



# Community Garden Handbook

Rules & Procedures for Establishing a  
Community Garden on Municipal Property

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# Section 1

## Community Garden Program



The municipality's community garden program allows residents to operate a community garden on municipally owned property. The program is intended for small scale operations by a group, on a non-profit basis, for:

- Personal use
- Donation to local food causes
- Production of a floral or landscape display; or
- Demonstration of gardening or other related instructional programming

This Community Garden process follows the Halifax Regional Council approved "Community Garden Program" Administrative Order (2014-009-OP). This order can be found here: [www.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/legislation-bylaws/AO-2014-009-OP.pdf](http://www.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/legislation-bylaws/AO-2014-009-OP.pdf)

### Before you apply you may wish to consider:

1. Looking at other properties in your neighbourhood such as Churches, businesses / organizations, schools, private landowners or other public lands (Provincial or Federal).
2. Consider joining an existing community garden.

Find out more about existing gardens on municipal land at [www.halifax.ca/recreation/parks-trails-gardens/gardens/community-gardens](http://www.halifax.ca/recreation/parks-trails-gardens/gardens/community-gardens)

### If you have any questions, please contact your Community Developer:

Community Developer	Serving the areas of...	Phone	Email
<b>Darren Hirtle</b>	Dartmouth & Eastern Passage	902-490-4865	hirtled@halifax.ca
<b>Kate Moon</b>	Halifax Peninsula	902-490-4408	moonk@halifax.ca
<b>Meaghan Dalton</b>	Bedford, Sackville, Fall River, Musquodoboit Valley	902-456-9683	daltonm@halifax.ca
<b>Ian David</b>	Cole Harbour & Eastern Shore	902-222-2673	davidia@halifax.ca
<b>Adam Huffman</b>	Clayton Park, Spryfield, Sambro Loop, Beechville, Lakeside, Timberlea, Prospect, Hammonds Plains, Hubbards and area.	902-476-2595	huffmaa@halifax.ca

# Section 2

## The Community Garden Process



The process to consider an application should take about 4 - 8 weeks to complete after the March 30 deadline (Depending on the number of applications received).



**Step 1:** Complete the Community Garden Application (available at [www.halifax.ca/recreation/parks-trails-gardens/gardens/community-gardens](http://www.halifax.ca/recreation/parks-trails-gardens/gardens/community-gardens)) and send to the Community Developer in your area (See page 3). Any questions concerning your application should be directed to your Community Developer.

**Step 2:** If you are not a Registered Society, start the process of forming a non-profit society. You will hold at least one public information meeting to:

- inform the neighbourhood of the proposed project
- gauge community support
- identify any issues and how you will address them

**Step 3:** Your Community Developer contact will review the application to ensure it is complete. Your application will then be sent to the Municipal Review Team for consideration. They will discuss your application and review the proposed site. The Team may have questions which will be compiled and e-mailed to you for response.

**Step 4:** An on-site meeting may be scheduled (if needed) with your group and a member(s) from the Municipal Review Team to resolve any outstanding issues.

**Step 5:** Submit the results of your public meeting and neighbours' support.

**Step 6:** Once all steps are complete and the requirements are met, you will receive an agreement from your Community Developer. The contract will lay out all the terms and conditions of your approval and must be signed prior to the start of your Community Garden being built.

# Section 3

## General Liability Insurance



Halifax Regional Municipality requires anyone operating on property owned by the municipality to carry a general liability insurance policy with limits equal to the risk of their activity. It is for that reason, that any Community Garden Group participating in the HRM Community Garden program is now required to provide proof of Commercial General Liability insurance with limits of not less than One Million Dollars (\$1,000,000) and with Halifax Regional Municipality named on the Policy as Additional Insured.

**Purchasing liability insurance may be a barrier to some groups. However, there are options:**

1. Community Garden Groups may purchase their own insurance through any Insurance Broker or Insurance Company. Some groups may already have a Liability policy in place and only need to add Halifax Regional Municipality as an additionally insured. A copy of the Certificate of Insurance must be provided to your Community Developer no later than May 1 of each season.
2. If your group does not have insurance, nor can afford it, you can join the Halifax Regional Municipality group insurance plan. The HRM Community Garden Insurance program is free to join, however, it does have a \$1000 deductible that is the responsibility of the Garden Group.

The Community Garden Liability Insurance policy provides the required liability insurance that will cover any insurance claims or incidents which may arise in operating a community garden. This policy carries a maximum of One Million Dollars (\$1,000,000) in liability coverage with a One Thousand Dollar (\$1000.) deductible which is the group's responsibility.

