

This community garden on private property provides training programs and supplies fresh produce to the The Green café at St Columbs Church.



**Interested in  
community food  
gardening in  
Boroondara?**

**Thinking about  
creating a new  
community  
garden?**

## This information booklet provides:

- Some useful resources for finding out what is going on locally
- Some guidance and ideas for getting organised if you want to form a group and plan a new community gardening project
- A summary of the process for working with Council if you're proposing a community gardening project in public open space (e.g. parks or reserves).



Ashburton Community Gardens  
working bee and garden plots. >

# Community gardening in Boroondara

There are a variety of community garden models in Boroondara. They include:

- **Traditional plot based and fenced community gardens on Council land** (e.g. Ashburton Community Gardens photos pages 2 & 3).
- **Unfenced and shared community gardens on both private and public land** for example the food garden in the grounds of St Columbs Church in Hawthorn, the Winton Road Food Forest (see photo page 4) and CamCare community garden.
- **Community food gardening on private land** facilitated by groups such as 3000acres (see photo back cover).

Before considering a new community garden, it is worthwhile exploring opportunities to join an existing community garden and to talk to the gardeners or committee members to learn from them.

## Learn more

Visit the City of Boroondara's website at [www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/grow-local](http://www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/grow-local) to:

- Download the *Snapshot of Local Food Growing and Sharing in Boroondara* document for a summary of the many community gardening initiatives across the City.
- Browse a list of groups and online resources on the webpage.



# Ideas for organising your community gardening initiative

## Getting a group together

If there isn't already a local community gardening initiative that's right for you, you might want to kick off a new project, ideally with the help of a group of like-minded people. You could:

- Set up an online **'Meet-Up'** group to connect with other interested locals.
- **Contact** your local Community or Neighborhood Centre and ask if they have networks you can tap into.
- Think about **'pairing up'** with a neighbour that has a garden or enough land to share, but lacks the time or skills to grow food – you could strike up an agreement to share the produce.
- Visit [www.3000acres.org](http://www.3000acres.org) and sign-up for their e-list to receive updates. 3000Acres are a Melbourne-based community organisation building a platform to 'connect people to land, resources and each other so that more people can grow more food in more places'.

When getting started as a new group, it is recommended that you hold group workshops to start clarifying and documenting your groups initial 'project proposal'. This will help you identify your group's goals and objectives, consider resources and anticipate challenges you will need to overcome.

## Finding suitable land

Before requesting allocation of Council-managed public open space for a new community garden, your group should first explore options for creating a garden on private land or other unused public land.

Your investigation could include:

- Scanning the local area on the 3000Acres website and registering your interest in any potential sites. You can also register new sites that you are curious about. It may be worthwhile making direct contact with 3000Acres to let them know you have a small group that is very keen to establish a new garden.
- Making contact with local schools, kinders, churches or other community organisations that own land. Some have kitchen gardens and may be looking for volunteer helpers. Others may be interested in working together to set up a new community garden on their land.

## Useful resources

Helpful information for community groups on working together and preparing a project proposal, can be found in **'Part 1 – Planning'** of the *Community Gardens Manual*, by Sustainable Gardening Australia (SGA) and the Helen McPherson Smith Trust. You can download the manual from [www.sgaonline.org.au/community/community-gardens-manual/](http://www.sgaonline.org.au/community/community-gardens-manual/) or ask Council for a hard copy.

The Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network website is another great source of advice that your group should review and discuss together. In particular, the article **'Ten steps for starting a garden'** at [communitygarden.org.au/category/about\\_gardens/10-steps-for-starting/](http://communitygarden.org.au/category/about_gardens/10-steps-for-starting/)



# Proposing community food gardens on Council-managed public open space

- Step 1:** Before proposing that public open space be converted for use as a community garden, interested individuals and groups are requested to investigate private land options (see previous section 'Finding suitable land').
- Step 2:** Where other options aren't found to be feasible and public open space is being proposed, your community group should contact Council to discuss its ideas. Make contact by calling 9278 4011 or email [environment@boroondara.vic.gov.au](mailto:environment@boroondara.vic.gov.au)
- Step 3:** Your group will then be asked to prepare a 'project proposal' for Council. It will need to build on your initial project ideas and consider relevant issues from Table 1 (page 5). In particular, it will need to address the first two sections: Community engagement and support, and Governance.
- Step 4:** It will then take some time to collaborate with Council officers through a process (see next section) to review and refine your proposal. This process is important because officers need to address all relevant issues and risks, and ensure there is broad community support and benefits, before seeking Council approval and funding to build the community garden.

