

# Community Gardens

Policy Directions  
for Marrickville Council

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MARRICKVILLE  
council

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## Policy Directions for Marrickville Council

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# Definitions

*A number of terms are used to describe community gardening and associated activities.*

## Community garden

*An area of shared land in which members of a community participate in the cultivation of food and other plants.*

*Community garden is an inclusive term for different types of enterprise that involve:*

- *horticulture, mainly of food species, usually vegetables and culinary herbs but, sometimes, fruit and nut trees*
- *community involvement*
- *sometimes, local government support and participation.*

*The focus of activity within a community garden varies with the enterprise; the more ambitious projects combine a number of foci such as gardening and education.*

*Models for the design and management of community gardens include allotments and shared gardens.*

## City farm

*This is a term often used interchangeably with 'community garden', especially for larger community gardens. It is also used to describe enterprises which keep farm animals as well as provide space for the growing of food.*

*Melbourne's Collingwood Children's Farm is an example. The large site in inner-urban Abbotsford includes:*

- *a long-established allotment garden*
- *an orchard*
- *educational facilities*
- *a shared garden*
- *farm animals such as mixed poultry and small numbers of horses, pigs and cattle.*

*The term 'city farm' is not commonly used to describe those community gardens that keep only a small number of chickens, as is the case in a number of Sydney and Melbourne community gardens.*

## Allotment garden

*A term imported from the UK, this is a community garden in which gardeners have exclusive access to their own small area of garden.*

*In its Australian usage the term does not necessarily imply adoption of the full UK model in which local government establishes and has overall management of an allotment garden.*

*Allotment plots vary considerably in size in community gardens around Australia:*

- *some, such as those at Collingwood Childrens Farm, Essendon, Highet Street and Flemington community gardens in Melbourne and Riverwood Community Garden in south-western Sydney are of sufficient size to supply a family with most of their commonly eaten vegetables*
- *others, such as those in Cook Community Garden in Sydney, have space sufficient for only a small amount of produce; they provide more a supplementary role to household food purchases.*

## Sustainability education centre

*These are either:*

- *centres especially designed for community education and that usually include a community garden*
- *city farms and community gardens that have adopted a role of educating the public on sustainability issues; the educational role may have developed after operating for some time, primarily for food production, or may have been adopted when the garden started.*



# Summary

This policy directions document proposes that Marrickville Council establish a structure to support community gardening as a food security, sustainability education and community development activity in the local government area (LGA).

The document starts from the observation that community gardening has become an established urban landuse and is increasingly practiced in Australian towns and cities. It makes a number of specific recommendations that would enable Council to take a proactive role and to systematise the application process for assistance to community gardening.

Local government is perhaps the key agency with direct influence on the future development of community gardening in Australia where access by the general public is concerned. Through enabling community gardening on public open space and, perhaps, on other classifications of land, community gardening offers councils the opportunity to link the practice with both local amenity and local issues as well as enabling citizens to take personal action on global challenges like global warming and peak oil.

Recommendations for Marrickville Council appear in the Section 11.

## Structure

The document is structured around the Action Learning model of:

### Look > Think > Act.

The 'look' and 'think' components comprise research carried out for the document and the interpretation of that information. The 'act' component is represented by the recommendations for Council and any consequent Council action.

Sources consulted for the document include:

- community gardeners
- sustainability educators, most working in local government and others in community-based organisations
- people with a training or administrative role in community gardens
- local government officers.

Additional to these sources is:

- information derived from informal conversations with people having some involvement in the practice of community gardening
- information presented at conferences, seminars and meetings
- observation of community gardening over time and in different states.

A number of community gardens are repeatedly used as examples throughout this document. The reason for doing this is that they are gardens with a long history and that underwent a range of challenges and innovations.

Some of their participants continue to be active in community gardening.

## Marrickville

The report recognises that land for the development of community gardens is limited in Marrickville LGA, just as it is throughout the Inner West.

For this reason it proposes that community gardens assisted by Council:

- be multifunctional - having user groups other than those directly involved in food production, such as the Arts in the Garden team that operated as part of the UNSW Permaculture Community Garden
- include a component of community education where possible - either through gardeners offering educational services to the wider community or by Council negotiating access to community gardens for its own program of sustainability education
- be designed and managed for high productivity in small areas
- be incorporated into plans of management for public open space
- be assessed for their value to strategic and other city plans.

# 1. Community Gardening

Community Gardens  
Policy Directions for Marrickville Council

## 1.1 What it is | What it is not

The definition of community gardening adopted by the Australian City Farms & Community Gardens Network (ACFCGN) states that:

*Community gardens are places where people come together to grow fresh food, to learn, relax and make new friends.*

The inclusion of food in the definition reflects the central role of food production in most community gardens.

Some gardens assisted by the Royal Botanic Gardens Community Greening program are used to grow exotic or native plants. It is because they have public participation that they are considered to be community gardens.

Food crops are the dominant plant type in community gardens in Australia and in other countries. That food production is the main horticultural activity in the gardens was clear at the five-day, 2007, *Cities Feeding People* conference in Melbourne. There, speakers and attendees affirmed that the focus of community gardening remains primarily one of urban food production and creating a sense of place, commonality and community.

A number of speakers made the link between community gardening and urban food security and suggested that the practice would increase in importance as the impacts of global warming became more apparent and the peaking of the global oil supply potentially pushes up food prices.

For the purposes of this report, the growing of food – annual and perennial vegetables, culinary and medicinal herbs and sometimes fruit and nut trees and shrubs will be an assumed activity in community gardens.

## 1.2 An expanded definition

Horticulture, cooperation and community initiative are the key definers of community gardening but the focus of activity within a community garden varies with the enterprise. The more ambitious projects combine a number of foci such as gardening and community education.

Over the past twenty years, a number of city farms and community gardens in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane have adopted community education as a primary role. They offer workshops, sometimes courses, on the various aspects of environmentally and socially sustainable living and demonstrate technologies and ideas related to this theme.

Because of this they may best be described as **sustainability education centres**.

Brisbane's Northey Street City Farm and the now-closed UNSW Permaculture Community Garden, in its earlier phase, fulfilled this role.

Other centres, such as Melbourne's CERES and the Macarthur Centre for Sustainable Living at Mt Annan in NSW were established primarily as sustainability education centres. The inclusion of community gardens as core facilities at these centres makes their experience relevant to this report. They, too, are included in references to community gardening.

### 1.2.1 Characteristics

The ACFCGN definition recognises the characteristics commonly ascribed to the practice of community gardening:

- access to fresh, nutritious food
- learning — not only about horticulture but about the skills of socialisation such as cooperation, working and making decisions with others — what are referred to in this report as ‘people skills’
- constructive and healthy recreation
- some degree of gardener self-management of both the site and the gardeners as a group; arrangements differ between gardens associated with particular Sydney councils.

In this document, the characteristics are those ascertained in formal and informal discussion with community gardeners and with others who have some connection to the practice of community gardening.

## 1.3 Which community?

‘Community’ is an overused word of varying meanings. The precise meaning varies with the user and their purpose.

For the purpose of this report, the term carries an implied meaning:

*“community”, used in association with ‘garden’ or ‘gardening’, refers to a group of people active in the practice of community gardening or not-for-profit city farming.*

A community gardening ‘community’:

- may be geographically dispersed through an area within convenient traveling distance of a community garden
- may be people sharing some common characteristic; for example —
  - Sydney’s Street Jungle was a group of gardeners living with HIV
  - Melbourne’s Fitzroy Community Garden is made up mainly of Hmong people living in the adjoining tower blocks
  - housing estate gardeners are people sharing common residency on a state government housing estate
- will reside in a single or in neighboring local government areas; this facilitates convenient access to the community garden;

A number of councils involved in community gardening restricts the use of their allotments to residents of the local government area, a practice that has come with the top down approach of councils starting community gardens. This is a peculiarity of council-managed gardens, or those started by councils and handed on to management by a gardener’s association. It is not universal in local government, however.

Opinion suggests that the practice ignores the fact that local government areas are part of regions of cities (eg. the Eastern Suburbs or Inner West) and of the city as a whole. It is understandable that councils view their responsibilities as primarily to their LGA residents, however the practice perpetuates the necessity and work of reinventing community gardens in LGAs and can be seen as a form of parochialism.

## 1.4 What community gardens are not

If a definition of community gardening is accepted to include:

- substantial community involvement in a garden's day-to-day activities and in decision making regarding garden management
- the production of food for gardener consumption

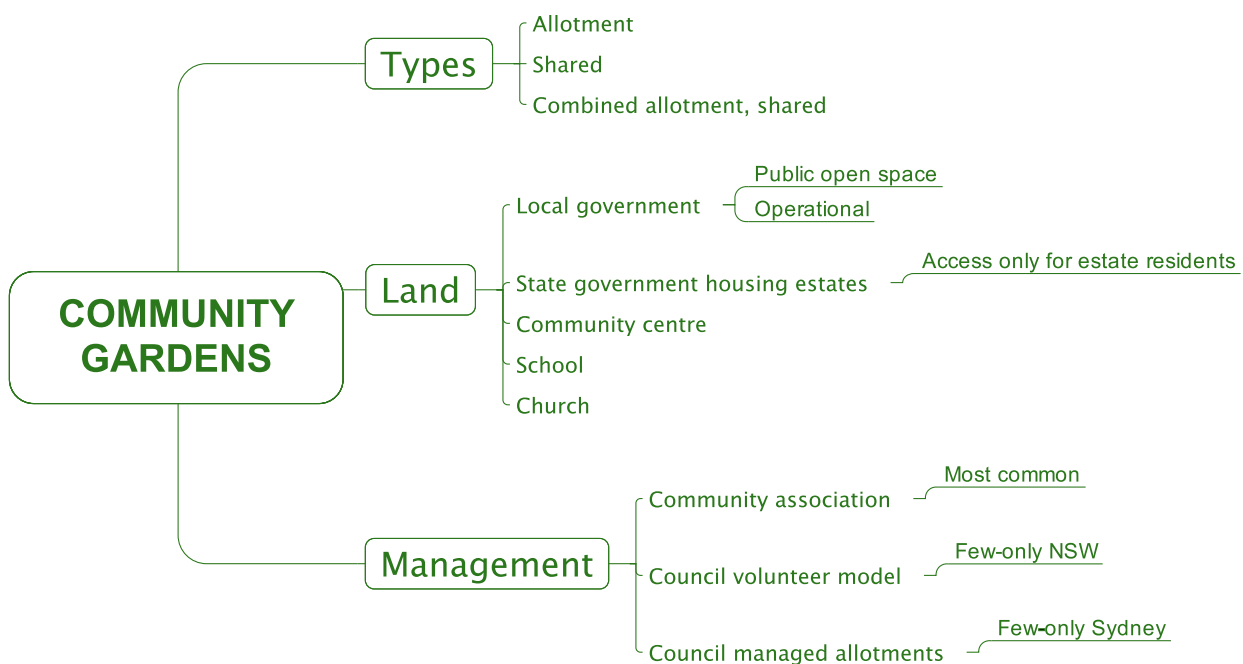
...then some types enterprise must be excluded for the purpose of this report.

These are educational/agricultural enterprises found in some Australian cities. Like Fairfield City Farm, which is a semi-independent enterprise of Fairfield Council in Sydney's south-western suburbs, their primary purpose is to educate school children about agriculture and farming.

These enterprises fill a valuable educational role. They are also the only places in which many children have contact with farm animals, something which lends them a role more to do with life education than academic study. It must be noted that this contact with animals also occurs in those community gardens in which chickens are kept.

Like community gardens and city farms, these educational/agricultural enterprises represent an alternative open space landuse to that commonly found in parks and gardens, remnant bushland reserves and sporting fields. As such — and like community gardens and city farms — they add to the diversity of urban recreational options.

Community gardening is a practice that comes under the rubric of urban agriculture, which includes the urban and city fringe market gardening so important to feeding the city. The difference is that urban farming is a commercial activity while community gardens are not-for-profit, community-based enterprises producing food primarily for the consumption of the gardener.



## 2. The big picture

# Community Gardens

## Policy Directions for Marrickville Council

The big picture contexts around the practice of community gardening and urban agriculture include issues of global warming, peak oil and associated trends such as the growing preference for local/regional food. They are increasingly the reason that people join community gardens.

With some councils addressing these issues through education and other activities, the potential of community gardens to be of use to local government officers with an educational role is worth noting.

## 2.1 How community gardening relates to global trends

Addressing global issues is a motivating factor for a growing number of community gardeners.

### 2.1.1 The return of urban agriculture & local food

Community food gardening is a part of the wider practice of urban agriculture.

Cities feeding themselves was not such a novel idea just a hundred years ago. Most cities lived off of their urban fringe market gardens and from small, intensively managed farms within the suburbs. These were supplemented by productive home gardens. The market gardens in the Rockdale, Kogarah and Randwick local government areas are remnants of this once extensive and important industry.

Even today, the urban agriculture industry retains its importance to Sydney, employing around 12,000. According to *Sydney Basin Agriculture: Local Food, Local economy*, an educational discussion sheet published by the Sydney Food Fairness Alliance ([www.sydneyfoodfairness.org.au](http://www.sydneyfoodfairness.org.au)):

*It is estimated that agriculture in the Sydney region is worth \$1 billion a year to farmers, with a multiplier effect on related industries. Its economic value to the industry as a whole is over \$4.5 billion annually (Gillespie, Mason 2003).*

Sydney supplies most of its vegetables, including almost 100 per cent of its Asian vegetables, from small, city fringe farms. Recognising the importance of urban fringe commercial farming, Liverpool Council has employed staff to liaise with local farmers and to assist them in marketing their product.

Urban agriculture is promoted by the UN. In the book, *Urban Agriculture: Food, Jobs and Sustainable Cities* (1996; UNDP), co-written by Jac Smit from Vancouver's Urban Agriculture Network, Smit describes the worldwide nutritional and economic importance of the sector.

Community gardening cannot produce the quantities of commercial market gardening, but just as the commercial sector brings a measure of food security to the city, so do the allotments of community gardeners bring a small measure of food security to them.

#### 2.1.1.1 The local food movement

The growing popularity of locally-sourced food is focusing attention on the future of Sydney's urban fringe market gardens and farms, just as it is doing in other Australian and overseas cities. Local food advocates cite community gardening as another source of local, fresh food.

Popular television food programs, food books and a growing lobby in favour of relocalising the food supply have created a market for food produced locally, which is loosely defined as food produced within a few hundred kilometres of a city.



Evidence for the growing demand for local/regional food comes from:

- the country-wide popularity of farmers' markets such as that at Marrickville's Addison Road Community Centre and at Orange Grove school in Rozelle
- the increase in the number of farmers markets in Sydney and elsewhere across the country
- a 'Sydney Grown' label that is being promoted to identify local food
- 2007 research conducted by CERES into the 'food miles' travelled by Melbourne's food supply (<http://www.ceres.org.au/index1024x768.htm>)
- the popularity of Melbourne's 100-Mile Café, which serves only food sourced from farms close to the city (<http://www.100milecafe.com.au/>)
- growth of the Melbourne Community Farmers' Markets organisation.

Stallholders at markets operated by Melbourne Community Farmers' Markets (<http://www.mfm.com.au/>) post signs on stallholders displays carrying an estimate of the distance the food on sale has travelled. The UK supermarket chains Tesco and Sainsbury's are to do the same as is the Manly Food Cooperative shop in Sydney.

As Melbourne Community Farmers' Markets states in its newsletter: "It's Victorian asparagus season now, so how can we justify the very vegetable, [marked] Product of Peru, in a supermarket this morning, just 20 kms from asparagus country?"

The concept of food miles is popularised by local food advocates. It is an estimate of the distance food has been transported from producer to eater, the quantity of fossil fuel consumed in its transport and the emission of greenhouse gases attributable to that transport. Some add a similar estimate for the packaging the food comes in.

Community gardens are examples of the do-it-yourself approach to local food. That fact is attested to by support for community gardening and farmers markets by the influential, international Slow Food movement in Melbourne and Sydney. In regard to local food, Hurstville Council, in Sydney, is the latest local government body to start a farmers' market.

For local government seeking to establish credentials in the tackling of global warming and the health benefits of fresh food, the encouragement of farmers' markets and community gardens are clear and obvious signs that they can claim credit for.

## 2.2 Motivators of community gardening

Beyond the revived interest in urban agriculture and a relocalised food supply, there are number of topical, big picture contexts that are interlinked and that motivate people to join or start community gardens. As they receive increasing publicity and enter the political agenda, they are cited by more and more community gardeners as influencing their decision to participate in the gardens. They are also issues cited by local government staff in support of community gardening.

These big picture motivators are:

- global warming
- the peaking of the global oil supply
- sustainability issues such as waste reduction, water conservation and agricultural biodiversity.

### 2.2.1 Global warming

Community gardening as a means of taking personal action on global warming is sometimes cited as a factor in support of the practice. Generally, respondents for whom global warming is a motivator cite food miles as a factor. The notion is particularly strong overseas and those mentioning it often point to the greenhouse gas emissions from the airfreight of fresh vegetables and fruit.

In this context community gardens qualify as centres of local food production and as a means of reducing an individual's contribution to global warming, even though the quantity of food produced is small.

### 2.2.2 Peak oil

Just as global warming is used to justify urban agriculture, the recent realisation that global oil production may peak within 10 to 15 years – some, both within the oil industry and outside it, say it has already peaked - is being cited as yet another reason to support community gardening.

As for global warming, it is the as-yet unknown potential for food cost increases and the reduction in the use of fuel oil — modest that it is – that are the motivating factors. Once again, if this issue assumes greater political prominence and becomes something that citizens expect their local government to take action on, facilitating the development of community gardens could become a sign of council action.

### 2.2.3 Developing a model of sustainability

Concerns about the breakdown of community, environmental and sustainability issues and the need to regreen the cities can motivate community gardens to become models of sustainability.

The idea is that they become demonstration centres about sustainable urban living along the lines proposed by ex-NASA scientist, now sustainable community development advocate, Dr Robert Gilman (<http://www.context.org/PEOPLE/RCGBio.htm>).

Community gardens, in this role, may demonstrate waste reduction and conversion, water harvesting and storage, sustainable building materials, renewable energy technologies, materials reuse and, in terms of social development, they become meeting places for socialising and building social capital.

*Sustainability motivator:  
Well-built and managed  
compost bins that are  
rodent proof and  
look presentable to  
visitors are essential if  
community gardens  
are to avoid common  
objections about  
odour and rats.*



### 3. Community gardening – a brief history

# Community Gardens

## Policy Directions for Marrickville Council

Understanding how the practice of community gardening has evolved in Australia and in other countries provides evidence that:

- the practice is an established and valid landuse in urban areas, particularly on land zoned as public open space
- local government involvement in support of community gardening is a proper use of public funds.

By the early 1800s in the UK and by the 1830s in Western Europe, urban allotments were being set aside as places where people could supplement their food supply.

The economic hardship of the 1930s recession, followed by World War Two, brought a renewed interest in community gardening as a means of securing a food supply. During World War Two the practice was encouraged by governments and allotment gardening was linked to the war effort. 'Victory gardens' flourished in the cities or combatant countries.

Writing in *City Bountiful - A Century of Community Gardening in America*, Laura Lawson sums up the North American experience:

*Looking back, we can trace a nearly continuous chain of community garden efforts. In the 1890s, social reformers started the trend by promoting vacant-lot cultivation associations to provide land and technical assistance to unemployed laborers in cities...*

*At the same time, education reformers promoted school gardens as an interactive teaching venue that correlated with school subjects and taught civics and good work habits. School gardens grew into a national movement.*

With the increasing affluence and the opening of markets to utilise the industrial capacity developed during the Second World War, the cheap mass production of food became possible. This contributed to a consequent decline in allotment or community gardening. In the UK, allotments were abandoned and their land sometimes lost to development.

### 3.1 A trend reversed

Although it declined, allotment gardening in the UK, Europe and the USA never disappeared. In the late 1970s the surviving gardens became core and catalyst to a new wave of interest in community or allotment gardening that continues to this day. The last decade or so has seen abandoned allotments in the UK reclaimed by new gardeners.

Writing in the 1983 publication *Growing in the City - Employment, Education and Recreation in Australian City Farms and Community Gardens*, the author reported that the demand for garden plots was increasing.

Discussing the UK experience, a million allotments were believed to be in existence and the waiting list for allotments in Greater London alone was estimated by the Civic Trust to be around 10,000. In the UK as a whole, the waiting list was reported to be around 100,000. Germany has more than 500,000 allotments, with around 35,000 each in Switzerland and Sweden.

Canada's City of Victoria government recognises in its policy on community gardens that:

*There is a national trend towards urban agriculture that has increased the demand for community gardens.*

*Demographic changes including an aging population combined with the popularity of gardening as a favorite outdoor activity have also increased interest in establishing community gardens.*

*There are many other reasons for this interest including healthy lifestyles, social interaction, cultural expression, protection of open space and nutritious and economic food production... community gardens are invaluable to the social and ecological wellbeing of cities.*

## 3.2 Community gardening comes to Australia

Community gardening came to Australia on October 7, 1977, with the opening of Nunawading Community Garden on local government land.

Commenting on the occasion of the garden's twentieth anniversary in the *Whitehorse Gazette* (October 18, 1995), reporter Ingrid Hering spoke of the "estimated 300 people who witnessed its opening".

*The community garden was the brainchild of former Nunawading councillor, Dr Gavan Oakley, who drew his inspiration from the popular garden allotment scheme that had flourished in the United Kingdom for 100 years.*

*Nunawading ratepayers and residents readily accepted the invitation to apply for the 65, four metre by nine metre garden allotments which were allocated by the ceremonial drawing of metal tags printed with plot numbers. The plots were offered on a one-year renewable lease at a cost of \$22 plus a \$3 membership fee.*

Nunawading Community Garden, Australia's first, continues to be cultivated by local residents.

### 3.3 Sydney's first

Sydney's first community garden was set up in 1986 in the grounds of Callam Park Hospital in Rozelle by people associated with a community centre. Like many community gardens and community-based organisations, Glovers Community Garden has seen fluctuating participation over the decades. The garden has served as a site for field visits for adult education and TAFE courses, bringing it a broader social role.

Just as the establishment of the Nunawading garden stimulated the further development of community gardening in Melbourne, so the practice gained a hold in Sydney. Angel Street Permaculture Garden was established in 1991 on Education Department land in a disused corner of a high school after the garden team failed to secure access from South Sydney Council to a small portion of Sydney Park, then just recently opened, for a city farm.