The Community Garden Group Insurance policy is not intended for garden operations outside the scope of the Community Garden Administrative Order such as apiaries, commercial garden ventures, greenhouses or sheds larger than 8'x10'. Any community garden with an apiary must have a registered beekeeper and liability insurance from the Beekeepers association.



# Section 4

## Community Engagement



Before you can start your Community Garden, you will need to make sure the community supports the project. Every effort must be made to inform the residents that border the immediate location of the garden and the surrounding neighbourhood within a 1 block area. There must be at least one in-person meeting that neighbours can attend to discuss the project. You can supplement your engagement by using means such as Facebook, online polls, posters within the community, email, etc.

### **The minimum requirements for community engagement are:**

1. Hold at least one in-person public information meeting
2. Collect and submit the Signatures Letter (see page 7)
3. Submit the results of your community engagement to your Community Developer

Collecting the signatures for the Signatures Letter can be done door to door or at the public information meeting. In going door to door, it provides you and opportunity to talk to the neighbours and gauge their support or opposition to the idea of the community garden. Speaking to neighbours directly allows you to explain the project to them, gather their support, clarify any misunderstandings and resolve any issues.

### **All Signature Letters must include the following:**

- Proposed location of the Community Garden
- Copy of the site plan

When you submit the Signatures Letter, please note which of the neighbours own property immediately adjacent to the garden location.



# Sample Signature Letter

Dear Neighbour,

As you may know, our neighbourhood is working to establish a Community Garden located at \_\_\_\_\_.

We are asking for your support for this location for the garden. You are invited to come and participate in this garden by being a part of the organizing society or just to come and garden!

Please make note of the details below about the project:

- Please look at the attached site plan. It shows you exactly where the garden will be located.
- This community garden will have \_\_\_\_\_ garden beds allowing \_\_\_\_\_ number of people to garden on the site
- Our garden group will maintain a waiting list if there is more interest than plots available.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the above details of the project and that you support the Community Garden. If you have any concerns, please contact \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

Printed Name	Signature	Civic Address

# Section 5

## Rules for Using Municipally Owned Property



### What Areas Are Not for Community Garden Use?

The municipality will not accept applications for Community Gardens that would be located on sport fields, boulevards and middle medians (areas between streets). Community gardens are not permitted on any HRM Right-of-Way. Ask your Community Developer for help when searching for a location. Look for city owned spaces next to Community Centre's, parks, etc.

### The Halifax Regional Municipality's Right-of-Way

Use of the Right-of-Way is reserved for motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians. The Right-of-Way also serves as a corridor for utility infrastructure. To ensure the safety of the public travelling on our roadways and sidewalks as well as the safety of those participating in the gardening activities, and to provide a safe working environment for our utilities to maintain vital public infrastructure, Community Gardens are not permitted within the Right-of-Way.

### Bylaw P-600 Respecting Municipal Parks

The establishment and operation of a community garden must comply with Bylaw P-600, Respecting Municipal Parks (i.e. vending, use of motor vehicles, etc.). A copy of Bylaw P-600 will be provided to the applicant organization. Bylaw P-600 must be reviewed prior to completing and submitting an application for a community garden. A copy of the bylaw can be obtained on-line at: [www.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/legislation-bylaws/By-lawP-600.pdf](http://www.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/legislation-bylaws/By-lawP-600.pdf)

### Bylaw P-800 Respecting the Regulation of Pesticides, Herbicides, and Insecticides

The establishment and operation of a community garden must comply with Bylaw P-800, Respecting the Regulation of Pesticides, Herbicides and Insecticides. A copy of Bylaw P-800 will be provided to the applicant organization. Bylaw P-800 must be reviewed prior to completing and submitting an application for a community garden. A copy of the bylaw can be obtained on-line at: [www.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/legislation-bylaws/By-lawP-800.pdf](http://www.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/legislation-bylaws/By-lawP-800.pdf)



## Requirements for Building a Community Garden

### **Raised Garden Beds / Cribbing Around the Garden**

The organization shall not carry out any major excavation or disturbance of the land. Only the regular turning and working of the surface area for the preparation of raised garden beds is permitted.

Raised Garden beds are to be made out of untreated wood or another material such as brick or stone. This helps maintain an aesthetically pleasing look for all residents in the area. Pressure treated lumber or lumber using creosote (rail ties) for cribbing around the garden is not safe and therefore not permitted.

### **Garden Soil**

The organization shall inform the Municipality on the source and quality of the soil/mulch before it is used on the site. The organization must ensure all topsoil brought to the site is free of any foreign objects, contaminants, subsoil, roots, sods, rocks or other unwanted materials including raw manures. Topsoil is to be screened through a ½ inch screen and shall consist of loose, friable fertile loam (textural class). Topsoil shall be a light mixture to sustain vigorous plant/root growth and with sufficient humus to prevent over-compaction. Topsoil shall have a minimum 2% organic carbon content and ph of not less than 5.7 or greater than 7.2. The Municipality reserves the right to request an Agricultural Soil Test.