Winton Road Food Forest, Ashburton.



# Council's process for assessing proposals for community gardens on Council-managed public open space

When Council receives a proposal to establish a new community garden in public open space, there is a process for assessing proposals. Key steps from this process are shown below.

**Community group** prepares an initial 'project proposal' for discussion with Council.

Preliminary research should investigate relevant 'issues for consideration' (see page 5) and canvas local community support.

Pending staff capacity, **Council** officers will undertake a review of the proposal and check against all 'issues for consideration'.

Proposal **supported** in-principle

Changes may be negotiated or proposal **not supported**

**Council** (in liaison with community group) consults local residents and users of proposed site on a concept design for the garden.

Broad **community support**

Significant opposition – proposal **not supported**

**Community group** identifies potential co-contributions (cash sponsors and/or in-kind support).

**Council officers** refine the garden design, prepare a budget and seek formal project approval (and co-funding) through the annual budget setting process.

Project and funding **approved**

Project **not approved** for following financial year

**Community group** forms Incorporated Association (or confirms formal auspice), obtains insurances, establishes rules of conduct, Working Group and committee of management.

**Council** liaises with representative 'legal entity' to prepare and sign licence or lease agreement.

Construction date confirmed and communicated to stakeholders.

## Issues for consideration

A wide range of issues need consideration when developing and refining a proposal for a new community garden on Council land. If important issues or risks cannot be resolved positively, the proposal may not receive Council approval and funding.

### Community engagement and support

<b>Community demand</b>	Is there a demonstrated demand for a new community garden in the area? Does the area have a significant number of properties with small yards and/or flats and apartments?
<b>Community support for the garden</b>	Are local residents clearly supportive of the project? Are a wide range of individuals and organisations being consulted and involved? Are particular concerns being raised by individuals or groups, being addressed?
<b>Garden access and inclusion</b>	Is the proposal to fence and lock the garden or to keep access open to the broader community? Does the proposal envisage individual plots, shared use plots or a combination? How else is the proposal seeking to maximise community engagement, access and inclusion?

### Governance

<b>Vision and commitment</b>	Does the community group making the proposal have enough members with relevant skills, experience and time to work together? Do they have a shared vision for the project? Is the project seeking to deliver benefits for the broader community?
<b>Legal status and public liability insurance</b>	Is the community group prepared to become an incorporated association and to take out public liability insurance? Or can a suitable auspice be found? In most cases either the community group or auspice would be required to enter into a legal agreement (lease or licence) with Council as the land manager.
<b>Maintenance</b>	Is there a sufficient number of individuals prepared to work together to ensure ongoing care/maintenance of the garden over time? What maintenance support/resources might be required from Council?

