

# Guidelines for the Establishment of Community Gardens on Council Owned and/ or Managed Lands in the Blue Mountains

April 2010



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This Guideline is designed to provide information to the Blue Mountains community to assist with the establishment of community gardens on Council owned and/ or managed lands across the city.

This document is responding to the following Council resolution:

'Prepare a set of guidelines by April 2010 to assist community groups considering the establishment of community gardens in the City of Blue Mountains'

(Minute No. 197, 26/05/09)

#### Community Gardens - Definition

Community gardens are gardens created and maintained on public or private land by people who come together to learn about, participate in and share the rewards of gardening activities.

#### Relevance to 25 Year City Vision and Map for Action

The establishment of community gardens achieves the following key directions and outcomes of the Blue Mountains Community Endorsed City Vision - Towards a More Sustainable Blue Mountains, which states that:

- Blue Mountains people live sustainably in harmony with the environment;
- The health and well being of Blue Mountains people are improved;
- A strong sense of local identity and place is created;
- The liveability and vibrancy of our towns and villages are strengthened;
- The ability of people to connect with each other and access services is improved;
- A culture of life long learning is nurtured in the Blue Mountains.

## Blue Mountains City Council's in principle support for community gardens

Blue Mountains City Council supports the development of community gardens throughout the city. The Council recognises the importance of community gardening in:

- Providing access to local food thus reducing food miles and assisting in addressing food security issues;
- Improving the health of the community by providing access to fresh food, and outdoor exercise;
- Fostering a sense of community;
- Providing increased opportunity for social connectedness and intergenerational exchange;
- Acting as a model for best practice with regard to sustainable gardening; and
- Providing skills development and learning opportunities

## Blue Mountains City Council's role in developing community gardens

The Council's role in developing community gardens is as an 'enabler' of the development of gardens. The Council does not take a lead in establishing gardens or providing funding.

#### **Blue Mountains City Council's Community Gardens Policy**

The Council's key policies regarding its' role in the establishment of community gardens on Council owned and/ or managed lands are to:

- Enable the establishment of community gardens on appropriate lands;
- Ensure that prospective gardeners complete an application form as specified in "Blue Mountains City Council Guidelines for the Development of Community Gardens on Council owned and/ or managed lands";
- Assess each proposal to establish a community garden on a case-by-case basis:
- Ensure that Council managed land is used and maintained appropriately and to the benefit of the community;
- Provide land use information including assistance to community groups in locating sites appropriate for community gardens;
- Ensure that appropriate weed, sediment and erosion control measures are in place;
- Ensure assets are maintained by the community group;
- o Ensure appropriate insurances and health and safety legislation are met;
- Negotiate and grant licences for land to be utilised by community groups as community gardens when appropriate criteria are met;
- Promote community gardens via means available to Council.

See Blue Mountains City Council's Community Gardens Policy Document for more information.

### Blue Mountains City Council's Community Gardens Assessment Team

The Council has a Community Gardens Assessment Team consisting of staff who can meet the following key roles:

Key Roles Required on Community Gardens Assessment Team					
•	Provide land use information				
•	Provide environmental assessment of new and existing sites (weeds, water waste, sediment issues)				
•	Liaison with the community				
•	Coordination of the Community Gardens Assessment Team				
•	Assessment of implications to Council assets/land				
•	Internal Policy Review				
•	Reports to Council				

This team will ensure a fair and orderly process for the assessment of proposals to establish new community gardens throughout the city and provide ongoing advice and assistance to existing gardens. The Community Strategic Planner is the nominated team member who will act as the key liaison person for the community in regards to community gardens.