At the same time, Waterloo Community Garden was opened in the grounds of the Uniting Church in Raglan Street. The Randwick Community Organic Garden (on Randwick City Council public open space at Randwick Community Centre) and UNSW Permaculture Community Garden on off-campus university land followed within a few years.

### 3.4 Gardens in other cities

The year 1994 was an auspicious one for community gardening in Australia.

In that year in Sydney, UNSW Community Permaculture Garden made its start.

Brisbane's first city farm/sustainability educational enterprise was set up in April of that year on Brisbane City Council public open space in Windsor. As a training venue, Northey Street City Farm offers workshops for the community as well as the TAFE Level 1 Horticulture Course and Accredited Permaculture Training - Certificate 3, in addition to being venue to a high school curriculum subject (<http://www.northeystreetcityfarm.org.au>).

The four hectare city farm has grown considerably and has become the major focus of community-based sustainability education in the city as well as the site of cultural celebration and festivals and a popular weekly organic farmers' market.

*Glovers Community Garden  
– Sydney's first.*

*Over the the last two years  
a new team of gardeners  
has brought a renaissance  
to the site. More recently,  
the garden has attracted  
wider recognition through  
publicity in a Sydney Morning  
Herald feature on community  
gardening and in the pages  
of the popular, nationally  
distributed magazine, ABC  
Organic Gardener.*





People associated with city farm went on to establish Growing Communities, which assists in the establishment of community and school gardens ([www.growingcommunities.org.au](http://www.growingcommunities.org.au)).

The year was also that in which City Farm Perth was started on an old scrap metal yard and battery recycling facility. Like Northey Street City farm, the Perth farm runs a weekly organic farmers' market and provides school's educational services on topics such as degraded land rehabilitation, recycling, permaculture gardening, environmental and social issues for primary through to years 11's and 12.

Around this time, community gardens were increasing in number in Adelaide and were soon joined by others in Tasmania. Gardens in Bendigo, Wollongong, Lismore, Wauchope, the Newcastle region and Cairns have extended the practice into regional Australia.

According to Auckland City Council, at least 15 community gardens are known to exist in New Zealand.

## 3.5 Birth of a network

The idea of setting up a national network of people and organisations involved or interested in community gardens, city farms and community-based entrepreneurial centres came to Dr Darren Phillips while completing research for his PhD in the mid-1990s. He found quite a number of these organisations in existence. He also discovered that they usually existed in isolation of each other and surmised that information sharing and cooperation between them could flow from establishing a national network.

Within six months, the Australian City Farms & Community Gardens Network (ACFCGN; [www.communitygarden.org.au](http://www.communitygarden.org.au)) had been established in all states and territories with the exception of the Northern Territory, Tasmania and Western Australia. It was established in the latter over the following few years.

The Network's role today is to facilitate communication between city farmers, community gardeners, school food garden managers, sustainability education centres and land holding institutions, such as local government, that support these community-based enterprises. In Sydney, there exists an informal network of local government staff and others whose work involves contact with or assistance to community gardens.

The March 2007 annual conference of the ACFCGN in Collingwood Town Hall attracted hundreds of participants, including local government officers, over its four days and was opened by Victoria's Minister for Housing. The attendance alone suggests that community gardening and the community building and educational activities that go on in the gardens are ideas whose time has well and truly come.

The UK, Western Europe and the USA now have well developed and cohesive city farm and community garden movements. In the UK, community gardens and city farms are backed by the National Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens ([www.farmgarden.org.uk](http://www.farmgarden.org.uk)). The organisation has received funding from the UK Department of the Environment and offers valuable support and advisory services to groups seeking to secure access to land. There is also, in the UK, the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners ([www.nsalg.org.uk](http://www.nsalg.org.uk)).

City farms today range in size and complexity from small, low-cost neighbourhood enterprises to larger establishments such as Collingwood Children's Farm and CERES.

### 3.6 Time of growth

Although the number of community gardens in Australia is not known with any accuracy, what is known is that the years from 1991 have been a time of growth for the practice. Growth accelerated later that decade and the number of gardens continues to increase.

The availability of assistance to NSW Department of Housing estate residents to start community gardens in the late 1990s, through assistance from the Royal Botanic Gardens, stimulated growth. The provision of similar services to estate residents in Victoria, through the community association, Cultivating Community, brought similar growth. Brisbane's Growing Communities has been established to catalyse the development of community and school gardens in that city.

The same period has seen greater intervention by local government in community gardening. Rather than wait for people from the LGA to approach councils for assistance in finding land and starting community gardens, a number of councils have taken the initiative and set up their own gardens.

Generally, local government views community gardening as a valid urban landuse limited only by the availability of public open space or other land, by funding and by the capacity of community organisations to design, construct and manage their gardens.



## 4. Community gardens – roles & benefits

# Community Gardens

## Policy Directions for Marrickville Council

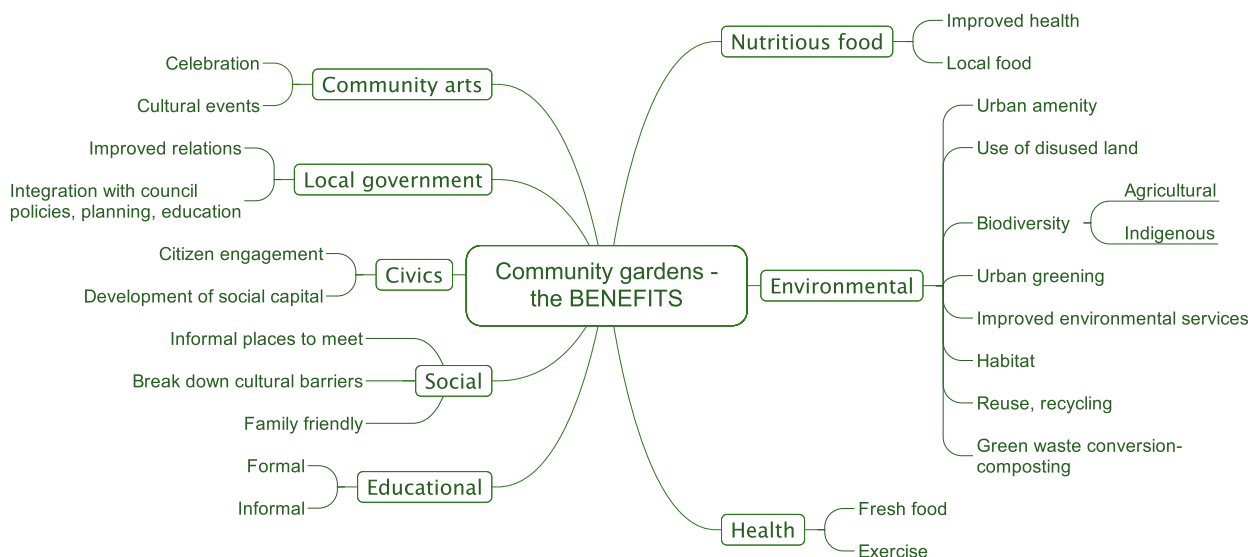
For local government, community gardens offer venues in which policy and recommended practices can be demonstrated, and a means to develop citizen leadership and the social capital of the LGA.

For participants, they offer opportunities:

- to improve personal health through exercise
- for constructive recreation
- to access fresh food to supplement that purchased
- to reduce family expenditure on food.

The information in this section is derived from the responses of local government officers, community gardeners, sustainability educators and from others with a direct interest in community gardening.

Additional observations derived from the practice of and familiarity with community gardening are included.



## 4.1 The benefits of community gardens

There is convergence on the value of community gardening among local government officers, community gardeners and others with a direct interest in the practice.

It is too early to identify benefits to Waverley Council LGA because their community garden is only coming into operation. The officer overseeing the establishment of the community garden, however, described benefits as potentially 'innumerable' and expects the following may be among those that eventuate:

- access to outdoor space
- involvement in growing, especially for children
- the gaining of new knowledge
- learning, both formal and informal
- access for older people who have had land and now live in apartments; the council officer suggested they may miss their gardens and, therefore, welcome the opportunity to participate in the community garden
- developing a sense of community through getting to know people and neighbours
- physical exercise.

These are characteristics that are generally ascribed to community gardening.

According to Cultivating Community CEO, Ben Neil, the benefits of the 20 community gardens on housing estates his organisation assists in Melbourne include:

- access to local food and therefore a reduction in the food miles travelled by food bought in shops
- an improved sense of community
- increased opportunities for social connectedness, intergenerational and cultural exchange

- a reduction in the volume of green waste going to landfill.

Jacqui Hunter, who until this year worked for a South Australian community development agency that assisted a number of community gardens, said that their benefits lay in:

- providing a meeting place for learning, friendship and growing food
- acting as a model of best practice with regard to sustainable gardening and sustainable living in general.

It is also generally agreed among those associated with the community gardening milieu that, through the cooperation necessary to successfully planning and maintaining a community garden or city farm, skills are developed that contribute to a viable civil society sector.

Experience indicates that all of these attributes are true. Some, like those to do with civil society skills and a sense of community, are not necessarily a part of every individual's community gardening experience and take time to become apparent.

*Common observations of benefits include the following...*

### 4.1.1 Access to nutritious food

Providing access to fresh, nutritious food ranked highly among community garden stakeholders.

The Sydney Food Fairness Alliance, an association of community and health workers, nutritionists, urban agriculture advocates and sustainability educators in local and state government, hospitals and the church and community sectors also recognises the value of the gardens as a do-it-yourself approach to urban food security.

Food security can be defined as:

*Year-round access to fresh, nutritious food sufficient to support an active lifestyle.*

Added to that definition by community and health workers dealing with multicultural clientele is the term 'culturally appropriate food' in recognition of the fact that people from particular cultures:

- may not understand the preparation of foods from outside their culture
- may have food taboos – foods that are not eaten; even where they are available they will not be consumed.

### 4.1.2 Environmental benefit

Community gardens bring environmental benefit to neighbourhoods and to the wider LGA through:

- the establishment of plants and the environmental services they bring (filtering of air; maintenance of the water table; cooling; windbreak; nitrogen fixation; prevention of soil erosion etc)
- urban amenity, such as improvement to the built environment and the associated food and recreational values; improvement to the streetscape
- bringing underused or disused land into productive use
- increasing biodiversity, both of agricultural (vegetables, herbs, fruits) and native species

- the conversion of organic and green wastes through composting and wormfarming
- urban greening.

Although designed primarily as food production systems, community gardens are also sites in which native plants of local provenance can be grown. Thoughtful design can incorporate native plants into the functional design of the community garden.

#### 4.1.2.1 Environmental planting in Randwick

The Randwick Community Organic Garden provides an example of how, by incorporating native plants into the design, constructive use can be made of them as a multifunctional element in the garden.

There, Randwick City Council's bushcare co-ordinator assisted with the provision and establishment of locally-provenanced indigenous plants. Established as a windbreak, their primary purpose is to protect the more vulnerable edible crops from the cold, strong winter winds and the southerlies that flow through the site.

The native species – trees, shrubs and ground covers – were incorporated into the overall design of the garden so that they:

- create a robust windbreak
- serve habitat and biodiversity values
- provide a future source of seeds
- serve an educational value as a source of interest to gardeners and visitors.

#### 4.1.2.2 Multifunctional planting in Brisbane

Biodiversity and environmental restoration featured at Brisbane's Northey Street City Farm in a project to restore the mangrove ecosystem along the reach of Breakfast Creek that borders the Farm.

A further biodiversity and educational project was the planting of the farm boundary to an Australian bush food forest of trees, shrubs and lower-growing species.

#### 4.1.2.3 Natives no stranger

Native plants, often indigenous to the locale, feature in many community gardens and demonstrate that there need be no conflict in the combination of natives and exotic edible species.

As in the case of the Randwick garden, incorporating natives in the overall design of the garden so that they perform a number of functions is the most effective means of achieving a synthesis of natives and exotic edibles.

### 4.1.3 Health benefits

The primary health benefits ascribed to community gardens by participants in the collection of information for this report were:

- nutritional health through access to fresh food
- health benefits coming from outdoor exercise.

The last point provides evidence for the outdoor recreational value of community gardens. Additional to this were comments about community gardens as venues for improving mental health through passive recreation, as places to sit, wind down and relax.

At a time of heightened concern over childhood obesity, the value of community gardens as recreational venues for children should not be overlooked. The number of children making use of community gardens depends upon parental involvement in the gardens, the number of children living close to the gardens and the demographic makeup of the area.

Use of community gardens by children has been observed at both UNSW Permaculture Community Garden and Randwick Community Organic Garden in Sydney and at CERES and Collingwood Children's Farm in Melbourne.

The health benefits potential in community gardens suggests that they may be of interest to local government recreation officers.

### 4.1.4 Educational benefit

Glovers, Randwick and the UNSW gardens have been used by TAFE, university and adult community colleges as educational venues. The CERES and Collingwood gardens in Melbourne and Northey Street City Farm in Brisbane are similarly used, as are gardens in other cities.

The types of educational services provided by community gardens include:

- experiential learning-by-doing and through workshops for gardeners and the general public
- environmental education
- horticultural and landscape design education for TAFE and university students as well as those attending community college courses
- public education through informal avenues, interpretive signs in some community gardens and workshops offered by community gardeners to the public on topics such as making compost, starting and operating a wormery, making a productive garden, cooking – garden to kitchen, ethnobotany (the use of plants by different cultures).



*A local government sustainability education officer leads a workshop in the Eastern Suburbs Community Garden*

Dr Tim Lockett, who has participated in the Marrickville Food Forest and UNSW Community Permaculture Garden, said that training for university and TAFE students had been part of the garden at UNSW throughout its existence. It also served researchers as well as adult community-based education.

- the Eastern Suburbs Community College used the garden as venue for practical training for its organic gardening course through the 1990s
- the garden and the associated Ecoliving Centre was used by Randwick City Council's sustainability educator for council's annual Ecoliving Fair and for sustainable living workshops for the community through council's partnership with the university
- Randwick City Council funded the installation of an outdoor classroom in the community garden.

#### 4.1.4.1 Educational values - a recurring response

The educational values of community gardens was a recurring response by both local government officers and community gardeners. Local government officers expressed an interest in using the gardens for their community education programs.

Specifically, they mentioned the following topics as suitable topics for educational activities in community gardens:

- composting
- the use of mulch
- the management of wormeries for domestic waste conversion
- garden construction, planting and maintenance
- crop selection to supplement household food supply.

Although these are common topics offered by sustainability educators for some time, observation suggests that there remains considerable demand for them.

A respondent involved in starting a community garden – he had earlier been involved in Katoomba Community Garden - listed sustainability education, organic food, the benefits of local food production and community gardens as child-friendly, safe environments as among their educational and social assets.

After council approval for their community garden is gained, he and other gardeners plan to make use of it for a program of community and gardener education.

The respondent is a graduate of the Permaculture Design Course and is representative of the number of people with similar qualifications who have become involved in community gardening over the past decade. Now that Permaculture design is offered as accredited training under the National Training Scheme, making students eligible for the federal tertiary educational allowance, it can be anticipated that people studying the topic at Certificate Three, Certificate Four and diploma levels will start using community gardens as venues to support their studies.

Local government waste educators already make use of community gardens to propagate their messages about composting and recycling.



### 4.2 Benefit to the arts

Arts have been established as a component of many community gardens and city farms.

- at the UNSW Permaculture Community Garden, Randwick City Council funded mosaic art workshops open to the public, which resulted in the production of a large mosaic artwork displayed at the garden entrance as well as smaller works
- through its Arts in the Garden team, the UNSW Permaculture Community Garden became known as a community arts venue for the Eastern Suburbs; included were performance, acapella singing, music, readings and historically themed events
- Melbourne's Veg Out Community Garden in St Kilda was started by artists whose works are very much in evidence throughout the garden
- Community arts are part of Northey Street City Farm's program of educational and cultural activities.

### 4.3 Social benefit

Community gardening practitioners, community workers and local government officers have stated that successful community gardens can become the focus of building a sense of community.

This occurs over time through the cooperation demanded of gardeners in planning, constructing and managing a community garden. Skills in negotiation, participation and the management of disagreement are called upon, as is the willingness to compromise for the greater good.

All going well, a sense of common endeavour and a sense of place may evolve and, through this, a sense of shared community can develop. This is not always the case, of course, but it is the actuality in a reasonable number of community gardens according to anecdotal evidence.



*Participants learn to make compost at a Randwick City Council sustainable gardening course at the UNSW Permaculture Community Garden*

There is also social benefit in simply getting together with the neighbours. 'Meeting the neighbours' was a recurring benefit cited by gardeners consulted in collecting information for this report and is frequently heard in informal conversation.

Making the effort to establish and maintain good relations with non-gardening neighbours was mentioned as a desirable activity.

The potential of community gardens as venues for social development suggests they may be of interest to local government social planners and community workers.

#### 4.3.1 The need for 'third places'

The role of informal meeting place was frequently mentioned by respondents as a benefit of their community gardens.

The importance of informal meeting places in our cities has been researched and given validity by US academic, professor Ray Oldenburg. He describes the values of such locations in his book, *The Great Good Place*, in which he terms them 'third places'.

His typology is based on the length of time characteristically spent in a place. Thus, the home is the 'first place' and the workplace the 'second place'.

The value of third places, Oldenburg says, is that they are cheap to visit, are best when local for ease of access and facilitate open discussion. Coffee shops, cafes, hairdressers and libraries are other examples of third places as they provide the opportunity for unmediated interaction and discussion which can be the inspiration for community-based activities.

The demand for third places is driven by many factors including the commercialisation of the public sphere, the intrusion of marketers into public places and the open, minimalist design of some public open space. This and other factors have limited the availability of quite places where people can get together informally.

It is probably for these reasons as well the development of a sense of community that social researcher, Hugh Mackay, reports that people say they want to see the return of the 'village green', a place for largely passive and unorganised sitting, meeting and enjoying.

Community gardens qualify as Oldenburg's third places and, if designed accordingly, could function as Mackay's village green as well, especially when local government designs the option for community gardens into the management plans for public open space. Then, such spaces may function as multifunctional places where space, compatibility and facility is designed accordingly.

This may be an effective way for gardeners and local government staff to address the perception that community gardens could alienate public open space. By designing them and their surroundings to incorporate the characteristics that could be expected of a combined community food production venue, social facility and village green, the third place values of the gardens may be enhanced.



### 4.4 Reducing crime

Worth consideration by local government decision makers is the potential for community gardens in crime reduction. A UNSW study found that the gardens have a role in reducing the incidence of crime on public housing estates in NSW. The potential for this to be transferable to public open space in general remains untested, but is surely worthy of consideration in planning the siting of new community gardens.

Crime in the form of vandalism does occur in community gardens, particularly in areas hosting a lower socioeconomic demographic where, in one case at least, it has been attributed to youth gangs. This suggests that fencing community gardens in these areas is a good idea. Anecdotal evidence from the Smith Street Community Garden in Cabramatta suggests that heroin users have been largely displaced from the adjoining park (the garden occupies part of a park).

Published in 2006, the AHURI UNSW-UWS Research Centre study found that a social approach to crime reduction including better design, lighting and cooperation between government and residents — and the presence of community gardens — was effective in reducing crime. The study is the work of Dr Bruce Judd and Dr Rob Samuels.

The NSW government housing estate at Claymore, near Campbelltown, provides an example of the role of community gardens in public housing estate rehabilitation. There, assisted by Argyle Community Housing, residents cleaned up their streets, started their own neighbourhood watch, employment service and built extensive community food gardens in public open space.

### 4.5 Encouraging good council/community relations

Providing assistance to new community gardens and maintaining an interest in their development through ongoing contact provides councils with the opportunity to enjoy positive relations with the public.

When councils offer workshops to the public in community gardens there is further opportunity for developing congenial relations. This is an opportunity that council public relations people are not yet aware of and, because of this, it is up to the motivation and knowledge of those council officers that have contact with gardeners and, through them, the public, to encourage further positive interaction between council and citizen.

### 4.6 Breaking down cultural barriers

Multicultural aspects of community gardening factored in the response of Hurstville Council, which only this year launched its involvement in community gardening with the opening of an allotment garden on the site of a disused bowling club close to the town centre.

Hurstville has a cosmopolitan population with a high proportion of people of Asian and Middle Eastern backgrounds. Council's Waste Project Officer, who has had responsibility for the development of the garden, cited the presence of:

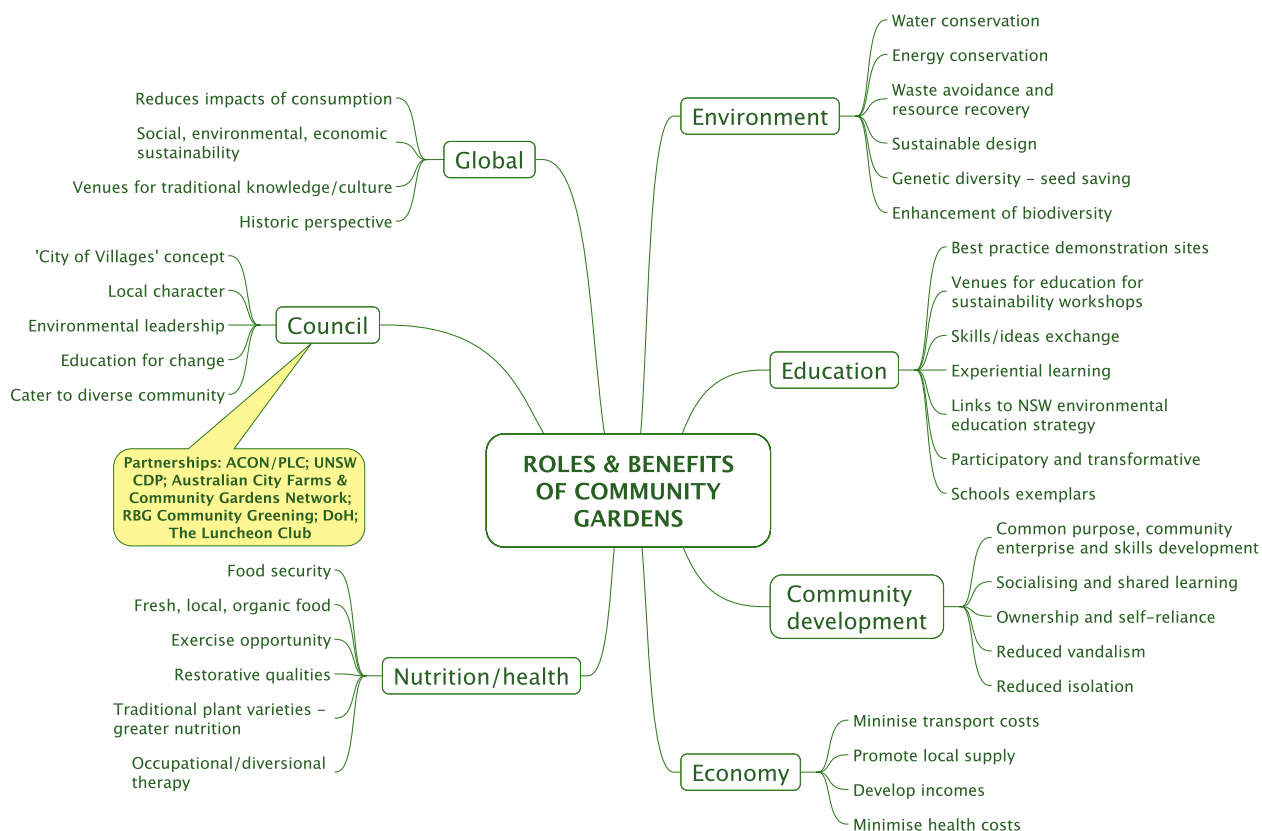
*Multi-cultural gardeners, mostly Asian, some Arabic, some Caucasian.  
Community gardening helps break down barriers and gardeners  
share recipes and vegetables.*

Community gardens reflect the ethnic and cultural makeup of the areas surrounding them. Thus:

- the proposed community garden in Manly LGA has, in its initial planning stage, attracted people of mainly Caucasian, Anglo background
- in Melbourne, the community gardens in Fitzroy estate comprises a preponderance of Hmong gardeners and some other ethnic groups
- the Collingwood housing estates gardens comprise Turks and Asians, for the most part
- Melbourne's Flemington Community Garden includes Vietnamese, Middle Eastern and other ethnicities
- Sydney's Riverwood Community Garden reflects the Asian origin of many living in nearby Department of Housing residences
- Brisbane's Northey Street City Farm has a large Anglo contingent although people of other cultural origins are involved and multicultural celebration is prominent in the Farm's annual activity calendar.

