

# Achieving Sustainability Through Community Efforts

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## THE PROBLEM

I currently live in downtown Fayetteville in an 8-plex apartment building with my roommate and three cats. Many of the previous residents of the had left the shared front yard a mess with trash and dog feces. My roommate and I decided to clean up the yard and create a small garden.

By sharing our foods and drinks and starting up friendly conversation with the other complex tenants, we created and maintained friendships with them. We spoke to everyone in the apartment complex about our vision to maintain a nice front yard and garden space communal use. Most of the tenants seemed very interested in our idea and some even wanted to be a part of our project.

## THE PROJECT

We started by raking up the trash, dead leaves and sticks, and shoveling up the dog feces. We raked up gallons of the yard waste. We then constructed a compost pile where we dug a hole along the edge of the yard near a bush. We placed rocks along the edge of the hole and returned some of the dug up soil into the hole. We regularly fill the hole with dead leaves, our food waste (fruit peels, rotten vegetables, coffee grounds, egg shells, and other non-animal based products), and shredded up paper based egg cartons. (Compost pile is displayed in photo B)

To build our garden beds, we dug up our top soil in the front of our yard displayed in photo E. We had to dig up the top soil because there was all sorts of trash embedded in the ground that we needed to dig up before we could plant herbs and foods worth consuming (photo D is an example of a small amount of the trash we dug up). After we cleaned up the trash we laid large river rocks into three bed sections to avoid stepping in the garden and disturbing the soil.



(PHOTO A)



(PHOTO B)



(PHOTO C)



(PHOTO D)



(PHOTO E)

## THE PROJECT

After laying out the rocks, we mixed in the trash-free soil in with some of compost soil and Happy Frog gardening soil that we bought from Ozark Natural Foods.

To be able to start growing season earlier than the spring, we planted seeds in pots of some of our compost soil. We also stuck stems of several herb varieties dipped in honey into glasses of water on the window sills of our apartment.

Therefore, come spring time we were able to move rooted stems and sprouted plants into to bigger pots outside or into our garden beds. My boyfriend was also able to build us a cold frame out of scrap wood and old pieces of glass from his job sight which we also used to sprout seeds in the late winter and early spring (photo C).

Our goal has been to incorporate uses for things normally seen as being trash, such as plastic sauce containers and chipped tea cups. This has increase these product's use time and has prevented the energy and pollution that often comes with product disposal and recycling.

## THE OUTCOME

So far the project has been a success. I plan on continuing to work on this project and apply it in every future home of mine. The project has helped me to build stronger and better relationships with my neighbors. It has brought many of the complex tenants out of their homes asking questions and has helped to spark conversation amongst ourselves. Some tenants have helped me with digging and garden construction techniques. The project has encouraged many residents to start growing plants and ritually work to keep our shared yard space clean.

## THE OUTCOME

By simply giving some of our compost soil a proper place to rest with plenty of sunlight and water, we had allowed volunteer plants to sprout and grow from the compost soil (an example is displayed in photo A). Stems that we saved from other plants and food waste have rooted successfully after cutting their ends correctly, coating the ends in honey, and allowing them to sit in a glass of water on inside of our home window panes.

## SUSTAINABILITY

Our project has helped to fix a situation that had compromised our ability and the other resident's anility to enjoy and utilize our shared yard space in a clean and healthy manner. With continual maintenance and awareness and educating future residents on gardening and correct waste disposal, our project will continue to improve conditions for future generations. According to the Brundtland commission report, they define sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Our project helps to do just this.

Our closer relationships with our neighbors in the complex has increased sharing and helping between ourselves. For example, less food is wasted because when somebody has too much of something they can share it with other neighbors before it goes bad. Or instead of somebody having to buy a new product, we are able to share and borrow products such as brooms and kitchenware with each other. This prevents us from consuming more products which all have life cycles that can impact the planet negatively. The practice of sharing has been able to save the energy, habitat loss, and pollution that is put forth towards the raw material extraction, material processing, part manufacturing, assembly, packaging, transportation and disposal of an extra product.