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# GARDEN SUITES DEVELOPMENT PERMIT AREA DESIGN GUIDELINES

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## OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

These design guidelines apply to garden suites, which are small detached houses located in the rear yard of a single family dwelling lot, as designated in *Zoning Bylaw, 2003*. They are accessory to the primary dwelling.

The purpose of these guidelines is to establish objectives for the form and character of Intensive Residential Development and to facilitate the thoughtful integration of garden suites into established residential neighbourhoods in a way that enhances livability and minimizes impacts on neighbouring properties.

### CATEGORIES

In accordance with *Section 488 (1)* of the Local Government Act the Garden Suite Development Permit Area has been designated for the following purposes:

- (a) Establish objectives to guide protection of the natural environment, its ecosystems and biological diversity;
- (e) Establish objectives to guide the form and character of intensive residential development;
- (h) Establish objectives to promote energy conservation; and
- (j) Establish objectives to promote the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

### LOCATION

All lands identified in Figure 1 below, which meet the requirements for garden suite development outlined in the *Zoning Bylaw* and the *Official Community Plan (Garden Suites Development Permit Area)*.



Figure 1: Map showing Garden Suite Development Permit Area boundary

## JUSTIFICATION

Residential neighbourhoods in Saanich are typically low density, composed predominantly of single family housing. Garden suites provide an opportunity for infill housing – housing that “fits” within an existing neighbourhood without significantly altering its character or appearance. They have the potential to:

- Add diversity and choice in housing;
- Increase the supply of rental accommodation and provide an alternative to secondary suites;
- Provide accommodation for family members or caregivers;
- Create accessible living accommodation;
- Promote water and energy conservation; and
- Provide rental income to homeowners.

The maintenance of neighbourhood character and appearance is a priority for garden suites. By considering key aspects of development such as building massing, height, size, placement on the lot, and existing trees, garden suites can become thoughtful and welcome additions to established neighbourhoods.

Limiting impervious cover (e.g. roofs, driveways, parking areas, hard landscaping), retaining existing vegetation, and encouraging engineered infiltration systems such as raingardens and bioswales on properties that replicate natural runoff regimes will help to minimize runoff volumes in receiving streams and municipal infrastructure.

Garden suites present an opportunity to incorporate energy conservation measures into the building and site design, which are consistent with Saanich’s sustainability goals and will result in more energy efficient homes and properties.

## EXEMPTIONS

A development permit is not required for a garden suite located in the ***Garden Suite Development Permit Area*** when:

- Only internal alterations are made to the garden suite;
- Minor exterior renovations to a garden suite or a single family dwelling on a lot with a garden suite are proposed that would not significantly alter the footprint or character of the building.

## INTERPRETATION OF LANGUAGE

Where *shall* is used in a guideline, the guideline is mandatory. At the discretion of the Director, variations may be acceptable, where the intent of the guideline is achieved, to address a unique circumstance that would otherwise render compliance impractical or impossible.

Where *should* is used in a guideline, the guideline is strongly encouraged, but can be varied where unique circumstances require other actions that will still meet the intent of the guideline.

# DESIGN GUIDELINES

## 1 SITE DESIGN

### Intent:

The guidelines for site design aim to optimize livability for residents and minimize impacts to the character and appearance of existing neighbourhoods. They encourage early consideration of the location of a garden suite on a lot, as well as tree protection and pedestrian circulation around the site.

### Guidelines:

- 1.1 The location of the garden suite should aim to minimize opportunities for overlook and shading on adjacent properties.
- 1.2 Protecting and retaining mature trees should be a key consideration during the early phases of planning for a garden suite. A garden suite, including associated parking and access areas, should be located and designed to preserve existing trees on neighbouring properties as well as Municipal property.
- 1.3 Efforts should be made to minimize hard (impervious) surfacing on a lot and especially in front yards and/or areas used for parking.



Figure 2: Example of a garden suite being located to retain existing trees (photo: [smallworks.ca](http://smallworks.ca))



Figure 3: Example of a clear pathway to a garden suite

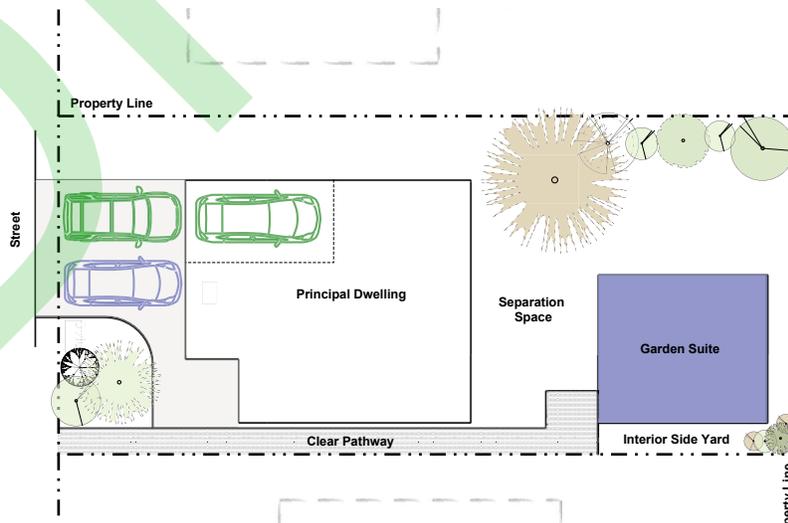


Figure 4: Example site plan for a Garden Suite

## 2 BUILDING DESIGN

### Intent:

Thoughtful consideration of architectural style and elements of building design such as materials, windows, exterior lighting and entrances will ensure that the garden suite 'fits' on the property and is sensitive to neighbouring properties.

Designing the garden suite to be adaptable to the changing needs of residents is also an important consideration.