### Appropriate location / site specific issues

<b>Is the proposed community garden in public open space?</b>	Have alternative locations, including co-location with existing community facilities, been properly explored? Is the area covered by an existing Master Plan, or subject to any restrictions (eg a floodplain overlay)?
<b>Impact on existing uses and function</b>	How might the project impact on existing and future users of the site? Would use of the site still allow adequate public open space for the broader community? Is the proposed site compatible with adjoining land uses and values (eg environmental and heritage)?
<b>Size of site</b>	Is the land area large enough to sustain a viable community garden? Depending on the project concept, more or less space may be needed, but many community gardens need space for compost bins/worm farms, path access, a shelter, storage shed and water tank(s).
<b>Site access</b>	Does the site allow access for construction vehicles? How will people access the site in the future to undertake maintenance and deliver materials (eg mulch)?
<b>Site history</b>	Do we know what the site has been used for historically? Potentially harmful chemicals can persist in the soil for many decades and can be taken up by plant roots. If any planting into the soil is proposed, testing for contamination will be required.
<b>Orientation / topography</b>	Does the site receive sunlight for most of the day? Is there a risk of overshadowing? Are there established canopy trees in or around the area (as well as risk of overshadowing, tree root zones will need protection)? Is the site flat or gently sloping?
<b>Access to water and power</b>	Is there access to water and power (if required)? Is there potential to access rainwater from nearby buildings?
<b>Public facilities</b>	Are there facilities nearby – public toilets, public transport, shared path?
<b>Visibility of gardens</b>	Is there some 'passive surveillance' of the site or is it hidden from public view? How might this affect perceptions of safety and risk of vandalism/theft?

### Funding/Investment

<b>Community funding and in-kind contribution</b>	Does the group have access to sources of co-funding or in-kind contributions?
<b>Return on investment</b>	Are the project's short and longer-term community benefits sufficient to justify Council capital expenditure and land allocation?
<b>Timeframe for planning and construction</b>	Formal Council approval and funding of a project would be confirmed through the annual budget cycle. Proposals that have been assessed and progressed successfully through design and community consultation would be subject of a budget bid (prepared around November to December each year for potential funding in the <i>subsequent</i> financial year or thereafter).  Considering the likely time lag between proposal development, formal approval and construction, can the community group maintain their commitment over the medium to long term?

# Community garden project proposal – checklist

This template sets out the key information needed by Council to make an initial assessment of your proposal for a new community garden on Council-managed land. It requires you to undertake some preliminary research and to articulate goals for your community garden. **Please keep your proposal to a maximum of 4 pages.**

The *Community Gardens Manual* prepared by Sustainable Gardening Australia and Helen McPherson Smith Trust (see Useful resources) has some tips and pointers that may be helpful.

Information needed	Description
<b>Your community group</b>	<p>Tell us about your community group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How did the group come together?</li><li>• Does the group have specific skills and experience related to planning or running a community garden or similar – or growing local food?</li></ul>
<b>Research to date</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What steps have you taken to explore options other than Council-managed land for your community garden?</li><li>• Have you identified Council-managed land for your community garden? If so, where is the land and how is the land currently used (you can nominate a couple of sites)?</li><li>• Why do you think your nominated site/sites would make a good location for a community garden?</li></ul>
<b>Community garden model</b>	<p>What community garden model do you propose?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fenced and locked? Or a low fence or open model (e.g. Winton Road Food Forest)?</li><li>• Individual plots? Shared plots? Or a mixture of both? How have you come to this decision?</li></ul>
<b>Goals (list 3-6)</b>	<p>What goals do you have for the community garden? Examples could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To provide an area in..... for the community to come together to grow and share local food.</li><li>• To activate a neglected or underutilised area of public open space.</li><li>• To provide learning opportunities for community garden members and other interested community members.</li><li>• To provide a community resource for people of all abilities.</li><li>• To demonstrate the use of sustainable growing methods.</li></ul>
<b>Other information</b>	<p>There may be additional information you would like to include.</p>

## How long might it take to progress a proposal?

Expect the process to take several months. Be prepared to collaborate and be flexible. Budgets are allocated on an annual basis, with submissions for funding in the following July – June financial year drafted by December the year before, so begin discussions as soon as possible.

**Please email your proposal with contact details to:  
environment@boroondara.vic.gov.au**



**For further information and advice contact the Environment and Sustainable Living Department**

**Website:** [www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/grow-local](http://www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/grow-local)

**Telephone:** 9278 4011

**Email:** [environment@boroondara.vic.gov.au](mailto:environment@boroondara.vic.gov.au)



3000acres community food gardens, Kew.

The community garden at St Columbs Church, Hawthorn.



## Contact us

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Kew Library  
Corner Cotham Road and Civic Drive, Kew

