


STRATHFIELD COUNCIL

COMMUNITY GARDEN POLICY

6 SEPTEMBER 2022

	COMMUNITY GARDENS POLICY		
RESPONSIBILITY	Manager Operations		
DATE ADOPTED	6 September 2022	MINUTE	195/22
REVISED	n/a	REVIEW	2024
CM10 No	22/57074		
ASSOCIATED POLICIES	Strathfield Council Plans of Management (various)		
ASSOCIATED LEGISLATION	<i>Local Government Act 1993</i> <i>Crown Land Management Act 2016</i>		

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Title and Commencement

This policy is titled *Community Gardens Policy*. This policy was adopted by Council resolution (195/22) after public exhibition from 4 August 2022 to 1 September 2022.

1.2 Background and Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to set out a framework for the establishment and operation of community gardens situated on public open space in the Strathfield Local Government Area (LGA).

Community gardens promote community participation in the growing of food using sustainable gardening practices. They provide a wide range of environmental, social, leadership and economic benefits, which align with the Strathfield Community Strategic Plan and commitment to Community Wellbeing, Active and Healthy Lifestyles and Liveable Neighbourhoods.

1.3 Objectives of the policy

The objectives of this policy is to:

- set out criteria for establishing community gardens in the Strathfield LGA on public land
- set out principles for site selection and design of community gardens
- set out roles and responsibilities of Council and Community Garden members
- encourage community participation and address barriers to community involvement

1.4 Coverage of the Policy

The policy applies to the operation of community gardens on public land owned and/or managed by Strathfield Council.

1.5 Definitions

- Community gardens - gardens situated on public land which promote participation by local communities in the production of food for non-commercial purpose and provide demonstration sites for education of sustainable practices for food production, gardening and resource and waste efficiency.
- No-Dig Garden – a method of gardening which locates a garden above ground.

2.0 Policy

2.1 Background

With the increase in local population of residents living in units, access to private land for gardening and growing fruit and vegetables is declining. Community gardens enable local communities, to acquire knowledge and skills of sustainable food production and support healthy and active social and leisure activities. Community gardens offer a range of environmental, social, leadership and economic benefits including:

- facilitation of community education and awareness of sustainable food production practices including responsible management of energy, water and waste
- opportunities for community participation, skill sharing and building of social capital by forming effective partnerships with community members and organisations
- promotion of recreation and healthy living in public open spaces
- opportunities for production of low cost food in the local area

2.2 Site selection

The following considerations apply to selecting sites for establishing community garden(s).

- use of land is permissible under the relevant Plan of Management, *Local Government Act 1993 and Crown Land Management Act 2016*
- the location and proposed use of the land for a community garden is feasible and complementary to existing uses and categorisations of the land. Proposals to establish new community gardens involve community consultation.
- the site has good solar exposure to support food plant growth. About 5-6 hours of direct sunlight per day are required.
- the site has good soil quality and/or drainage. Alternatives such as 'no-dig' gardens may be considered, particularly where soil quality is poor or prior history of contamination.
- the site has access to rain water and/or run-off collection from nearby buildings
- the site is accessible to public transport and accessible pedestrian pathways

- the site is in close proximity to medium-to-high density living or ancillary to community facilities eg community centres

2.3 Site Design

In designing community gardens, the following principles will be considered:

- maximisation of sunlight exposure by solar orientation, including avoidance of tree planting on northern and eastern boundaries
- passive solar design aims for maximum sunlight (consider when planting garden boundaries, placement of fruit and nut trees)
- design will encourage creative uses and aesthetically attractive designs eg espalier, green walls, herb spirals
- inclusion of appropriate community arts eg murals on tanks and sheds, sculpture and creative signage
- design will consider the size and types of allocation of spaces eg allotments and shared gardening spaces, communal access plots and individual access plots including allotments of varying sizes – family size, individual size, and smaller allotments beside wall (as those allottees will also grow vertical gardens)
- plants with sticky leaves to catch particulate pollution from nearby roads and railway
- consideration of efficient water management eg where possible, source water from rain water from roofs of nearby properties and manage runoff into site and out of site
- use of recycled materials in the community garden where possible. When purchasing new materials, council and gardeners will consider the entire life cycle of the item from the sourcing of raw materials to disposal options
- inclusion of access for all abilities and elderly such as ramps, wide pathways and raised garden beds (where possible)
- ensure design of the garden includes access to drinking water, storage areas for tools and supplies, shaded areas and seating

2.4 Site Guidelines

Each community garden site will develop site specific operational guidelines, in accordance with principles set out in Council's *Community Garden Policy*.

2.5 Community Garden activities

The following activities should be promoted:

- programs and activities that promote social and recreational, environmental, economic and leadership benefits to the community
- gardening primarily for food production, incorporating sustainable gardening practices
- participation in community garden programs and activities is open to all members of the local community
- that the community garden can be used as a demonstration site for community education and workshops. Examples include but not limited to composting and worm farming, no-

dig gardens, salad gardens for small spaces, and how to use teepees for growing beans and climbers

2.6 Sustainable gardening practices

Council supports sustainable gardening practices in community gardens. The following principles will apply:

- gardens will primarily support growing of food plants ie vegetables, fruit and herbs
- plant selection will encourage species and genetic diversity of food plants and low water-use plants
- where suitable, 'no dig' gardens will be encouraged to avoid issues associated with soil contamination and compaction
- on-site composting will be used to supplement plant nutritional needs
- gardens will be organic wherever possible but chemicals may be used where no viable natural alternative is available
- integrated pest management principles will be employed
- weeds will be managed by mechanical rather than chemical methods
- garden beds will be regularly mulched to discourage weed growth and retain moisture
- noxious and environmental weeds and poisonous plants will not be allowed in the garden
- encourage efficient irrigation practices, including time of day and use of watering cans (a 'well' instead of irrigation infrastructure)
- minimise and conserve water use for pot washing and tool cleaning to be collected and used where possible.
- minimise waste production and where possible, compost waste on-site

2.7 Council's role and responsibilities

Strathfield Council is committed to:

- providing access to public land in the Strathfield LGA consistent with relevant Plans of Management and site selection and design principles (clauses 2.2. and 2.3)
- encouraging access to members of the Strathfield community to participate in community garden programs and address barriers to participation such as disability, language etc
- providing information and advice on the community garden program through Council's website, social media and publications
- developing guidelines for specific site operation of community gardens
- develop site plans for community gardens including community consultation
- applying for building permissions if required
- manage sponsorship arrangements (where relevant)
- providing ongoing advice and communication with community participants
- facilitating education and awareness programs
- managing complaints and disputes that may arise

2.8 Member responsibilities

- To participate as a member of a Strathfield Community Garden, individuals and organisations are required to apply for membership
- A yearly membership fee applies for participation in community garden programs and activities. Fees and charges (if applicable) are set out in Council's *Annual Fees and Charges Schedule*. A 50% reduction of annual membership fees will apply to students and pension card holders (evidence of status may be requested)
- A bond may be required to obtain keys to the site (where applicable). The bond will be refunded when keys are returned
- Council reserves the right to withdraw approval to individuals or organisations to participate in Community Garden programs and activities if terms of agreed use are breached. Use of public land for community gardens does not assign or imply rights to individuals or organisations other than the terms set out in agreements including site specific operational guidelines

3.0 Version Control

Date	Type	Minute
2 August 2022	Resolution for public exhibition of draft policy	160/22
6 September 2022	Resolution to adopt draft policy	195/22