Amongst other things the team will assess proposals based on the following practical considerations:

- The appropriateness of preferred sites (compliance with LEP etc)
- o Required licence arrangements
- Weed, waste, sediment and water issues
- o Accessibility
- Health and Safety issues

#### Responsibilities of Community Gardeners

Community gardeners are responsible for maintaining gardens so that the health and safety of the surrounding community is not adversely impacted. In particular, gardeners are responsible for ensuring that:

- They cooperate and manage effective relationships with the surrounding neighbourhood, partnering organisations and other gardeners.
- They do not discriminate against one another due to differences in race, culture or sexuality.
- They regularly communicate with the Council and/or other landowners and stakeholders.
- Decision making is democratic, transparent and inclusive.
- Any water leaving the garden is not contaminated by sediment, fertiliser, manure or excessive organic matter that might pollute waterways.
- Noise levels within the garden are maintained at a level that is not disturbing to neighbours.
- Manures, compost systems and fertilisers do not produce unpleasant odours.
- Compost and worm farming systems are maintained so as not to attract vermin.
- Rainwater harvesting systems are maintained to ensure water is of a high quality.
- Lawn areas are regularly mowed and garden beds kept tidy. Any materials
  delivered to or stored at the garden are maintained so as not to create an
  unpleasant environment for other residents in the community.

A license or other agreement between Blue Mountains City Council and a gardening group could be revoked or not renewed if:

- The group disbands or ceases to function due to internal conflict.
- The garden is not maintained or becomes unsafe for public access.
- Appropriate insurance cover is not maintained.

#### **Insurance and Risk Management**

It is essential that garden groups be aware of the risks associated with undertaking a publicly accessible community garden project. Each garden group has a duty of care to the community who access the garden areas. To ensure funds are available to meet that duty, a minimum of \$10,000,000 of public liability insurance policy is required to be taken out.

Public liability insurance has an associated cost, and may not be easily accessible to small community groups. Options for obtaining insurance cover include:

- The group can become an incorporated association through the NSW Office of Fair Trading and manage their own insurance.
- The group may be auspiced by another organisation or agency, such as a neighbourhood centre, and as a project of that organisation will be covered by their insurance.

 A group of community gardens with similar objectives might obtain insurance together.

#### **Incorporation of the Garden Group**

Blue Mountains City Council encourages community garden groups to have a clear and identified legal structure. Garden groups can apply to the NSW Office of Fair Trading to become Incorporated Associations. This arrangement affords the group some flexibility in the management of funds and enables them to open a bank account, obtain public liability insurance cover and apply for government grants. Incorporation as an association requires groups to establish a management committee with annually elected office bearers and to commit to regular meetings. This can be beneficial for the project as it maintains a structure that can address management issues as they arise.

#### Factors to consider before establishing a community garden

It should be noted that there is limited Council managed land available to establish community gardens in the Blue Mountains, and other land managers such as Department of Education, Department of Lands, RTA and/or private land owners may provide more options for land.

Blue Mountains City Council recommends that community groups or individuals interested in establishing a community garden in the Blue Mountains refer to the checklist for establishing a community garden provided on the Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network website (<a href="http://communitygarden.org.au/checklist">http://communitygarden.org.au/checklist</a>), see Appendix 1, prior to approaching the Council for assistance with establishment.

The checklist encourages consideration about a range of issues, including:

- What will be the purpose of the community garden?
- Will a community garden meet your objectives? Are there other ways of meeting your objectives?
- How will you garden?
- What types of plants will be grown?
- · What training is needed?
- How will water be conserved in the garden?
- What criteria will need to be met for a preferred site for the garden?
- What is your proposed management structure?

# Finding an Appropriate Site for Community Gardens on Council owned and/ or managed lands in the Blue Mountains

There are two Local Environmental Plans (LEP) in the Blue Mountains, LEP 1991 and LEP 2005. Community gardens are defined and allowed for differently in both LEP's.

#### **Community Gardens in LEP 2005**

There are two options for the definition for community gardens under LEP 2005, depending on the type of community garden being proposed:

Option 1: If the community garden is established along permaculture lines then the definition of permaculture under the LEP applies, as below:

**'Permaculture** means the use of residential or recreational land to grow fruit, vegetables and herbs using closed systems which are designed to replicate the diversity, stability and resilience of natural ecosystems, for non-

commercial purposes, but does not include the planting or propagation of any plant listed within the schedule entitled "Weeds of the Blue Mountains" in the Council's *Better Living DCP*.'

The table below is an extract from the land use matrix in LEP 2005. The matrix indicates the zones where permaculture is allowed without development consent (•), is allowed only with development consent (C) or is prohibited (blank). The various zones are indicated at the top of the table.