Community gardeners welcome people of all cultural backgrounds and circumstances, however Waverley Council states that, among other characteristics, overseas born residents of the LGA will be looked on favourably in applications for allotments. A preference for cultural origins is not in the egalitarian tradition of community gardening. City government overseas stresses that membership be provided on a first come-first served basis.

City of Sydney  
ROLES & BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY GARDENS  
Produced by City of Sydney Waste Education Coordinator



## 5. The structure of community gardens

# Community Gardens

## Policy Directions for Marrickville Council

Community gardens make use of either the allotment or the shared approach to gardening. Many successfully integrate both models.

Gaining access to land and finding financial and other support to start community gardens has been, and remains, an ad-hoc process and major challenge to gardeners.

Lacking has been any model for approaching land holding institutions such as local government to gain their support outside of the special case of public housing estates. Equally lacking is any model by which these institutions might respond to approaches for land and assistance in any structured way.

Council utilisation of community gardens for public education is an idea with considerable potential.

The practice of councils starting community gardens seems to be restricted to NSW. As a top-down approach it is consuming of staff time. In only a comparatively few cases do councils directly manage community gardens.

There is no single model of a community garden, nor is there a single model for starting gardens.

Over the almost 30 year history of community gardening in Australia, characteristics and trends have evolved that have given rise to the diversity of community garden arrangements found around the country.

## 5.1 The number of gardens

The number of community gardens and city farms in Australia is not known.

There has been no census of gardens since that carried out by the Australian City Farms & Community Gardens Network in 1996 (*Australian City Farms, Community Gardens and Enterprise Centres Inventory*, 1996; compiled by Darren Phillips; July 1996; self-published), in which 40 were identified. Even for its time this figure may have been an underestimate as, over the two editions of the *Inventory*, information about previously unknown gardens came in after the *Inventory* went to press.

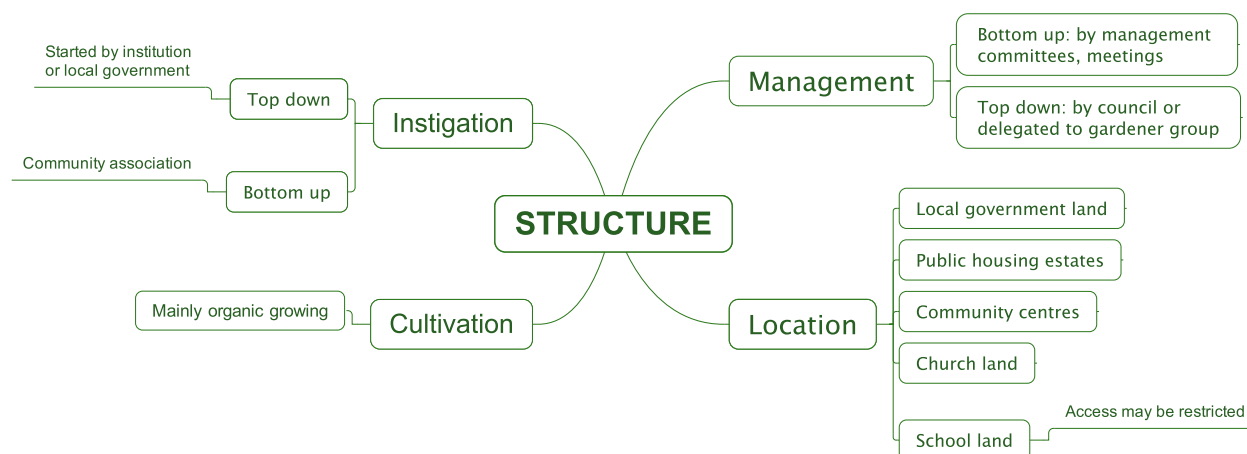
ACFCGN sources in Adelaide list the number of South Australian community gardens at 27. This includes gardens in Adelaide as well as those in regional centres.

A rough count for Sydney would list around 65 community gardens inclusive of those whose use is limited to residents of public housing estates. There may be more.

The Sydney City Council area has a total of ten community gardens, three of them on the Department of Housing's Waterloo Estate. Participation in these housing estate gardens, as in all community gardens on public housing land, is restricted to a community defined by residence on the estates. They are not open to use by the wider community.

An evaluation of the Royal Botanic Garden's Community Greening program puts the total number of community garden projects at 52, with additional gardens for special needs clients such as people living with HIV and in schools (*Community Greening Program Evaluation - Final Report*; 2004; Urbis, Sydney). The program was established to assist community gardening on public housing estates and does not assist community gardeners in the wider community.

A rough and conservative estimate for Australia as a whole puts the number of gardens at over 120 in total. Again, the figure may be substantially in excess of this estimate.



### 5.2 Establishing the gardens

Gaining access to land and finding financial and other support to start community gardens has been, and remains, an ad-hoc process for gardeners outside of public housing estates. For these more-narrowly defined communities, the Royal Botanic Gardens in NSW and Cultivating Community in Melbourne provide a structure for establishing gardens and for ongoing assistance. The comments that follow refer to gardeners outside the estates.

Lacking has been any model for approaching land holding institutions such as local government and donors to gain their support. Equally lacking is any model by which these institutions might respond to approaches for land and assistance in any structured way. The result is the diversity of community garden arrangements we find across the country today.

It can be the experience of would-be community gardeners approaching local government for assistance that the response depends on the attitude of council staff or elected councillors and their knowledge, if any, of the history and potential role of community gardens in urban environments. That this can be variable, even chancy, was attested to by a number of local government staff consulted in the production of this report as well as by community gardeners.

### 5.3 Access to land: where gardens are located

To date, community gardens have been located on land owned by the following organisations.

#### 5.3.1 Local government

Most community gardens and city farms in Australia are located on local or city government land zoned as public open space.

#### 5.3.2 State government

The NSW Department of Housing has a policy of support for community gardens on its public housing estates.

In NSW, the Royal Botanic Gardens assists the establishment and management of community gardens on the estates through its Community Greening program. This provides for periodic visits to gardens for support and advice.

In Melbourne, a community organisation, Cultivating Community, is contracted to the Department of Human Services to assist the start-up of, and to provide on-going support to, community gardens on the Department's estates.

Cultivating Community employs a number of full and part-time staff, many with horticultural expertise, and attaches them to gardens for fixed periods. The model has proven a successful one and Cultivating Community has extended its range of activity to include involvement in a garden-to-kitchen program running in several schools, for which staff with teaching expertise are hired, and the start-up of two food cooperatives (member-based food purchasing organisations) on two housing estates.

The organisation enjoys semi-autonomous status in its work on behalf of government and is pioneering new ground for a community-based organisation.

### 5.3.3 Schools

Only a small number of community gardens have been set up within the grounds of schools.

In Sydney, these include Angel Street Permaculture Garden, established in 1991 in a disused area of Newtown High, a small garden in the grounds of a school in Bundeena and a community garden in the grounds of a primary school in Granville.

Difficulties with this model arise in the form of gardening hours restricted to weekends and as issues around the protection of children. Restricted hours, especially in the dry conditions that have prevailed in Sydney these past few years, have the potential to limit access for watering and weed control, both of which could reduce garden productivity and discourage gardeners.

School yard community gardens open to the public are rare in other cities. Many schools have food gardens that are used for educational purposes, however these are for students and, in the case of a school grounds garden in Marrickville, for the use of their parents as well.

Providing reasonable conditions of access could be negotiated, there is probably potential for growth as schools form a sizable reservoir of open space in our cities.

### 5.3.4 Churches

The number of community gardens on church land remain small.

The Raglan Street Uniting Church, in Waterloo, has hosted the Waterloo Community Garden since 1991. Due to the initiative of members of the congregation and community worker, Rhonda Hunt, the garden continues today and is open to the wider community.

The garden was originally of the shared type but was changed into an allotment garden. Ms Hunt went on to work in community garden liaison with South Sydney Council (since amalgamated with City of Sydney) as part of its waste education unit and was instrumental in assisting the gardens on the Waterloo Estate during their establishment.

The small Glebe Community Garden at the rear of a church on St John's Road, and the Greg Hewish Community Garden in Redfern (on diocese land) are the only other community gardens in Sydney known to exist on church land. There is a community garden in the grounds of a convent in Wellington, New Zealand.

### 5.3.5 Community centres

Few community gardens have been established in association with community centres.

Gardens on community centre land in NSW include:

- Chester Hill Community Garden in Western Sydney
- Habitat and Harmony Community Garden on land attached to Belmont Community Centre in the southern Hunter region
- the Sutherland Council garden in the backyard of a small community centre.

An advantage of siting gardens on community centre land is that the centre may choose to extend its public liability insurance to cover the gardeners, saving them the challenge of funding a recurring and significant expense. A further advantage is that the centre may be able to introduce its clients to the garden, providing, in effect, a recruitment function.

## 5.4 Approaches to starting gardens

Broadly, there are two approaches to starting community gardens:

- the bottom-up approach, in which citizens form a community gardening group and approach council or other landholders for access to land and assistance
- the top-down approach, in which councils start a community garden.

State government housing estate community gardens are a different category. They are demand driven in the sense that assistance becomes available after the department is approached about a community garden. In some cases community workers may seed the idea of a community garden first.

The bottom-up approach was the norm until only a few years ago, when local government has become involved in designing and constructing community gardens in the absence of evident grassroots support. The UK model of council not only constructing a garden but assuming direct control and issuing licences for allotments is untried in Australia and is only now having its first implementation with a single council.

The first top-down community garden in Australia, as far as is known, was Young Earth Community Garden at Chester Hill Community Centre. Centre management hired a young woman to design, start construction and interest the local community in the garden. This was successful but took quite some time.

Top-down models are supply-driven and are the most time-intensive for local government, requiring design, construction and management input, at least in their initial phase. Bottom-up community gardens are demand-driven and offer the least call on local government resources as it is a community association that does most of the organisation and construction work.

The Hurstville Council model, in which Council designs and constructs the garden then hands management over to a gardener's team, reduces the call on council resources after a sufficient number of gardeners have been recruited.



## 5.5 Types of gardens

There are two models for the design of community gardens:

- allotment gardens - in which gardeners have exclusive right to the use of an area of land; the allotment holder may be an individual, family or group of friends, depending on the rules established by the gardeners or land management authority
- shared gardens - in which a garden is cultivated in common, with produce being divided among gardeners.

Housing estate and some council-initiated gardens are exclusively of the allotment model, however more common are community gardens combining both shared gardening and allotments.

All gardens have areas of common land and infrastructure which must be maintained, such as fencing, shared compost production facility, water tanks, storage shed and paths. Maintenance is simple in shared gardens because it is a regular part of the activity cycle. In allotment gardens, allotment holders are expected to contribute time and effort to maintenance of common areas and facilities.

Preference for a particular model - allotment or shared - sometimes has its basis in observation of gardens the community gardeners have visited, their knowledge or experience of community gardening overseas or a belief that one system is superior to the other. Experience, however, indicates that both models work.

While the Nunawading Community Garden, the nation's first, took the UK model of allotment gardening as its structure, gardens established since the early 1990s, particularly in NSW, have combined allotments with shared gardening. Contemporary community gardens designed on this model include Randwick Community Organic Garden on land owned by Randwick City Council and the NSW Department of Lands and the now-defunct Eastern Suburbs Community Garden.

One Randwick gardener explained the rationale for designing a garden that mixed the models. He said that some people who wanted to garden couldn't attend the community garden on a regular enough frequency to maintain an allotment. Others didn't want an allotment. Working in the shared garden area on whatever task needed doing at the

*Allotments at the original  
Randwick Community  
Organic Garden  
were small in comparison  
with many Melbourne  
allotment gardens  
but were large enough  
to produce vegetables  
to supplement food  
purchases.*





## 5. The structure of community gardens

time met their need to participate in gardening as well as taking a share of whatever was ready to harvest. There, the combination of both types proved viable.

Some gardens make a deliberate decision to adopt only shared gardening as they believe this a more authentic form of community gardening. They make a clear distinction between this model and allotment gardens. Gardens that have made exclusive use of the shared model include Angel Street Permaculture Garden, Habitat and Harmony Community Garden and the now-closed UNSW Permaculture Community Garden.

All housing estate community gardens have adopted the allotment model, including those in Melbourne associated with Cultivating Community. Why this model was adopted remains unclear. It may have been that community gardeners in Melbourne originally included a sizable portion of immigrants and the allotment was their only experience of community gardening. There is also the belief that each gardener having their own area leads to a greater sense of 'ownership' of the garden as a whole. The allotment set the precedent for estate gardens and has been replicated exclusively.

Non-estate gardens adopting the allotment model include Hurstville Council's new Hurstville Community Garden, Woolloomooloo Community Garden (on public open space in Sydney Place and managed by the gardeners in association with City of Sydney) and the community garden at Green Valley in Western Sydney.

Local government officers taking the top-down approach to establishing community gardens have opted for the allotment model. The rationale for this is clear - they have too little time or experience in community work, and too few of the interpersonal skills necessary to develop shared gardens. The allotment is what is manageable. It is no accident that all shared gardens have been the initiative of voluntary groups of gardeners.



*Allotments at Melbourne's Flemington Community Garden are of sufficient size for production of food for a family. Note raised gardens on right for less-mobile gardeners and roofed shelter behind.*

## 5.6 Legal structure

To date, most community gardens outside the housing estates have been established by individuals organised into voluntary associations registered with the NSW Department of Fair Trading and similar agencies in other states.

This structure:

- is often required before councils will allocate land for a community garden
- facilitates the purchase of public liability insurance, often a further requirement of councils
- is often stipulated by donors for eligibility for grants
- is manageable by the gardeners because the annual reporting requirement of the Department is not onerous and does not call for skills beyond those present in most associations.

Obtaining public liability insurance, usually to the value of \$10-20 million, is a barrier to the formation of community gardens. Raising the funds can be a real challenge to small groups. Obtaining insurance is sometimes seen as bureaucratic intrusion into what, gardeners say, should be a simple activity. It is an unwelcome demand on the time of people who simply want to garden.

Public liability costs up to around \$900-\$1,200 a year depending on its source. A number of community gardens have joined Landcare Australia or horticultural associations to take advantage of their group buying scheme to cut their insurance costs by more than half.

The reality is that most garden groups find the obligations of incorporation a minor burden. Appointing people as treasurer, public officer and secretary, as decreed by the rules of incorporation, may be to offer unwanted roles, but the demands are not great and most carry them out without difficulty. Most gardens that incorporate find that it opens opportunities, such as access to grants, not otherwise available.

Not all gardens buy the insurance and some question its necessity. To the author's knowledge, there has never been a liability claim on a community garden.

### 5.7 Cultivation methods

Organic gardening is the preferred method of community gardening in Australia. It is promoted on the basis of:

- gardener safety through the avoidance of toxicity from overuse or misapplication of synthetic biocides
- avoidance of contamination of waterways and soils with synthetic chemicals
- the opportunity to learn about cultivation that comes with the use of organic methods, which are knowledge-intensive rather than relying on the simple application of synthetic chemicals.

Some councils stipulate that only organic methods are permissible and this is stipulated in a number of overseas community garden policies.

### 5.8 Council involvement in the community garden

Beyond allocating land, local government generally has had little involvement in community gardens apart from occasional support in the form of small grants or the irregular donation of goods like mulch, compost or water as in-kind contributions. This, however, is starting to change as councils take the initiative to set up community gardens in the Sydney region.

Apart from councils that have set up a model of direct management of community gardens, such as Waverley and Willoughby, those with ongoing arrangements with community garden associations, beyond assisting them find land and get started, commonly make use of the garden as a venue for council workshops for the public as part of their sustainability education program.

Thus, Randwick, Waverley, City of Sydney and Sutherland have an arrangement for use of community gardens they helped set up. Randwick City Council, responding to enquiries from the public about keeping chickens in backyards, purchased a set of chickens and a small, mobile pen that is housed in Randwick Community Organic Garden. There, the garden's 'chook team' makes use of the poultry for eggs and to learn about caring for the animals and council's sustainability education officer borrows birds and pen for workshops and Council's annual Ecoliving Fair.

Council utilisation of community gardens for public education is an idea with considerable potential for development that was identified by community gardeners and council officers during the information collection phase of this report.

This report later recommends that councils and gardeners develop a memorandum of understanding that allows for council use of the garden for public education and the demonstration of 'sustainable' gardening, green waste conversion and garden water demand management.



## Community Gardens Policy Directions for Marrickville Council – November 2007

*Learning to make a sheet mulched garden by recycling newspaper as a weed barrier in a community garden.*



*Gardens designed on the shared model are visually different to allotment gardens.*

*In this shared garden, beds of annual herbs and vegetables are located to the sunward side of the site. Part of a pergola-covered sitting area appears to the left.*

*Behind is a food forest modeled on the vertical structure of the natural forest, with low growing plants tolerant of shade and upper levels forming an open canopy.*

*The forest was an attraction for visitors and also served as windbreak to protect the annual crops.*



## 6. Effective community gardening

# Community Gardens

## Policy Directions for Marrickville Council

Factors contributing to the effective and productive operation of community gardens include those related to horticultural practices as well as decision making.

Considerations:

- Council encourage community garden groups to adopt decision making processes based on the participatory model
- were Council to set up an allotment garden and lease plots to gardeners, Council encourage gardeners to set up a management team and Council be represented on this
- depending on the model of community garden, Council considers making a small start-up grant to assist the garden obtain infrastructure and cover insurance costs.

Efficiency is about the economical and maximal use of resources in a community garden. Effectiveness refers to the overall direction of a garden and its propensity to meet its objectives and aims. Effectiveness is more about direction than the means of getting there.

The management of a garden and relationships between gardeners figure prominently among factors contributing to effective community gardening. This was something about which local government officers and community gardeners concurred.

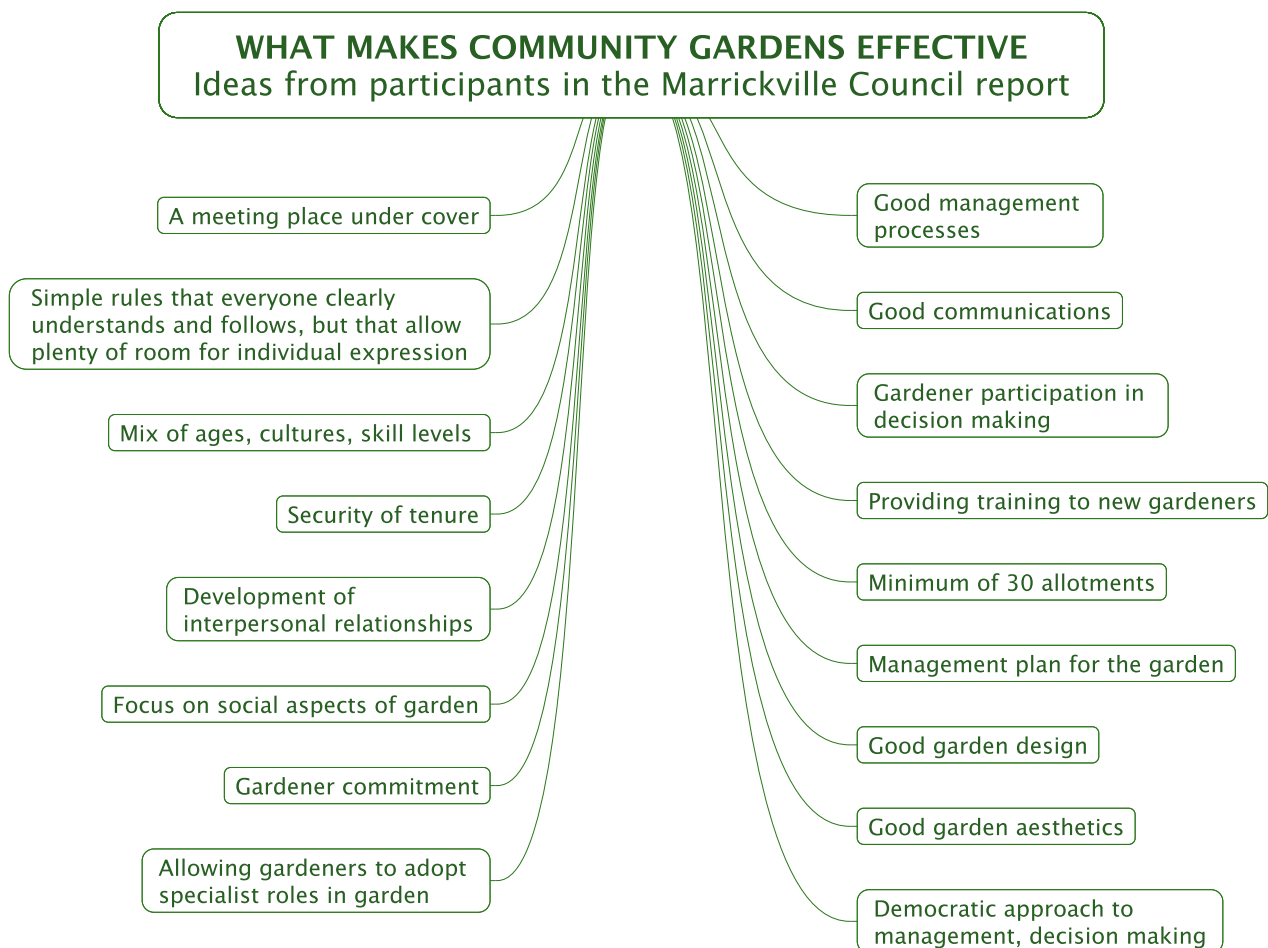
## 6.1 Ideas on effectiveness

A respondent, Dr Tim Luckett mentioned that the sharing of produce is a factor that contributes to effectiveness. This was his experience in two community gardens that made use of the shared gardening structure rather than the allotment model. Sharing does occur in allotment gardens, other than the shared work of maintaining common areas, but it is not as core a practice.

