

Community Gardening Guideline



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Welcome to Community Gardening

Town of Cambridge is pleased to present this Community Gardening Guideline, developed to support residents in creating and maintaining vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable community gardening spaces.

Community gardening spaces are valuable assets that promote environmental stewardship, healthy living, social connection, and local food resilience. This Guideline outlines the best practices necessary to ensure the effective management and long-term success of community gardening on public or shared land.

Whether you are starting a new group or participating in an existing one, this guideline is intended to assist gardening coordinators, volunteers, and community members in understanding their roles and responsibilities, while fostering collaboration and respect among all participants.

We thank you for your commitment to building greener, healthier, and more connected communities. Your efforts contribute meaningfully to our shared vision for a sustainable and liveable city.

Definitions

Definitions are taken as those detailed in the Local Government Act 1995 and associated legislation.

- Community Gardening Groups: are a not for profit, community-based initiative where gardeners produce food for their own consumption. They are a community managed, multifunctional garden space that can provide a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits. Community Gardening Groups may refer to either Community Garden groups or Community Food Forest groups.

- A Community Garden is a shared fenced space where individuals, community groups, or organisations come together to grow vegetables, herbs, fruits, and ornamental plants. These gardens are designed to promote social interaction, environmental sustainability, healthy living, and community engagement.
- Community Food Forest: is an open space that has fruit and nut trees annual vegetables and Bush Tucker plants for the local community to enjoy and learn what can be grown in their area.

Getting Started

Objectives

The objectives of these guidelines are to:

- Guide the establishment and ongoing governance of community gardening on Town-managed land, through clearly defined responsibilities and partnership frameworks.
- Promote local food security and healthy lifestyles
- Foster community engagement, learning, and social inclusion
- Support climate resilience through green spaces
- Encourage sustainable land use and biodiversity
- Ensure safe and fair use of public land

Council Support

The Town aims to support community gardening to be self-managed. This increases community ownership and the long-term success of a garden. Council can assist with the following:

- (a) Identification of a potential garden site.

(b) Advice regarding available grants- groups are responsible for funding a community gardening project however the Town can advise groups of the grants available.

(c) Encouragement of partnerships with other community gardening to help build relationships and encourage the sharing of information and experiences.

(d) Promotion of community gardening events through the Town's website and publications; and

(e) Provision of basic resources such as mulch where available.

Procedure for Establishing a New Community Gardening Group

- Establish a community gardening group and organise incorporation of the group
- Undertake site assessment of potential sites
- Discuss proposal with the Town to identify any potential issues
- Submit a completed application to the Town
- Town assessment of application
- Assessment completed within 6 weeks of receipt of application

Establishing a New Community Gardening

For the Town to consider the establishment of a new community gardening an interested group must:

(a) work with the Town to identify a potential site

(b) address the site criteria given in the policy and

(c) follow the procedure given below for starting a new garden.

Community gardening's are built on shared vision and collaboration. While one or two passionate individuals can inspire a project, long-term success depends on collective effort.

Step 1: Build a Committed Working Group

Start by bringing together a group of residents who are genuinely interested in gardening, sustainability, and community building. A well-rounded working group should include people with a mix of skills - organisational, practical, creative, and more.

The size of your group can vary depending on the scale of your proposed garden. Five to twenty people is a good starting point. A larger group brings broader perspectives and energy, while a smaller group may be easier to coordinate early on.

Step 2: Engage the Community

Host a public information session to invite broader community involvement. Spread the word by:

- Reaching out to neighbours and friends.
- Contacting local environment and gardening groups.
- Connecting with local resident and precinct associations.
- Advertising in the Post or other community publications.

At the meeting, avoid presenting a pre-designed concept. Instead, consider inviting a guest speaker from an existing community gardening to share their experience. This helps illustrate what's possible and encourages creative, collaborative thinking.

If possible, engage a neutral facilitator to guide the discussion and ensure everyone's voice is heard. Be sure to collect names and contact information from interested attendees to form the foundation of your contact list.