Zone:	Village			Liv	Living		Employment		RTC	Recreation		Environmental Protection		
Development for the purpose of:	TC	NC	T	н	G	C	ВС	G	EN		PR	os	PR	os
offensive industries or offensive storage establishments														
panel beating workshops								С		1002400			77	
parking	С	С	С	С	С	С	C	С	С	С	¢	C .		С
parking facilities	С	С						С	С	С				
permacultura	7		•	•	•	•	•		+		•	С		
places of assembly	С	С		С				С	С		С			9
places of worship	С	С	С	С	С			С	С		С	С		
oublic buildings	C	0	C	C	n	T		C.	C		C	C		

This means that if a potential site is within any of the above zones shown as (•) for Permaculture, then the community garden can commence without any development application being required but with consent of the landowner, with the exception of any site in Recreation – Open Space where a development application would be required.

Option 2: If a community garden is proposed that is not a permaculture garden then it would fall under the definition of recreation area in the LEP, as below:

#### 'recreation area means:

- (a) a children's playground, or
- (b) an area used for sporting activities or sporting facilities, or
- (c) an area used by the Council to provide for the physical, cultural or intellectual welfare of the community, or
- (d) an area used by a body of persons associated together for the purposes of the physical, cultural or intellectual welfare of the community to provide recreation facilities for those purposes, but does not include a showground, racecourse or other place elsewhere defined in this Dictionary.'

The table below is an extract from the land use matrix in LEP 2005. The matrix indicates the zones where 'recreation area' is allowed with development consent (C) or is prohibited (blank). The various zones are indicated at the top of the table.

Zone:	Villagė			Liv	Living		Employment		RTC	Recreation		Environmental Protection		
Development for the purpose of:	тс	NC	T	н	G	С	ВС	G	EN		PR	os	PR	os
offensive industries or offensive storage establishments														
panel beating workshops								С						
parking	С	С	С	С	С	С	С	С	С	С	С	С		С
parking facilities	С	С	Γ			Г		С	С	С				
permaculture			•	•	•	•				1	•	С		
places of assembly	С	С		С	T	T	T	С	С		С			
places of worship	С	c	С	С	С	T	T	С	С		С	С		
public buildings	С	C	c	c	C	Г	T	С	С		С	С		
public transport terminals	С	С			I					С				
public utility undertakings	•	•	•	•	۰	•	•	•	•	•	۰	• .	•	•
recreation areas	С	С	С					С	С		С	С		
recreation facilities	С	С						С	С		С	С		
refreehment morns	C	C	C	C		1					C.	C		

This means is that a development application would need to be lodged for a Community Garden, as defined under 'recreation area' in the zones noted above.

#### **Community Gardens in LEP 1991**

Under LEP 1991 there is only one definition into which Community Gardens fall and that is recreation area, as below:

'Recreation area means a place used for recreation by the community but does not include a recreation facility.'

The table below is an extract from the land use matrix in LEP 1991. The matrix indicates the zones where recreation areas are allowed with the consent of Council.

DEVELOPMENT	ZONES	Rural Conservation	Bushland Conservation	Residential Bushland Conservation	Residential	Light Industrial	Recreation	Recreation- Environmental Protection	Environmental Protection & Environmental Protection- Acquisition	National Park	Regional Open Space
Hotel											
Industry											
Institution			C								1
Intensive Agriculture	cont-								-common	2-	
Junk Yard				l							
Keeping of hoofed animals		C	C	C	C		C				
Light industry			2. 3			C		0	-01.027111		
Low intensity agriculture	- 1	C	C	C	Santa and			8		3	
Medical Centre			2	-3507		J					
Mine			С	10							
Motor Showroom						C					
National Park	2505	C	C	С	C	C	C	С	C	С	C
Neighbourhood shopping centre											
Offensive industry				16				/			
Parking		С	C	C	C	С	С	С		C	5
Place of public worship		C	С	C	C	C					
Public office						С					
Public transport terminal						С				1	1
Recreation area		C	C	С	С	C	C	C	С	С	C
Recreation facility		C	C			C	C				
Refreshment room		C	C			C		- 5			

This means that a development application would need to be lodged for a community garden in any zone in LEP 1991.