There are psychological aspects to effective community gardening, according to Dr Luckett. There's return on effort:

*You feel you get out what you put in.*

There's also the feeling of inclusiveness, of being part of a group of gardeners that "have a stake in the garden".



He added that gardeners have to “get the work done to be effective”, a factor which figured in the decline of the Marrickville Food Forest.

The Randwick Community Organic Garden made use of organisational structures developed by the Eastern Suburbs Community Garden, which seemed to have found the happy medium between a state of under and over organisation. The Randwick garden's respondent, Emma Daniell, a qualified landscape designer and horticulturist, listed as important to effectiveness participatory factors such as:

- good communications
- stakeholder participation in decision making
- having ‘good process.’

She added as important:

- flexibility
- providing training to new gardeners
- roles for participants - Ms Daniell said that gardeners sometimes find that they like doing a particular activity and making it possible for them to do this is helpful to the functioning of the garden.

Dr Kristina Warton is a medical research scientist who participated in the UNSW Permaculture Community Garden until its closure and is now with the Randwick Community Organic Garden. She stresses the importance of the community garden's constitution as contributing to the effective management of the enterprise:

*It is important to the resolution of disputes and how things get done.*

Also necessary is the willingness to compromise and good communications. This is something people usually bring with them to the garden but it can be learned, she said.

Structure is important to Glovers Community Garden in Rozelle, according to teacher and gardener, Jane Mowbray. She sees the community garden's shared structure (there are no allotments) as the means of maintaining the effectiveness of the garden as people come and go.

Community educator, returned overseas development assistance worker and Permaculture design graduate, Rob Allsop - a member of the new community garden startup in Manly LGA - lists as components of effectiveness:

- democratic process
- a focus on the social aspects of the activity
- a regular commitment by members
- good garden aesthetics.

A garden which is productive and looks that way and is encouraging to members:

*Garden productivity and a food focus equate to success. The garden should look like it is well used, like it's happening.*

Local government officers generally agreed with the comments made by the community gardeners above, and added their own.

Marrickville Council's sustainability educator, Nell Graham, lists as the main contributors to effectiveness:

- strong leadership in the garden
- gardeners that know what they are doing
- good design
- gardening knowledge.

City of Sydney Waste Education Coordinator and community garden liaison, Michael Neville, cites the example of Woolloomooloo Community Garden in Sydney Place as an example of garden effectiveness. The City designed and constructed the garden to replace an earlier, small community garden sited adjacent to the Eastern Suburbs rail viaduct, and continues to provide support.

Michael said that factors he has observed that contribute to effectiveness include:

- the importance of a competent organisation
- democratic and participatory group structure
- commitment
- the ability to deal with issues through an informal conflict resolution process
- having a management plan for the garden.

The City's partnership with the AIDS Council and Department of Health facilitated access to the Newtown garden by people living with HIV.

The therapeutic values of community gardening also figure prominently in the Sutherland Community Garden which serves as venue for rehabilitation and is used by disability services. The services make use of the garden once or twice a week, however there are also other users for whom the garden serves as meeting place.

Council's community garden liaison, environmental scientist, Justin Sauvage, said that community gardens work well when they serve a genuine need, and that providing access to food gives the gardens a purpose.

He explained that the Sutherland garden - it is in the backyard of a Council house that serves as a community centre - has had varying rates of participation. This he puts down to the Sutherland area's demographic with its characteristics of mobility and middle class structure. He said that the municipality has both medium density dwellings as well as detached houses with gardens, so access to open space for home gardening is achievable for those that want it.

Willoughby Council's Bushcare Coordinator has responsibility for the single, council-managed community garden in the LGA. She lists as critical to effectiveness:

- democratic process
- allowing gardeners to be heard
- giving them the freedom to try things
- learning by the gardeners
- the development of interpersonal relationships
- sharing of a common space
- the feeling of being supported.



For both gardeners and local government officers, fair and democratic process and the participation of gardeners in decision making figured prominently in their responses.

It has been suggested that shared gardens have the potential to be more inclusive, to develop closer and more cooperative bonds between gardeners and to have greater potential to be participatory, however while these characteristics may be more necessary in a shared garden than in one based on the allotment model, there has been no objective assessment to test the assumption. It remains an observation of those active in shared gardens.

### 6.2 The training and support managers view

Considering the 20 Melbourne community gardens assisted by Cultivating Community, CEO Ben Neil lists the following as contributing to the effective practice of community gardening:

- a minimum of 30 plots (all of the gardens assisted by Cultivating Community are allotment gardens)
- a strong, active and inclusive committee of management
- active gardeners
- good garden design; the design of Cultivating Community gardens has been assisted by a landscape designer and the gardens are usually designed and installed under the supervision of Cultivating Community rather than being gardener designed and built; this is more appropriate to the clientele that use the gardens
- the presence of a meeting space in the garden; this reinforces the social role of community gardening and their role as 'third places'
- good quality soil and composting systems
- social events in the community garden
- translations of signage and instruction, if needed.

Drawing on her experience assisting community gardens in Adelaide, Jackie Hunter says good practice in community gardens and the effectiveness of the gardens comes through:

- security of tenure
- diversity - a mix of ages, cultures, skill levels etc
- a combination of communal and private plots – catering to a range of needs
- a meeting place – ideally under cover, with simple cooking facilities to encourage the sharing of food and to further community building
- simple rules that everyone clearly understands and follows, but that allow plenty of room for individual expression.

## 6.3 Decision making in community gardens

If gardens are to be participatory and democratic, decision making on both strategic direction and day-to-day affairs is of great importance.

### 6.3.1 Restrictive models

Because the UNSW Permaculture Community Garden formed a part of the university's Ecoliving Centre, gardeners did not enjoy the freedom and self-management characteristic of many other gardens. There were team meetings but the gardeners were answerable to the manager of the Ecoliving Centre and had to seek approval for works of any magnitude.

The arrangement was a later one in the garden. In the years from 1995 to the turn of the century, the garden was more self-managing as the Ecoliving Centre was not in existence over that period. The garden had originally developed as a project of the UNSW Student Guild. With the establishment of the Ecoliving Centre, itself instigated by the gardeners as a response to securing a longer tenure after the university attempted to close the garden, it became incorporated into the formal structure of the university.

Among the lessons coming from the experience of the UNSW Permaculture Community Garden are that the modes of organising and management of corporate structures, such as universities, and the looser and informal structures of civil society organisations need skillful negotiation to make them workable.

Waverley community gardeners will have less of a role in decision making, according to Council. There is to be no formal avenue for gardener input in the model being developed. Council's respondent suggested informal avenues of input into the garden may open with time, but it is notable that none have been built into any operating plan for the garden.

Waverley gardeners are licensees rather than lease holders and Council maintains care, control and management of the site. Observation of the operation of the model over time may disclose its workability and the adjustments that may be necessary to develop it into a fully workable structure.

Respondents saw no difficulty with councils setting up and leasing out plots in allotment gardens, however some suggested that the model is the least likely to see the development of the skills that increase social capital among gardeners.

### 6.4 Garden democracy

Most community gardens feature democratic process of some type in decision making:

- the proposed Green Fingers Community Garden in Manly LGA will be governed by a set of by-laws formulated by the garden team and by elected committees that consult with members
- the Marrickville Food Forest had no formal structure for decision making; decisions were made spontaneously by those present
- Randwick Community Organic Garden, like others, has a seasonal member meeting at which matters of importance to all are voted on; its structure was based on that of the Eastern Suburbs Community Garden.

Governance in community gardens is, for the most part, a form of deliberative democracy in which consensus and agreement plays a role and decisions are formalised by voting.

A model in which council establishes a garden then hands over management to a gardener's association, as is being done by Hurstville Council, could facilitate an innovative and workable model of gardener self-management.



*Community gardeners deliberate changes to the design of a shared garden.*

## 6.5 Funding the gardens

Community gardens do not require large sums of money to operate successfully. Most expenditure occurs at the start-up stage when costly infrastructure is installed.

This may include:

- fencing
- water reticulation - usually a tap and sometimes a water tank to collect rain falling on to the roof of the tool shed or shelter; there are state and federal rebates for installing tanks at the present time, however such rebates may vary in availability depending on the priorities of government
- lockable tool shed
- shelter - usually a pergola-like structure to give shade and shelter from sun, rain and wind and that is paved
- garden edging materials
- public liability insurance
- mulch
- tools and equipment.

Grants, membership and allotment fees are common sources of funding for recurring costs such as insurance. One Sydney council is considering the use of Section 94 funds to start their community garden.

Local government is often the source of the small grants that are helpful in meeting start-up costs. Other sources of grants include philanthropy, though few gardens manage to access philanthropic grants. One garden - Randwick Community Organic Garden - managed to obtain a grant from Bendigo Bank, which expressed interest in participation in the garden.

Beelerong Community Farm, in suburban Brisbane, sells a '\$5 bag' of freshly picked garden produce to local people but some city governments, such as the ACT, prohibit the sale of produce, even as a small scale fund raiser. This creates a barrier to raising small amounts of money. The proposed Manly garden hopes to be able to sell small volumes of garden produce to raise modest funds to meet ongoing expenses.

During its more than a decade of existence, the community garden at UNSW organised arts events such as acapella singing, mosaic workshops for the community and readings. These raised small amounts from donations to fund their art projects and events.

Of critical importance to new community gardens have been the local government grants made at start-up. Randwick City Council has given money in the form of a community grant to the garden.

Also important is in-kind assistance from local government and other sources. This is a low-cost option for councils and may consist of periodic loads of mulch or compost material from council's green waste collections, topping up a water tank until the gardeners build a shed or shelter and start to harvest rain falling on its roof, occasional small grants or, perhaps, the donation of old city park furniture to the garden.

Financial support to City of Sydney community gardens is made available as a council budget item. This is especially useful as it facilitates the development of management plans for the gardens in the knowledge that infrastructure can be planned and that there will be the funds to implement installation. The proposed Kogarah Council community garden will similarly have a budget.

Gardeners in the Sutherland, Willoughby and Waverley models, council-managed gardens in which council is the construction and maintenance agency, do not have to raise funds as they are derived from council's operating budget.

## 7 Community gardens – constraints and opportunities

# Community Gardens

## Policy Directions for Marrickville Council

The shortage of available land in some LGAs, vandalism and the fear of vandalism, the availability of labour to manage the garden, soil quality and contamination, the perceptions of neighbours and the capacity of community gardeners to sustain and manage an organisation may be constraints on community gardening.

Constraints are balanced by the opportunities that the gardens bring in the form of council engagement with residents of the LGA, the social and citizenship benefits of managing a community garden, their role as venues for community education and the potential direct benefits to councils in the form of venues for council-led education. Community gardens are also highly visible symbols of council investment in community facilities and, when the gardens are managed effectively, offer public relations potential for council.

Considerations:

- Council stipulate that applicants for land access for community gardening address common objections in their submissions
- Council promote and encourage the multiple-use values of community gardens in any projects they support
- Council consider options for water harvesting and irrigation in community gardens that conserve water and supply sufficient water for the healthy growth of plants
- Council promote and if necessary provide training in the use of composted green waste as the fertiliser of choice in community gardens.

In assessing community gardens, their value to municipalities and to those participating in them, constraints have to be measured against benefits and opportunities.

The difficulty in doing this is that benefits and opportunities that grow out of the presence of community gardens may not be identifiable until the gardens have passed through the challenging establishment phase and into their post-establishment phase when much of the construction and site development is past. This is when they have achieved a measure of operational equilibrium.

In assessing constraints and opportunities, it is recognised that they vary considerably and may be peculiar to a single community garden. Some, however, suggest a convergence or a trend.

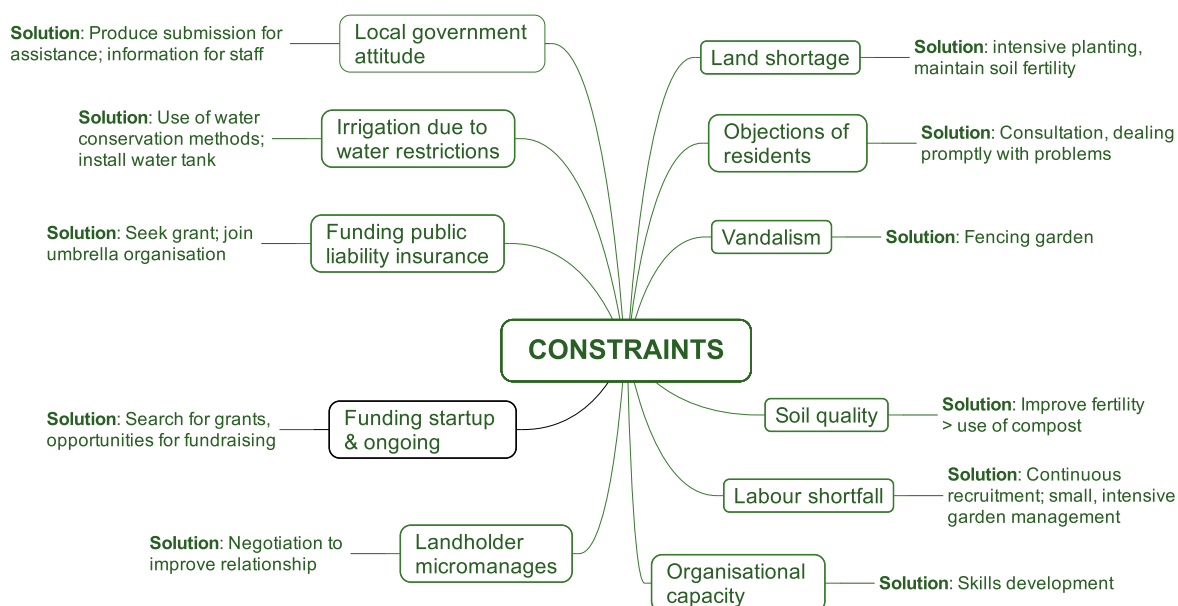
Local government attitude towards community gardens plays an often decisive role in what is identified as constraints and opportunities.

The opportunity for local government to play a significant role in increasing the presence of community gardens, city farms and sustainability education centres is likely to grow with public awareness of the issues of global warming and peak oil and with what appears to be a growing expectation that councils will play a role in educating the public about sustainable living.

Pressure for greater local government involvement in doing this will come from citizens wishing to take direct action and participate in solutions, but it can also come from councils wishing to fulfill a public education role and that wish to be seen to be doing something about the issues. This is a big picture context for community gardening.

There are further opportunities that depend on the interests, skills and motivations of community gardeners. Participation by schools, disadvantaged groups, community and health workers, nutritionists and the community service sections of local government are a few areas where modest inroads have already been made.

Asked what had worked, gardeners in established community gardens came up with a list of mainly social and management factors.





### 7.1 Constraints

#### 7.1.1 Land shortage

The most difficult barrier to the expansion of community gardening in our cities will likely be the lack of sufficient open space to accommodate the anticipated growth in community gardening.

That idea that demand is likely to grow comes from:

- comments made by those involved in the practice that indicate a growing interest
- evidence of a trend towards an increase in the number of community gardens since the start of the 1990s.
- the publicity boost to the popularity of community gardens via television, magazines, newspapers and on the Worldwide Web that has popularised the practice over the past decade.



*Community gardens can be designed to occupy small spaces.*

*The Goody Patch Community Garden in Adelaide is squeezed between a tennis court and the footpath.*



*The original Woolloomooloo Community Garden is another example of a very small but very productive community garden. Occupying only a few tens of square metres, the garden was replaced by a larger facility built by City of Sydney in Sydney Place.*

With scarcity of open space comes competition for what remains, and this can only grow as population increases because of policies on urban consolidation and immigration, and because of the preference for apartment living and economic trends that favour city living.

Marrickville local government area is not alone in having limited land to devote to urban food gardens. While collecting information for this report, both Manly and Waverley councils identified the same barrier to meeting future demand for gardening space.

### 7.1.2 Objections

Further constraints are likely to come from public perceptions about community gardening in residential areas.

Most of the objections stem from assumptions rather than from objective evidence, however they remain an influence on council irrespective of their truth value. They have already acted as a barrier in a number of instances but have, so far, prevented few community gardens going ahead.

In most cases objections to the presence of community gardens have proven unfounded, but this does not imply that they are unrealistic as there have been minor incidents in which some have proven correct.

During interviews for this report, a number of respondents reported that councils had received objections to proposals for a community garden.

Objections included the potential for:

- noise
- unpleasant odour
- vandalism
- loss of parking spaces
- aesthetics
- vermin
- alienation of public open space.

*Fern Avenue Community Garden in Adelaide combines food productivity, community participation and an attractive aesthetics.*





## 7. Community gardens -constraints and opportunities

Specific cases of objections include:

- a neighbour's objection to a rainwater tank in a community garden being higher than his fence; council installed a smaller tank
- local people - neighbours of a long-running inner city community garden - complained to council about a lack of access to the site; the garden was open only on a single week day and not on weekends
- a gardener was said to be using a community garden for production of plants for his landscaping business and for storing his materials on site
- in the case of the UNSW Permaculture Community Garden during its early years, members of an adjoining tennis club complained to gardeners about their smelly compost; the gardeners, being inexperienced, had allowed the compost to go anaerobic; a workshop led by an experienced gardener and the moving of the compost system to another, more convenient location solved the problem
- concern that allocation of a small portion of public open space to a community garden alienated that area from the general community.

Such constraints, and the likelihood that they may eventuate, have to be balanced against the benefits brought by community gardening. Many of them can be dealt with preemptively by addressing their management in the lease or through a memorandum of understanding between gardeners and council.

### 7.1.3 Soil quality

The quality of garden soil can be a constraint but, unless severely contaminated, not a barrier.

Over time, garden soils can be improved by a combination of opening the soil profile to aeration, water and nutrient penetration and the addition of compost and other organic fertilisers.

Evidence that this is a workable solution for poor quality (low fertility) soils comes from community gardens in the Eastern Suburbs, all of which are on sandy soils typical for a region which used to be known as the Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub.

Gardeners have dealt with low fertility, low water retention capacity and lack of minerals through the plentiful application of compost.

For a number of gardens, a valuable input for making the compost has been the delivery of stable sweepings from the Police stables in Redfern. This has also been used as mulch. Gardeners treated the sweepings by letting them cure for a time to leach out veterinary chemicals and then using them to make compost or mulch. Sweepings from the racecourse stables at Randwick have been similarly used.

A number of community gardens have set up bins and signage to assist non-gardening neighbours in leaving their green waste for composting, adding value to the garden's presence for them.

Areas of boggy soils in some community gardens are sometimes a problem in times of rain, however this is a minor difficulty that can be solved through design, such as planting high-water-need plants (eg. taro, water celery, banana) in areas of boggy soils or raising the height of the garden beds as Randwick Community Organic Garden did recently.

### Contaminated soils

Few community gardens in the Sydney region have been assessed for soil contamination other than those in the South Sydney Council area that were analysed in the late-1990s.

Elevated levels of lead ruled out a bowling green for Kogarah Council's proposed community garden on a disused lawn bowls site in Carss Park. An adjacent green was found suitable. Council prepared a *Statement of Environmental Effects* for the proposed garden (June 2007) which also mentions the risk of acid sulphate soils, however the proposed garden site is unaffected by this.

#### 7.1.4 Constraints of capacity

As community-based associations, community gardening organisations may lack organisational capacity:

- there may be a lack of specific expertise such as landscape design or horticultural knowledge
- getting things done can sometimes take a long time and local government officers may find this frustrating
- organisational structures are less formal and structured than those of local government and making decisions may involve a lengthier and consultative processes; rapid response to council enquiries may not eventuate
- the legal requirements of councils and legal language may be baffling
- difficulties with local government can arise because members of the community have little knowledge of council procedures, processes and planning instruments such as regional and local environment plans and plans of management; in the production of this report, people commented that the workings of local government are often a mystery, particularly the division of responsibility within councils
- the availability of time is a major constraint affecting voluntary organisations; family and working life often have to be prioritised above gardening matters.

#### 7.1.5 Labour

The availability of participants and their labour to develop and maintain community gardens was cited as a constraint, although not by a majority of those consulted for this study. Labour availability influences the rate of development of new community gardens and the quality of maintenance in established gardens.

For example:

- gardeners associated with the UNSW Permaculture Community Garden said that finding sufficient labour and the skills to manage the garden was a challenge at times; this was despite the garden being designed as a food forest consisting of mainly perennial fruit, nut and herb species, with a relatively small area of high-attention annual garden for vegetables
- at one stage during the 1990s, the area under cultivation at Glovers Community Garden had to be reduced because the number of gardeners had declined; the terraces on the upper slope, originally cut for vegetable cultivation and fruit and nut trees, were abandoned for some time.

Availability of labour remains an important constraint on community garden development and makes the incremental development of any new community garden site an appropriate strategy:

1. Starting small.
2. Consolidating the small area.
3. Moving out from the its edge of the small, consolidated area in further small steps, consolidating new areas as they are developed.