Step 3: Listen to Concerns

Not everyone will be immediately supportive, and that's okay. Be open to hearing concerns and take the time to address them thoughtfully. Having background knowledge about community gardening benefits, land use, and safety can help you respond constructively.

Avoid pushing forward if there is strong opposition. Instead, take time to understand and work through concerns. In the long run, a community gardening will thrive only with broad local support.

Step 4: Grow Community Spirit

Once you have a core group, focus on building trust and connection through regular social events such as:

- Community BBQs or picnics
- Skill-sharing workshops (e.g. composting, planting, or garden design)
- Collaborative planning sessions

Keep the momentum going with celebrations of milestones — big or small. Encouraging participation, acknowledging contributions, and creating opportunities for shared learning will help your community gardening flourish both as a space and as a social hub.



Types of Community Gardening Groups

Community Food Forest

An open space that has fruit and nut trees annual vegetables and Bush Tucker plants for the local community to enjoy and learn what can be grown in their area.

Community Garden

A shared, fenced space where individuals, community groups, or organisations come together to grow vegetables, herbs, fruits, and ornamental plants. These

gardens are designed to promote social interaction, environmental sustainability, healthy living, and community engagement.

Designing a Community Gardening in the Town of Cambridge

- Creating a successful community gardening begins with thoughtful, inclusive design. A well-designed garden is not only productive but also welcoming, sustainable, and reflective of the people who use it.
- Involve the Community from the Start.
- Design should be a participatory process. Host design workshops and planning sessions with your working group and residents to ensure the garden reflects community needs and aspirations. Involving a permaculture designer or landscape architect early on can help guide the process while keeping it grounded in ecological and practical principles.

Key Design Considerations

Design for Low Waste

- Plan for on-site composting and worm farming.
- Consider collecting organic waste from nearby homes or businesses to close the loop on waste.

Soil Health & Fertility

- Grow your own mulch and compost ingredients onsite.
- Plant legumes that naturally fix nitrogen in the soil.
- Use crop rotation to maintain healthy soil and reduce disease.

Sustainable Materials

- Use recycled, repurposed, and locally sourced materials where possible.
- Minimise soil imports and grow a diverse range of edible and native plants.

Water-Wise Design

- Plan for safe drinking water and handwashing stations.
- Use passive irrigation, mulching, and harvesting rainwater.
- On sloped sites, install swales, terraces, or contour beds to capture water.

Sunlight Access

- Ensure buildings and structures don't block morning or midday sun.
- Plant shade trees on the western side to protect from harsh afternoon sun.

Integrated Pest Management

- Encourage beneficial wildlife by planting for birds, frogs, lizards, and insects.
- Include ponds, bird baths, and habitat plants to attract natural pest controllers.

Wind Protection

- Create windbreaks using native or drought-tolerant shrubs along southern and western boundaries to protect plants and retain moisture.

Biodiversity

- Choose plants that support local fauna and create a habitat corridor within the urban landscape.
- Incorporate rare or heritage food plants for education and preservation.

Design for the Senses

- Make the garden a place people love to visit by including:
 - Scented plants
 - Colourful flowers
 - Public art
 - Sound elements like wind chimes or water features

Learning Spaces

- Include outdoor learning areas, meeting nodes, and demonstration plots for workshops and school visits.

Accessibility

- Build raised garden beds for easier access.
- Design wide, level paths suitable for prams and wheelchairs.
- Ensure all gardeners can work comfortably, regardless of mobility levels.

Sociability

- Create spaces for people to gather—think benches, shaded areas, and picnic tables for informal meetings, shared meals, and relaxation.

Safety

- Design for clear visibility across the site.
- Avoid hidden corners but allow for quiet spots and curved paths that create a sense of discovery without compromising safety.

Cultural Inclusion

- Include plants and traditions that reflect the diverse cultures within the Town of Cambridge.

- Invite local cultural groups to contribute ideas and be part of the planning process.

Keep It Flexible and Evolving

While it's important to have a clear design from the outset, understand that your garden will evolve. New members bring new ideas and energy—embrace that. If needed, seek professional help to create a detailed, inspiring site plan that helps keep the vision alive, especially if leadership changes over time.

