



## Community Gardens Policy (2016)

### What is a Community Garden?

The City of Victoria recognizes community gardening as a valuable community recreation activity that contributes to health and well-being, positive social interaction, neighbourhood building, food production, environmental education, habitat development, and connection to nature.

For the purposes of this policy, a community garden is a piece of land gardened collectively by members of the community, in partnership with a non-profit society.

Community gardening includes, but is not limited to, the following types of activities:

- Growing annual and perennial food plants, medicinal plants, and flowers
- Growing Indigenous, cultural and native plants
- Pollinator gardens and hobby beekeeping
- Permaculture projects
- Fruit and nut trees
- Demonstration farming
- Edible landscaping

### Types of Community Gardens

There are three main types of community gardens in Victoria:

1. **Commons Garden:** A commons garden is a communal garden area maintained and managed by community volunteers, where any harvest produced is available to the public.
2. **Allotment garden:** Allotment gardens consist of individual garden plots that are rented, maintained and harvested by individual member gardeners.
3. **Community Orchard:** A community orchard is a grove fruit or nut trees where a community organization is responsible for the care, maintenance and harvesting of trees, with food going to the community.

Community garden projects often include a mixture of these three types (for example, a garden may be a mixture of allotments and common garden areas.)

A community garden project may also have the following features:

- Compost bins, tool storage sheds, shared tools and other elements necessary for the operation of a community garden
- Educational opportunities to encourage the involvement of schools, youth groups, and citizens (who do not have assigned plots) in gardening activities
- Mechanisms for deer protection (tree fencing or perimeter fencing).

- Universal accessibility in garden design, to provide gardening opportunities to people with a variety of abilities.

#### **City support for community gardens**

The City of Victoria supports community gardens by working with non-profit societies and gardening organizations. Subject to available resources the City:

- Promotes community gardening and provide contact information to the public of existing community garden organizations (e.g. through the City of Victoria website).
- Provides a staff contact liaison for community garden projects.
- Provides access to information on the development and operation of community garden projects.
- Through City of Victoria grants, provides opportunities for funding to start, develop, and manage community gardens.
- Facilitates connections between project proponents and other potential partners.
- Assists interested groups in searching for suitable land for the development of community gardens.
- Where appropriate, assesses the suitability of City-owned land for food consumption and production through a Phase 1 Environmental Analysis (a historical search of the property to determine possible soil contamination from past land uses).
- Helps connect project proponents to appropriate landowner, if not the City of Victoria.
- Provides a municipal water hook-up and minimal fencing for new garden sites on City-owned land.
- Provides in-kind support where feasible (e.g. excess materials like compost and leaf mulch).

#### **Finding an appropriate site**

Appropriate sites for community gardens have the following features:

- Informed and supportive neighbours
- Year-round accessibility
- Good sun exposure (a minimum of 6 hours of sunlight per day)
- Easy access to municipal water
- Visible from surrounding uses to provide passive site surveillance
- Will not adversely impact other land uses

To assist with finding suitable land for community gardens, the City of Victoria has prepared an inventory of City-owned sites that may be suitable for future projects. This inventory can be viewed on the City's interactive mapping system 'VicMap', accessible from the City of Victoria website. Sites identified by the land inventory will still be subject to the public consultation requirements of this policy.

#### **Community garden projects on City-owned land**

The City of Victoria supports the creation of community gardens on City-owned land where neighbours have been consulted and are supportive, where a gardening group demonstrates an interest and commitment, and where the project meets the intent and objectives of this policy. Community garden projects on City-owned land will be subject to the following:

#### **A. Criteria for community garden projects**

Community garden projects on City-owned land will be operated by a non-profit society according to the following criteria:

1. Promotes urban agriculture, food production, education, and/or habitat enhancement.
2. Does not negatively impact surrounding land uses.
3. Is maintained to a minimum standard of aesthetics and orderliness. Year-round production is encouraged.
4. Expressions of art and creativity are welcomed and encouraged.
5. Operates at no cost to the City of Victoria, except through City of Victoria grants.
6. Provide public access to the garden at all times; locked gates are not permitted except through special approval from the City of Victoria.
7. The duration of a community garden is time-limited, according to the terms of the license agreement.
8. Groups are required to have liability insurance.
9. Produce grown on the site is not for private profit, unless through prior approval with the City of Victoria.
10. Contact information is posted on site for neighbours to support positive relationships.

#### **B. Public Consultation Process**

Community garden projects on City-owned sites are subject to a public consultation and approval process to ensure neighbours are informed and supported. Public consultation will be jointly facilitated by the City of Victoria and the proponent. Requirements for public consultation will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, determined by project size and anticipated project impact.

#### **C. License for use**

For community garden projects on lands owned by the City, a license of use agreement is required between the City of Victoria and the non-profit society for the purpose of developing and maintaining a community garden. Depending on site location, licenses may also be subject to Council approval.

License terms may vary based on project requirements. A standard license agreement for a community garden will be three (3) years. License agreements may be renewed for multiple terms providing the project continues to meet the criteria of this policy.

#### **D. User agreement between Non-profit Society and Garden Members**

The community garden organization and/or a neighbourhood association agrees to develop, manage and operate a community garden according to a user agreement with their members which specifies the terms of use, management responsibilities, user fees and access procedures which include the following:

- User agreement will not exceed three years, with an option to renew.
- Residents of the City of Victoria will be given priority for membership and the opportunity to garden.
- Participation must be made from a waiting list on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Membership in allotment gardens may not be restricted by neighbourhood.

- A list of regulations is developed for use of the site, and members are required to sign a contract indicating their compliance with regular maintenance and standards.
- Membership and use of the site can be revoked for non-compliance with the organization's bylaws and regulations.
- Pesticide use is not permitted on the site.
- Public access to the site is permitted and facilitated.

#### **Community garden projects on Private Lands**

The City of Victoria encourages the creation of community gardens on private lands where the project meets the intent and objectives of this policy and the vision of the Official Community Plan. The City of Victoria offers the following support for encouraging community gardens on private lands:

- Make connections between project proponents and potential funding partners.
- Help connect project proponents to appropriate landowners.
- Funding opportunities through City of Victoria grants.