



**TARRANT COUNTY**  
FOOD POLICY COUNCIL



## PREVENTING THEFT & VANDALISM IN THE GARDEN

### TYPES OF THEFT

- Theft of produce
- Theft of whole plants
- Theft of gardening supplies
- Theft of décor and structures
- Theft of water/electricity

### TYPES OF VANDALISM

- Destruction of crops and produce
- Destruction of structures or property
- Graffiti
- Trespassing
- Litter
- Storage of personal property
- Dumping



### VANDALISM & THEFT

Vandalism and theft happen in community gardens all over the country.

Many different kinds of vandalism and theft occur in the garden and some gardens attract more issues than others. No matter the type of vandalism, gardeners can become discouraged and frustrated with ongoing issues.

Finding the right solution for your garden to implement in response to vandalism can be difficult. Several solutions may need to be tested until one is successful.

### PROBLEM SOLVING

The American Community Garden Association (ACGA) recommends *encouraging* the entire community to take pride in its garden. Sharing ownership will provide more watchful eyes to keep the garden safe. Involve the surrounding community from the beginning of the project and continue to engage others as the project continues.

ACGA also recommends making friends with those who live near the garden. Invite everyone to *participate* in the garden. People who feel connected to the garden are less likely to vandalize it.

Participation in a community garden is not limited to renting and gardening in a plot. Find other ways that neighbors can help. Some people may want to take photos or help with building and maintenance. Find a job for everyone.

### TO FENCE OR NOT TO FENCE?

Installing perimeter fencing may seem like the perfect solution to many vandalism and theft issues. However, fences may also cause issues by making others feel excluded and unwanted in the garden.

Each community can decide if a fence is needed for their garden, but, in general, fences are not recommended as a solution for vandalism and theft.

Continue to the back for recommended solutions.

# SOLUTIONS

## Signage

Installing a few simple signs can help to deter unwanted activity. Encourage visitors to participate at scheduled events or let them know that the plots belong to a family.

If food or social assistance is available at a nearby location, post a sign with contact information and what services are available.

## Communicate Garden Policies

If items are dumped or stored regularly at your garden, communicate with signage or conversations about what the expectations and consequences are for undesired items.

## Report Theft

Build a relationship with your neighborhood police officer, neighborhood watch group or homeowner association.

## Harvest Produce Regularly

Make sure to have a clear policy about what happens when produce is picked without permission. Alternatively, if produce is picked on a regular basis, less of it can go missing.

## Community Harvesting Opportunities

Install “Free Food Beds” or specific locations where the community can take free garden produce. Be sure to label these spaces and encourage participation.

## Repair Damage Quickly

Encourage your gardeners to clean up after vandalism and restore normal operations as soon as possible. A calm response to vandalism can discourage future episodes.

## Lighting & Security

Install motion sensor lighting or security cameras—real or decoy!

## Lock Up

Install sturdy locks on storage buildings, water faucets and electric outlets. Limit the number of people who know the combination or have a key to the lock.



## PLANT-BASED SOLUTIONS

- Choose unusual varieties of your favorite crops—yellow tomatoes, purple peppers or white radishes.
- Grow more than you need.
- Dust plants with flour or ashes to deter harvesting.
- Create a living fence made of thorny shrubs like roses, hollies, barberry or blackberries.
- Plant flowers densely around your vegetable crops to make them less accessible.

## RESOURCES

American Community Garden Association

[www.communitygarden.org](http://www.communitygarden.org)

Community Garden & Urban Agriculture Working Group

[www.tarrantcountyfoodpolicycommission.org/cgua-working-group.html](http://www.tarrantcountyfoodpolicycommission.org/cgua-working-group.html)