Above all, make the design process inclusive, collaborative, and open to input—this ensures the garden becomes a place everyone feels ownership of and pride in.



Community Management of Gardening Groups

Community gardening groups must be self-directed and self-sustaining. Gardens need to be implemented and managed by an incorporated local community group in a way that accounts for the needs of all stakeholders. Community gardeners need to manage the garden so that the health and safety of the neighbouring community is not adversely affected.

Responsibilities of Community Gardeners

Community gardeners must:

- (a) Co-operate and maintain effective relationships with the neighbouring community, the Town, partnering organisations and other gardeners.
- (b) Regularly communicate with the Town and other stakeholders.
- (c) Ensure that decision making is democratic, transparent and inclusive.
- (d) Ensure that water leaving the garden is free from sediment, fertiliser, manure or excessive organic matter that could pollute waterways.
- (e) Ensure that noise levels within the garden do not disturb the neighbouring community.
- (f) Maintain worm farms, compost and fertilizers so that they do not attract vermin or produce unpleasant odours
- (g) Maintain rainwater harvesting systems to ensure water is of a high quality suitable for the garden and doesn't encourage the breeding of mosquitoes; and

- (h) Keep garden beds and the surrounding areas tidy. Materials delivered to or stored at the garden must be kept in a way that doesn't create an unpleasant environment for the surrounding community.
- (i) Ensure the community gardening group is self-managed, self-directed, self-sustaining.
- (j) Ensure the community gardening groups are incorporated.
- (k) Maintain a current and up-to-date public liability insurance policy of \$10,000,000 minimum.
- (l) Provide a copy of the Management Plan to the Town.
- (m) Present an early Annual Plan to the Town.

Rights of Community Gardeners

Community gardeners have the right to:

- (a) Develop their own internal policies, organisational procedures and management plan in consultation with the Town and/or landowner.
- (b) Be consulted regarding any decision that may affect the garden and to be advised by the Town of any changes in policy that may impact the project.
- (c) Be treated with respect by other gardeners, the neighbouring community and partnering organisations; and
- (d) Negotiate a secure and reasonable agreement with the Town/landowner.

Community gardeners are advised to develop a management plan that includes an agreement that all community gardening members agree to abide by. The agreement should make clear expectations of gardener behaviour on site, the management of plots and shared garden areas and a conflict resolution process.

Incorporation of Community Gardening Groups

The Town requires community gardening groups to be incorporated. This enables the group greater flexibility in managing funds and the opportunity to open a bank account, obtain public liability insurance and apply for government grants. Incorporation as an association requires groups to establish a management committee with annually elected office bearers and to hold regular meetings. This structure can assist groups to manage their affairs more effectively and increase project success. It is beneficial if the group organises incorporation as soon as possible.

Land for Community Gardening Groups

When assessing a potential community gardening site, the Town will take the following site criteria into consideration:

- (i) Land use - the site must be free from restrictions and must not have any future development potential.

- (ii) Location- sites zoned for community recreation may be appropriate. Priority will be given to sites located in high-density areas or areas close to potential partnering organisations that can support the project.

(iii) Safety- sites must not have any major health or safety issues. They must also have good passive surveillance to reduce the likelihood of vandalism or other anti-social behaviour.

(iv) Accessibility- sites should be accessible to a range of user groups and have good walking, cycling and public transport access. They should also allow disabled access and vehicle access to enable the delivery of mulch and soil.

(v) Solar Access- to be suitable for productive gardening, it would be preferable that sites receive full sunlight for at least 5-6 hours/day.

(vi) Size- sites need to be large enough to accommodate garden beds, composting systems, rainwater harvesting, when possible.

(vii) Utilities- sites need to have access to power and water. Easy access to water and rainwater harvesting potential is important.

(viii) Soil Contamination- Sites may need to be tested for soil contamination particularly where there is a history of contamination at the site. Where levels are high, expert advice will need to be sought regarding the food growing capacity of the site.

The Town reserves the right to exercise discretion when considering potential community garden sites.

