



Sustaining growth. Strengthening communities.



A guide to community gardens

2014

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This guide to community gardens within the City of Ballarat aims to guide and assist you and your community group to establish and manage a safe, successful and sustainable community garden.



Introduction

Community gardens are opportunities for people to:

- Grow and therefore access healthy food, thus increasing food security
- Build capacity by increasing knowledge and skills in gardening, cooperation and decision making
- Make new friends and hence reduce social isolation
- Improve physical and mental health through outdoor exercise and connection to nature
- Create stronger communities by promoting community discussion, decision making skills and social interaction
- Increase safety
 - » Social capital reduces crime. Social capital involves people in a group or community showing care, reciprocity and trust
 - » Community gardens should support the following Safer by Design, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles:
 - Use of space for a range of functions by a variety of groups
 - Encourages residents and other users to take responsibility for places/spaces by promoting a sense of ownership
- Restore and maintain natural assets
- Reduce fossil fuel use to grow and transport food
- Demonstrate efficient use of water
- Reduce organic waste through composting
- Demonstrate environmentally friendly ways to manage pest plants and animals

Community gardens on Council managed land come in a number of different forms, some of these are:

- Community gardens with a mixture of allotments for members and shared areas
- Shared community garden areas
- Small orchards

Existing gardens

There are many community gardens in Ballarat and surrounding areas which include:

- Ballarat Community Garden
- Friends of Royal Park, Buninyong Community Garden
- Friends of Learmonth Community Garden
- Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Gardens at Wendouree Primary School and Yuille Park P–8 Community College
- Various primary school gardens
- Daylesford Community Food Garden
- Daylesford Neighbourhood House Community Garden
- Newstead Community Garden
- Kohinoor SAILS Garden (City of Ballarat)

Before starting a new community garden,
consider joining an existing group.



Choosing a new community garden site

If you are unsure of who owns the land for your proposed garden, please contact Council. Council may be able to assist with negotiating a land use agreement.

If the proposed site is Council managed land, then a 'Community Garden on Council Managed Land' application can be made. Some of the things that you will need to consider for a site are:

Location

Sites owned or managed by the City of Ballarat may be appropriate. These sites are usually established for community use such as park lands, open spaces and community centres that have outside areas. Priority will be given to sites located in high density areas and near community centres or community organisations that might be able to support or partner the project.

As over 70% of public land within the City is not managed by Council other parties may need to be involved.

Safety

Sites should have no major safety or health concerns; and have good passive surveillance. For example, can be easily seen from nearby houses or shopping areas.

Accessibility

Sites should be accessible for a range of user groups. Sites should be located close to public transport, allow disabled access, have vehicle access (e.g. for delivery of mulch and soil) and accommodate groups wanting to visit the garden.

Solar access

Sites need to be suitable for growing vegetables and receive full sunlight - ideally for at least 5 -6 hours per day.

Size

Sites which are large enough to accommodate garden beds, composting systems, rainwater tanks, seating areas, shelter for gardeners and for community workshops and demonstrations.

Water

Sites should have easy access to water or buildings nearby from which rainwater can be collected. Installation of mains supply water and paying any associated costs will need to be considered.

Soil Contamination

Sites may need to be checked for soil contamination. If high levels are present then advice will need to be sought from experts on whether it is suitable for growing food.

Multiple-use

Sites where a community garden can be integrated without conflicting adversely with other land uses and where the community garden can still be used by non-gardeners for passive recreation and educational workshops.

Fencing

The impact of and need for fencing requires consideration and discussion. Council needs to assess the impact and cost of fencing against the need to maintain public access to open space. This will be done on a case by case basis.

Land use planning

The site should not compromise any of Council's key strategic documents relating to the public open space (e.g. Ballarat Planning Scheme, Ballarat Open Space Strategy, master plans or open space standards).

Note: It may not always be possible to find a site that meets all of the above criteria. The City of Ballarat will prioritise the sites that can meet as many of the requirements as possible.

Using Council managed land for a community garden

Council is a key land use planner and provider of recreation and open space facilities/spaces in Ballarat.

Council undertakes a number of occupancy agreements for public open space and community facilities. Each site will be assessed individually and a formal tenancy agreement containing operating terms will need to be agreed to.

A range of governance models could be used to ensure that participation is open across Ballarat's diverse communities. These would range from

leasing to an incorporated community management group (or an auspice organisation) through to a tenancy agreement for community groups occupying Council-owned facilities. Governance models would reflect the capacity of community members to self-organise, and the size of the group of gardeners.

Community management by an incorporated body is the most appropriate model of governance when the group is well-skilled and the group is large (50+). A steering committee with some input from Council staff may be more appropriate where there is relatively limited experience of formal management processes. A community agency may auspice the community group for smaller sites, or when the agency has a target-group specific focus.