The approach ensures that an area is first completed before a new area is developed. Finishing the small areas to a high standard reduces the demand for maintenance.

The approach ensures that gardener energy is not dissipated in attempting to develop and maintain gardens scattered over an area larger than the number of gardeners can maintain.

### 7.1.6 The use of organic methods

Gardeners at one site experiencing low participation said that reliance on organic methods was a constraint on the control of weeds. The common weedicide, glyphosate, was not used in the garden as it was not an organic control.

The use of glyphosate, which reportedly has limited persistence in the soil, can be an issue because:

- it offers a rapid solution
- it is not an organic control
- there persist allegations of persistent toxicity.

The use of the chemical is best addressed in the community garden guidelines.

### 7.1.7 Management

A lack of autonomy was an issue for UNSW gardeners, with ideas for anything other than minor works having to be referred to the management of the university's Ecoliving Centre.

In the Eastern Suburbs Community Garden, gardeners tightened up their management procedures and developed a code of conduct as a response to conflict in the garden.

Most community develop a management system that works for them.

### 7.1.8 Vandalism

Vandalism is usually a minor constraint that affects community gardens from time to time. On the rare occasions of intensive vandalism, it can be a major discouragement to gardeners and local government:

- vandalism has been experienced at The Food Forest at Addison Road Community Centre; the site is unfenced
- Woolloomooloo Community Garden experienced an intense bout of vandalism in 2007 in which plants were damaged and a structure severely damaged; the site is surrounded by a low fence
- the original Randwick Community Organic Garden was unfenced but vandalism remained minor although there was the occasional theft of equipment and damage

to plants in allotments; while the garden was not fenced, the community centre site of which it was a part was locked at night

- gardeners associated with the UNSW Permaculture Community Garden reported that children had killed tadpoles in the frog pond by contaminating it with Eucalyptus oil they found in the storage shed.

Incidents of vandalism raise the question of whether community gardens should be fenced or left open and accessible. Gardeners at the damaged Woolloomooloo garden wanted the site to retain its low fence rather than surround it with a high fence. Others install a fence in anticipation of vandalism.

#### 7.1.8.1 Fences and open space alienation

Gardeners acknowledge that a fence excludes people other than vandals and can contribute to the perception of the enclosure of public open space and exclusion of the general public.

They say that any decision on fencing has to balance openness with the damage brought by vandalism. Some suggest a wait-and-see policy in which the garden remains unfenced or has only a low fence. If vandalism becomes an issue then a high fence is warranted.

What there is agreement on is that the socio-demographic make-up of an area influences decisions on fencing.

Fences are sometimes erected to keep dogs out of the garden.

#### 7.1.9 Other constraints

Other constraints identified by respondents include:

- in one garden, there was little interest in saving seeds for future planting and poor documentation of saved varieties, with a generally unsystematic approach
- small membership; recruitment should be an ongoing process in all but the most popular community gardens
- disagreement over gardening techniques; this suggests the wisdom of specifying gardening techniques (organic etc) in a signed gardener's agreement upon recruitment
- lack of council support; this was not a universal comment and would vary with the type of community garden; for example, in council managed allotment gardens there would be greater expectation of council support than in less formal gardens

*The sign welcomes visitors into this unfenced community garden in Katoomba, successfully avoiding the charge that community gardens alienate public open space.*



such as the community association-managed Food Forest in Marrickville

- for the Eastern Suburbs community gardeners, when council was deliberating their future, the debilitating effect of uncertainty over tenure reduced their willingness to do anything in the garden other than simple maintenance
- the presence of the homeless - the UNSW Permaculture Community Garden was unfenced and for a short period a homeless man occupied the site at night; although there was never any danger to gardeners or visitors and no damage to the site, the man was moved on
- Brisbane's Northey Street City Farm, located not far from the city on the Breakfast Creek floodplain, is the only other garden to report the presence of homeless people; they occupied the site prior to the development of the city farm and are regarded by some associated with the farm as a de facto security presence, deterring those who might attempt to break into the office; there have been a small number of minor incidents with the men but their nocturnal presence is not considered a problem.

### 7.1.10 Water supply, irrigation and conservation

Commentators say that the dry conditions affecting South Eastern Australia are likely to continue for some time and may become permanent. This brings water supply to the forefront of community garden design.

Respondents to this report identified water restrictions as a constraint on community gardening. Present limitations on permissible days and times of garden watering can affect when gardeners attend their gardens and what they plant. Gardens that die off because of water stress may discourage gardening.

#### 7.1.10.1 Design the water system when the garden starts

Water conservation and harvesting technologies should be considered at the start of the community garden design process.

Doing this at that time is important because the hydrology of the garden site is affected by soil type, slope, existing soil formations and structures. Assessing the way in which the site interacts with rainfall forms an important part of site analysis. Information identified in this process forms the basis of water harvesting and conservation strategies.

Assessing the water absorption capacity of the soil and how rainfall runoff moves over the site allows the development of design solutions to water harvesting that involve minor earthworks to channel runoff to storage or that would deflect and drain potentially damaging runoff.

Irrigation, moisture retention and water harvesting ideas worthy of consideration in community gardens include:

- organically enriched soils
- the use of mulch on gardens
- installation of water tanks
- contour ditches
- micro-catchments.

These are considered in greater detail in the Attachment 3.

### 7.1.10.2 The Water for Gardens campaign

The magazine, *ABC Organic Gardener*, in its November-December 2007 edition, reported in an article entitled *Water for Gardens Campaign* (page 10) on the new campaign to raise water allowances for gardeners growing food rather than ornamentals and native plants. If successful, this could benefit community gardens.

The argument is based on the fact that home and community gardening uses less water to produce edible crops than commercial farming and therefore should be encouraged by a more generous water allowance.

An 'embodied water' concept seems to be emerging that is analogous to the 'embodied energy' assessment used for materials.

## 7.2 Constraints imposed by landholder

The Randwick Community Organic Garden had to negotiate its lease with two landholders who manage different parts of the site - Randwick City Council and Department of Lands. This enquired more effort and time than dealing with a single landholder.

Some council's stipulate use of only covered compost bins rather than the more traditional open, three bay system and gardeners are expected to abide by laws around exclusion of noxious plants, as are home gardeners.

The practice of restricting participation in council- managed gardens only to residents of the LGA could be seen as a constraint by those wishing to join the community garden but living nearby in another LGA.

There are few other landholder-imposed constraints.

## 7.3 Constraints identified by councils

Local government officers identified a number of constraints that they have observed in the development and maintenance of community gardens.

These include:

- a lack of land in the inner suburbs to develop as community gardens
- lack of council response to the demand for land by community groups
- gardeners giving up the idea of community gardening where councils make it too difficult
- ideas working at different times in the history of a garden; this may be due to the changing membership, the interests that new members bring and to the state of development of the community garden
- lack of a long term view on the development of the gardens; the comment has relevance to the need for community garden development plans
- insufficient multiple use of community gardens was cited by council staff who say that community gardens should be multi-use sites incorporating non-gardening uses as well, such as arts performance; it is worth noting that the UNSW's Arts in the Community Garden team, non-gardeners for the most part, brought people to the garden who would not otherwise have visited it and successfully enacted the multiple-use idea, as did the use of the garden as educational venue.

## 7. Community gardens -constraints and opportunities

Other constraints identified by local government officers involved with community gardens include:

- lack of funding to support the gardens
- drought and its impact on garden productivity through restrictions on watering
- the development of factions among gardeners; this was a comment by a council staffer overseeing a council-managed community garden
- the shading of gardens by adjacent structures and vegetation
- access to the gardens; this was to do with the opening hours of a small number of gardens
- a lack of commitment to participate in the organising and ongoing administrative activity.

Specific responses reflected conditions found in different LGAs:

- the manager of Manly Council's environmental education section said that there is very limited space for future community gardens, with perhaps only two suitable locations
- funding and the Council bureaucracy and a low level of knowledge about community gardening among council staff were identified as constraints
- Willoughby Council's community garden liaison said that real estate values in the LGA were associated with a public expectation that council will profit from sale of excess public land which could otherwise be used to cater to any future demand for community gardening space
- space for future community gardens was also a consideration in the Waverley Council LGA:
  - there was slim chance of finding any, according to the Council officer responsible for the development of the new allotment garden
  - that finding land for any recreational purpose is likely to become competitive was disclosed in Council's recreational needs study
  - a further constraint are the costs incurred by council in setting up and managing a community garden
  - Council is redeveloping a community garden site and will directly manage the garden; this is probably the most costly option of community garden development for local government.
- the experience of Hurstville Council with its first community garden, designed and developed by council, has been the realisation that:
  - there were too few gardeners at the start to hand over care, control and management of the garden to the community association
  - finances figured as a constraint, with the garden proving costly to establish
  - costs were reduced during construction by using council resources such as crushed concrete, organic soil mix and recycled pavers; plants were donated
  - Council has installed two rainwater tanks fed from the roof of the community garden's shelter structure.

## 7.4 Opportunities

Both gardeners and local government officers identified opportunities stemming from the presence of community gardens in LGAs.

Opportunities identified by community gardeners...

### 7.4.1 Learning:

- about the group - people and processes
- about horticulture
- increasing management and people skills
- about the availability of grants and grant writing
- to work through issues
- to participate in mosaic making workshops
- bookkeeping skills as treasurer – learning Excel software
- to manage a community garden website
- to compost
- to learn how bamboo could be used for fencing
- increasing knowledge of building materials through research into sustainable timbers for pergola construction
- how to obtain publicity
- knowledge in general
- to build a chicken pen and learn about keeping chickens
- about education, with council staff
- about communications
- about dealing with people
- about human resources – discovering people's knowledge.

Respondents reported that they learned about resources in the community:

- such as the location of nearby stables to obtain stable sweepings to use for composting making and mulch
- neighbours bringing kitchen and garden wastes for composting in the community garden
- the availability of local government support; eg. council support for mosaic making workshops, construction of an outdoor classroom and workshops
- the opportunity to form partnerships with local government
- the unexpected acquisition of cast-off chickens (two Sydney community gardens have found live, discarded chickens tossed over their fence or into their chicken pen).
- expertise becoming available when needed, such as a builder.

Cultivating Community CEO, Ben Neil, lists as learnings:

- upgrading gardens with state government assistance
- the use of the community gardens as event space for art
- the use of community gardens as venues to launch National Compost Week.



### 7.4.2 Opportunities identified by local government officers

For Marrickville Council, the Bush Pockets program would not have happened without the gardens. The project brought the opportunity to contact communities otherwise out of reach. Workshops took place on site. School gardens were found to be an additional opportunity.

For City of Sydney, local action plans to do with Council's City of Villages concept present opportunities for community garden development.

A further opportunity stemming from City of Sydney's interest in community gardening has been the chance to organise community garden fact finding tours for Willoughby and Kogarah councils.

Another learning has been that the sense of people being in control affects their attitude.

An unexpected opportunity for Hurstville Council was the winning of a \$3000 grant from the Australian Open Garden Scheme. This was spent on tools and a shed for their community garden. Council's garden liaison anticipates further learnings as the garden moves into full production and beyond.

### 7.4.3 Centres for learning

Community gardens offer opportunities for education of the public in the form of:

- informal and formal workshops and courses organised by the community gardeners and held in community gardens
- workshops organised and led by council staff, such as waste/water/environmental educators and held in community gardens.

The second opportunity is contingent upon council and gardeners negotiating an arrangement to enable council use of the garden. This might be stipulated in a lease for the land the community garden is built on or in a memorandum of understanding between council and gardeners.

An alternative means of council delivering community education is that of Ku-ring-kai Council which arranges for a community-based organisation, Permaculture North, to provide training services in the form of workshops.



*Students learn about plant identification at a Sydney community garden.*

## Community Gardens Policy Directions

for Marrickville Council - November 2007

*Therapeutic  
community gardening.*

*The small Street Jungle  
Community Garden in the  
grounds of a community  
centre in Newtown was  
assisted by City of Sydney  
to provide access to fresh  
food and exercise to people  
living with HIV*



*Located in a part of a small  
public park, the Smith  
Street Community Garden in  
Cabramatta received local  
government assistance. The  
garden is of the allotment  
type. The pergola provides a  
sheltered sitting and meeting  
place. Durable gravel paths  
reduce maintenance and add  
to the aesthetics  
of the garden.*



*The allotments of  
Collingwood Community  
Garden under construction  
in Melbourne. The  
allotments are family sized  
and are gardened mainly  
by immigrant peoples  
assisted by Cultivating  
Community.*





## 8. The management of community gardens

# Community Gardens

## Policy Directions for Marrickville Council

Most community gardeners are interested in horticulture rather than taking on roles such as secretary, public officer and treasurer needed in an incorporated community garden association. Such roles are sometimes filled reluctantly, however gardeners manage to fulfill their legal requirements in regard to incorporation.

As community-based organisations, community gardeners can demonstrate reduced capacity to accomplish plans. What can seem a short term task to council officers may take longer in the gardens.

Considerations:

- Council advise new community garden teams to adopt a management structure that provides accountability to members and meet any legal requirements for meetings and reporting, such as those pertaining to incorporated associations
- Council be patient in its dealing with community garden associations and anticipate that tasks, even communication, will take longer than they might anticipate
- Council propose to community garden management teams that they develop a member's agreement or code of behaviour to encourage civility in the garden and effective decision making; conflict resolution and gardening practices.

There are two general structures of community garden management:

- self-managed gardens in which an incorporated or unincorporated community garden association has care, control and maintenance of an area of land
- council or state government managed gardens.

## 8.1 Housing estate gardens

Community gardens on state government housing estates in NSW and Victoria exist on land adjacent to the public housing occupied by their gardeners. They receive assistance initially from the housing authority and ongoing advice from the Royal Botanic Gardens Community Greening program in NSW and Cultivating Community in Melbourne.

Gardeners on the estates have day to day management of the garden but no wider powers.

## 8.2 Council managed gardens

It is similar with council-managed community gardens. The degree of day to day decision making power resting with participating gardeners is variable.

The disadvantage of limiting decision making authority is that gardeners are unlikely to develop the social capital skills that comes with responsibility for a community garden. The increase in an individual's capacity to work with others and to take on the role of an engaged citizen is what is generally considered to be social capital.

The approach of councils such as Sutherland and Willoughby is a little looser. Hurstville Council are preparing to hand care, control and management of the community garden Council built over to the community garden association. A Hurstville council officer explained that this would result in less work for council.

In Victoria, there is less variation in land access and management structures. Community gardens either exist on public housing land owned by the state government or on land managed by incorporated associations – commonly, local government land.

In Brisbane and Adelaide, as far as is known, there are no gardens on public housing estates and the prevailing model of management is that by community associations.

## 8.3 Opinion remains open

Most gardeners consulted believe that there is a role for all of these management arrangements even though they favoured the model of gardens managed by gardener associations.

A frequent comment was that different arrangements suit different people. Some just want to garden, in which case a council-managed garden where council rents allotments to gardeners is workable. Others want to work with a more cohesive group and to develop a fuller sense of participation in a garden and a sense of community. The management by community association model was said to facilitate this better than other models.

There was also discussion about whether the shared garden, rather than the allotment model, is better at binding a group together to achieve common aims. Some said that the shared garden brought a sense of responsibility for the entire area rather than simply for the small segment of the allotment – in other words, a greater sense of ownership.

There is only gardener opinion to go on. No research appears to have explored this notion although there have been a number of PhD students who have researched community gardens. While a few gardeners seem to make a sharp division between 'community' (shared) gardens and allotment gardens, the terms remain interchangeable and both models are recognised as valid forms of community gardening.

### 8.4 Loose structure

The formal management of community gardens remains loose.

Gardeners appear to have no difficulty in complying with state government regulations requiring incorporated associations to submit an annual report and hold an annual meeting. Only one or two gardens have allowed this requirement to lapse. In one case, a name change was required when garden personnel changed over time, so that payment to the Department of Fair Trading for non-compliance with the annual reporting requirement would be avoided. That was due to key gardeners leaving and others coming in, unaware of the requirement for an annual report. This raises the idea that some form of documentation to record a garden's 'corporate memory' would be a good idea.

#### 8.4.1 Management by informal committee - the common practice

A common arrangement to manage community gardens consists of:

- the formation of task-oriented committees for decision making between quarterly meetings
- quarterly meetings of the membership
- an annual general meeting.

In community-managed gardens, meetings, usually quarterly, are the usual means of dealing with issues and proposals that come up in the gardens, of keeping members up to date, reviewing progress and dealing with horticultural and design problems that arise from time to time.

Gardeners form committees to manage specific tasks. These meet monthly. Seasonal members' meetings ratify committee decisions. The arrangement meets both legal and gardener requirements. The willingness and sometimes the capacity of community garden teams to comply with a more rigid or demanding management or reporting regime is doubtful.

Once a garden is established there are few major decisions to make. Informal, day to day decision making keeps the garden going.

An example of the ability of a gardening teams to organise a collective response to an incident was the calling of a meeting in a long established, shared garden to resolve the issue of a gardener digging up and moving young fruit trees around the site from time to time. The gardener was well intentioned, so the problem was easily solved, but the incident serves as a successful example of self-management.

It was not so in another community garden. There, a gardener was reported to be continually disruptive in the sense that she attempted to undermine the management processes of the gardeners. Despite going through the conflict resolution procedure that gardeners agree to when joining the garden, the problem did not go away and the gardeners were forced to expel the woman.

Expulsion is a last resort but it would be wise for gardens to include it in their regulations for the rare times when other methods of conflict resolution fail. In council-managed gardens the decision to exclude a gardener rests with the council officer that supervises the garden.

## 8.5 Gardener responses

Responses by community gardeners, consulted in the preparation of this report, to questions about garden management were varied and reflect gardener experience.

Gardeners in the UNSW Permaculture Community Garden said the garden's management structure was too rigid. University management made the decision to change the concept of the garden from one operated by participating gardeners - a community garden - to a university garden with public participation. Gardeners say they had no input into the decision and there was a perception of loss of control and self-management.

Another long-running garden, Glovers Community Garden in Rozelle, is run in a loose, informal manner and has encountered no major difficulties for operating in this way. Disagreements are mild, said the garden spokeswoman, and decisions are made at regular, informal meetings.

Neither the UNSW Permaculture Community Garden nor The Food Forest, both gardens of the shared model, had a formal code of behaviour. Bonding was achieved among the gardeners who developed informal lines of communication and problem solving through deliberation, in a similar way to Glovers Community Garden.

### 8.6 The member's agreement

Having new members sign an agreement or code of behaviour when they join is already a common practice that virtually all consulted strongly supported, both community gardeners and local government officers.

Commonly specified in member agreements are:

- a code of behaviour that defines standards expected of gardeners; in a number of gardens with participation of people from different cultures, this includes prohibition of racial slurs
- the payment of membership dues
- the type of gardening methods permitted - usually types of organic gardening
- decision making procedure
- how conflict is to be resolved - this is usually a consultative process
- how long an allotment can be held in disuse before being forfeited
- other administrative issues.

Formal agreements and regulations are unnecessary when the people who form the initial gardening group are known to each other and share a high level of trust. As the number of gardeners increases and the garden expands in size and possibly in its roles, the utility of formal arrangements becomes clearer.

Melbourne's Veg Out Community Garden has put together a code of behaviour, stated in a light-hearted manner, that all new gardeners agree to:

#### Veg Out Vows

*The Veg Out Vows were written in a sense of fun but with the important purpose of providing the diverse people involved with some common principles to operate under.*

1. *I pledge not to interfere with the rights and opportunities of others at Veg Out.*
2. *The only conflict initiated by me will be with weeds and pests, which I will attack with biological means rather than chemical.*
3. *If a dispute does arise, I pledge to settle it through calm discussion and goodwill according to the grievance procedures of Veg Out. If the issue remains unresolved, I will accept the decision of the Veg Out Committee.*
4. *I understand that my involvement at Veg Out and the opportunity to use my garden is a privilege, not a right, and as such I must use it or lose it.*
5. *When I use tools (where and when I swing them or leave them) I will always be aware of the safety of myself and others.*
6. *I understand my participation at Veg Out is at my own risk. The City of Port Phillip, and members of the Veg Out Committee, are not liable for any injury to me, or to my invited family and friends, nor for the loss of any of my possessions.*

7. *I appreciate the need for security of the Garden and the Artists' studio spaces and will lock the gate each time I exit through it.*
8. *I understand that if I do not pay my plot fees (as set by the Committee) on time I will forfeit my right to use the plot.*
9. *I will contribute at least one hour per month to general site maintenance and I happily agree to share what I can with the garden community.*
10. *I have read, appreciated and will abide by the spirit of the Veg Out Charter, with the best of intentions for the greater good.*

### Veg Out Charter

*To create a unique, safe and supportive haven within the City of Port Phillip for all citizens. To promote a sense of community where trust, effort, knowledge, skills and responsibility are shared; where creativity, quality and the environment are nurtured; and where equity and philanthropy can flourish.*

*Source: <http://www.vegout.asn.au/about.html>*

## 8.7 Informal is better

Community gardens are places where people of different experience, background, attitude, belief and disposition are brought together and given responsibility for an area of land, often with no experience to call upon.

Gardens in which some members have horticultural skills are ahead when it comes to the effectiveness of their gardening, but too seldom do gardeners bring the interpersonal and organisational skills that are the other side of a successful community garden.

Informality is a key characteristic of community gardening and experience suggests that the management of gardens works best where it is low-key and unobtrusive and where meetings are run in an informal manner.



## 9. A role for local government

# Community Gardens

## Policy Directions for Marrickville Council

Local government finds itself cast into the role of community garden supporter but often lacks sufficient knowledge and experience in dealing effectively with the demand from the public.

Considerations:

- that Council assess and recognise that community gardens can play a role in alleviating what the Sydney Food Fairness Alliance calls the 'hidden hunger' prevalent in the general community
- having accepted this, Council endeavour to assist community gardeners approaching it for access to land, where possible
- that Council assess the value of integrating community gardening and other community-based food initiatives into its landuse and social planning
- recognising the limited capacity and funding available to community gardens, Council reduce procedural impediments to their development providing such development does not create a public safety risk.

As the controller of access to public open space, local government has a critical role to play in the development of community gardens and whether such gardens can even make a start. This gives local government a decisive role in the development of food production in the cities, a practice acknowledged as important by the UNDP and by a growing body of opinion around sustainable development in Australia.

It was a finding in talking to local government officers that there exists an openness to community gardening but that council officers often have minimal appreciation of the practice and its potentials. This may lay behind confusion about the legitimacy of community gardening on council land. It can also cloak the potential benefit of gardener-council partnerships, formal or informal, in making use of community gardens for community education and benefit.