Land Tenure

New gardening initiatives established on Council land will be given an initial trial period of one year. At the end of this trial period, a lease agreement will be prepared with Property and Leasing. If the site has been managed according to policy guidelines and is self-sustaining an agreement for a longer period up to 10 years can be negotiated. An agreement will not be entered into or may be revoked if:

- (a) Group inactivity or dissolution
- (b) Failure to maintain safety or insurance; or
- (c) Breach of lease terms

After 10 years a report will be presented to Council who will decide a possible future tenure period.

Access to the Garden

Community gardens need to be secured with fencing and a locked gate to prevent unauthorized access when the garden is not open. In addition:

- (a) Gardening opening times need to be indicated on appropriate signage so gardeners and the public are aware when the garden can be accessed; and
- (b) The garden should allow disabled access and vehicle access for deliveries.

Insurance and Risk Management

It is essential that community gardening groups manage the risks associated with a publicly accessed community site. Groups have a duty of care to the community that accesses the garden and a responsibility to ensure they are adequately insured. To meet this obligation the Town requires groups to obtain a minimum of \$10,000,000 of public liability insurance.

Anticipated Community and Social Benefits

Community Gardening are a unique form of public open space where people can come together to grow food and foster community. They are managed by the community and contribute to the development of a sustainable urban environment. Aside from food production community gardening are a community hub where people can participate

in a range of educational and art activities, community events, celebrations and social enterprise. They foster a sense of community ownership and build a sense of community. The Town recognises the social, economic and environmental benefits of community gardening and its ability to contribute to the health and well-being of the community.

Annual plan

Groups working in the Town of Cambridge must submit an annual report to the Manager of Parks and Natural Environment at the end of each financial year. The report should include the following information:

- Current membership of the group
- Total volunteer hours spent on gardening activities
- Summary of activities and events undertaken during the year
- List of plants planted or planned for planting
- Summary of the group's achievements
- Any external funding received for equipment, materials or events
- Photos of the garden, wicking beds and the overall site
- Any new projects proposed or underway

An annual report template is provided in the Appendices section of this manual.

Information from the report will assist the Town in allocating resources to assist a Community Gardening Group to manage a reserve.

Useful Resources

- Community Gardens WA: www.communitygardenswa.org.au

- Australian City Farms & Community Gardens: www.communitygarden.org.au
- Cultivating Community (Victoria): cultivatingcommunity.org.au
- Books: Introduction to Permaculture (Mollison), Earth User's Guide to Permaculture (Morrow)

More information

<https://www.cambridge.wa.gov.au/About/Corporate-Documents/Council-Policies/015-Community-Gardens-Policy>

Website: <https://www.cambridge.wa.gov.au>

Email: mail@cambridge.wa.gov.au



Appendix

Annual Report Template

1. Group Details

Group Name	<i>Enter the full name of the group</i>
Location / Site Name	<i>e.g. Smith Reserve Community Garden, Cambridge</i>
Reporting Period	<i>e.g. 1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025</i>
Date of Report	<i>DD Month YYYY</i>
Report Prepared By	<i>Name and role</i>

2. Executive Members

List all current office bearers for the reporting period.

Role	Name	Email Address	Phone Number
Chairperson President	<i>Full Name</i>	<i>name@email.com.au</i>	<i>04XX XXX XXX</i>
Secretary	<i>Full Name</i>	<i>name@email.com.au</i>	<i>04XX XXX XXX</i>
Treasurer	<i>Full Name</i>	<i>name@email.com.au</i>	<i>04XX XXX XXX</i>
Committee Member	<i>Full Name</i>	<i>name@email.com.au</i>	<i>04XX XXX XXX</i>
Committee Member	<i>Full Name</i>	<i>name@email.com.au</i>	<i>04XX XXX XXX</i>

3. Current Membership

Provide a summary of the group's membership as at the end of the reporting period.

