



GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNITY GARDENS

in the City of Cockburn





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Introduction

Community gardens can be a great way to grow your own food, meet like-minded people, reduce your carbon footprint and make a difference in your local community.

The City of Cockburn has put together this guide to help community groups understand the steps required to create a sustainable community garden.

Objectives

The objectives of these guidelines are to:

- Promote the development of community gardens as places where people can meet and work together, build stronger community relationships and learn about sustainable gardening
- Ensure that the location is the initial consideration in determining the potential for a community garden
- Clarify the rights and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in the community garden process
- Increase community ownership and encourage community gardens to be self-managed and not reliant on the City for ongoing support
- Ensure consistency in the development and management of community gardens in the City of Cockburn.

How the City supports community gardens

The City demonstrates support for the establishment of community gardens via:

- A Community Garden Policy
- The preparation of guidelines for the establishment and management of community gardens
- Undertaking land assessments
- Licensing of suitable land for the purpose of community gardens
- Providing guidance and support for community groups to become incorporated
- Providing funding opportunities.

Procedure for starting a new community garden

Step 1

Determine the type of community garden.

Community Garden	School Garden	Verge Garden
Continue to Step 2.	Contact the school to seek approval in accordance with their policies and procedures.	Refer to the City of Cockburn Street Verge Improvement Policy.

Step 2

Establish context and seek guidance on the application process from the Community Development Coordinator.

Step 3

Determine a location for the community garden.

Freehold land owned by City of Cockburn	Crown Reserve managed by City of Cockburn	Private land	Crown Reserve managed by State Government
Proceed below.	Proceed below.	Contact the respective landowner to seek approval in accordance with their policies and procedures.	Contact the respective State Government department to seek approval in accordance with their policies and procedures.
Liaise with Land and Lease Administration Service Unit to undertake a preliminary site assessment:			
Land is supported	Land is not supported		
Conditional Approval issued Proceed to Step 4.	Written feedback will be provided. An alternate site may be considered. Return to Step 1.		

Step 4

Undertake community consultation. If there is significant opposition from the community to the proposal, the City reserves the right to consider alternate sites for the project.

Step 5

Establish an Incorporated Community Garden Group.

Step 6

Prepare a Management Plan, Risk and Safety Assessment, and Rules of Use.

Step 7

Enter into a license agreement.

Step 8

Once all steps have been completed, and all documents have been approved by the City, then applicants may wish to apply for grants or funding to commence development of the community garden.



1 Types of community gardens

There are a number of different models for community gardens in Australia including:

1.1. Neighbourhood Community Gardens

Community gardens can be located in a range of locations including private property, public open space and community facilities such as churches. Neighbourhood community gardens can include a mix of allotment and communal gardens. Sometimes these gardens donate surplus produce to local charities in need.

- Allotment Gardens include small garden plots that are allotted to, and managed individually by, different people or families. Small fees may be charged to rent an allotment. Some allotments may be shared
- Communal Plots are managed collectively by all members of the community garden group. Roles, responsibilities and tasks are shared between group members.

1.2. School Kitchen Gardens

School kitchen gardens are used as outdoor classrooms and are located on school property where students, teachers and parents within the school community can join the garden project. The school curriculum is reinforced through the planting, cultivation and harvesting of produce, teaching valuable lessons in teamwork, decision-making and healthy eating.

These gardens can also include sensory gardens and bush tucker gardens.

A number of school kitchen gardens have been established under City of Cockburn Sustainability Grants program and the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation.

1.3. Edible Verge Gardens

The City allows edible gardens in accordance with the Verge Improvement Policy. Edible gardens need to be well maintained to ensure no sight line issues are created. The City encourages consultation with adjacent owners in order to achieve the desired outcomes.





2 Establish context

Starting up a community garden is hard work and requires a significant investment of time, energy, and a clear vision.

The most successful community garden projects are those where ample time is invested in the planning stages and an ongoing commitment is established.

The City's Guidelines for Community Gardens and Community Garden Policy provide useful information on the process to establish a community garden.

The Community Development Coordinator is the first point of contact for community gardens enquiries within Cockburn.