#### **Dividing Fence**

A dividing fence is a fence that separates the lands of adjoining owners. An application for a community garden may identify the need to construct a dividing fence to define the garden boundaries or for security or for another purpose. A Development Application may be required to gain permission to install a dividing fence. Council's <a href="Development Control Plan No 33">Development Control Plan No 33</a> - <a href="Exempt and Complying Development">Exempt and Complying Development</a> describes the conditions when a fence requires or is exempt from the need to obtain development consent.

## Blue Mountains City Council Development Application Process

Before preparing a Development Application you must:

- 1. Have consent for the development from the landowner; and
- 2. Be fully aware of the limitations of the site and any regulations that may affect your proposal. It is important to understand the Local Environmental Plans (LEP) and Development Control Plans (DCP) which apply to your area, your property or your type of development and check Council's requirements carefully to ensure that your proposal complies with the controls. This analysis must be completed prior to the development of your proposal and will help to determine what type of supporting material is required. Better Living DCP contains all the relevant issues, design principles, performance criteria and standards for development. Copies of Council's LEPs and DCPs are available for purchase at Council's offices or can be downloaded from Council's website at www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au.

If the proposed site is Council managed land the Community Gardens Assessment Team can provide preliminary advice on site restrictions and other limitations on the land. Should greater detail be required further information on limitations/regulations can be obtained from the Council, for a fee. This service would include a site meeting and a report.

For more information including application forms see Blue Mountains City Council website:

http://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/sustainableliving/landuseapplicationforms

## Development Application fee refund for non-profit community groups

Blue Mountains City Council (BMCC) is committed to ensuring that residents or organisations can make applications for hardship relief on certain types of fees as outlined in the Fees and Charges Section of the Management Plan (Financial Supplement) 2009-2010. Non-profit community groups may be eligible for Development Application fee refund up to \$500. All requests for a refund of a fee or a charge must be made in writing at the time of lodging the Development Application.

#### **Community Garden Application Process**

Any proposal to establish a new community garden on Council managed land *must* complete the 'Blue Mountains City Council Community Garden Application Form'; see Appendix 2 and also available for download at <a href="www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au">www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au</a>. Although not essential (unless a Development Application is required by the Local Environment Plan LEP), it is also recommended that community groups interested in establishing a community garden on private land consider completing an application form and submitting it so that the Council might assist your group with relevant information or assistance with the management of issues that might arise.

The application form is to be completed and submitted to the Blue Mountains City Council Community Gardens Assessment Team via the Community Strategic Planner. The team will then assess the application and liaise directly with the community group to progress any issues that arise from the application. When completing the application form, should there be any questions please direct them to the Community Strategic Planner who is charged with community gardens liaison, who will seek an appropriate answer from relevant Council staff.

The recommended procedure for a community group to establish a new community garden in the Blue Mountains is detailed in Appendix 3.

#### References and useful information

Blue Mountains City Council 'Community Gardens Policy' (in draft) November 2009

Thomas, F (2008), "Getting started in community gardening", City of Sydney, Sydney <a href="http://communitygarden.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/cityofsydney-cg.pdf">http://communitygarden.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/cityofsydney-cg.pdf</a>

Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network <a href="http://communitygarden.org.au/">http://communitygarden.org.au/</a>

Russ Grayson & Marrickville Council "Community Gardens – Policy Directions for Marrickville Council" 2007

City of Sydney "Community Gardens Policy (in draft)" 2009

Auckland City Council Community Gardens Policy, 2002 <a href="http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/documents/gardenpolicy/default.asp">http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/documents/gardenpolicy/default.asp</a>

Woollahra Municipal Council Community Gardens Policy <a href="http://www.woollahra.nsw.gov.au/">http://www.woollahra.nsw.gov.au/</a> data/assets/pdf file/0016/31813/Adopted Community Gardens Policy v2.pdf

Kogarah Municipal Council "Community Gardens Policy Directions for Kogarah", 2008

http://communitygarden.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/kmc\_policy\_sept08.pdf

#### Appendix 1 – Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network - Checklist to consider prior to establishing a community garden

