

Boulevard Gardening Guidelines

The boulevard is the area between the street curb and the sidewalk that is typically planted with grass. Residents are encouraged to transform the boulevard adjacent to their home into well-designed and maintained gardens.

Boulevard gardens can create more beautiful, interesting and diverse streets, add character to neighbourhoods and increase feelings of community pride. They can also support environmental benefits such as increasing ecological diversity and providing bird, butterfly and pollinator habitats.

Remember that the boulevard is a shared public space, so please be courteous of neighbours and passers-by by keeping your garden tidy, clear of the sidewalk and free of garbage. Also, remember that underground utilities share the boulevard. The City may require occasional access to maintain these underground utilities, to build new sidewalks, install street signage, or prune street trees. The following Boulevard Gardening Guidelines assist residents in transforming their streets in a way that is both beautiful and safe.

Preparing the boulevard for planting:

- Residents should confirm the location of underground utilities before disturbing the boulevard by phoning BC One at 1.800.474.6886 or www.bconecall.bc.ca
- To avoid interference with underground utilities, do not dig down more than 15cm.
- Keep plants and soil clear of utility covers. Work crews must be able to easily locate and access them. A pot of flowers on top of a utility cover is fine as long as it is easily moved by one person.
- Remove existing grass and shake it well to ensure minimal soil loss. Alternatively, you can flip grass over or place a layer of newspaper or cardboard, allowing the grass to decompose in place. The Yard Trimmings Collection Program does not accept sod. Sod that is removed should be composted.
- Mound up compost or soil 20cm above the original ground level to ensure there is adequate soil for plants to root and that underground utilities are not disturbed. Be careful not to place more than 10cm of compost or soil above tree roots as it encourages shallow root growth.
- Use new, clean soil or compost to avoid weeds and toxins. The Vancouver Landfill makes compost from the Yard Trimmings Collection Program. For information and pricing, call 604.940.3213 or visit the compost sales website at <http://vancouver.ca/home-property-development/compost-soil.aspx>

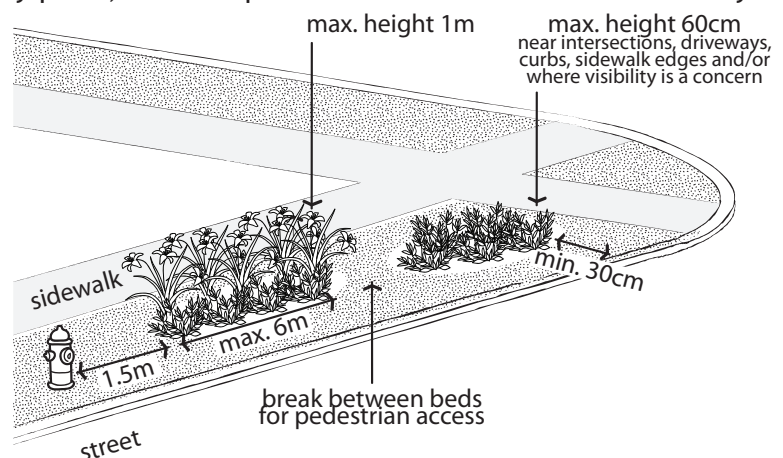
Setbacks and access:

- If there is no sidewalk, access must be provided so that pedestrians are not forced to walk on the street.
- Maintain a path of at least 30cm wide along the curb edge to allow pedestrians to easily open and close vehicle doors, and cross to the sidewalk from the street. Garden beds should be no longer than 6m without a break.
- Maintain a 1.5m clearance around fire hydrants, utility poles, or other permanent structures. Make sure they are easily visible and accessible from both the street and the sidewalk.

Plant height:

- Plants must be no taller than 1m. Choose plants that grow to a mature height of 1m or less or keep plants low by trimming.
- Keep plants low closer to intersections, driveways, curbs, sidewalk edges and/or where visibility may be a concern. Plants should be no taller than 60cm in these locations.
- If the plant heights are deemed to be a visibility, safety concern, or do not meet the above guidelines, the City of Vancouver reserves the right to ask that plants be trimmed, or to have them trimmed.