The following questions need to be asked and resolved in the planning of a community garden:

- Is there a need for a new community garden?
- Where is the nearest established community garden?
- Is there sufficient community interest and support to sustain the project long term?
- What community groups or businesses are nearby including schools, childcare centres, community or aged care facilities?
- Who lives in the local community and what are people's cultural and linguistic backgrounds?
- What is the land currently used for? Who owns the land? (See page 12)

Community garden enquiries:

Community Development Coordinator

City of Cockburn

(08) 9411 3444

communitydevelopment@cockburn.wa.gov.au

3 Land ownership & preliminary site assessment

The first thing to consider when searching for a community garden location is the ownership of the land.

3.1. Land ownership

Land ownership can be classified under four main categories:

1. Freehold

If the land is owned in freehold by the City of Cockburn, the City can consider this land for a community garden and will undertake an assessment of its suitability.

2. Crown Reserve – Managed by the City of Cockburn

If the land is a Crown Reserve (owned by the State of WA) and is managed by the City this land may be considered for a community garden. However, this option may require the City to apply to the Department of Lands to amend the Management Order, a process which may take up to one year.

3. Private

If the land is privately owned in freehold by another party (e.g. an individual or a company) or a State Government agency (such as Department of Education or Western Australian Planning Commission), the applicant may then seek to enter into an agreement directly with the respective landowner.

4. Crown Reserve – Managed by other State Government department

If the land is a Crown Reserve (owned by the State of WA) that is managed by another State Government agency (e.g. Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions), the applicant may then seek to enter into an agreement directly with the respective State Department.

The assessment of the land's suitability for community gardens on City of Cockburn freehold land (category 1) or land managed by the City of Cockburn (category 2) will be undertaken by the Land and Lease Administration Service Unit in conjunction with Parks Team.

Land assessment enquiries:

Land Administration Service Unit
City of Cockburn
(08) 9411 3444
landadmin@cockburn.wa.gov.au





3.2. Preliminary site assessment

Once it has been established that the City does have ownership or management of the land, the applicant will need to consider a range of issues. Ideally community gardens should leverage on existing community and park facilities.

Multi-Use

The concept of including a community garden as part of an existing facility that compliments the aims and objectives of a community garden is to be encouraged. For example, if there is a community hall or clubroom located on site, the community group can create synergies with other community groups utilising the land.

Existing infrastructure

The use of existing infrastructure such as carparks, water, lighting, electricity and amenities means that the cost of providing stand-alone infrastructure is defrayed by utilising existing utilities.

The costs of installing sub-meters in order for the water and electricity costs of the community garden to be calculable needs to be factored into the establishment process.

Accessibility and safety

The site requires good accessibility by:

- Private vehicle and public transport
- Pedestrian use
- Delivery vehicles
- People with disabilities
- Internal footpaths.

The site needs to have sufficient lighting in place so that the community garden is well-lit and safe.

These factors, combined with the land ownership, will enable the City of Cockburn to make a determination on whether conditional site approval is granted. This assessment process can take from 6 months to 1 year.



Consider raised garden beds

4 Community consultation

Strong supportive partnerships with neighbours, community groups, and organisations within the local community are essential for the long term viability and success of any community garden.

It is essential that community gardens proposals are discussed with stakeholders directly affected by the project, especially immediate neighbours. Community consultation will help to establish if there is sufficient interest and support in the local community for a new project. If there is significant opposition from the community to the proposal, the City reserves the right to consider alternate sites for the project.

The City's Community Development team can help to draft a consultation plan. A variety of engagement tools can be considered including:

- A letterbox drop
- Meeting at your chosen site
- Organising a BBQ to promote the idea
- Putting up posters
- Contacting local schools, gardening, cultural and community groups.

Along with community consultation, the applicant may also wish to establish partnerships with local businesses and organisations which can be a valuable source of resources and financial support. Additionally the applicant can liaise with established community garden organisations who can provide a wealth of knowledge, experience and advice.

The Community Development Coordinator will guide the applicant through this step.

Community consultation enquiries:

Community Development Coordinator
City of Cockburn
(08) 9411 3444
communitydevelopment@cockburn.wa.gov.au



5 Incorporation of the group

It is a requirement for community garden groups to develop a constitution and become incorporated.

