

CITY OF DAREBIN

274 Gower Street, Preston PO Box 91, Preston, Vic 3072 T 8470 8888 F 8470 8877 E mailbox@darebin.vic.gov.au



National Relay Service

TTY dial 133 677 or Speak & Listen 1300 555 727 or iprelay.com.au then enter 03 8470 8888



Speak your language

T 8470 8470

العربية Italiano 繁體中文 Македонски Еλληνικά Soomalii हिंदी Tiếng Việt

WHO TO CONTACT

The City of Darebin is happy to help with any communal food garden enquiries.

Contact Sustainable Food Officer

Phone 8470 8392

Email environment@darebin.vic.gov.au

Post PO Box 91 Preston, 3072

Important Links

Communal Food Garden Site Assessment Checklist Community Garden Licence Agreement Template





Introduction

Darebin Council supports communal food growing to help improve food security, promote healthy eating and facilitate community connections. Communal food growing sites can be a focal point for diverse members of the community to come together and share their food growing and preparation knowledge and skills. They can also encourage broader awareness of environmental sustainability by including water and food waste recycling initiatives, promoting food sharing and hosting events and workshops on sustainable living.

Community gardens are the most common type of communal food growing in Darebin. Community Gardens involve the collective gardening of a single piece of land by a community group on a not for profit basis, producing food primarily for the consumption of the gardeners. They can be located on private or publically owned land. They vary in size, access and governance / operating models.

Other types of communal food growing in Darebin include the All Nations Kitchen Garden, the orchard and bush foods garden at Bundoora Park, fruit trees in selected pocket parks and naturestrip or verge gardens. There are separate guidelines for the planting of naturestrips available on the Council website at: www.darebin.vic.gov.au/naturestrips.

Council provides a range of general services to all established community gardens as outlined in the Urban Food Production Strategy. These guidelines have been developed to explain the consultation and assessment process for new communal food garden proposals, and set out the community and Council roles and responsibilities.

Establishing and maintaining a community garden requires substantial community involvement and commitment. Community groups should not underestimate the importance of gaining broad support for the garden from the local community before commencing the project. Ensuring there are enough committed community members who can support the garden through both the establishment and ongoing maintenance phases is essential.

For the best chance of success, Council recommends community groups thoroughly research what is involved before initiating the Communal Food Garden Assessment process. Detailed guides on setting up community gardens are located at www.darebinfoodharvestnetwork.org.au under Resources – Community Gardens.

Purpose

The Communal Food Garden (Community Garden) Assessment Guidelines set out the key considerations for assessing the suitability of a particular site for growing food on a communal basis, as well as the steps involved in assessing and approving a new communal food garden proposal. The guidelines focus on the process for assessing sites on Council owned or managed land. They can also be used to help guide site choices and the process to establish food gardens on land owned by other public entities such as VicTrack or Melbourne Water, as well as on private land.

Communal Food Garden Site Selection Criteria

THE SITE SELECTION CRITERIA PROVIDED ARE DESIGNED TO IDENTIFY SITES WHICH HAVE THE MOST POTENTIAL FOR SUCCESS, BOTH IN TERMS OF BEING PRODUCTIVE FOOD GROWING SPACES AS WELL AS MAXIMISING ACCESS TO A BROAD RANGE OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS.

1. LOCATION

Sites which may be suitable include land which has been designated for communal use such as parks and open space. Examples are underutilised land adjacent to a sportsground or play space, or land associated with a community centre or council building.

Natural conservation areas, such as creek banks and native grasslands, sports ovals and play spaces would not be appropriate due to the conflicting use and access issues that would likely arise.

Land within kindergartens and child care centres may be appropriate for food gardens for the community using that centre, but are not considered appropriate for general community gardens.

Priority will be given to sites close to a relatively high density residential base and a community centre or other community organisation which could support or partner the project, particularly if the centre / organisation has the capacity to engage those from low socioeconomic or disadvantaged backgrounds.

2. MULTI-USE

Priority will also be given to sites which can be developed without having an adverse impact on other existing land uses and where the site can still be used by non-gardeners for passive recreation, events and educational workshops.