Questions or concerns regarding plant heights can be directed to 3-1-1 or greenstreets@vancouver.ca.

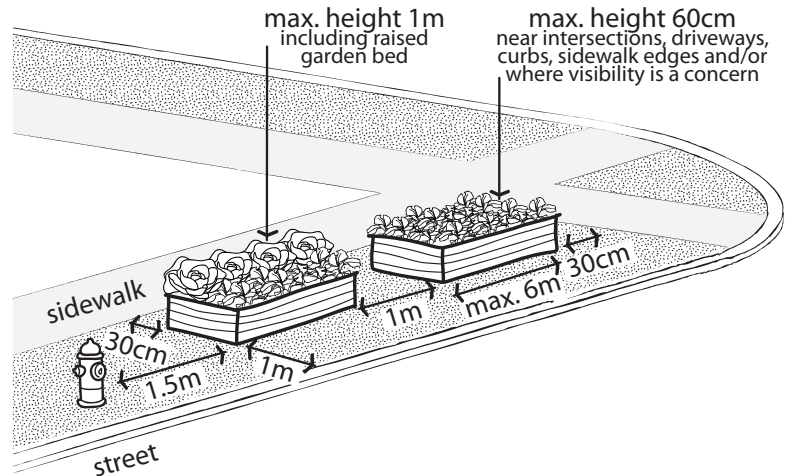


Plant selection and maintenance:

- Choose drought-tolerant plants and plants with winter interest to create a waterwise boulevard that looks great in all seasons. See the [recommended plant list](#) developed by the BC Master Gardeners.
- Do not plant trees. Only trees planted by the City are allowed on the boulevard.
- Food producing plants are allowed within certain guidelines. If you intend to grow food, you must also read and comply with the guidelines for Growing Food on City Boulevards after understanding the Boulevard Gardening Guidelines.
- Outdoor pesticides cannot be used in the City of Vancouver. To learn more about pest management, visit the Park Board's Pest Information website at: <http://vancouver.ca/home-property-development/pests-and-wildlife.aspx>, consult your local garden centre, or contact the BC Master Gardeners.

Structures and ornaments:

- Permanent installations such as in-ground irrigation systems are not allowed.
- Temporary structures and ornaments are allowed within certain parameters, provided they are easily movable and do not interfere with access or visibility.
- All temporary structures and ornaments must be set back 1m from the curb, 30cm from the sidewalk and 1.5m from any pole, fire hydrant or other permanent structure.
- Raised garden beds are considered temporary structures.
- The recommended height for a raised garden bed is between 15cm and 45cm. Raised garden beds should not exceed 45cm.
- Provide a 1m wide path between raised garden beds and other fixed objects to ensure easy access between the sidewalk and parked vehicles. Raised garden beds should be no longer than 6m.
- Plants must be no taller than 1m, measured from the ground level, not the surface level of the raised garden bed. Plants should be kept to a maximum of 60cm closer to intersections, driveways, curbs, sidewalk edges and/or where visibility is a concern.
- If you are building raised beds to grow food, avoid treated lumber or creosoted timbers as they may be toxic. Use wood that is naturally rot-resistant such as cedar or juniper. For low garden beds, materials such as bricks, landscape pavers or rocks can be used to retain soil and define the garden edge.



Please check with Engineering Services by contacting 3-1-1 or greenstreets@vancouver.ca before installing any temporary structures or ornaments.