Being incorporated allows groups to create a separate legal entity through which to conduct their activities. There are numerous advantages, such as:

- Individual members limit their exposure to personal legal liabilities
- Bank accounts can be opened in the name of the association
- The association apply for grants and hold property.

Garden groups can apply to the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety to become Incorporated Associations. It is recommended to visit their website for helpful information such as how to become incorporated, roles of committee members, key obligations and record keeping.

The Community Development Coordinator can guide the applicant through this step.

5.1. Constitution

A constitution is a legal governing document which sets out the rules for the daily running of the group and contains details of the group's purpose, obligations and responsibilities. It is necessary for the following reasons:

- To ensure project aims are clear and agreed by its members
- To provide mechanisms for making decisions.

5.2. Insurance

It is essential that garden groups are aware of the risks associated with undertaking a publicly accessible community garden project. Each garden group has a duty of care to the community who access the garden areas.

It is essential that the group takes out appropriate public liability insurance so they are covered for potential risks. The City recognises that public liability insurance has an associated cost, and might be a financial burden to small community groups.

Options for obtaining insurance cover include the following:

- The City's Community Development department can cover the cost of insurance to eligible organisations in Cockburn
- The group may be covered by another organisation, such as a local resident group
- A group of community gardens with similar objectives might obtain insurance together
- The group manages their own insurance.

5.3. Management Structure

A core group, ideally with a range of skills and experience, should be selected to form the garden management committee. Having a committee helps share the tasks of garden management and avoids excessive responsibility being placed on a couple of people. This group is to work collaboratively to keep the project on track and deal with issues as they arise.

An effective committee:

- Works to support the gardens aims, objectives and vision
- Includes representation from a range of stakeholders
- Is well informed about operational and governance issues
- Upholds agreed meeting and decision making procedures
- Has good support from the community garden members
- Holds friendly, efficient and well facilitated meetings
- Facilitates effective communication between committee and other gardeners.



5.4. Conflict Resolution and Complaints Procedure

Although community gardens aim to promote an environment that is tolerant and inclusive, sometimes conflict will arise, either within the garden group or with external stakeholders. Managing disputes and complaints is an important task of the management committee. Developing a clear process for the resolution of conflict is therefore essential and should be included in the group's constitution.

It is recommended to consider the following points:

- Encourage respectful and open communication
- Clarify the stakeholders involved
- Address who, both internally and externally will mediate conflict
- Identify the process for addressing personal grievance.

In the event of a conflict arising, steps should be taken immediately to accelerate its resolution, including communicating respectfully with those involved and engaging the assistance of a mediator where appropriate.

The City recommends that community gardeners develop a Code of Conduct which includes a Gardener's Agreement that all members agree to follow. An agreement should provide information on the expectations of behaviour on site, as well as the management of shared garden areas and plots.

5.5. Rights of Community Gardeners

Community gardeners have the right to:

- Develop their own internal policies, organisational procedures and plan of management providing they liaise with, and get support from, the landowner
- Be consulted with regard to any decision that may affect the project and to be advised by the City in a timely manner of any policy changes that impact them
- Be treated with respect by other gardeners, local residents and partnering organisations
- Negotiate a secure and reasonable agreement with the landowner.



5.6. Responsibilities of Community Gardeners

Community gardeners are responsible for maintaining the garden so that the health and safety of the surrounding community is not adversely impacted. In particular, gardeners are responsible for ensuring that:

- They cooperate and manage effective relationships with the surrounding neighbourhood, partnering organisations and other gardeners
- They do not discriminate against one another due to differences in race, culture or sexuality
- They regularly communicate with the City and stakeholders
- Decision making is democratic, transparent and inclusive
- Any water leaving the garden is not contaminated by sediment, fertiliser, manure or excessive organic matter that might pollute waterways
- Noise levels within the garden are maintained at a level that is not disturbing to neighbours
- Compost, worm farming systems and fertilisers are maintained so as not to attract vermin or produce unpleasant odours
- Rainwater harvesting systems are maintained to ensure water is of a high quality
- Lawn areas are regularly mowed and garden beds kept tidy
- Any materials delivered to, or stored at the garden are maintained so as not to create an unpleasant environment for other residents in the community
- Visitors are welcomed to the garden, and members of the public can access the community garden during daylight hours.