The survey of opinion for this study disclosed a number of trends in thinking about community gardens. These are not limited to the respondents but have a wider currency among the community gardening milieu around Australia.

They include the idea:

- that the practice of community gardening is now a valid landuse in Australian cities and the time has come for local government to adopt policies and procedures in support of community gardening in their LGAs
- that it is time to move beyond the one-off, ad-hoc approach to dealing with requests from citizens for community gardening space
- that the production of a formal submission should be incorporated in local government approaches to community garden approval
- that partnerships with community gardeners that include local government community education programs around environment and sustainability, benefit all.

In addition to the above considerations and in relation to the first point, the activities of the Sydney Food Fairness Alliance ([www.sydneyfoodfairness.org.au](http://www.sydneyfoodfairness.org.au)) have attracted the interest of council officers. The Alliance supports the use of community gardens as venues for the production of nutritious food and for access to such food in communities where fresh food outlets are few or difficult of access.

### 9.1 In summary

The way local government deals with applications for land for gardens has been ad-hoc. This applies to community gardens interstate as well as in NSW.

The comment is not meant as a criticism. It is what should be expected of a new demand on local government in most LGAs. Like sustainability education, it is one of those new areas that citizens now expect councils to take on in addition to their traditional roles.

Opinion of both council officers and community gardeners suggest that the time has come to move to a more structured approach.

It is certainly helpful when councils support the start-up of new community gardens with a small grant and the donation of infrastructure. Assistance of this type is of course helpful at times through the life of the garden, however councils should not be so generous that gardener initiative is stymied.

Respondents indicated that they are in general agreement with council use of community gardens for educational programs, such as sustainability/environmental education workshops and the demonstration of household technologies such as water tanks and mulched gardens. A partnership agreement or a memorandum of understanding between councils and gardener organisations would facilitate arrangements to enable this and formalise it.

A further advantage of such an arrangement is that workshops in the neutral territory of community gardens provide the opportunity for positive interaction between councils and citizens. Away from the formal environment of council customer service or meeting rooms, a less formal and friendlier interaction becomes possible.

### 9.2 What the councils say

#### 9.2.1 Providing assistance

Council facilitation of, or assistance to, a community-based gardening organisation need not involve the expenditure of large sums of money.

The cheapest option is supplying assistance to a community group that will have care, control and maintenance of a community garden. What the council supplies as assistance would then depend on the availability of funds and disposition of the council towards community food production. Commonly, councils will supply start-up funds in the form of a small grant to help with fencing, legal fees, purchase of tools, installation of a tap, water tank or other infrastructure.

A useful further contribution would be council assistance to the gardener group in applying for non-council grants if sourcing grants is not a skill present in the group.

Community gardens on local government land in the Sydney area have received a range of support from councils.

In the case of Woolloomooloo and Hurstville community gardens, council designed and constructed the gardens and continues to have a role in their ongoing maintenance and in their use as training venues for community courses in green waste conversion and minimal water use gardening and so on.

Likewise in Sutherland, council's landscape designer was brought in to plan the garden after which Council developed a plan of management through workshops that incorporated the gardener's vision.

In some cases, such as the Hurstville and Sutherland community gardens, the initial impetus to construct a community garden came from elected councillors. It was through this route that the councils decided to design and build the gardens themselves.

Randwick City Council had virtually no input into the UNSW Permaculture Community Garden until the position of Sustainability Education Officer was created in Council. Then, a partnership was created with the Ecoliving Centre, to use of the garden and the Centre's building for community sustainability education courses and workshops. To facilitate this, Council and the UNSW jointly funded a landscape design and construction company to build an outdoor classroom/community performance space.

Through the partnership, the Ecoliving Centre became the venue for Council's first Ecoliving Fair which attracted an estimated 3000 people.

Councils sometimes place conditions on granting gardeners space for a garden.

Randwick Community Organic Garden, for instance, is limited to the use of only compost bins rather than the large, open compost bays that are part of some community gardens. The rationale for this is that the bins are less likely to become habitat to vermin such as rats.

The garden makes use of a large number of the plastic bins, some of which were donated by Council's sustainability section, and experience indicates that the bins have sufficient capacity to produce the needed compost, something no doubt enabled by the compost-making workshop that all gardeners go through as a condition of participation in the garden.

Council also insisted on the erection of a chainlink fence around the garden to avoid damage from dogs being walked on the adjacent land.

Conditions imposed on the Eastern Suburbs Community Garden by Waverley council included the requirement that the gardeners produced no excessive noise or odours from the garden.

### 9.2.2 DAs - a need uncertain

For the school and other gardens that Marrickville Council has assisted, there has been no need to submit a development application (DA). A Council source said that a council requirement for community gardeners to submit a DA would prove a barrier for community organisations that are poorly sourced and that may lack the knowledge necessary to producing the document.

City of Sydney requires a DA from a community garden only where structures are planned. It is the same with Randwick City Council.

Councils managing their own gardens are uncertain about the requirement for DAs for other gardens in future. The Eastern Suburbs Community Garden was not required to put in a DA for planning permission.

Were a DA needed from garden applicants, council could assist by explaining the document to gardeners and offering the services of a planner to guide the applicants through the its production. Advice on the exempt and comply provisions of council would be needed.

For community garden groups, the cost of submitting a DA may be a challenge.

### 9.2.3 Soil quality testing

A further area where councils could provide services otherwise possibly beyond the financial reach of would-be community gardeners is in testing of soils for contamination.

Few community gardens in Sydney or interstate have had their soil tested and none of those consulted have had council-instigated testing.

The only known soil testing in Sydney took place in the year 2000 when the then-metropolitan Waste Board arranged, at its expense, for the testing of community garden soils in South Sydney LGA. Nothing particularly alarming was found. The test results for Waterloo Community Garden are documented on the website of the Australian City Farms & Community Gardens Network ([www.communitygarden.org.au](http://www.communitygarden.org.au)).

Because it is one-time industrial land that has the greatest potential for chemical contamination, a useful means of assistance to community gardeners searching for land is for council to check the records of previous landuses and if anything potentially damaging is found, to fund a follow-up soil test.

Before it was closed for site redevelopment and the gardeners began their search for a new community garden site, the soils of the original Randwick Community Organic Garden were assessed along with others on the redevelopment site. They were found to be contaminated with asbestos in the form of old building material. The new gardeners sort funding assistance from Randwick City Council for soil testing.

## 9.3 What the gardeners say

Community gardeners consulted expressed appreciation of local government support for their activity where it was made available.

The Randwick gardeners were appreciative of council's ongoing support in the form of:

- water to fill their tank; the tank will be fed from the roof of the pergola now under construction
- small grants
- soil testing, wormfarms and compost bins
- rainwater tank.

The City of Sydney provide ongoing funding support in the form of:

- producing promotional brochures for their gardens
- DA assistance
- design and construction of shelter sheds with attached rainwater tanks
- compost systems.

Other gardens have received minimal assistance from their local governments.

A topic on which gardeners and council staff agreed was the desirability of having a single point of contact on council and in the community garden. One council staffer said that gardeners need a 'friendly face' in council.

- for gardeners, this simplifies the business of dealing with council with its sometimes seemingly byzantine tangle of departments and responsibilities
- for council, a liaison person in the gardening group simplifies the passing on of information and requests.

Where such liaison roles exist they are carried out by a range of council staff positions:

- Marrickville Council - Sustainability Coordinator
- Randwick City Council - Sustainability Education officer
- City of Sydney - Waste Education Coordinator and Waste Projects Officer
- Waverley Council - Bushcare Officer (the community garden is managed as a council volunteer program similar to that of Bushcare)
- Manly Council - Environmental Education Manager
- Hurstville Council - Waste Projects Officer and a councillor, who was instrumental in council creating the garden and is herself an allotment holder
- Sutherland Council - Environmental Educator/ Environmental Scientist.

Other gardens liaise with the community centre management whose land they occupy.

## 9.4 An appropriate response from council - a gardener's perspective

What constitutes an appropriate response by council to a request for assistance in finding land and starting a community garden from a community organisation?

Needless to say, a positive response was mentioned more than once. It was also mentioned by some council respondents.

- A spokesman for the group planning up the Manly community garden suggested councils should be prepared for applications with a structure for dealing with community gardens. The process would be facilitated by councils having someone on staff with responsibility for liaison.
- It would also help if councils knew their needs in regard to community gardens – whether they should be incorporated, have rules for members and a process for making applications for gardening space.
- There was support for the idea that councils develop a formal application process requiring structured submissions. A submission would estimate the number of people involved initially and the size or the area needed.
- Developing a community garden checklist for use by council officers would also be of benefit in assessing whether the gardeners had considered all items of interest to council.
- Councils and the gardening group should meet to clarify points in a submission. Perhaps council could set up a panel to assess the application and that it is the panel that meets with gardeners.

The idea of councils setting up a team to assess applications for community gardens was raised by a number of respondents. This might consist of staff from leasing, community services, sustainability/environmental educators and parks and landscape departments as well as recreational department staff as it is these that would have the most potential interest in a community garden.

Dr Kristina Warton from Randwick Community Organic Garden suggested that council could give practical advice on producing and submitting a DA, were one required.

An early indication of the likely council support that might be available would also help the garden group in its planning.

Speaking from her experience as community gardener, landscape designer, horticulturist and council staffer, Emma Daniell emphasised the importance of councils having someone who understands community gardening involved in whatever process they adopt in dealing with applications for new community gardens.

This was echoed by two other gardeners who said that council staff dealing with community garden proposals must be sympathetic and knowledgeable about them. A person on management would be preferable.



Another idea raised by several gardeners was that councils could help promote community gardens in their LGA. Council newsletters, rates notices and mayor's columns in local newspapers would be appropriate media. An example of this type of promotion was the City of Sydney's, and, later, Leichhardt Council's brochures with maps locating community gardens in their LGAs.

A suggestion from a respondent, a member of an Inner West community garden that has never received assistance from council, was that local government seriously consider supporting the gardens with funds, water tanks, compost, wormfarms and other infrastructure.

## 9.5 How to respond - a council perspective

There was agreement between community gardeners and local government staff on dealing with applications for land for community gardening. The need for council policy on community gardening and having guidelines for gardening would simplify processing applications in council. Council could produce guidelines and an application form.

For Michael Neville, talking with people involved in the proposal for a garden and identifying suitable land are the important actions. He said that he makes use of startup information on Australian City Farms & Community Gardens Network website.

Waverley Council's community garden liaison said future response would depend on progress with the community garden that Council has reclaimed from the gardening association which previously made use of the site.

### 9.6 Preparing to meet with council

A meeting between council staff and gardeners seeking access to land is beneficial to clarifying intentions and understanding the constraints and opportunities potentially stemming from approval.

An initial meeting would not grant go-ahead for a garden but, rather, serve as an information and clarification opportunity. Meetings personalise the process and a greater appreciation by council of the intentions and capacities of the garden group may be gained.

Where councils set up a staff team to consider community garden proposals, community gardeners should meet with the entire team where possible.

Local government officers suggested that such meetings are critical. Community garden groups should prepare themselves for a meeting with council staff so as to make the most of the time available. A number of respondents said they should try to anticipate some of council's concerns.

They proposed that community garden groups prepare themselves by:

- knowing what they want to achieve from gaining access to the land
- be able to prove their dedication to operating and effectively managing a garden
- being able to explain how the garden would operate
- having a project plan
- having gained commitment from their team
- having some idea of suitable site locations
- having some idea of the components to be included ie. size of a shelter structure and what it would be made of, tool shed, rainwater tank/s and watering system, number of allotments/size of shared garden areas, animals such as chickens and size of perennial beds of fruit trees/natives etc
- producing a sketch design if a proposed site is being sought, or a conceptual design for an imaginary site to provide an idea of what the garden would look like
- doing their research on community gardening before approaching council
- thinking about long term planning
- preparing a submission whether required to by council or not
- producing a budget estimate
- citing case studies and having photographs of community gardens
- approaching council in a way that council doesn't lead the process; garden teams should be prepared to take leadership of the project.

## 9.7 Advice to community gardeners

Council officers said that gardeners groups would need guidance from council in seeking land for their garden and developing it.

Asked what advice they would give to people planning to approach council to discuss the possibility of accessing land for a community garden, council officers advised them to:

- spend time on design
- work out the preferred model before approaching council – whether allotment, shared or a combination of the two
- do their research and planning
- organise a community forum to introduce the garden idea
- make links with council policies
- look at community needs and wants
- consider long term sustainability; leaders can leave and the garden collapse
- identify multiple uses for the site
- establish partnerships with other organisations and consider a partnership with council
- identify and articulate their wants well
- plan properly
- know how to resource the garden.

## 9.8 What the gardeners say

Respondents associated with community gardens said that they find the structure of councils to be confusing and discovering who does what can be a challenge. This provides further rationale for councils to set up a more formal process for dealing with community gardens.

As well as having a supportive person on council to communicate through, the gardeners suggested that groups seeking access to land:

- develop a formal submission to council
- be clear about the number of gardeners, why a garden is wanted, how it would be used and other topics
- detail their existing experience with community gardening
- identify garden needs and costing
- have photos of community gardens to show to council staff so they have some idea of the variability in aesthetics, design and activities involved in community gardening
- have a knowledge about the different models of community gardens
- have a knowledge of the community benefit stemming from the gardens
- be able to describe their proposed organisational structure
- develop a list of requirements such as area, water, fencing, tanks etc.

### 9.9 The catalyst's ideas

#### 9.9.1 Ben Neil, CEO Cultivating Community

Ben Neil's suggestions come from his long-running role with Cultivating Community as a community garden service provider to the Victorian government.

Dealing with people of many cultures as well as with state government, Ben suggests that councils could respond to requests about setting up a community garden on council land by:

- referring would-be gardeners to [www.canh.asn.au/community\\_gardening](http://www.canh.asn.au/community_gardening)
- when they have read this refer them to local community gardens, if they exist
- prepare a form for them to fill out that asks things like demonstrating that there is community interest, how the garden will be funded, how the garden will be built etc; this will ensure the group has done its homework
- allocate an annual amount of money to be put towards community gardens
- include community gardens in a staff member's job description.

A community garden group might prepare themselves for a meeting with council by:

- demonstrating that there is community demand for a garden
- deciding on the focus of the garden
- providing links and other information that demonstrate the benefits of community gardening
- producing rough costings
- possibly, a proposed design of the garden.

This would be included in a submission to council for access to land.

#### 9.9.2 Jacqui Hunter, community garden support officer

Jacqui's ideas come from her role as community garden support officer for a community development agency.

As for a preferred model of community gardening, Jacqui suggests that gardens managed by a community gardening association in collaboration with local council would be good. There needs to be ongoing support for the garden as contingency for times such as when key people leave the association.

Approached for assistance, she proposes that councils:

- prepare a checklist of questions to ascertain that the people interested have the skills, time and enthusiasm to stick with the project; questions could be drawn from the Community Gardening in SA Kit
- find out who the gardeners are planning to work with
- look for multiple benefits for the community
- assist gardeners in networking with others who would benefit from involvement in the garden; this may also include government departments; eg. in South Australia, Zero Waste is a government body some of whose goals would be met by the increase in effective composting by the community
- find out what type of community garden they are planning to develop
- perhaps, provide examples of other types of garden that they may not have considered.

In planning to meet with councils, community garden groups might:

- develop clarity on what they want to develop, who they want to work with, where they want to construct the garden and why
- be able to describe the benefits and beneficiaries
- pre-think some of the issues that council may have to contend with; eg. parking, and consider establishing Green Travel plans (public transport access to the garden)
- water use – how will that be managed.
- if possible, prepare some rough designs for a couple of sites in the council area - providing options would be helpful.

Jacqui proposes that community gardening groups develop a formal submission for consideration by councils.

Included in the submission should be:

- what the gardeners want to develop
- who they want to work with
- where they want to construct the garden and why there
- benefits and who benefits
- addressing of issues that council may have to contend with
- water use – how that will be managed
- a funding plan for start-up and ongoing management.

She also supports the development of a memorandum of understanding between council and gardeners to include:

- the upkeep of the gardens
- financial management; eg. who pays for water
- security
- insurance
- hours of use
- organic gardening practices.

## 10. Community garden policy

Community Gardens  
Policy Directions for Marrickville Council

## Community Gardens Policy Directions

for Marrickville Council - November 2007

Apart from the South Sydney Council policy that enabled council support of community gardens in the 1990s, there is little evidence of local government in Australia developing policy specifically on community gardens.

City government in other countries, however, have taken the initiative to support the development of community gardens on the basis of their benefit to the city and its inhabitants.

Overseas city governments with policy on community gardens include:

- Auckland, New Zealand
- Berkeley, USA
- Boston, USA
- Chicago, USA
- City of Victoria, Canada - community gardens have operated since the mid-seventies; eight gardens at present
- Saanich, Canada
- Seattle, USA
- Vancouver, Canada.

*Notes on the pertinent points found in these policies follow...*



### 10.1 Defining community gardens

Some definitions of community gardens provided by cities with a community garden policy are quite detailed about what is found in community gardens and the activities that take place in them.

According to Auckland City Council, New Zealand:

*Community gardens involve residents in sharing in the creation, maintenance and rewards of gardening. They provide food, recreation and therapeutic opportunities for a community. They can also promote environmental awareness and provide community education.*

*Where they exist, community gardens form an important part of a city's public open space network. Today, there are approximately 10,000 community gardens in United States cities alone. At least 15 such community gardens are known to exist in New Zealand.*

Auckland defines community gardens as:

*...a small scale, low-investment neighbourhood communal gardening venture, growing vegetables, fruit and/or flowers.*

*It uses vacant or unspecified open space – either in the public domain or owned by another organisation or business (for example by a church or through a public housing body).*

*Community gardens may have an explicit gardening philosophy such as organic growing, permaculture or biodynamic gardening, or they may allow participants with individual plots to manage them as they see fit. They may also establish nurseries to propagate and raise seedlings for their gardeners.*

The City of Victoria lists in its definition that community gardens:

*promote urban agriculture, food security and food production; utilise a parcel of land to produce organic vegetables, fruit and flowers for the use of members via allotment or shared gardens; may be an ornamental, native and perennial food producing garden for community enjoyment; provide demonstration gardening and other environmental education; have compost bins, tool storage sheds and other infrastructure; donates surplus production to the city's food banks and encourages partnerships with other community organisations.*

Saanich, Canada, describes community gardens as:

*a parcel of land operated by volunteers and used for the production of produce for the member's personal use in allotment or shared gardens; demonstration of gardening and other instructional programs offered; available of plots, water, shared tools to members for a fee.*

Vancouver, Canada:

*Community gardens are regarded as community development programs operated by a non-profit society with one or more features such as a piece of land used for food or flower production for the personal use of members; the presence of a community development programs encouraging participation by schools, youth groups and citizens who do not have a plot in the garden; organic gardening that increases the biodiversity of the city and provides an increased understanding of food production.*

## 10.2 Policy

### 10.2.1 Auckland City Council

Auckland City sees itself more as an enabler and supported of community gardening than as a provider of gardens or source of funds.

Council finds no legislative or policy impediment to establishing community gardens in city parks and open space but identifies a need to comply with the city's District Plan and Local Government Act in doing so. Community gardens may be treated as 'desirable community facilities' similar to community centres, libraries or swimming pools. Council goes on to state that one of the greatest potential benefits of the gardens lies in community development.

Auckland City Council states that the adoption of policy covering the establishment of community gardens on public open space "will ensure orderly and consistent management across the city", and:

*where there is any confusion, the relevant reserve management plan would take precedence over the community garden policy.*

Council will enable the establishment of community gardens on public open space and that other types of open spaces identified as potentially suitable for community gardens include schools, residual land adjoining rail corridors, vacant or temporary lots.

Council will:

- assess each proposal on a case-by-case basis
- ensure that applicants for community gardening space are required to submit a proposal report to the relevant Community Board for a decision
- on approval, develop a lease which provides tenancy for a maximum term of five years.

Community gardens should:

- consider and complement the primary function of the open space and its users
- be located to minimise potential conflict with open space uses and users
- not dominate the primary useable area of neighbourhood parks.

Where submissions for community gardens arise from initial reserve management plan consultation, Auckland City may include community gardening as an option for further consultation and consideration.

### 10.2.2 City of Victoria

The City policy proposes:

- recognition of the need for and value of community gardens
- establishing community gardens throughout the city and encouraging roof top and workplace gardens to complement community gardens and for urban greening
- maintaining existing community gardens and protecting local food production.

### 10.2.3 Saanich, Canada

The Saanich policy says the City will:

- support and establish one community garden for each neighbourhood
- recognise the need for community gardens as parks are acquired or redeveloped.

## 10.3 City government action

City action stems from the presence of a policy on community gardening.

### 10.3.1 Auckland City Council:

- has adopted a policy on community gardening which supports the development of gardens and the provision of leases.

### 10.3.2 City of Victoria:

- promotes community gardening
- provides information to the public
- offers city-owned land for new gardens (undeveloped parcels, closed road rights of way, marginal park land)
- assesses site suitability for food production, perennials and flowers through environmental analysis
- provides start-up funds and in-kind support where feasible.

### 10.3.3 Saanich, Canada:

- promotion
- provides information to the public on developing and operating community gardens
- helps groups find land via zoning and leases
- assists with site development
- provides water at special rates
- provides recreation programming for groups on community garden sites
- offers one-time matching grants to assist with start-up.

#### 10.3.4 Vancouver:

Vancouver provides access to information on the development and operation of gardens:

- assists in finding land
- assists with developing user agreements
- assists in developing a community-led environmental education program.

#### 10.3.5 Seattle:

- inclusion of existing community gardening program in the city's evaluation of surplus property for priority use
- incorporation of community gardening in Seattle's Comprehensive Plan and provision of budgetary support.

#### 10.3.6 Berkeley:

- support for community gardens in the city's draft General Plan
- recognises community gardens as a high priority use of public open space
- secures land
- creates long term stability for community gardens through land purchase and long term leases
- integrates community gardens into existing open space near areas of higher density residences that do not have a community garden
- provides administrative resources to enable groups to manage the gardens
- include community gardens in open space planning.

#### 10.3.7 Boston:

- proposes a specific zoning category for community gardens to ensure their long term protection.

#### 10.3.8 Chicago:

- passed an intergovernmental agreement to create Neighbor Space funded by municipal funds and that can also raise private funds. The entity will donate, sell or lease small parcels of land.