(available to download at http://communitygarden.org.au/checklist)

Checklist	nunity garden
1. What type of community garden do we want?	
Will the community garden be:	
a shared garden where participants share the gardening and the harvest     an allotment garden where participants garden their own plot and share the m     a garden with both allotments and shared gardening space.	aintenance of common areas
Allotment gardens:	
How long can allotments be held while they are not being used?	
What size will we make the allotments?	
This can be influenced by the size of the area available for gardening.	
2. What will be the purpose of our community gard	len
Recreation/ community building:	
a safe place where people can come together to grow food and get to know e	ach other
a place where parents can bring their children.	
Other:	
Food security and nutritional health:	
access to fresh, nutritious food	
reducing family expenditure on food	
supplementing the family food supply.  Other:	
Education:	
will the garden be open to use and/ or visitation by community groups/schools/	other educational horter?
YES NO D	
Will the gardeners offer workshops (eg. compost making, gardening etc) to the pu	blid YES □ NO □
If not, will the gardeners make the garden available for others to provide education	nal services# YES 🔲 NO 🖵
Other educational activities:	
3. How will we garden?	
Organic gardening? YES NO	
Reasons:	
Fit is to be an organic garden, will this be explained to new gardeners when they writing? YES $\square$ NO $\square$	join the garden - either verbally or in
Explained in some other way?	
	Australian City
FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVING IN THE CITY	Gardens Network

<ol><li>What types</li></ol>	of plants will w	e grow?	
When considering what typ space and should be space			er that fruit and nut trees need plenty
vegetables	herbs	fruit/ nut trees	☐ flowers
berry fruit shrubs	water crops	medicinal plants	bush foods
herbal tea plants	native or indi		
(native plants are those orig	inating in Australia; indig	genous plants originate in the lo	cal region)
5. What animals	will we keep?		
chickens	other poultry	bees	no animals
other animals			
6. What structure ☐ sitting area to shelter fro		in the community g	arden?
lockable shed for storing	tools, seeds etc		
nursery for plant propag	gation		
☐ fireplace for making cof	fee and tea - barbecue fo	or preparing food	
play area for children			
		elter roof to irrigate the garden	
Other:	. water from the away at	ener roor to ringate the garden	
Uther:			
7. What training	do we need?		
Gardening/construc	tion skills:		
plant propagation		improving garden soils	making compost
using mulch - irrigation (		seed saving	garden construction
developing a planting o	alendar	planting out and harvesting	9
Other:			
Design skills:			5
site analysis and garden	er needs analysis for the	site design process	garden design
Other skills:	_	_	_
cooking what we grow	promotional:	skills conflict resolution	running offective meetings
Other:			
	able in the community ga	rdening group? YES 🔲	но 🗖

Will the garden be a pla	ce where communities and	local government local government can work ommunity gardening, such c	k together to demonstrate social and
waste reduction energy efficiency Other:	water conservation biodiversity	regreening nutritional health	oducation for sustainability
	support biodiver seed of heritage or heirloo	•	we can collect, save and replant the crops?
		am more about food plant of a Local Seed Network?	biodiversity, to obtain non-hybrid seed from
Will we propagate and o	distribute seed of endanger	red or rare local native (ind	igenous) plants?
		ners and the pub se organic matter through:	lic in waste reduction?
Compost Other:	worm farms	mulching	use of recycled materials
11. How will we rainwater tanks	conserve water		low-water-use irrigation
12. How will we apply for grants  How will we fund ongoin	e fund the garder membership fee g costs?	n ?	ding

13. What will we look for in a preferred	d site for the garden?
size of area needed:	
access to sunlight, water and wind protection etc.:	
good quality soil close to residential area  Comments/suggestions:	close to public transport
14. Description of the proposed manage Will the garden organizational structure be an incorporated asso Will the garden obtain public liability insurance? YES  How will decisions be made?	ociation? YES NO
What will be the proposed conflict resolution process?	
How will new members be recruited and trained?	
15. How will gardeners ensure that the Odour: Vandalism: Excessive noise: Site aesthetics - how the site looks: Rodents: Parking: Non-gardener access: Other	ere are no problems with:
From the Community Gardens Network  Gardens Network	Complex Comments Administrative Princesses and Administrative Works 2.5 Australia Transac May (I rentiference areas and Comments grander, compresses and antiference, and generated, authorized by antiference and comments.

