



Community Garden Policy

Policy Name:	Community Garden Policy
Policy Owner:	Director of Environment Services, Environment and Infrastructure Services
Approved by:	Council
Effective Date:	July 10, 2017
Date of Last Revision:	July 10, 2017
Review Date:	Every five years from effective date
Policy Status:	New

Purpose:

To facilitate Community Gardens in Richmond Hill.

Specific Objectives:

- Provide consistent support and delivery of Community Gardens in Richmond Hill by setting guidelines and service levels, and identifying roles and responsibilities
- Increase community capacity through partnerships, community education and engagement
- Ensure fairness and equity by supporting Community Gardens that allow participation for all residents

Policy Principles:

The following principles form the basis of Richmond Hill's Community Garden Policy:

1. The Town recognizes that Community Gardens provide Richmond Hill residents with a multitude of social and environmental benefits including opportunities to engage in a healthy recreational activity, grow nutritious food, interact with neighbours and learn about growing food, ornamental and native plants.
2. The Town recognizes the importance of creating and supporting opportunities for residents to participate in long-term Community Gardens.
3. The Town recognizes that Community Gardens:
 - Contribute to a more vibrant Richmond Hill by creating a sense of identity and place
 - Support wise management of resources through growing and supporting a local food economy
 - Create stronger connections, opportunities and places for people to connect and get involved

Definitions:

“Allotment Garden”	A Community Garden divided into individual plots that are available for rent, typically run by a municipality or an organization/institution.
“Allotment Gardener”	An individual that rents a plot at an Allotment Garden.
“Community Gardens”	Outdoor spaces located in community settings on private or public property where parcels of land are allocated to people or community groups to grow fruits, vegetables, herbs, flowers, native and/or ornamental plants.
“Community Garden Agreements”	A form of acknowledgement, waiver or other agreement entered into in connection with an Allotment Garden, Community Garden or Collective Garden that sets out, among other things, the terms and conditions to which the user of the Community Garden or administrator a Collective Garden must abide.
“Community Garden Committee”	Generally a small group of committed gardeners that help to make decisions about the garden.
“Community Garden Coordinator”	An individual appointed by a Community Garden Committee that acts as a liaison between the Garden Committee and the municipality to relay relevant garden and administrative inquiries.
“Community Group”	An organized group of individuals whose members reside in a specific locality and shared government. Level of organization, purpose of the group, and number of members may vary widely.
“Collective Garden”	A Community Garden that is administered and maintained entirely by a group of gardeners or a volunteer committee. Decisions are made collectively by the Community Garden Committee. These gardens may include some plots that are individual, or they can be wholly communal.
“External Organization”	A registered organization (i.e. Non-profit, charity) that operates externally from the Town.
“Town”	The Corporation of the Town of Richmond Hill or the geographic area known as the Town of Richmond Hill, as the case may be.

Scope:

This policy applies to the creation and administration of all Community Gardens in Richmond Hill, including requests by members of the public, External Organizations or Community Groups, to create, support or modify existing or new Community Gardens.

Policy:

The following Policy provides guidance for gardens on both *public* and *private* property, and includes the following provisions, where applicable:

- Levels of Service
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Risk Management Requirements
- External Funding/Partnerships
- Application Process, Site Selection, Public Consultation Requirements, Agreements, and Orientation
- Continual Improvement

COMMUNITY GARDENS ON PUBLIC PROPERTY – ALLOTMENT AND COLLECTIVE

General Provisions

Community Gardens on public property in Richmond Hill (both Allotment Gardens and Collective Gardens) are gardens located in outdoor spaces including parks, open spaces, community centers and libraries where parcels of land are allocated to individuals or Community Groups to grow fruits, vegetables, herbs, flowers, native and/or ornamental plants.

These gardens provide a multitude of environmental and social benefits to residents, and all residents of Richmond Hill will have equal opportunity to participate in Town-supported Community Gardens.

Community Gardens are not to be used to raise animals, livestock and/or poultry, or to grow plants and produce for the purpose of sale.

All Community Gardens shall embrace a ‘wise management of resources’ approach with respect to garden activities.

Levels of Service

Levels of service to be provided by Richmond Hill in support of Community Gardens on public property may include resources such as:

- Site selection and public consultation

- Initial site construction and preparation (i.e. clearing site, building garden bed(s), fencing)
- Garbage and compost receptacles
- Signage
- Water hook-up and ongoing cost for water
- Administration (direct-to-gardener or via External Organization/Community Group)
- Garbage and organics pick-up
- Tilling and soil amendments
- Promotion

Roles and Responsibilities

External Organizations, Community Groups, community gardeners and various staff and departments throughout the Town have roles and responsibilities to ensure the success of a garden. These will be outlined in the Community Garden Procedures and other agreements.