Total Number of Members	<i>[Enter number]</i>
New Members This Year	<i>[Enter number]</i>
Members Who Left / Lapsed	<i>[Enter number]</i>
Waiting List (if applicable)	<i>[Enter number or 'None']</i>

Additional notes on membership (optional):

[Enter any relevant notes, e.g. changes to membership fees, recruitment drives, demographics]

4. Volunteer Hours

Record the total volunteer hours contributed to gardening activities during the reporting period.

Total Volunteer Hours (Gardening)	<i>[Enter total hours]</i>
Average Hours per Member	<i>[Calculated or estimated]</i>
Number of Working Bees Held	<i>[Enter number]</i>
Other Volunteer Activities	<i>[e.g. admin, events, grant writing]</i>

Notes on volunteer hours tracking method:

[Describe how hours were recorded, e.g. sign-in sheets, digital log, self-reported]

5. Summary of Activities and Events

Describe the key activities, working bees, workshops, and community events held during the year.

5.1 Regular Gardening Activities

[Summarise routine gardening work: watering, weeding, planting, composting, maintenance of wicking beds, etc.]

5.2 Working Bees

Date	Activity / Focus	Volunteers Present	Hours Logged
DD/MM/YYYY	e.g. Wicking bed maintenance	[Number]	[Hours]
DD/MM/YYYY	e.g. Wicking bed maintenance	[Number]	[Hours]
DD/MM/YYYY	e.g. Wicking bed maintenance	[Number]	[Hours]

5.3 Community Events & Special Activities

[List any open days, workshops, school visits, cultural events, or collaboration with other organisations]

- [Event name] — [Date] — [Brief description]
- [Event name] — [Date] — [Brief description]
- [Event name] — [Date] — [Brief description]

6. Plants Planted or Planned for Planting

List the plant species planted or scheduled for planting. Add rows as needed.

6.1 Plants Planted This Year

Plant Name (Common / Scientific)	Type	Quantity	Location in Garden
<i>e.g. Tomato / Solanum lycopersicum</i>	<i>e.g. Vegetable</i>	<i>e.g. 12</i>	<i>e.g. Wicking bed 3</i>
<i>e.g. Tomato / Solanum lycopersicum</i>	<i>e.g. Vegetable</i>	<i>e.g. 12</i>	<i>e.g. Wicking bed 3</i>
<i>e.g. Tomato / Solanum lycopersicum</i>	<i>e.g. Vegetable</i>	<i>e.g. 12</i>	<i>e.g. Wicking bed 3</i>
<i>e.g. Tomato / Solanum lycopersicum</i>	<i>e.g. Vegetable</i>	<i>e.g. 12</i>	<i>e.g. Wicking bed 3</i>

6.2 Plants Planned for Next Year

[List species under consideration or committed to for the coming year]

- [Plant name / type — planned location / reason]
- [Plant name / type — planned location / reason]
- [Plant name / type — planned location / reason]

7. Summary of Achievements

Highlight the group's key accomplishments for the year — quantitative and qualitative.

- [Achievement 1 — e.g. Completed installation of two new wicking beds]
- [Achievement 2 — e.g. Produced X kg of fresh produce shared with members]
- [Achievement 3 — e.g. Delivered environmental education session with X school]
- [Achievement 4]
- [Achievement 5]

Additional context or narrative on achievements:

[Provide a short paragraph describing the significance of these achievements and the group's overall contribution to the community this year]