Community group enquiries:

Community Development Coordinator
City of Cockburn
(08) 9411 3444
communitydevelopment@cockburn.wa.gov.au

6 Management plan

The incorporated community group will be required to submit a management plan to the City outlining the following key points.

The Parks Manager can assist the Community Garden Group with any questions regarding this step.

Aims and Objectives

Develop a shared vision for the garden and outline what the group wants to achieve.

Aims and objectives can include short, medium and long term goals to ensure that the group is sustainable and meets the needs of the community.

Design

The design needs to consider the following:

- Plot size, layout and height of beds
- Alignment of services i.e. water, power
- Infrastructure, i.e. buildings, carpark, sheds, toilets
- Accessibility to and through the garden, i.e. delivery of materials, pedestrian movement, universal access
- Water management scheme
- Sustainability
- Safety & Security.

Water Management

The efficient management of water is critical to the sustainability of a community garden project. Water minimisation strategies are to be implemented in managing the garden efficiently. The community garden will be required to conform with the Water Corporations scheme water restrictions.



A garden for everyone

Infrastructure Required

A range of infrastructure will be required to establish a community garden. The cost, construction and maintenance of this infrastructure needs to be factored into the establishment process, and shall be borne by the community group.

Budgeting and Finance

There are a number of different financial models for community gardens that ensure it is sustainable. Key elements to consider include; cost to build garden, connection to service and ongoing costs, membership fees, reinstatement costs (bond, etc.), garden plot fees, etc.

Risk Management

It is essential that community groups are aware of the risks associated with undertaking a publicly accessible community garden project. Each community group member has a duty of care in managing the garden areas. A risk assessment must be undertaken by the group to identify potential risks and corresponding action plan to reduce the risk to an acceptable level.

Rules and Guidelines

The community garden group will need to develop a set of rules and guidelines to meet their aims and objectives. Sample headings are provided below.

1. Membership
2. Fees
3. Allocation of plots
4. Forfeiting of garden plots
5. Responsibilities of members
6. General conduct in the garden
7. Maintenance of common areas
8. Waste management
9. Water management
10. Pest and vermin management
11. Storage of materials and equipment
12. Animals
13. Security
14. Visitors
15. Donation of surplus produce



Management plan enquiries:

Parks Manager
City of Cockburn
(08) 9411 3444
customer@cockburn.wa.gov.au

7 Licence agreement

Incorporated community groups can discuss the terms of the licence arrangement with the City of Cockburn's Land Administration Service Unit.

The terms of the licence will be determined on a case by case basis, and listed below are some examples of the terms that will likely be included in the licence.

7.1. Establishment

The applicant would need to cover all costs involved in the design, establishment and construction of the community garden. In some cases, depending on the design and the level of infrastructure, planning and building approval may be required.

7.2. Maintenance

The applicant would be responsible for all costs associated with the cleaning, upkeep, upgrades and maintenance of the community garden and its associated infrastructure.

7.3. Insurance

The applicant would need public liability insurance to cover their members and the public who use the community garden.

7.4. Reinstatement bond

In most cases, the City would require the applicant to provide a cash bond to be held by the City in case the community garden ceases operation. The cash bond will be used towards reinstating the land back to its original purpose and original condition. For example, the costs towards removing the furniture, garden beds, reticulation, re-levelling the land and re-establishing grass/vegetation.

Once the licence has been established, an Elected Members item will be prepared for Council's consideration.

License agreement enquiries:

Land Administration Service Unit
City of Cockburn
(08) 9411 3444
landadmin@cockburn.wa.gov.au

8 Apply for funding

Incorporated community groups may apply through the City's Community Grants Program or Sustainability Grants Program for funding to assist with the establishment of the community garden.

Additionally there are a range of external funding sources that can be accessed to assist in establishing a community garden.

For more information on grant opportunities please contact the City of Cockburn's Grants and Research Officer.

Funding enquiries:

Grants and Research Officer
City of Cockburn
(08) 9411 3444
communitygrants@cockburn.wa.gov.au



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