



COMMUNITY GARDENS POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Community gardening provides a valuable recreational activity that contributes to community development, environmental awareness, positive social interaction and community education. This Community Garden Policy will enable the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission and City staff to collaborate with interested groups to develop community gardens. The Official Community Plan promotes food security and neighbourhood connections and community gardens foster these goals.

DEFINITION

A community garden is defined as a community development program operated by a non-profit society or community organization. A community garden has the following features:

- Improves the quality of life for people living adjacent to the garden.
- Provides a catalyst for neighbourhood and community development.
- Stimulates social interaction.
- Encourages self-reliance.
- Beautifies neighbourhoods.
- Produces nutritious food.
- Reduces family budgets.
- Creates opportunities for recreation-promoting exercise and therapy.
- Fosters educational opportunities.
- Preserves green space.
- Provides opportunities for intergenerational and cross-cultural connections.

1.0 SUPPORT

The Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission will support the development of community gardens in Nanaimo through the following means:

- 1.1 Providing access to information on the development and operation of community gardens.
- 1.2 Assisting interested groups in searching for suitable land for the development of community gardens. This inventory must include City-owned land, land controlled by other government agencies, and privately-owned land.

- 1.3. Assisting in the development of user agreements with the owners of sites chosen.
- 1.4. Assisting with the development of a community-led environmental education program.

2.0 CONDITIONS

If it is determined that park land is the most suitable site for community gardens, the following conditions will apply:

- 2.1 The garden is developed at no cost to the City, except that prior to the first season, the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission will, through the Volunteers in Parks (VIP) Program, allocate funds to the Garden Society for start-up costs.
- 2.2 A community consultation process indicates neighbourhood support for the garden.
- 2.3 A garden site plan must be drawn up and approved by the City. The plan must include the layouts of the plots and include any proposed structures or fences.
- 2.4 A non-profit society agrees to develop and operate the gardens according to a user's agreement which will specify the term of use management responsibilities, user fees and access procedures including the following specific terms:
 - 2.4.1 The standard term of the user agreement will be five (5) years. The Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission may consider the granting of multiple terms in exceptional circumstances. The issuance of such longer terms is warranted in circumstances where the Society can demonstrate that the standard five-year term would significantly restrict the Society's ability to:
 - i. Comply with Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission policies and direction;
 - ii. Conduct community outreach programming beyond the Societies members;
 - iii. Implement a long-term plan;
 - iv. Execute significant, approved, site improvements;
 - v. Such other circumstances that the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission deems relevant;
 - vi. For terms longer than five (5) years, a review and formal reporting to the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission will be required at each five (5) year period and the Agreement will incorporate a strengthened termination clause to allow both the Society and the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission the option to terminate the agreement with adequate notice. Failure to

maintain the Community Garden and follow the rules set out in the policy could result in termination of the Agreement with three (3) months written notice.

2.5 For those gardens with allotment beds:

- 2.5.1 Allotments of space will be done by random selection from a waiting list of interested parties. While community gardens are a neighbourhood initiative, membership in the Society and the opportunity to be allotted a plot, must be open to any resident of Nanaimo. Organic gardening methods and integrated pest management principles are to be followed. Allotment fees charged by the Society must be reported to the City. The Society must adhere to maintenance standards set by the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission. No barriers to general public access to the site can be erected. Garden practices shall comply with all Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission and City Policies and Bylaws.

Although located on City-owned land, with the prior approval of the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission, Community Gardens are operated by volunteers from the community.

3.0 PLOTS

The plots within the garden can take any of the following approaches:

- 3.1 Communal – all plots are community beds. That is they are open to any members of the community to gather and garden to grow what is agreed to collectively by the members. Maintenance of the beds is the responsibility of all members. The produce is there for the community.
- 3.2 Allotment – all plots are allotted to individuals who can grow whatever they choose within guidelines provided by the Society.
- 3.3 Combination – the garden is a combination of community and allotment beds.

4.0 WAITLIST POLICY & PROCEDURES

- 4.1 If allotment beds comprise part, or all of the community garden, the following procedures will be followed:
- 4.1.1 A list of people interested in allotment beds will be compiled by the Licensee.
- 4.1.2 If demand exceeds supply, there would be a random draw of names from the list of interested people.

- 4.1.3 Those who were not selected would go on a waitlist which would be reviewed annually for available plots.
- 4.1.4 If a plot came available, there would be a draw of those people on the waitlist.
- 4.1.5 City staff would be available to oversee the process.

5.0 MISCELLANEOUS

5.1 Benefits of Allotment Beds

- Individuals more willing to contribute to their plot and while simultaneously contributing to the community garden at large.
- Increase the use of parkland for recreational enjoyment.
- Opportunity for individuals to grow their own food.
- Those interested in an allotment bed would be placed on a list and selected through a draw.
- The term and fee for the allotment would be determined by the Community Garden Society in conjunction with Parks staff.
- The opportunity for an allotment bed would be open to the entire neighbourhood community.

5.2 Common Courtesy Rules of The Community Garden:

- Garden organically;
- Maintain paths adjacent to your plot;
- Allow your neighbours their fair share of sun;
- Water responsibly;
- Secure the tool boxes and shed and help maintain tools;
- Produce may not be sold, but sharing produce is encouraged;
- If you go out of town, have someone maintain your garden;
- Don't smoke in the garden;
- If you bring a radio to the garden; keep the volume low;
- Take home your garden waste;
- Keep your dog on a leash, within the boundary of your plot;
- Resolve differences in a neighbourly way;
- Closely supervise your children;
- You must provide at least eight (8) hours of communal time;
- Don't neglect your plot.