Working around street trees:

- All trees growing on the boulevard belong to the City of Vancouver and are under the care of the Park Board.
- Take care not to cut roots or branches.
- Keep soil or compost from contacting the bark as moisture causes bark to rot, threatening the health of the tree.
- Do not place more than 10cm of compost or soil directly above tree roots as it may lead to shallow rooting. Deep rooted trees are more likely to survive drought stress and are less susceptible to wind damage.
- Use compost or soil with a sandy texture (at least 50% sand by volume) around tree roots for good drainage.
- Do not nail or tie signs, trellises or other fixtures to a street tree.
- Questions or concerns regarding street trees should be directed to 3-1-1.

For further information about boulevard gardening, call 3-1-1 or email greenstreets@vancouver.ca

Growing Food on City Boulevards

The City of Vancouver aims to become the greenest city in the world by 2020 and with that, a leader in urban food systems. Boulevard gardens can play a role in local food production along with other local food initiatives such as community gardens and farmers markets to name just a few. Visit the Greenest City website at:

<http://vancouver.ca/green-vancouver/a-bright-green-future.aspx>

to learn more.

Before deciding to grow food in your boulevard garden, carefully consider the following guidelines. Most food producing plants require very good soil and regular watering which means your boulevard may not be the most ideal location; however, for some residents the boulevard is the only location that has the right conditions for growing food. With a little planning and diligence, residents can successfully add an edible element to their street garden.

The City of Vancouver cannot guarantee the suitability of each boulevard for growing food. It is up to the individual gardener to determine whether or not it's appropriate to grow food in their boulevard garden based on the following guidelines. Please contact 3-1-1 or email greenstreets@vancouver.ca if you have further questions.

Year-round interest and beauty:

Ensuring that your boulevard looks great in all seasons is a key consideration when planning your garden. Many food producing plants are annuals that die back in the winter. Planting these areas with a winter cover will ensure the garden looks well-maintained while also protecting the soil from winter erosion. Consider planting a mix of annual and perennial plants to create a winter presence in your garden. Make sure you keep your boulevard clean and tidy year-round.

Watering and maintenance:

Food producing plants typically demand more water and maintenance. It may be challenging to water your boulevard, so determine how you will water your plants before you begin to ensure a successful harvest. Be careful not to leave hoses and other tools on the sidewalk as they can be a trip hazard for pedestrians.

Neighbourhood pets and passers-by:

The street is a public space where you have little control over the way people and pets interact with your garden. Plants and produce may be picked by passers-by and pets often have little consideration for garden beds. A certain level of quality and contaminant control is lost when you garden along the street.

Soil quality:

It is possible for contaminants to be present in soils at potentially unsafe levels, particularly in older or more industrial neighbourhoods where paints and sprays were used before the ban of certain chemicals. In many boulevards, the likelihood of soil contamination is low; however, the City cannot guarantee the suitability of your boulevard for growing food.

Another source of potential contamination is in runoff of water from the street that can contain oil and other residues. Boulevards typically have raised curbs that obstruct the flow of water into the planted area. Residents, however, are encouraged to take note of water flow around their gardens.

If you are not certain that your soil is safe, have a soil test done. They are relatively easy, inexpensive and may provide urban gardeners with confidence that their food is safe for consumption.

If you are concerned about soil contamination:

- Use ornamental plants in your boulevard garden. Sustainable choices include native, drought-tolerant and/or pollinator-friendly species that will benefit the urban environment.
- Create raised beds if you intend to grow food. Use new, clean soil for planting. Make sure your raised beds fit

within the Boulevard Gardening Guidelines.

- Contaminant levels are higher in the soil than in the plant material and therefore, the risk of exposure is higher from direct contact with the soil (or soil particles on the surface of plants) rather than from the consumption of garden produce. Washing garden produce thoroughly will greatly reduce the risk of contaminant consumption. Gardeners should take care not to ingest soil or dust and wash hands, gardening clothes and tools well.
- Adding compost helps bind metals such as lead and also assists with the breakdown of oil or pesticide residues, making the soil safer for food growing.
- Fruiting crops like squash or berries are less likely to take up common contaminants than root crops or greens.

Return to the [Boulevard Gardening Guidelines](#)