Consideration should be given to whether the site supports a design which encourages community interaction as part of the gardens operation.

3. ACCESSIBILITY

Sites should be highly accessible to a range of user groups including people with disabilities. Ideally they will be located close to public transport and have vehicle access (to deliver infrastructure, soil etc).

4. SECURITY

The site should have good passive surveillance i.e. be in a high profile, preferably well-lit location that can be easily observed from nearby houses, shopping areas or businesses.

Amenity, noise, pollutants and weed infestations from adjoining sites should also be considered.

5. SOIL CONTAMINATION

It is essential to investigate soil contamination issues prior to starting any planting in the interests of public health. For example if the site was previously an industrial site or waste dump then soil is likely to be contaminated. Contamination is not necessarily obvious by simply looking at the site. It is safest to assume most sites will have some level of contamination.

Council can help identify the previous use of the site to determine the likely degrees of soil contamination. Soil testing and remediation can be prohibitively expensive. To reduce contamination risk, food on Council land is generally grown in raised garden beds filled with clean soil from a trusted source. Council can help gardening groups seek advice on soil contamination on a site-by-site basis.

6. SOLAR ACCESS

Sites should not be overshadowed by tall buildings or dense tree canopy, to enable food plants receive more than 6 hours sunlight per day.

7. WATER ACCESS

Gardens need ready access to water or to buildings in close proximity from which rainwater can be harvested.

8. SIZE

Land of all sizes may be suitable for communal food growing. There is no limitation to the garden size as long as all the above issues have been considered and the proposed garden type / design is appropriate to the space.

Procedure for Assessing Communal Food Garden Sites

STEP 1

Applicant identifies a Darebin site which could be suitable for growing food.

↓ STEP 2

Establish land ownership. Applicant contacts the **Sustainable Food Officer** at Council to find out if the site is owned by Council or other government authority. If the site is privately owned, applicant conducts a title search to establish ownership.

STEP 3

City of Darebin owned / managed sites Sustainable Food Officer liaises with relevant council departments to undertake a site suitability assessment, (referring to the Property Asset Management Strategy). Identify any existing land use and service commitments, potential risks and potential Planning Permit requirements.

Site not suitable.

Written feedback will be provided. An alternative site (s) may be proposed.

Site potentially suitable.

STEP 3

Private Sites Applicant approaches the landowner directly regarding their proposal. If both parties agree to proceed, the Landowner liaises with Darebin **Statutory Planning** staff to determine **Planning Permit** requirements.

STEP 3

Other Public Sites Applicant approaches VicTrack / Melbourne Water or other State Government landowners directly OR contacts Council's Parks and Vegetation department for assistance with providing the relevant contacts, letters of support, facilitation of meetings with the landowner, potential Planning Permit requirements.

STEP 4

Applicant undertakes their own site assessment using the Communal Food Garden Site Assessment Checklist and submits to the **Sustainable Food Officer** who liaises with applicant and relevant Council departments to identify / resolve potential issues.

STEP 5

Applicant undertakes the **initial community consultation** with local residents and other stakeholders to understand the level of support for the project. Interested participants outline a **garden plan**, including proposed scale, design and funding model. Community consultation results and garden plan is submitted with the application.

STEP 6

 \downarrow

Assessment of Community Garden Application

The application is assessed by a review panel with representatives from Environment and Natural Resources, Community Health and Wellbeing, Strategic Planning, Leisure and Public realm, Parks and Vegetation, and Assets and Properties (as applicable).

Application supported.

Application is not supported.

Written feedback will be provided. An alternative site(s) may be proposed.

STEP 7

Sustainable Food Officer undertakes full **Community Consultation.** If there is considerable opposition to the proposal, Council may propose alternative site(s).

STEP 8

Application goes to Council meeting for

consideration. If approved, Council will meet with the community group to develop the broad terms of the agreement with Council (MoU, Auspiced through a community centre, Licence agreement).

STEP 9

Apply for funding if required, either through the Community Grants program, Council's budgeting process (contingent upon budget constraints and demand) or other relevant funding / grants program.

STEP 10

Design and Build the Community Garden.

The level of Council involvement and support will be determined on a project by project basis.