Town Staff

Parks and Natural Heritage Planning

- Include consideration for Community Gardens in park planning process when required or appropriate

Parks Design & Construction Division

- Provide design and construction for Community Gardens on public property in *new or redeveloped* parks

Natural Environment Section

- Support planning, site selection and public consultation process
- Administer Community Gardens (i.e. application process, agreements, liaison with gardeners or Community Garden Groups)
- Coordinate promotion, education and outreach
- Coordinate and support on-site work requests and on-going maintenance in collaboration with Operations

Public Works Operations Division

- Site development for Community Gardens on public property in *existing* parks or open spaces
- Site clearing and tilling
- On-going maintenance
- Provision and maintenance of a water source
- Installation of the water line to the garden

Legal

- Assist in preparing Community Garden agreements

Risk

- Assess and determine insurance requirements

Allotment Gardener

- Attend orientation
- Adhere to rules and regulations of the garden
- Maintain assigned garden plot throughout the year/season
- Contact designated Community Garden Coordinator or designated Town staff with questions, concerns and suggestions

External Organization (Allotment)

- Administer Allotment Garden as set out in the Community Garden agreements
- Respond to gardener inquiries/concerns
- Communicate requests/concerns with designated Town staff

Community Group/External Organization (Collective)

- Follow guidelines, rules and regulations set out in the Community Garden agreement
- Establish a Community Garden Committee and/or Community Garden Coordinator
- Communicate regularly via Community Garden Coordinator with designated Town staff
- Work with Town staff to secure funding for Community Garden as needed
- Coordinate volunteers to participate in the Community Garden

Risk Management

Allotment Gardeners, Community Garden Coordinators and their gardeners must be responsible for loss, damage, injury or any other type of incident or claim arising from the creation, operations, products or site of the Community Garden. Richmond Hill staff responsible for administering Community Garden Agreements will stop any activities deemed unsafe. These terms will be outlined in the Community Garden Agreements.

Collective Garden groups are required to satisfy the Town's insurance requirements by obtaining a Liability policy through a licensed insurer and providing evidence of the same prior to a Community Garden Agreement being finalized. The insurance requirements for each garden will be outlined in the individual Community Garden Agreement government the arrangement. Individual Allotment Gardeners will be required to sign a waiver.

External Funding/Partnerships

External funding opportunities should be pursued to support the development of Community Gardens in Richmond Hill. The Town will support and assist groups in seeking external funding to support Community Garden costs. This support may include assisting with grant applications or by providing letters of support.

Where possible, Community Groups are encouraged to work together. This process may identify new partners to aid in implementation or offset costs.

ALLOTMENT GARDENS ON PUBLIC PROPERTY

Allotment Gardens are divided into individual plots that are available for rent, run by the Town or an External Organization on behalf of the Town.

Application Process for Allotment Gardens

Individuals who would like to rent a plot at an Allotment Garden (either seasonally or for the full year) will fill out a Town application form. Priority for plot rentals will be established as follows:

1. Residents of Richmond Hill who rented a plot in the previous calendar year
2. Residents of Richmond Hill in the order that applications were received
3. Non-Residents of Richmond Hill who rented a plot in the previous calendar year
4. Non-residents of Richmond Hill in the order that applications were received

A plot is considered rented when a Community Garden Agreement has been signed and full payment has been received. Non-residents will pay additional fees. Only one plot per household will be rented at a time. Waiting lists will be created when there are more interested participants than plots available, and waiting lists will be carried over each year. Individuals must be at least 18 years old to rent a plot.

Site Selection for Allotment Gardens

New Allotment Gardens will be best considered as part of a park master planning process or during the detailed design of a new park or park redevelopment project, if demand exists.

Site selection will be based on the following criteria:

- Garden fit - fits with the character and function of the area and is compatible with adjacent land use
- Direct Sunlight - a minimum of six (6) hours daily of direct sunlight during the gardening season and must be clear of any objects.
- Grading - reasonably flat surface (slope of 10 inches or less).
- Water Source - located near a suitable water source (or Access to existing municipal water infrastructure)

- Soil Conditions and Drainage – appropriate for Allotment Gardens
- Proximity to Transit - adjacent to transit stop or within walking distance of a transit stop strongly preferred
- Availability of parking – strongly preferred

Public consultation Requirements for Allotment Gardens

Public consultation will be completed as part of the aforementioned park master planning process or during the detailed design of a new park or park redevelopment project.

