



POLICY:	Community Gardens
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OBJECTIVE

This policy aims to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Council in establishing and managing community gardens on Council owned and/ or managed lands in the Blue Mountains.

BACKGROUND / DEFINITIONS

Blue Mountains City Council recognises community gardens as a valuable use of land that can contribute to improved health and well-being of the community. Community gardens provide a place for healthy recreation, environmental education and creative endeavours of all kinds. Community gardens have economic benefits, whilst a local food source and reduced food miles strengthen the sustainability of communities. There is a history of the Council offering advice, support and coordination to community groups interested in establishing community gardens in the Blue Mountains. The diverse issues that arise for those wishing to establish a community garden include land use and zoning, insurance requirements, weeds management, asset maintenance, sediment and erosion control, dispute resolution, health and safety etc. This Policy outlines the role of the various Groups of Council in supporting a proposal to establish a community garden in the Blue Mountains.

Community Gardens - Definition

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

Relevance to Sustainable Blue Mountains 2025

Sustainable Blue Mountains 2025 was developed in 2010 to provide the long term vision for the city. The emphasis is on growing a more sustainable future and many objectives and strategies are identified. Among the strategies are:

- Encourage and promote sustainable food initiatives
- Provide opportunities to learn about sustainability
- Provide a range of recreational and sporting opportunities

The activity of establishing and growing community gardens in the Blue Mountains, fulfils each of these strategies, confirming the relevance of community garden developments as an important component in building the future of the city.

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

Community gardens occur as ecosystems that actively unite people and plants and contribute to the health, creativity and sustainability of communities. In recognition of this, Blue Mountains City Council supports the development of community gardens.

The Council recognises the potential for community gardens to:

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

Blue Mountains City Council's role in developing community gardens

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

Enabling community gardens on Council owned and/ or managed lands

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

The establishment of a community garden will require the consent of the landowner and may also require the submission and approval of a development application. The method for assessing whether a development application is required is outlined in the "Blue Mountains City Council Guidelines for the Development of Community Gardens on Council owned and/ or managed lands".

PROCEDURES

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

Key Roles Required on Community Gardens Assessment Team	Branch	Position
• Provide land use information	City Planning	Manager City Planning
• Provide environmental assessment of new and existing sites (weeds, water waste, sediment issues)	Environmental Management	Manager Environmental Management
• Liaison with the community	Corporate Strategy	Manager Corporate Strategy
• Coordination of the Community Gardens	Corporate Strategy	Manager Corporate Strategy

Assessment Team		
• Assessment of implications to Council assets/land and ongoing use	Assets	Manager Assets
• Internal Policy/guidelines review and strategy	Corporate Strategy	Manager Corporate Strategy
• Reports to Council	Corporate Strategy	Manager Corporate Strategy

This team will ensure an orderly process that shares the load for discussion and decision making on matters concerning community gardens. The team will be responsible for considering proposals for the establishment of new community gardens as they arise and to consider issues that may arise regarding existing community gardens. The team will meet on an as-needs basis.

The Community Gardens Assessment Team will consider proposals to establish new community gardens on a case-by-case basis. Gardeners will be required to submit their proposals to establish a community garden in accordance with the “Blue Mountains City Council Guidelines for the Development of Community Gardens on Council owned and/ or managed lands”.

Amongst other things the Team will assess practical considerations such as:

- The appropriateness of preferred sites (compliance with LEP etc)
- Alternative sites (if required)
- Lease arrangements and requirements (if on Council managed land)
- Weed, waste, sediment and water issues
- Accessibility
- Health and Safety issues

A proposal for a community garden that is supported by the Assessment Team will be subject to consultation with local residents in accordance with Council's [DCP 35 Community Consultation for Land Use Management and Manual of Procedures](#). Any feedback gained from the consultation process will be considered and any concerns addressed and negotiated with the applicant. If there is considerable opposition to the project, the Council reserves the right to consider alternative sites for the project.

A proposal for a community garden may be subject to a development application. The situations where a development application is required are outlined in the Blue Mountains City Council *Guidelines for the Development of Community Gardens on Council owned and/ or managed lands*.

A Report to Council for final endorsement and approval of an application for a community garden will be submitted by *the responsible officer* if the application is:

- Assessed as viable by the Community Gardens Assessment Team, and
- Supported by the local community through consultation.

If required, a Development Application for the chosen site will be submitted in accordance with the *Guidelines*.

For an application approved by Council, the relevant written agreements for the garden such as a licence will be developed by Council staff in collaboration with the applicants. Signing of a licence agreement will be made by the authorised Council officer and representative from the applicant organisation.

POLICY STATEMENT

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

- Enable the establishment of community gardens on appropriate lands;
- Ensure that prospective gardeners complete an application form as specified in the Blue Mountains City Council *Guidelines for the Establishment of Community Gardens on Council owned and/ or managed lands*;
- Assess each proposal to establish a community garden on a case-by-case basis;
- Ensure that Council managed land is used and maintained appropriately and to the benefit of the community;
- Provide land use information including assistance to community groups in locating sites appropriate for community gardens;
- Ensure that appropriate weed, sediment and erosion control measures are in place;
- Ensure assets are maintained by the community group;
- Ensure appropriate insurances and health and safety legislation are met;
- Grant licences for a maximum of 10 years for land to be utilised by community groups as community gardens when appropriate criteria are met, with an option to extend the term of the agreement upon application, in five year blocks; and
- Promote community gardens via means available to Council.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Blue Mountains City Council *Guidelines for the Development of Community Gardens on Council owned and/ or managed lands*.