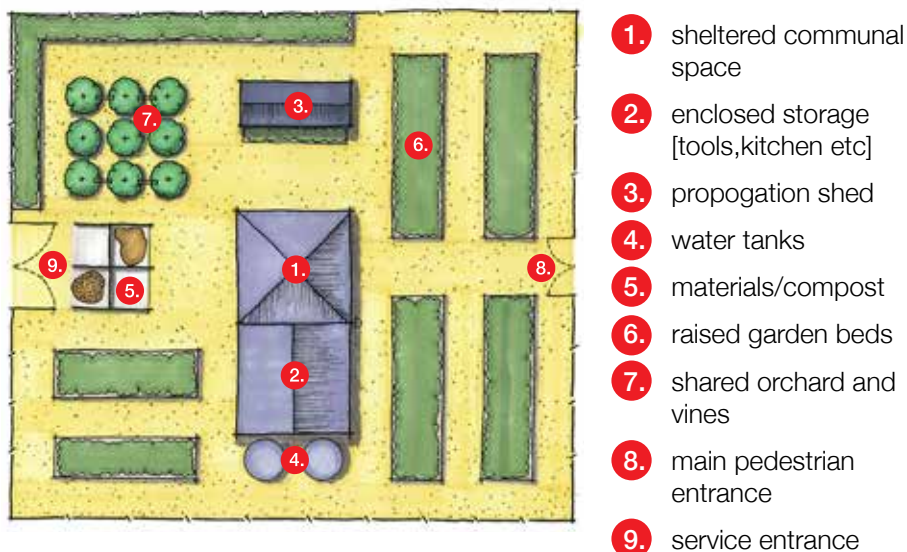
The agreement between Council and the community group/organisation will specify responsibilities during the lease. The agreement will also state the responsibilities for the return of the site to ordinary public open space in the event of discontinuation of the community group/organisation.





What to consider when designing a community garden

The example of a community garden design, below, provides a simple generic layout for a community garden. It includes practical and functional design features that need to be considered when designing a garden, no matter what the size or site conditions. If these features are appropriately considered within the original design layout the garden can be organic in its development, and more easily adaptable to change over time.



Other design and construction considerations not illustrated above include:

- Locating the main pedestrian entry to a road frontage for passive surveillance.
- Providing wide paths (min 1500mm) for wheelchair and pram access.
- Raising garden beds to 400-700mm above ground level for convenient wheelchair gardening and informal seating.
- Making building materials safe by removing nails from recycled timbers, filling or covering sharp edges or ends of corrugated iron, placing caps over exposed star picket ends, etc.
- Using durable fixtures such as galvanised screws and bolts, not nails.
- Adding artistic features and signage to add vitality and provide information.

What to consider when managing a community garden

Once you have chosen a site, it is a good idea to develop a management plan. A management plan can assist your community group to manage the garden and should include:

- A contact person
- Expected behaviours of members and garden users.
- A decision making process that is democratic, transparent and inclusive
- A dispute and conflict resolution process
- Maintenance requirements and who is responsible
- Expected number of gardeners and arrangements for allocation of individual garden beds
- Clarification of ownership of produce grown on the site
- A security plan
- Safe storage of equipment and supplies
- Proposed educational activities
- Safety induction
- Water supply and storage
- Impact on the current function of the site, including other users, flora and fauna
- Fenced off areas

Risk and insurance

Community groups need to consider a risk management plan, public liability, contents and/or building insurance.

Community groups are required to develop a risk management plan. The risk management plan should at a minimum consider health and safety, financial, environmental and reputation risks. Council is able to provide some advice in relation to the development of a risk management plan.

Public liability insurance covers injuries caused by negligence only and is an essential requirement. A number of options exist and are dependent on the governance model of the community group and whether a lease, license or tenancy agreement is entered into for the use of the land/facilities. In the case of a not-for-profit, incorporated body, Council's insurer can offer reduced premiums to eligible organisations. To obtain further information and an online quote refer to www.localcommunityinsurance.com.au

Council-owned buildings are covered by Council's building insurance policy. Contents insurance is also recommended to cover tools and other equipment and is the responsibility of the community group.



Key ingredients for a successful community garden

The following points have been shown to be very important elements in a successful community garden:



Management

✓	A garden management plan
✓	Simple rules that are clear but allow for individual expression
✓	Democratic and inclusive management and decision making
✓	Gardener participation in decision making
✓	Good communication within and outside of the garden
✓	Effective processes for resolving conflict
✓	Secure site tenure



Members and garden users

✓	A focus on the social aspects of the garden
✓	A meeting place with some facilities and refreshments
✓	Mix of ages, cultures and skill levels



Garden site

✓	Good design that enables wheelchair and pram access
✓	Clear signage and seating
✓	A plan for regular maintenance that keeps the site neat
✓	A mix of communal and individual garden areas

Existing community gardens

Ballarat Community Garden Inc

Address Cnr Queen and Dyte Parade, Ballarat East

Phone 0417 347 395

Email info@ballarat.org.au

Website www.ballaratcommunitygarden.org.au

Other details: The Ballarat Community Garden enjoys a shared community space, where people grow healthy produce. It is a thriving, social group of enthusiastic gardeners.

Ballarat North Neighbourhood Centre Community Garden

Address 6 Crompton Street, Soldiers Hill

Phone 5329 1101

Email Alison.Demuth@salvationarmy.org

Website www.salvationarmy.org.au/karinya

Other details: The Karinya Neighbourhood Garden is a shared garden where various produce is grown. Join a program to learn and share knowledge about gardening. The garden is open during business hours Tuesday - Friday 9.00am till 4.00pm

Buninyong Community Garden

Address Buninyong Sustainability at Royal Park
1101 Warrenheip Street, Buninyong

Email forp.buninyong@gmail.com

Website forp.org.au

Other details: Come and be a part of sustainability action: an urban orchard, garden plots, a monthly produce swap (on the 2nd Sunday). All welcome.

Learmonth Community Garden

Address 212-218 High St (Cnr Bankin St) Learmonth

Phone 5343 2554

Other details: The garden comprises an orchard and exotic trees in what is hoped will become a botanical park space for all to enjoy.

Further information

Community groups interested in developing a community garden on Council managed land will be required to submit a 'Community Garden on Council Managed Land' application form. Contact Customer Service on 5320 5500 or visit www.ballarat.vic.gov.au

References

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