Agreements for Allotment Gardens

Allotment Garden Agreements (waivers) may have an annual or seasonal term, depending on which plots are available at the time. Once per year, the agreement will come up for renewal and the plot will be offered to the existing plot holder. Agreements will also contain provisions for the following:

- Garden inspections
- Liability waiver
- Roles and responsibilities
- Rules and regulations

An agreement will also be required between the Town and an External Organization in the circumstance where an Allotment Garden is administered by an External Organization on behalf of Richmond Hill. The agreement will include provisions for the following:

- Roles and responsibilities
- Rules and regulations
- Reporting requirements
- Garden inspections
- Liability waiver requirements
- Funding, if applicable

Orientation for Allotment Gardens

At the beginning of the season (May), participants will be invited to an orientation session at the Allotment Garden where their plot agreement is held. The orientation will cover topics including safety, rules and procedures.

COLLECTIVE GARDENS ON PUBLIC PROPERTY

Collective Gardens are run and maintained by a Community Group or External Organization and can take many different forms dependent on the needs and capacity of each group. Decisions are made collectively by the group; the garden may be wholly communal or include some separated plots.

Application Process for Collective Gardens

Community Groups or External Organizations interested in initiating a Collective Garden on Town-owned property will fill out an application form. The Town will review applications against pre-established criteria and initiate follow up meetings.

The startup of a new Collective Garden may be limited by availability of existing garden space, availability of potential garden space that meets the needs of the organization/group, and available funding.

The application will outline how the group will ensure that all residents of Richmond Hill will have equal opportunity to participate in the Community Garden. Town staff will work with each Community Group/External Organization to determine how this requirement will best be met through a clear and transparent process.

When an application has been approved and a site selected, an agreement between the Community Group or External Organization and the Town will be executed with a three-to-five year term.

There is no charge to Community Groups/External Organizations to use public property for a Collective Garden (in many cases Collective Gardens provide their own supplies and maintenance). Community Groups/External Organizations may charge participants a minimal fee to cover the cost of materials and supplies for the garden within each calendar year, which will be outlined in the agreement.

Site Selection for Collective Gardens

New Collective Garden sites will be selected and constructed as part of a park redevelopment project or by incorporating the garden into an existing municipal park or the Greenway System.

Site selection will be based on the following criteria:

- Garden fit - fits with the character and function of the area and is compatible with adjacent land use
- Direct Sunlight - minimum number of hours of direct sunlight determined based on garden needs
- Grading - will be considered and determined depending on the needs of the group.
- Water Source - Located near a suitable municipal water source (or appropriate alternative available)
- Soil Conditions and Drainage - Appropriate for garden need
- Proximity to transit
- Availability of parking

Public consultation Requirements for Collective Gardens

Public consultation will be completed as part of the site selection process.

Agreements for Collective Gardens

A bilateral agreement will be executed between the Community Groups/External Organizations and the Town for a term of three to five years with the possibility of renewal. This agreement will also outline provisions for:

- Garden inspections
- Risk/liability insurance requirements
- Roles and responsibilities
- Rules and regulations
- Monitoring reports
- Ensuring that all residents of the Town of Richmond Hill will have equal opportunity to participate in the Community Garden
- User fees
- Funding

Orientation for Collective Gardens

Upon execution of an agreement, the Community Garden Committee will be required to attend an on-site orientation to review rules, procedures and safety requirements as outlined in the agreement.

COMMUNITY GARDENS ON PRIVATE PROPERTY

Gardens on private property are located in various locations throughout Richmond Hill including schools, churches, seniors' homes, youth centers as well as properties owned by individuals or developers.

Levels of Service for Gardens on Private Property

Community Gardens and/or individual gardens on private property are eligible to access the same resources and materials that are open to all residents of Richmond Hill (i.e. self-serve mulch pickup, attending educational workshops, participating in the seed library, etc.). No additional resources will be provided by the Town of Richmond Hill to Community Gardens on private property.

CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENTS

The Town of Richmond Hill is committed to a process of continuous improvement. As such, this policy will be reviewed and updated every five years.

Related Documents

The Town has a number of other key documents and policies that relate to this policy:

- The Town's Strategic Plan: A Plan for People, A Plan for Change (April 2009);
- Richmond Hill Official Plan: Building a New Kind of Urban (July 2010)
- A Vibrant Community: Richmond Hill's Cultural Plan (December 2011);
- Richmond Hill Parks Plan: Better Choice for People at Play (April 2013);
- Richmond Hill Environment Strategy - Greening the Hill: Our Community, Our Future (2014)
- Community Garden Policy Key Findings and Recommendations Report (2017)