



# Incredible Edible Downeast



## Getting Started Guide

### Table of Contents

1. Incredible Edible History
2. Starting your own Incredible Edible Project
3. Nuts & Bolts
  - a. Site Selection
  - b. Tools & Materials
  - c. What to Grow?
4. Community Engagement
  - a. Spread the Word
  - b. See the Signs
5. Sustainability
  - a. Funding
  - b. Volunteers
6. Resources

## **Incredible Edible History: English Origin & Milbridge Inspiration**

The Incredible Edible movement is a global phenomenon which originated in the small town of Todmorden, England. Since then, the concept of community food gardens has sprouted across the globe and inspired Maine's own Incredible Edible Milbridge (IEM).

Incredible Edible Milbridge, just like Incredible Edible Todmorden, began as a grassroots effort by a few community members. IEM has since evolved to include 24 free, pick-your-own raised bed vegetable gardens throughout town and a 14,000 sq. ft. Market Garden with grant funding and several paid staff.

This handbook shares the knowledge and spirit of IEM in order to help other downeast communities start their own Incredible Edible projects.



## **5 Steps to Start Your Own Incredible Edible Project**

### **Step 1: Start the Conversation**

- Chat with a neighbor or co-worker. Meet with a group over a cup of coffee. Plan a community potluck dinner. Your community is your best asset, so see who comes to the table.

### **Step 2: Dream**

- Gather your group and let imagination run wild! What do you want to see in your community? Where could this project lead? Creating a long-term vision will clarify the steps that will get you there.

### **Step 3: Plan**

- Choose one small step, and make a plan to get it done. Just one planter will put your project on the road to success! Make a list of materials, assign responsibilities, and set a timeline.

### **Step 4: Act**

- Pull together your team, follow your plan, and make it happen!

### **Step 5: Celebrate**

- See what you've accomplished! Honor the time and effort, enjoy the success, and imagine what you can do next. Tell your community about your incredible project!



## Nuts & Bolts

What do you need to start an Incredible Edible garden? Whatever you have! The key is to start small, and grow as you go. This list offers ideas and considerations to get your creativity flowing.

### Site Selection

- Accessibility is key! Older folks & families may need a site they can drive up to.
- Water access - you'll need a nearby spigot or other water source for your garden project.
- Consider proximity to volunteers. Could a local business commit to watering a planter in their front yard? How about a library with an existing volunteer base?

### Tools & Materials

- **Garden Containers:**
  - Raised beds
  - 5 gallon buckets
  - Window planters
  - Wooden barrels
  - Row covers for protecting tender plants from frost, pest and disease (local farmers may have scraps just the right size for a small garden)
- **Garden Tools:**
  - Watering cans or hoses
  - Hoes, shovels, trowels, and hand cultivators
  - Harvesting tools:
    - Bags or truggs
    - quart and pint containers
    - knives or scissors
    - gloves
  - Trellising for tall vining plants
- **Soil & Compost:**
  - Local landscaping companies may deliver large amounts of soil/compost
  - Ask local soil companies or garden stores to donate broken bags of soil/compost
  - Glean compost from backyard compost bins
  - Seaweed
  - Dead leaves (maple is best; oak is high in tannins)

- **Seeds and Seedlings:**
  - Ask for seed donations from companies like Fedco, Johnny's, and more
  - Check with local farms and garden clubs for leftover seedlings

### What to Grow?

- Plant u-pick items like: cherry tomatoes, peas, string beans, strawberries, herbs, flowers, and potatoes
- Choose plants that don't take up too much space for one food (e.g. broccoli)
- Listen to what your community likes to eat!



## Community Engagement

### Spread the Word

- Talk to your community!
  - Ask what they would be excited to see growing!
- What do people miss, food-culture-wise? Are certain crops hard to get where you are?
- Make a social media page for the project
- Contact local newspapers, radio, and TV stations about your Incredible project
- Flyers
- Post at local businesses, libraries, and community spaces
- If you create a larger garden space consider open garden events & hours
  - Older folks love hanging out in the garden & chatting
  - Offer field trips for local school students

Remember - it takes time for new ideas to sink in! If community members hear about the gardens through word of mouth, they will come pick. Don't push too hard, and be responsive to your community's input and needs.

### See the Signs

- Be clear, consistent, and creative with garden signs!
  - Local students, scout troops, etc. could make signs
- Consider labelling each garden space with a sign - identifying it as part of your IE project
- You may want labels to identify the different crops
- Pick vs. don't pick signage to help visitors know when food is ready



# Sustainability

Congrats! Your Incredible Edible project is up and running, and now you can focus on planning for long-term sustainability. A combination of garden champions, volunteers, and reliable funding will keep your garden project growing for years to come.

## Funding Sources

- Donation box
- Grants - may need fiscal sponsor
- Local businesses or banks may be supportive
- Springtime seedling sales
- School groups might be willing to fundraise for the project

## Volunteers

- Keep a running list of volunteers with contact information
- Create a volunteer schedule at the beginning of each growing season
- Social media outlets can be a great way to keep folks informed about needs and offers.
- Advertise the perks of volunteering:
  - Lots of produce!
  - Community of gardeners to consult on all gardening questions
  - Social opportunity
  - Community service hours (for students and others)



## Resources

Incredible Edible strategy:

- Incredible Edible Network : [www.incredibleedible.org](http://www.incredibleedible.org)
- Incredible Edible Milbridge : <https://whrl.org/iem/about-iem/>

Gardening:

- University of Maine Cooperative Extension : <https://extension.umaine.edu/gardening/>
- Johnny's Seeds Grower's Library : <https://www.johnnyseeds.com/growers-library/vegetables/growers-library-vegetables.htm>

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Health & Safety:

- 5 Steps to Safe Fruit and Vegetable Gardens from UMaine Cooperative Extension : <https://extension.umaine.edu/gardening/manual/five-steps-food-safe-fruit-vegetable-gardening/>