### 10.4 The values of community gardening

Auckland City Council lists community garden values to include social, ecological and community development.

Addressing the reasons to establish community gardens, Council's policy document on community gardening states that community gardens:

*are valued as open spaces and places for socializing and relaxing. Public amenities such as benches, children's play areas, and art have been added to many gardens to increase their value as community centres.*

*The activities that take place in community gardens - sharing gardening tips, cooperating through work parties, arranging social events for gardeners and neighbours and enjoying the fruits of the land - bring people from all walks of life and all ages together, building stronger, more integrated communities.*

*Economic opportunity and security are often intertwined with community development in community gardening. In this context, security means food security. Community gardening allows participants to raise their own food to improve their nutrition and benefit their health.*

*They also sometimes provide opportunities for local enterprise, for example, for training in work skills and small-scale horticultural businesses such as the sale of plants.*

*Community gardens are also educational resources within a community, promoting environmental awareness and stewardship and providing opportunities for recycling organic waste and for solid waste and water re-use.*

*Finally, they might also contribute to the diversity of open space use.*

The City of Victoria lists the values of community gardening to include public amenity and public education.

Saanich sees value coming through:

- community recreation
- health and wellbeing
- positive social interaction
- community development
- cultural expression
- connection to nature
- protection and use of open space
- economical food production.

Seattle lists economic, social and environmental values.

Values identified by Berkeley include:

- growing of food and flowers
- a way for people to work together and socialise.

The policy states that:

*Users plan, construct and manage the space, thus building community relations at the same time as they save the city money and help lower their own cost of living.*

## 10.5 Other considerations

The City of Victoria stipulates that the gardens:

*produce organic vegetables, fruit and flowers for the use of members.*

The City of Victoria lists that community gardens encourage involvement by schools, youth groups and citizens.

City of Victoria lists the challenges facing future community garden development as high land costs and lack of available sites.



### 10.6 Conditions

Auckland City Council:

- in its community garden policy, Council recognises that a lease agreement which prohibits income generation within the community garden through the sale of produce or provision of services such as community educational activities may handicap the garden's viability.

Council stipulates that community gardens must be not-for-profit entities and says that it is the responsibility of the community gardeners to:

- maintain control of noxious weeds and pests in accordance with any policies of council to the satisfaction of the Parks Officer or other council officer responsible for the public space
- maintain the garden's vegetation, fencing, signage, furniture and/or other structures to the satisfaction of the Parks Officer or other council officer responsible for the public space
- maintain public access rights and any other conditions as stipulated by the lease
- allow monitoring and review as stipulated by the lease - gardens are monitored annually by Council.

The City of Victoria states that:

- garden development must be at no cost to the city apart from grants
- community consultation and planning process are undertaken by the gardening association
- environmental education and demonstration on topics such as composting, organic gardening and drought tolerant gardening are undertaken.

Saanich, Canada specifies:

- minimal cost to the city
- community planning process undertaken to identify garden-neighbourhood benefit and support
- assistance provided for site clearance, surveying and layout planning, irrigation management and other components
- encouragement of public art
- environmental innovation and demonstration such as composting toilets
- a first-come, first-served membership
- no pesticide use
- organic production only
- development of a user agreement
- public access to the site permitted and facilitated.

Vancouver conditions include:

- community consultation to indicate neighbourhood support for the community garden
- drawing up of a site plan to be approved by the general manager
- development at no cost to the city after the first season during which the city will prepare the site for planting and add compost to the soil
- development of a five year user agreement.

### 10.6.1 Public access

The cities of Victoria, Saanich and Vancouver stipulate that public access must be permitted and facilitated.

The issue of alienation of public open space is put into wider context in Auckland City Council's policy on community gardens. The policy recognises that there may develop a perception that community gardens are a private use of public open space that restricts public access, however it notes that community gardens in Auckland and elsewhere generally encourage public access, both adjacent residents and visitors.

The policy also recognises that there are existing limits on public access where sporting clubs have been given access to council land. A solution may lie in negotiating public access to the area occupied by the garden with Council in the development of a lease.

### 10.6.2 User agreements

In formulating agreements of how city land is to be used by community gardens, the City of Victoria has a three year agreement with a renew option.

The agreements stipulate:

- the development of site usage regulations signed by members
- minimum standard of aesthetics for allotments
- encouragement of year-round production
- membership on first-come, first-served basis if wait-listed
- no use of pesticides - organic production only
- no sale of produce for private profit
- donation of excess production
- public access to the site be maintained
- liability insurance be obtained.

### 10.6.3 Common themes

Recurring in these policies is the stipulation:

- for organic gardening
- ensuring that the non-gardening public can enter the community garden site
- the development of user agreements.

The stipulation on public access has not been a requirement placed on gardeners by landholders in Australia, however it may be worth considering to allay public perceptions that community gardens alienate public open space. The idea would require exploration as many community gardens are open on only specific days of the week, some only on weekends.

## 10.7 The South Sydney Council food security policy

In the mid-1990s, South Sydney Council (now amalgamated with City of Sydney) passed a policy on food security in the municipality entitled *What's Eating South Sydney?*.

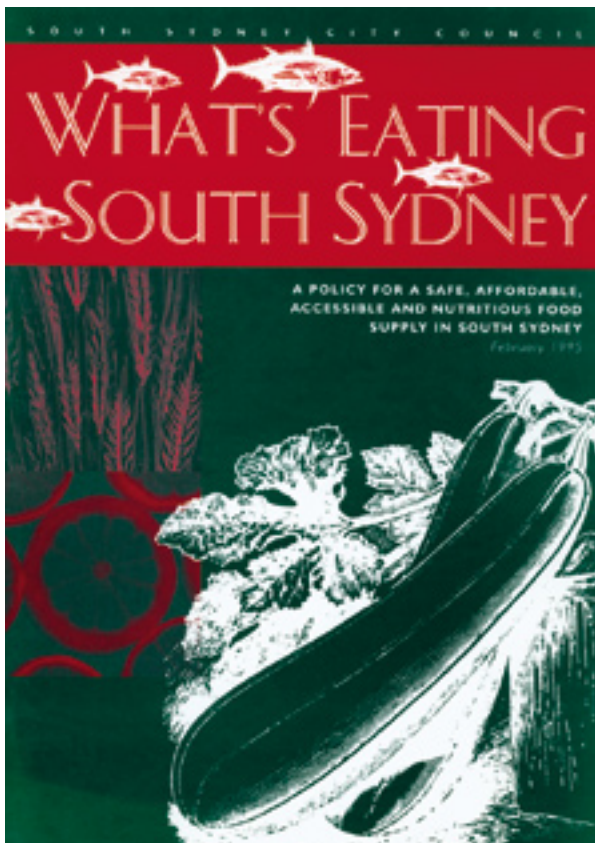
The policy was intended to enable programs that would improve local access to fresh, nutritious food and the development of ideas that would achieve that aim. These included community gardens and food cooperatives.

The passing of the policy enabled council to provide support to residents of the Waterloo Estate, among others, in the development of community gardens and the training of gardeners to manage these and produce food. This was done in cooperation with the Department of Housing which provided the land for three community gardens and funded fencing and construction costs.

The policy is a model of a more comprehensive assessment and policy that places community gardening in the wider context of food security in the LGA and the city. Whether such a broader policy is necessary would depend on factors such as the demographic and income mix of the LGA, the spatial distribution of fresh food outlets and access to the outlets via public transport.

Where conditions are such that a policy would benefit council's service delivery and enable initiatives not presently available (as did the South Sydney policy), it would be recommended.

Ideas on developing a food security policy inclusive of community gardens and other community-based food security initiatives such as food cooperatives, may be obtained from the Sydney Food Fairness Alliance ([sydneyfoodfairness@lists.green.net.au](mailto:sydneyfoodfairness@lists.green.net.au)) and the Illawarra Food Fairness Alliance.





## 11. A process for Marrickville

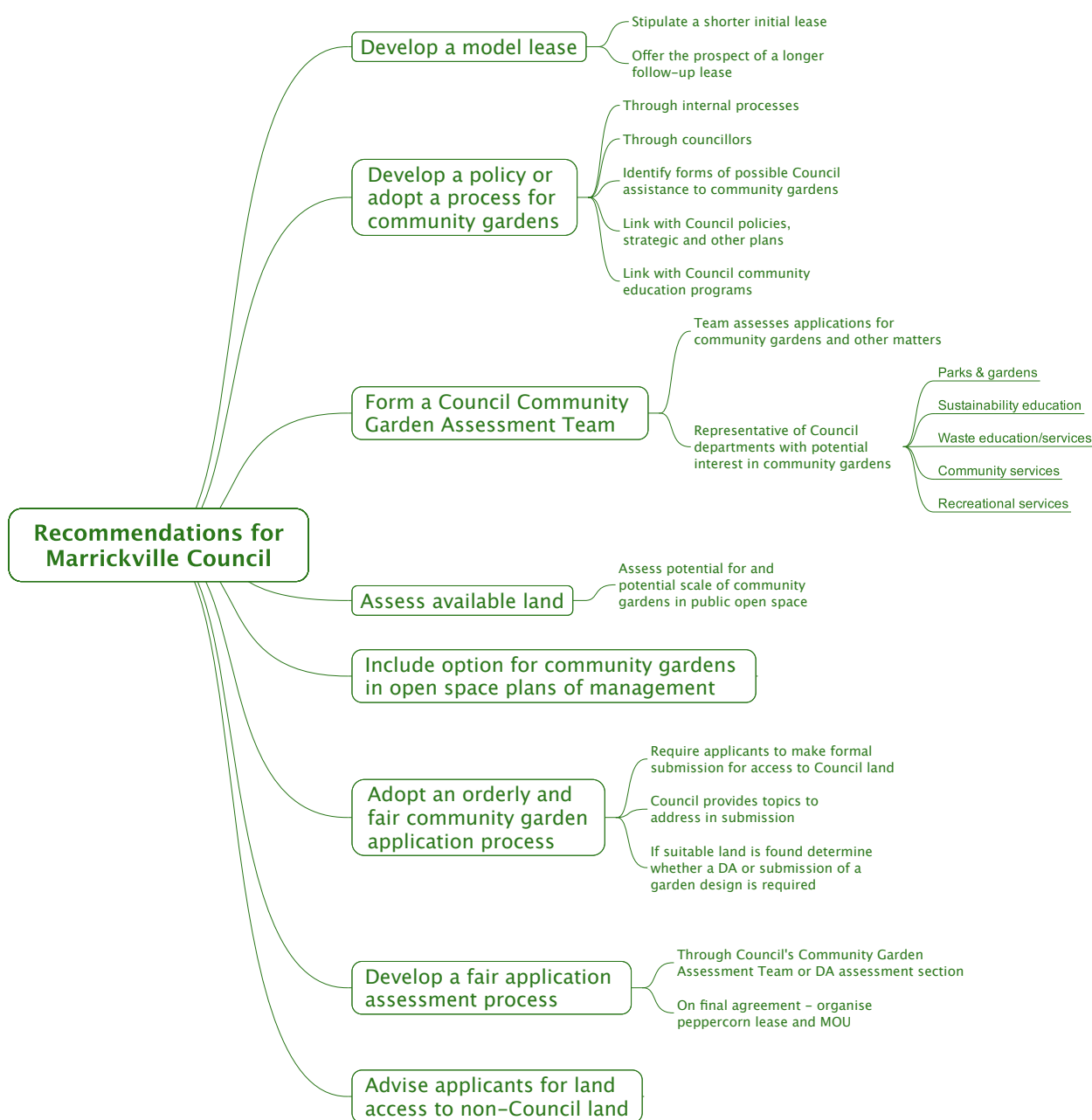
Community Gardens  
Policy Directions for Marrickville Council

Evidence from discussions with community gardeners and local government officers suggests that a structured approach to dealing with community gardens would be timely. It would also streamline the process for local government and ensure fairness for applicants for land for community gardening.

## 11.1 Council preparedness

In adopting a process for considering community gardens on Marrickville Council land, Council should first consider whether it would benefit from:

- adopting a policy to enable and support community gardens
- whether Council officers already have the capacity to develop a process.



### 11.2 The Local Government Act

Councils, under the Local Government Act, have the option of allowing compatible uses of land classified as 'Community Land'.

Under the Act, land categorised as either 'park land' or for 'general community use' would appear to be suitable for use as community gardens, other considerations being satisfied to permit that use.

For such land to be approved for community garden use, it may be necessary for it to be authorised under the Plan of Management for the particular parcel of land.

The Act stipulates that leases for the use of such land may be given for exclusive use and that a lease for more than five years must be approved by the Minister for Local Government. Few if any community gardens have leases exceeding five years, however there is an argument that leases could realistically be made for a ten year period where community gardens have been successful on the site for a reasonable time and show signs of sustainability.

The Act also requires councils to implement the principles of ecological sustainable development. Council support for community gardening could go some way towards achieving this.

Further legislation relevant to local government involvement in community gardening/city farms is the Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act 2002. This focuses on closing the loop in materials production/lifecycle. Organic cultivation in community gardens can be seen as integral to the Act, given that organic gardening involves the conversion of the green waste that constitutes up to 50 per cent of domestic waste.

### 11.3 Recommendations

#### 11.3.1 Recommendation – the lease

Marrickville Council lease land to community garden associations for an initial two year period followed by an option of five year lease periods with automatic renewal unless there are extenuating circumstances.

The initial period of two years:

- ensures that the garden is a viable proposition and is unlikely to be abandoned
- is of sufficient length to allow gardeners to design, construct and start to manage the garden.

Even after Council approves a community garden there may be a period before work starts while gardeners prepare themselves, however it is more likely they will start to garden as soon as possible.

#### 11.3.2 Recommendation – develop a policy or adopt a process

Marrickville Council develop a policy in support of community gardening in the Marrickville LGA by formulating a proposal for elected councillors to make a decision on.

OR.....

Council assess options for supporting the development of community gardening through internal processes allowable under the Local Government Act.

The benefit of a policy on community gardening is that it facilitates Council decision making by providing a legislative framework in which such gardens are enabled. With



community gardening enabled by policy, Council's decisions are then based on practical considerations such as:

- the availability of land for community gardening
- the location of such land
- whether there could be conflict with existing uses of that land and how an arrangement that incorporates differing uses could be negotiated
- compatibility with the Marrickville Strategic Plan 2006/2011 and incorporation of community gardening into Council's Management Plan and Budget up to 2009.

A further consideration could be whether approval for community gardens should form part of a wider policy on food security within the LGA. Such a policy would, like South Sydney Council's policy of the 1990s, consider the nutritional health of LGA residents and the availability of fresh food retail and other outlets, among other considerations.

Council assesses:

- **whether the community garden group need be an incorporated association** and have public liability insurance; existing arrangements with community-based organisations making use of Council facilities may form a precedent in this
- the **level of support Council might offer** to the community gardening association.

#### 11.3.2.1 Grants

To assist community gardens get started, Council might make use of its Community Grants Program that provides funds of up to \$5,000 to not-for-profit organisations. This is for projects that build social capital, sustainability and active citizenship. Other grants are available from time to time such as the state government's Environmental Trust Grants and the federal government's water grants.

There may be opportunity for funding community gardens aimed at a lower socioeconomic demographic through Clubs NSW Community Development and Support Expenditure Scheme that funds projects which contribute to welfare and service provision to local communities.

Up to \$25,000 is available through the scheme, which is aimed at low income and disadvantaged people. To access this funding the applicant would have to demonstrate that it has targetted a specific group and that there is support for its proposal. It is likely that Council would have to be substantially involved in the project, perhaps through its community services section in association with a community association and would need to advise and guide the application, project design and implementation phases.

#### 11.3.3 Recommendation – Council form a team

Council **form a Community Garden Assessment Team** to deliberate on matters concerning community gardens.

The team should be formed irrespective of whether a policy is formulated and adopted by Council or whether other planning instruments allow the approval of community gardens.

The team will ensure an orderly and open process for discussion and decision making on community garden matters and may invite input from sources considered relevant.

The team should consist of representatives of Council departments with a potential interest in community gardens, such as:

- parks, gardens and open space
- sustainability education
- waste education/services
- community services
- recreational services.

The team need meet only:

- on the infrequent occasions that Council receives a submission for a community garden
- to consider proposals for the further development of existing community gardens that are of a type or scale to warrant a collective decision
- that council becomes aware of difficulties within a community garden on Council land that are beyond the capacity of the community garden association to solve
- that Council decides to conduct monitoring of community gardens.

### 11.3.4 Recommendation – land assessment and inclusion in plans

Council assess public open space or available operational land as potential sites for the establishment of community gardens.

Once identified, council include community gardening as an allowable activity in plans of management for the sites.

Council:

- assess whether the proposed activities are appropriate to the location
- whether it would make use of the proposed community garden for its community education workshops and education.

### 11.3.5 Recommendation – adopt an orderly application process

Council adopt an orderly process for **assessing applications for land** for new community gardening groups.

The process of assessing applications would consist of:

1. **Provision of advice about Council requirements and possible assistance** to would-be community gardeners.
  - a) This may be placed on Council's website and produced as a simple brochure for distribution at Council service centres and libraries.
2. Notification in the above information of Council's **requirement for a formal submission** to be made for access to land.
  - a) Council to **provide a list of topics to be addressed in the submission** and invite applicants to include others they consider relevant.
  - b) Council and the garden association **identify liaison people** to facilitate effective communication.
3. Council to provide applicants with the **opportunity to present their submission** to a meeting of Council's Community Garden Assessment Team. After consideration of the submission, Council may invite applicants to meet with the team again so that ambiguities in the application may be clarified and further information obtained prior to a final decision by the team.

4. Council to inform the community garden group of possible suitable sites or otherwise.
5. **If a suitable site is identified** the options could be:
  - a) SUMMIT A DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION (DA)
  - i) **Council develop guidelines to help gardeners lodge a DA** as they usually lack knowledge of the process. Council may choose to offer technical advice through its landscaping department. Council may also offer to waive the DA fee on the grounds that the gardening group is a community organisation.
  - ii) **Council instructs the garden group to lodge a DA** that indicates how the group intends to use the site and details structures to be built. The DA process would allow for the notification to local neighbours of the proposed garden so that they have the opportunity to make comment.
  - b) SUMMIT A PLAN OF THEIR PROPOSED GARDEN DESIGN
  - i) Council's **Community Garden Assessment Team request a garden design plan** from the gardening group and provides feedback and technical assistance where possible
  - ii) Council's **Community Garden Assessment Team distributes a letter to nearby residents** to inform them about the proposed community garden so that they have the opportunity to make comment.
6. **Upon final agreement** to proceed, Council and the garden association sign:
  - a) **A peppercorn lease** for an initial two years, with the option for a longer lease at the end of this period if conditions such as community garden group viability, land suitability and garden management be met.
  - b) **A memorandum of understanding** to clarify expectations, not included in the lease, on the future use of the garden and activities in it and on Council support for the garden.

### 11.3.6 Recommendation - gardens on non-Council land

Council may choose to develop a role in encouraging community food production and community building in the LGA by advising a community garden group on how to make a submission to a non-Council landholder and how to effectively present information at a meeting with them.

## 11.4 Assessing the application

In assessing applications for access to Council land, it would be useful for Council officers to keep in mind limitations in the capacity of community associations.

They:

- may not be conversant with terminology in local government planning circles, making necessary the clarification of concepts, ideas, acronyms, legal and jargon terms
- may not be conversant with or understand local government planning tools such as REP, LEP, Plan of Management etc
- may not have great capacity in providing clearly the information requested in a submission, necessitating a follow-up meeting to clarify ambiguous responses
- may lack skills in site planning
- might not be certain about particular potential site uses; for example, a team requesting land simply to grow food might be uncertain whether they would later offer community education workshops in gardening skills or compost making or similar.

# ATTACHMENT 1:

## Community garden start-up documents

# Community Gardens

## Policy Directions for Marrickville Council

### 1. Topics for inclusion in a submission to council for access to land

This report recommends that community garden groups make a formal submission to councils, in writing, to obtain land for gardening.

The topics listed here provide an example of the type of information councils might request and that gardeners might think about in planning their garden.

### 2. Checklist for new community gardens

The checklist was devised by the Australian City Farms & Community Gardens Network for new groups to think through what they want in a community garden.

## A1.1 Suggested submission topics

Topics Council may recommend to be included in a submission by a community garden association for access to local government land.

1. Name of community garden association
2. Contact details – liaison person
3. Incorporated association number (if required by council)
4. Date of incorporation (if required by council)
5. Whether organisation is not-for-profit
6. Does the association carry public liability insurance and to what value? (if required by council)
8. Name of proposed garden
9. Number of gardeners
10. List characteristic of a preferred site for the community garden on council land, ie:
  - size of area needed
  - access to public transport
  - access to sunlight, water and wind protection etc.
11. Do you have a preferred location for the community garden?
15. The types of activities planned for the land eg.
  - organic gardening
  - community education workshops etc.
16. Planned infrastructure eg.
  - rainwater tank
  - shelter structure &/or storage shed,
  - paths - paved, mulched, gravel etc
  - nursery
  - poultry yard
  - compost system etc
17. Preparedness to allow the public access to the garden site for compatible purposes other than gardening eg. passive relaxation
18. Description of the proposed management structure for the community garden:
  - how decisions will be made
  - the proposed conflict resolution process
  - how new members will be recruited
22. How ongoing costs will be funded
23. How gardeners will ensure that there are no problems with:
  - a) odour
  - b). vandalism
  - c) excessive noise
  - d) site aesthetics - how the site looks
  - e) rodents
  - f) parking
  - e) non-gardener public access.

## A1.2 Community garden checklist

This checklist presents ideas to consider before starting a community garden.

*by Russ Grayson + Fiona Campbell for the Australian City Farms & Community Gardens Network, 2001*

### 1. WHAT TYPE OF COMMUNITY GARDEN?

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 maintenance of common areas
- ☐ a garden with both allotments and shared gardening space.

#### 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 GARDEN

#### Recreation/ community building:

- ☐ a safe place where people can come together to grow food and get to know each 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 colleges/ schools/ other educational bodies?

YES ☐ NO ☐

Will the gardeners offer workshops (eg. compost making, gardening etc) to the public? YES ☐ NO ☐

If not, will the gardeners make the garden available for others to provide educational services? YES ☐ NO ☐

Other educational activities: .....

### 3. HOW WILL WE GARDEN?

Organic gardening? YES ☐ NO ☐ Reasons: .....