### **Standard Soil Test**

The organization may wish to undertake a standard soil test to know what nutrients the garden's soil may be lacking. For more information on a soil test, contact the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture, Quality Evaluation Division, Laboratory Services.

### **Gardening Equipment**

The use of heavy excavation equipment is not permitted. Small motorized gardening equipment, such as a Rototiller, is permitted for annual soil turning and must be operated by an experienced individual. Proper clothing, proper footwear and safety equipment is required when operating such equipment.

### **Fences**

A low fence to keep out animals is acceptable but must be approved first. Visibility and accessibility to the garden must be maintained. All fencing supports must be visible for safety.



## Requirements for Building a Community Garden

### **External Structures: Small Storage Sheds and Greenhouses**

The Community Garden Program has allowances for garden groups to have external structures on site such as a Shed or Greenhouse. To qualify for an external structure your group:

- Shall have successfully operated a garden on municipal property through the community garden program for at least a year.
- Send a request in writing to your Community Developer with reasons why the external structure is needed
- Send an updated site plan with their request
- Their request will be reviewed by the Review Team

### **External Structures:**

- Cannot have running water, electricity or a permanent base
- Cannot be larger than 8'x10' (80 Square Feet)

In the event permission is granted for an external structure to be installed as part of the Community Garden program, the Halifax Regional Municipality is not responsible for, nor liable for, the design, installation, construction, maintenance or removal of external structures associated with Community Gardens. In addition, the garden group should be aware that loss of any type to the Participants, External Structure or its contents including but not limited to theft, fire, vandalism, spillage or damages of any kind (including personal injury) are the responsibility of the Garden Group. The City is not responsible for loss, damage, theft or vandalism of any structures or equipment.

### **End of the Project / Restoration of the Garden Site**

Either party may end the agreement without cause by providing ninety (90) days' written notice of termination to the other party. The Organization shall be responsible for the clean-up and any rehabilitation of the garden site at the end of the project.

### **Compost Bins**

A Composter must be a closed bin design to keep animals and pests out. Every gardener should be aware of the compost bin located on site.

### **Disposal of Organic Waste / Onsite Garbage**

As a community gardener, you are a steward of both your plot and the garden; you should compost what you grow, and dispose of your garden wastes/weed in a safe and responsible way (example: using a Compost Bin). Please do not throw waste or weeds on the pathways, in the fields close by, or just beyond your plots.

No waste receptacles for non-organic waste (garbage) shall be permitted on the garden site. The organization shall remove all garbage from the garden site immediately

## Requirements for Building a Community Garden

### Site Selection

When selecting a site for a community garden you must consider the look of the site and ensure your garden will compliment it. You must also consider security, and how it will be provided for the site. Site plans (see example below) are required upon submission of application; if you wish to expand your garden you must send your Community Developer a new site plan and a letter/e-mail requesting the expansion. The Community Developer will have the final decision on the site plan which will be determined after a site meeting with the Review Team.

### Site Maintenance

When designing the layout of your Community Garden, please keep enough space for a lawn mower to move between your garden beds. Your society will be responsible for maintaining the area between the garden beds. The municipal contractors who cut the grass are not required to cut between your garden beds.

### Cannabis

Cannabis is not permitted to be grown in any community garden on Municipally owned property.