# Appendix 2 – Blue Mountains City Council New Community Garden Application Form

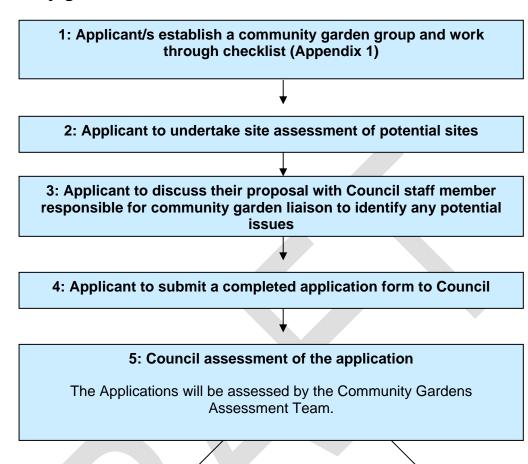
! NB: This form does NOT replace a Development Application (DA), if a DA is required.

1. Contact Details		
a. Name of your grou	p:	
b. Name of contact p	erson:	
c. Address:		
d Dhanas I Is	<b>\</b> A/.	
d. Phone: H:	W:	M:
e. Email:		
2. Group Details		
a. Is your group an Ir	icorporated Asso	ociation? YES NO
b. How many member	s does your group	p have?
	,	
c. Is your group not-	for-profit? YES [	NO L
	arry its own Public	c Liability insurance?
YES NO		
- if yes, to who	ıt value?	
e. Does your group cu	irrently have fund	ds available to establish a
community garden? (	zg. Purchase of m	naterials, compost bins, tools, shed,
insurance etc)		•
VEC DNO D		

3. Site Details
a. Name of your proposed garden
b. Have you identified a preferred site for your garden? YES NO - If yes above, what is the address of this site?
- Is this site owned/managed by Council? YES NO - If no, who owns this site?
- Please describe the key features of this site, including dimensions, toilets, aspect, slope, soil, water access, proximity to public transport, structures on the site, existing use of the site (use an additional sheet to answer this question).
4. Garden and Produce Details  a. What types of activities are your group proposing for the site (you can select multiple answers or add additional answers):  Organic gardening  Permaculture  Raised beds  Community education  Workshops  Sensory garden  Other
b. What types of plants are members of your group keen to grow?  c. Do you have plans for any of the following on your site:  Rainwater tank/s  Shelter  Storage shed  Potting bench  Pathways  Nursery  Compost bays  Animal enclosure/s  Other

5. Management of your garden
a. Please describe the proposed management structure for the community
garden (including how decisions will be made, conflict resolution
processes, how new members will be recruited, any criteria for
membership etc (use an additional sheet if necessary)
b. Will your garden be open to the public (rather than members only with a key system)? YES NO
c. Will there be restrictions about when your garden will operate?
YES NO
- Please describe
d. How will your group ensure the following issues are addressed? Odour:
Vandalism:
Excessive noise:
Site aesthetics:
offe desinenes.
Rodents:
Parking:
Waste:
6. Any supporting information you wish to add?
(use additional sheet if necessary)
(ase additional sheet if necessary)

## Appendix 3 - Recommended Procedure for starting a new community garden in the Blue Mountains



6a: Application is supported and Council and the group applying work together to undertake community consultation with local residents.

The Council will consider any feedback gained from the consultation process and work with the community group to ensure any concerns are addressed. If there is considerable opposition to the project the Council reserves the right to consider alternative sites for the project.

6b: Application is not supported by Council.

Written feedback will be provided and an alternative site may be considered.

#### Step 7: Application goes to a Council meeting for final approval.

If the application is approved at a Council meeting, then Council staff will meet with the applicants to develop any relevant written agreements for the garden such as a licence.

#### Step 8: Apply for grants and funding

Once all documents have been approved by Council then applicants may then wish to apply for grants and start building their community garden.