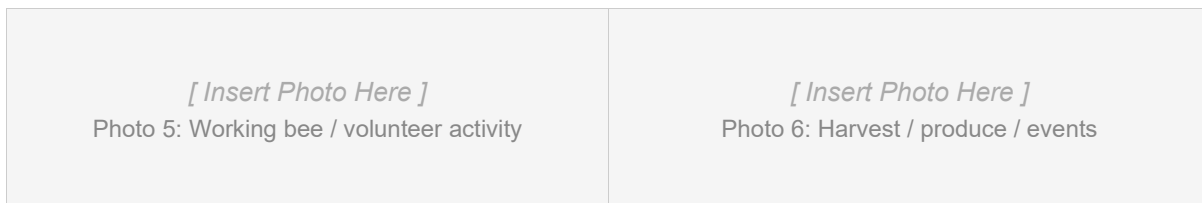
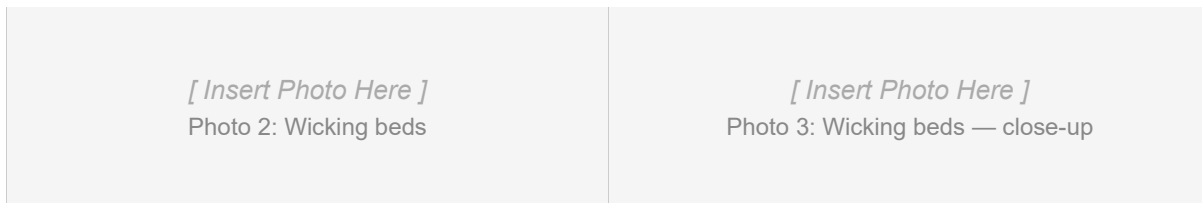
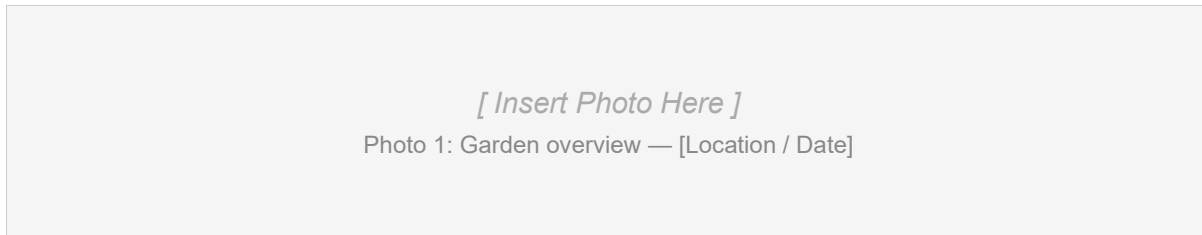
8. External Funding Received

Record any grants, donations, or in-kind support received during the reporting period.

Funding Source / Organisation	Type of Support	Value (\$)	Purpose / Items Funded
<i>e.g. Keep Australia Beautiful</i>	<i>e.g. Cash Grant</i>	<i>e.g. \$2,000</i>	<i>e.g. Composting equipment</i>
<i>e.g. Keep Australia Beautiful</i>	<i>e.g. Cash Grant</i>	<i>e.g. \$2,000</i>	<i>e.g. Composting equipment</i>
<i>e.g. Keep Australia Beautiful</i>	<i>e.g. Cash Grant</i>	<i>e.g. \$2,000</i>	<i>e.g. Composting equipment</i>
TOTAL		[\$0,000]	

9. Photos of the Garden and Site

Insert photos below. Right-click an image placeholder → Change Picture or delete the placeholder and insert your own image via Insert > Pictures.



Add additional photos on the next page as required.

10. New Projects Proposed or Underway

Describe any projects that are in planning, in progress, or proposed for the coming year.

Project Description	Name /	Status	Est. Completion	Resources / Funding Required
<i>e.g. Install rainwater tank</i>		<i>e.g. Proposed</i>	<i>e.g. Q2 2026</i>	<i>e.g. \$1,500 — seeking grant</i>
<i>e.g. Install rainwater tank</i>		<i>e.g. Proposed</i>	<i>e.g. Q2 2026</i>	<i>e.g. \$1,500 — seeking grant</i>
<i>e.g. Install rainwater tank</i>		<i>e.g. Proposed</i>	<i>e.g. Q2 2026</i>	<i>e.g. \$1,500 — seeking grant</i>

Project Details

[Provide a paragraph for each significant project, including its purpose, anticipated benefits, timeline, and any community or funding partnerships]

Declaration and Sign-Off

This Annual Report has been reviewed and approved by the executive committee of the group.

Signed (Chairperson)	_____
Printed Name	<i>[Full Name]</i>
Date	<i>DD / MM / YYYY</i>
Signed (Secretary)	_____
Printed Name	<i>[Full Name]</i>
Date	<i>DD / MM / YYYY</i>

End of Annual Report