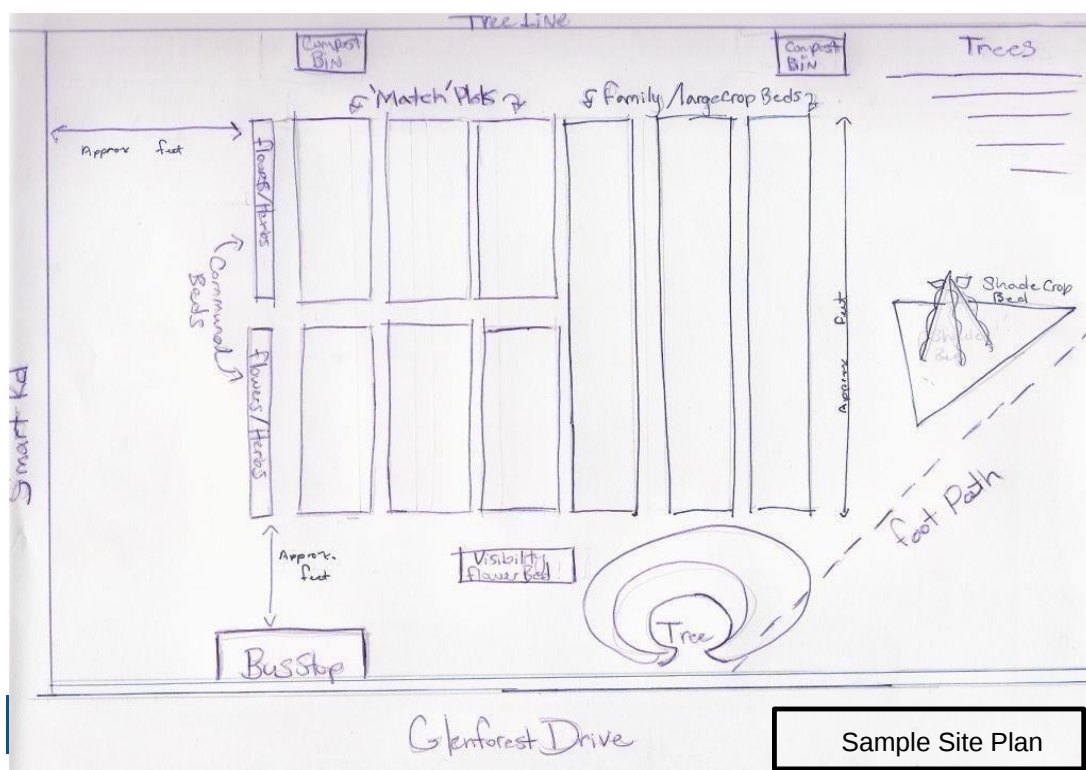
# Section 6

## Creating a Site Plan



To enable a timely and complete review of a proposal for a community garden, a detailed site plan is required. This plan forms a substantial portion of the information used to determine eligibility of a community garden. Establishment of the community garden must follow the approved plan. The plan may or may not be professionally drawn but must be legible, drawn to scale and contain the following:

- Location of proposed garden beds (Show how many garden beds you want)
- Approximate location of existing property lines
- General location of existing structures (buildings, play structures, etc.)
- General location of existing landscape features (planting beds, trees, pathways, benches, lighting, fencing, parking areas, etc.)
- General location of any existing watercourses (streams, rivers, etc.)
- Approximate distances between property lines, structures and landscape features
- Dimensions of the proposed garden area (where you will be planting)
- Dimensions and location of any proposed fencing, composting bins, small garden sheds or greenhouses, pathways or other similar features to be installed in support of the proposed community garden
- Location of the proposed water source
- Please note what area will be used as a “Common Area” for all to garden and use.



# Section 7

## Operating the Community Garden



The Community Garden Agreement between a Garden Group and the Municipality stipulates the rights, responsibilities and rules to be followed within the Community Garden. Once you have completed all the requirements and the Community Garden Review team approves your application, you can start your garden once this agreement has been signed.

### **How Long Will This Agreement Last?**

Your organization is responsible to maintain, manage and operate the site as per the rules and operating procedures and the definition of a community garden outlined on the application. The agreement is for (3) years, with an option to renew.

### **Funding**

Your organization is responsible for all expenses associated with building, operating and maintaining the garden site, this includes the provision of water to the community garden.

### **Expanding Existing (Approved) Community Gardens**

If you wish to expand an existing Community Garden, please send the proposed changes (written description, reasons for the expansion and a new drawing of the proposed site) to your Community Developer. They will review and check with the Review Team. Changes to the original plan require the written approval by the Municipality prior to installation. The Municipality reserves the right to end the agreement if the operating procedures are not followed.

### **Risk Management**

The Halifax Regional Municipality is not responsible for loss, damage, injury or any other type of incident or claim arising from the creation, operation, products or site of the garden in this open space. The Municipality has the authority to stop any activities they see which are unsafe. The garden group should have a risk management plan to promote safety and to minimize any risk to its volunteers and participants.

### **Common Area in Your Design**

Your Garden Group is required to maintain at least one area that is open for anyone to garden in. You should plan to encourage the involvement of groups such as schools, youth, seniors and citizens who do not have an assigned plot.

## **Assigning Individual Plots / Plot Holders**

If the community garden contains individual plots, a first-come, first-served waiting list must be maintained. Membership in the Garden Group and the opportunity to be assigned a plot must be open to any resident of the Municipality.

A Plot Holder is a member of the Garden Group who has shared or full responsibility for gardening at least one garden plot within a Community Garden. Plot Holder Agreements are recommended to inform plot holders of their responsibilities, share your rules and procedures to the resident who wishes to garden at your site.

## **Membership / Plot Fees**

Your Community Garden will be located on Municipally owned property. Therefore, we require you to keep any membership fees below \$30.00 per person for the season.

All money collected must go back into the Community Garden program. Proper records shall be maintained following standard financial practices.



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