If it is to be an organic garden, will this be explained to new gardeners when they join the garden - either verbally or in writing? YES ☐ NO ☐

Explained in some other way? .....

#### 4. WHAT TYPES OF PLANTS WILL WE GROW?

When considering what types of plants to grow in your community garden, remember that fruit and nut trees need plenty of space and should be spaced about 3-5 metres apart.

- |   |  |   |                                     |
|---|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> vegetables         | <input type="checkbox"/> herbs   | <input type="checkbox"/> fruit/ nut trees | <input type="checkbox"/> flowers    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> berry fruit shrubs | <input type="checkbox"/> water crops   | <input type="checkbox"/> medicinal plants | <input type="checkbox"/> bush foods |
| <input type="checkbox"/> herbal tea plants  | <input type="checkbox"/> native or indigenous plants (native plants are those originating in Australia; indigenous plants originate in the local region) |   |                                     |

#### 5. WHAT ANIMALS WILL WE KEEP?

- |  |  |                               |                                     |
|--|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> chickens            | <input type="checkbox"/> other poultry | <input type="checkbox"/> bees | <input type="checkbox"/> no animals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other animals ..... |  |                               |                                     |

#### 6. WHAT STRUCTURES WILL WE BUILD IN THE COMMUNITY GARDEN?

- ☐ sitting area to shelter from the sun and rain
- ☐ lockable shed for storing tools, seeds etc
- ☐ nursery for plant propagation
- ☐ fireplace for making coffee and tea - barbecue for preparing food
- ☐ play area for children
- ☐ public art
- ☐ educational signs
- ☐ rainwater tanks to collect water from the shed/shelter roof to irrigate the garden

Other:.....  
.....  
.....

#### 7. WHAT TRAINING DO WE NEED?

##### Gardening/construction skills:

- |   |  |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> plant propagation              | <input type="checkbox"/> garden soil analysis        | <input type="checkbox"/> improving garden soils | <input type="checkbox"/> making compost      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> using mulch - irrigation       | <input type="checkbox"/> pest management             | <input type="checkbox"/> seed saving            | <input type="checkbox"/> garden construction |
| <input type="checkbox"/> developing a planting calendar | <input type="checkbox"/> planting out and harvesting |   |  |

Other:.....

##### Design skills:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> site analysis for site design | <input type="checkbox"/> garden design |
|--|--|

##### Other skills:

- |   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> cooking what we grow | <input type="checkbox"/> other ..... |
|---|--------------------------------------|

Are any of these skills available in the community gardening group? YES ☐ NO ☐

If not where will we find these skills?.....  
.....



## 8. HOW WILL WE CO-OPERATE WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT?

Will the garden be a place where communities and local government can work together to demonstrate social and environmental policy compatible with the aims of community gardening, such as:

- ☐ waste reduction      ☐ water conservation      ☐ greening  
☐ energy efficiency      ☐ biodiversity      ☐ nutritional health      ☐ Agenda 21

Other:.....  
 .....

## 9. HOW WILL WE SUPPORT BIODIVERSITY?

Will we plant the non-hybrid seed of heritage or heirloom vegetables and fruits so we can collect, save and replant the crops?

YES ☐ NO ☐

.....  
 .....

Will the garden join the Seed Savers Network to learn more about food plant biodiversity, to obtain non-hybrid seed from the members of the network or to become the focus of a Local Seed Network?

YES ☐ NO ☐

.....  
 .....

Will we propagate and distribute seed of endangered or rare local native (indigenous) plants?

YES ☐ NO ☐

.....  
 .....

## 10. HOW WILL WE EDUCATE GARDENERS AND THE PUBLIC IN WASTE REDUCTION?

Will we demonstrate the reuse and recycling of waste organic matter through:

- ☐ compost      ☐ worm farms      ☐ mulching      ☐ use of recycled materials

Other:.....

## 11. HOW WILL WE CONSERVE WATER IN THE GARDEN?

- ☐ rainwater tanks      ☐ mulching      ☐ low-water-use plants      ☐ low-water-use irrigation

Other:.....

## 12. HOW WILL WE FUND THE GARDEN?

- ☐ apply for grants      ☐ membership fee      ☐ other types of self-funding.....

How will we fund ongoing costs?.....  
 .....  
 .....

**13. WHAT WILL WE LOOK FOR IN A PREFERRED SITE FOR THE GARDEN?**

- ☐ size of area needed
- ☐ access to public transport
- ☐ access to sunlight, water and wind protection etc.

Comments/suggestions:.....  
.....  
.....

**14.DESCRPTION OF THE PROPOSED MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE FOR THE  
COMMUNITY GARDEN:**

Will the garden organsational structure be and incorporated association? YES ☐ NO ☐

Will the garden obtain public liability insurance? YES ☐ NO ☐

How will decisions be made?.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

What will be the proposed conflict resolution process?.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

How will new members will be recruited?.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**15. HOW WILL GARDENERS ENSURE THAT THERE ARE NO PROBLEMS WITH:**

Odour:.....

Vandalism:.....

Excessive noise:.....

Site aesthetics - how the site looks: .....

Rodents:.....

Parking:.....

Non-gardener access:.....

Other:.....

The background is a solid green color. It features several wavy white lines that create a sense of movement and depth. There are also several dotted white lines that follow a similar wavy pattern, adding to the design's complexity.

## ATTACHMENT 2: Participating community gardens

Community Gardens  
Policy Directions for Marrickville Council

## Community gardens in the Sydney region

Only gardens on land administered by local government are described below. Other gardens exist on land owned by the Department of Housing, church and school land.

There are three known community gardens within school grounds:

- one in Bundeena in Sutherland Shire Council LGA
- another in Granville
- the long-established Angel Street Permaculture Garden on high school land in Newtown.

Additional to these are gardens for the use of school communities, either for students as part of their studies or as a general interest like that at Wilkins Green in Marrickville. These are not listed below because they are not open to the general public.

It was not possible to find information on a small number of gardens located in the Parramatta Council area. An earlier garden, dating back to the early 1990s - the St Clair Community Garden - once existed on public open space in Penrith LGA, however the garden ceased operations some time in the late 1990s.

### Marrickville Council

**Number:** One - The Food Forest, Addison Road Community Centre.

The garden has experienced the variability in use characteristic of many community gardens but in a more exaggerated form.

The main use has been for gardening as a recreational activity and for food production.

**Land classification:** Community centre.

**Councils role:** Minimal. A Citizens for Sustainability grant has been made to Addison Road Community Centre, which includes expenditure for the community garden.

**Council liaison:** Sustainability Coordinator.

**Type:** Shared garden; no allotments; unfenced.

**Management:** Community association.

**Comment:** Other gardening activities in the LGA include:

- Marrickville West school community garden
- Wilkins Green community garden within the school grounds for students and parents
- Fern Court School 'peace garden', for contemplation, a P&C driven project featuring vegetables, native plants and a frog pond
- Palace Lane is a community driven project with no grant provided by council.

Council assistance to different gardens includes donations of native plants.

### City of Sydney

**Number:** Two gardens are directly supported by council – Woolloomooloo and the small community garden in Newtown.

Council also provides assistance to community gardens that are not on local government public open space:

- to eight gardens, most being on Department of Housing estates and three on church land
- Waterloo Community Garden in the grounds of Waterloo Uniting Church; since opening in 1991, the garden has switched between allotments and shared gardening
- Glebe community garden, a small garden occupying a church yard which has received assistance from The Watershed sustainability education centre, a joint project of City of Sydney and Marrickville Council
- the Greg Hamish Community Garden in Redfern, a small garden on Anglican Diocese land gardened mainly by tenants of the nearby high rise housing estate.

The gardens are eligible for City of Sydney grants.

**Land classification:** Of the gardens on City of Sydney land, one is on public open space, the other on community centre land.

**Councils role:** promote, resource and support through a dedicated annual budget. Most support is of the in-kind type, including the purchase of water tanks, signage, mulch and promotion.

**Council liaison:** Waste Education Coordinator.

**Type:** Allotment. Low fences only.

**Management:** Community associations.

**Structures in garden:** Woolloomooloo Community Garden - Water tank, bamboo shelter, compost bays, storage structure. Other gardens - no structures; access to adjoining building.

### Hurstville Council

**Number:** One, started in 2007.

**Land classification:** Public open space; a disused bowling club.

**Council role:** Design, construct garden.

**Council liaison:** Waste Project Officer.

**Type:** Allotment; only a low fence around site.

**Management:** Council designed and constructed the garden and is to hand over management to the gardener's community association.

**Structures in garden:** Water tanks, storage shed. The garden is enclosed with a low fence.

**Comment:** As well as Hurstville Council, Kogarah Council may make use of the garden for environmental education.

Councillor Sandy Grekas has an allotment.

No open compost bays - only plastic compost bins for individual composting.

### Kogarah Council

**Number:** One garden in pre-planning phase in late 2007.

**Land classification:** Public Open Space 6(a), as a permissible use under provisions of the *Kogarah Council Local Environment Plan 1998*.

**Council role:** A Council initiative. Council will consult with stakeholders to develop ideas for the garden, then contract a landscape designer to detail the plan. Council is considering the employment, probably part time, of a project officer to manage the establishment and initial phases of the community garden project.

**Type:** To be determined by stakeholders during consultative/participatory process.

**Management:** Undecided as yet, but perhaps by community/Council group. Liaison people for Council and the gardeners may be formalised and a MOU between Council and gardeners may be developed.

#### **The Carss Park Bowling Club Community Garden** (working title)

The proposed garden was assessed in accordance with Section 79C of the EPAA, 1979.

In its *Statement of Environmental Effects*, Council states that the proposed garden complies with the informal active and passive recreational uses of the land identified in the Plan of Management developed for the site and adopted by Council in December 2004.

Visual, natural environment, water, social impact, solar access and views were criteria assessed. It was found that the proposed garden would "enhance the aesthetic quality of the premises and the surrounding locality".

Funding for the garden is likely to come from Section 94 contributions.

### Leichhardt Council

**Number:** One - Whites Creek Community Garden.

**Land classification:** Public open space.

**Council role:** Minimal.

**Type:** Shared.

**Management:** By community group.

#### Glovers Community Garden

The garden is in Leichhardt LGA but is on land owned by Rozelle Hospital. Interaction with council is minimal.

Management is by community association which funds public liability insurance and meetings are informal.

Structures consist of a pergola used as a nursery, compost bays, chicken yard and shelter and an existing building used for storage. The site is enclosed in a high chainlink fence.

### Manly Council

**Number:** One in pre-start-up stage.

Gardeners have submitted a formal submission to Council for access to land. This has gone to a Council committee for consideration.

**Land classification:** Proposed site - public open space.

**Council role:** Council may want to use the garden for environmental education, though there are no plans to do this as the garden has not yet received formal approval.

**Council liaison:** Unidentified, but likely to be within the environmental education division.

**Type:** Probably combined shared and allotments.

**Management:** Community association.

**Structures in garden:** Plans to have storage shed, pergola for shelter, water tank.

**Comment:** Council some years ago assisted a school /community food garden as part of a youth project; this now serves only as a school garden.



## Randwick City Council

**Number:** One.

**Land classification:** Public open space; part of land occupied by garden owned by NSW Department of Lands.

**Council role:** Provided access to land; provided startup grant of \$9000 used in part for legal fees; provided water to fill tank, native plants for windbreak via Council's Bushcare Officer; small grants in-kind.

**Council liaison:** Lease Officer, Sustainability Education officer.

**Type:** Shared and allotment; allotment access requires completion of three gardening workshops offered by a gardener who is a qualified horticulturist and landscaped designer as well as being a member for six months - this ensures applicants for allotments are going to stay around.

Council required the erection of a high chain link fence around the site.

**Management:** Incorporated association.

**Structures in garden:** Storage shed, water tank; pergola/awing structure including paving, chicken house. The garden is enclosed with a high chainlink fence.

**Comment:** The garden replaces one started nearby in 1994 on land designated for redevelopment.

### Sutherland Shire Council

**Number:** One, in the grounds of its Sustainable House.

The garden resulted from the enthusiastic lobbying of a community member for a period of six years. Greens councillors at the time sourced the site. There was originally high enthusiasm but this trailed off over time.

**Land classification:** Council operational land.

**Council role:** Assistance; use as community education venue.

**Council liaison:** Environmental educator/environmental scientist.

**Management:** Council has adopted the council volunteer model similar to that found in local government Bushcare programs. Management is by council's sustainability education, community services teams

Council provides land and infrastructure. Gardeners sign on as council volunteers and sign in and out when gardening. Volunteers do an orientation in council office that includes OHS.

A safe working methods statement has been developed.

## Waverley Council

**Number:** One.

**Land classification:** Public open space; occupies part of a public park.

**Council role:** Construction, management.

**Council liaison:** Community Services.

**Type:** Allotment; high chain link fence around site.

**Management:** Direct management by council, which installed a water tank and hired a landscaping company to reconstruct the garden.

**Structures in garden:** Storage shed, water tank.

**Comments:** Council did not renew the lease of the Eastern Suburbs Community Garden Association. The decision against lease renewal reportedly followed considerable lobbying by a small number of dissatisfied gardeners.

Council is redeveloping the site as a council-managed allotment garden based on the UK allotment model. Gardeners will be granted a one year licence which may or may not be renewed, depending on demand for allotments. Preference will be given to aged, single parent and CALD applicants.

Interestingly, allotment holders do not obtain a lease for their allotment, but a licence. The legal reasoning for this remains unclear and it makes the Waverley garden unique.

## Eastern Suburbs Community Garden

Although the garden has been closed and the infrastructure demolished to make way for the new Waverley Community Garden, it is documented here because it occupied the site until recently and because it developed a reputation as a well organised and very productive garden. A couple of its gardeners were consulted in the production of this report.

**Land classification:** Public open space in the corner of a park at Bondi Junction.

**Council role:** Council had little interaction with the garden other than making land available for its construction.

**Type:** Shared and allotment. Allotments were available after a qualifying period working in the shared garden.

**Management:** By a gardener's association which obtained public liability insurance. Committees handled the day to day running of the garden and there was a quarterly member's meeting followed by a shared meal. Like other gardens, this one has an established conflict resolution procedure.

**Structures in garden:** Shelter pergola, water tank which harvested rainfall from the roof of the adjacent child care centre, nursery with shade cloth roof, storage shed for tools and administrative material, compost bays which were later replaced by plastic compost bins and tumblers. A high chainlink fence enclosed the site.

**Comment:** The garden developed a unique structure that combined maintenance of the garden's productive capacity with the training of gardeners. New gardeners were assigned to a team that included at least one experienced garden. The teams maintained a section of the garden using crop rotation so that they learned of the management of a particular set of plants that changed with the growing season.

In recent years, the gardeners offered an outreach service to advise new community gardens and influenced Randwick Community Organic Garden in its structure and management.

## Willoughby Council

**Number:** One garden. Revived after desertion by an earlier group of gardeners who became discouraged when council proposed selling land around 10 years ago.

About a quarter acre block in size.

**Land classification:** Public open space; part of a public park.

**Council role:** Assistance, promotion and management; training of participants.

**Council liaison:** Bushcare Coordinator.

**Type:** Shared. Unfenced.

**Management:** Council has adopted the council volunteer model similar to that found in local government Bushcare programs.

**Comments:** Council reports interest in the garden from the public.

Council staff have restarted the compost system and reports interest in the garden by the public.

The land will later be sold and another location sought for garden, therefore no long-life plants being established.

There is also a demonstration no-dig garden near Artarmon Library, started as citizen initiative.

## Community gardens in regional NSW

Community gardens have started to appear in NSW rural centres over recent years.

Locations include:

- Wollongong LGA
- Lismore LGA (one garden in Lismore, another in Nimbin)
- Byron LGA
- Blue Mountains LGA – the Katoomba Community Garden with its arboretum of rare and heritage apple trees and small community gardens in Springwood and Blackheath
- The Hunter region – several gardens
- moves to start a garden in the Nowra region
- a proposed community garden in Albury-Wodonga
- Wauchope (Port Macquarie region)
- the ACT has at least six community gardens, most established for some years.

### Wauchope Community Garden

A community garden is currently being established at the rear of Wauchope Neighbourhood House within the mid-North Coast town of Wauchope.

The aim of the garden is to demonstrate that everyone can grow some of their own vegetables and fruit, providing for themselves and their families a cheap and nutritious source of healthy food.

As an activity of the Neighbourhood House, the garden is covered for public liability insurance. It receives no government or other funding but has received hand tools from Bunnings Warehouse.


Qualified horticulturist, Linda Parker, has given an undertaking to co-ordinate the Garden for a period of two years and volunteers are currently planning and planting out the garden.

Encouraging people to take up growing and eating more vegetables and fruit, no-cost workshops are planned to give hands-on experience and confidence to people to start their own veggie patch at home and to encourage those living on their own to eat well.

Focus will be on a small edible garden and as time and funds permit will demonstrate how edible plants can be incorporated into a 'normal' garden.

A small orchard section, backyard poultry and seedsaving areas are to be set up, with composting and waterwise methods on display. A sensory walk will occupy the back corner of the garden, providing an area where the public can wander to touch, taste and smell the plants.

Fruit and vegetables produced in the garden will firstly be distributed to the Hastings Meal Service, a soup kitchen that runs out of the Uniting Church's kitchen in Wauchope. As the volume of produce increases, other community-based organisations will benefit.



# ATTACHMENT 3: Water harvesting and irrigation options

Community Gardens  
Policy Directions for Marrickville Council

Much depends on site characteristics when assessing water harvesting, irrigation and water conservation options for community gardens.

Assessment for water options should form a part of site and sector analysis that precedes garden design. The minor earthworks that are part of some of the options would have to be completed before other works in a new garden.

It is important that community garden associations have competent advice in assessing sites and developing water harvesting and irrigation solutions.

A few gardens, Randwick Community Organic Garden included, have no reticulated city water supply and rely fully on water tanks.

Most of the options that follow have been deployed successfully in community gardens around Australia.

## Organically enriched soils

Soils enriched with organic matter have greater moisture retention properties than sandy or poorly structured soils. They avoid the drainage problems associated with heavy clay soils.

The production of compost from garden and kitchen wastes and stable sweepings, if available, is probably the simplest means of obtaining organic matter for incorporation into garden soils.

## Mulched gardens

Mulching is already a feature of most community gardens, however a lack of mulching has been observed in some community gardens on public housing estates in Sydney and Melbourne.

Mulch:

- retains soil moisture by reducing evaporation
- retains soil moisture as it breaks down into organic matter and becomes incorporated into garden soil.





*Mulching the garden conserves moisture and provides nutrients*

## Reticulated irrigation

Drip irrigation, fed from a water tank or tap, is suitable for the irrigation of orchard plantings in community gardens as well as permeable hoses like an Aquapore hose system.

Buried irrigation networks would be likewise suitable where plantings of annual and perennial vegetables and herbs are made in lines, however few community gardens plant in this pattern.

Although the use of sprinklers is currently banned under water restrictions, some gardeners suggest the use of inverted irrigation soaker hose, turning a sprinkler into something like a drip irrigation system.

## Installation of water tanks

Already a feature of a growing number of community gardens, there is a good argument that water tanks that harvest runoff from the roof of tool storage sheds and shelters in community gardens should be a feature of all gardens.

Local government could assist either by funding the installation of tanks as a small grant or by advising gardeners of the sources of rebates or grants available for water storage tanks.

A number of community gardens harvest water from the roofs of neighbouring buildings. The multi-use park in Fremantle, that includes a community garden as well as other features, obtains water from adjacent houses. The Eastern Suburbs Community Garden harvested water from the roof of the neighbouring childcare centre.

Some gardeners have made water tanks from salvaged 200 litre fuel drums and the large plastic barrels used to import olives.

*Water tank harvesting runoff  
from the roof of a shelter at  
Northey Street City Farm,  
artwork illustrates  
the water cycle.*





## Contour ditches

Contour ditches, otherwise known as swales, are excavated across a slope along the contour so that they detain rather than drain runoff. The water infiltrates the soil profile.

Habitat and Harmony Community Garden in Belmont and the urban Landcare funded, demonstration permaculture garden built at Fairfield City Farm feature contour ditches. Interlife, a 1990s project of the church in the Blue Mountains, installed contour ditches as a water source in their orchard area.

The design and installation of contour ditches calls on skills in measuring and marking out contours and in excavating the ditch to the right dimensions, depth and spacing.



*One of several swales at Habitat & Harmony Community Garden retains water after rain.*

*Fruit and nut trees can be planted on the downslope lip of the swale, which is made up of the excavated soil. Crops are planted in the interswale alleys and are irrigated in part by the downslope movement of moisture through the soil profile, depending on the type of soil present.*



*The swale after rain at Fairfield City Farm prior to planting out.*

*Fruit trees were established on the downslope lip of the swale.*

## Micro-catchments/retention basins

These are essentially excavations or bunding, designed to harvest runoff.

They may take the form of a ditch, the edge of which is planted to moisture loving trees, shrubs and ground covers. Channels or raised bunds may be made to intercept runoff moving downslope and channel it into the ditch/basin.

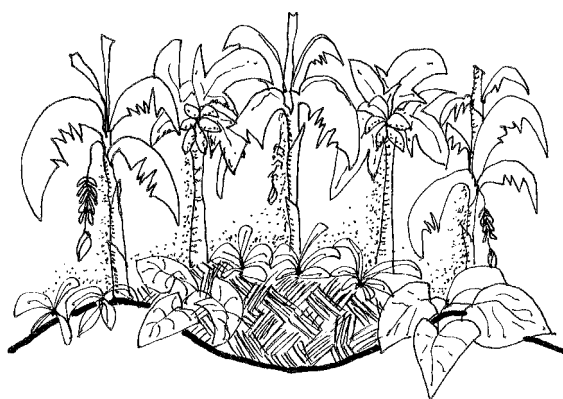
Banana, taro and other moisture loving crops are planted on the lip or inside the micro-catchment.

Low, raised bunds may be constructed across slope, either to intercept and detain runoff in the same way as contour ditches or to drain it to a micro-catchment.

## Hand watering

Hand watering by hose during allowable water use periods remains a common method in community gardens.

Some allotment gardeners make use of irrigation by watering can, a laborious but obviously practical means. Some gardeners say this is the best method of irrigating crops because it encourages careful use of water and delivers it directly to where it is needed.



*Micro-catchment showing central pit which retains water for infiltration into the soil and is planted to water loving vegetables. Bananas and taro are planted into the raised lip.*

## REFERENCES

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## Listings

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