also creating a community garden at the library.

Advanced Planning

We have been offering gardening classes since the summer of 2014 and will continue through December 2015. We started planning months in advance. Kristi Bryant, our adult services librarian, and Jolene Staruch, the master gardener, plan all of the programs. Before each class, Kristi and Jolene plan the program, determine a materials list, purchase materials and create handouts. The only challenge we have experienced is with too much demand for the class, which means that some people have not been able to register. Our budget for gardening supplies is tight and therefore we must limit participation.

Marketing

We promote the programs by creating and displaying posters in the library and within the community. We also advertise the series through our newsletter, in local newspapers, and on our social media pages.

Budgeting

We spent some money on mature plants to create a container garden, bulbs to force, seeds, and some other materials like soil, stones and vermiculite. One way we tried to cut costs was by asking our participants to provide their own plant pots. This became problematic as some didn't bring a pot or brought a huge pot that required many plants to fill. I would recommend buying low-cost or recycled pots for everyone. One of our classes covered how to choose and order seeds, and we were able to get free seed catalogs from a local vendor. So there are ways to trim costs.

Day-of-event Activity

Our events have required at least two to five hours of preparation, depending on the program. We hold messier classes outside in the warmer months to minimize the mess. We also purchase plants in advance and set up tables to hold the materials. As a tip, we use storage totes to mix the soil when we are planting container gardens. There is a need for watering cans, too.

Program Execution

We have only received very positive feedback and these classes are a definite success! We've had an average of 20 people in each class. We cap class size at 20 because of material costs and also to allow the instructor to spend time with each individual. Many of the attendees return for other programs.

Advice

Be prepared by working on the programs well in advance of the event. Make sure you are allowing yourself enough time to shop in local stores, or order online, for your seeds and bulbs. I also recommend using local vendors for plants. We avoid buying live plants from the big box stores, when possible, and find that our local garden stores or farm stands provide great plants at fair prices. The plants are often donated, or we are offered a discount because we are the library.

Don't be afraid to partner with outside agencies. We have a great relationship with our local Cooperative Extension office and have found volunteers willing to teach for free. They are a wealth of knowledge and know local conditions better because they live here. My final advice would be to offer monthly programs, if possible, which helps people stay engaged and keeps them coming back!

[Did you try this program at your library? Share your experience using this form.](#)

Supporting Materials

[Download this Program as a PDF](#)

- [Programming Librarian Facebook Group](#)

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