### Guidelines:

#### Design and Massing

- 2.1** Textured, durable, high quality cladding materials should be used to help reinforce the residential character of a garden suite.
- 2.2** Consideration may be given to modular and pre-fabricated housing provided the residential character and permanence of the garden suite is reinforced.
- 2.3** On sloping sites, the scale, mass and location of the garden suite should adapt to the topography and natural features. Views from adjacent properties should be considered in the design of the garden suite.
- 2.4** On steeply sloping sites any vertical portion of the garden suite is discouraged from being greater than the prescribed maximum building height.

#### Windows and Lighting

- 2.5** The size and placement of garden suite windows should minimize overlook and be sensitive to neighbours' privacy.
- 2.6** Second storey windows facing adjacent properties and the space between the garden suite and the principal dwelling should be designed to promote privacy and reduce overlook. The use of skylights, clerestory windows and obscured glazing should be considered.

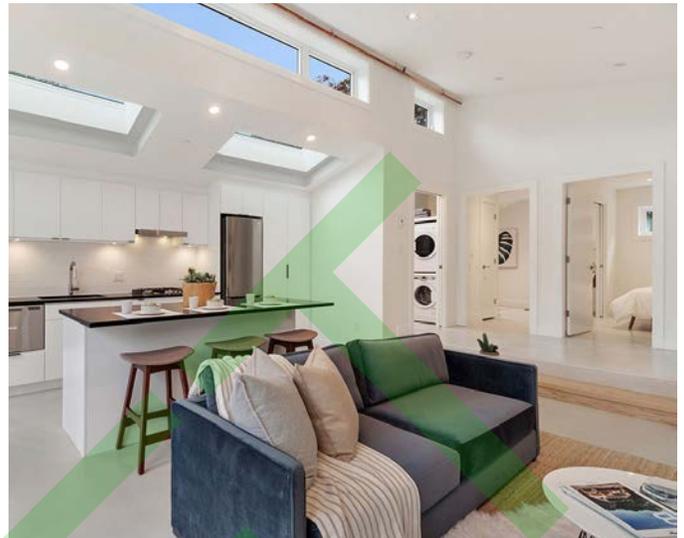


Figure 5: Example of overlook being reduced with the use of skylights and clerestory windows (photo: [smallworks.ca](http://smallworks.ca))



Figure 6: Example of overlook being reduced with the use of skylights and clerestory windows (photo: [smallworks.ca](http://smallworks.ca))



Figure 7: Example of a garden suite with an architectural style that complements the primary dwelling (photo: [District of North Vancouver](http://District of North Vancouver))



Figure 8: Example of a covered entry to a garden suite that provides weather protection and light fixture for visibility and safety (photo: [lanefab.com](http://lanefab.com))

## Design Guidelines

- 2.7 Clear eye level windows may be permitted where it can be demonstrated that privacy and overlook on neighbouring properties is not an issue.
- 2.8 Operable windows are encouraged to increase air flow and natural ventilation in the garden suite.
- 2.9 Lighting for the garden suite should complement the building and landscape design.
- 2.10 Lighting should be kept to a minimum necessary for pedestrian safety and visibility. Consideration should be given to the number, location, and style of light fixtures, as well as the negative effects of light spilling into adjacent properties.
- 2.11 Light fixtures should be recessed. Fully-cut off fixtures are encouraged. Motion sensor lights are discouraged.

### Entrances

- 2.12 Entrances should be designed to provide weather protection and can include features such as recessed or covered entries. Front porches may be considered in accordance with Section 5.8 of the Zoning Bylaw, however consideration should be given to noise and/or privacy impacts for adjacent neighbours.
- 2.13 Garden suites shall have individual unit identity numbers that are illuminated at night. Unit numbers shall be located on the garden suite and in a clearly visible location along the nearest the street frontage.
- 2.14 The primary entrance of the garden suite should be oriented to a street whenever possible. Landscaping should be used to reinforce the location of entry.

### Accessibility and Adaptability

- 2.15 The design and construction of the garden suite should consider standards of adaptability and accessibility. See the District of Saanich *Guide to Adaptable and Accessible Designs*.

### General

- 2.16 Where possible, external mechanical equipment including HVAC systems such as heat pumps and utility metres should not be located in interior side yards and they should not be visible from the street. This will help to limit visual and noise impacts on neighbouring properties.



Figure 9: Example of lighting that minimizes light spill into neighbouring properties (photo: [lanefab.com](http://lanefab.com))



Figure 10: Example of garden suite identity number that can be illuminated at night



Figure 11: Site plan for Accessible Design

## 3 ROOF FORM

### Intent:

Roof form plays an important role in the design of compact buildings. It can also provide opportunities for natural light inside the garden suite. The height and shape of the roof can impact shading and overlook on adjacent properties. Branches on nearby trees can also be affected by the height & shape of the roof.

### Guidelines:

#### General

- 3.1 One simple roof form is encouraged.
- 3.2 Secondary roof forms, such as dormers shall be integrated into the main roof form in order to provide additional head space and opportunities for natural light.
- 3.3 Dormers should be set back a minimum of 0.6 m from gable end elevations. Total dormer width for each elevation shall not exceed 40% of the width of the upper storey.
- 3.4 On a Garden Suite with a shed roof (slope of 3:12 or greater), the tallest portion of the building should be located to minimize impact on adjacent neighbours.

#### Two Storey Garden Suites

- 3.5 On the second storey of a garden suite with a sloping roof, the upper floor area shall be integrated into the roof form.
- 3.6 The main roof on a garden suite should spring from somewhere between the upper floor level and 1.67m above it.
- 3.7 Flat- or shallow-pitched roofs (slope less than 3:12) on two-storey buildings are discouraged as they can result in increased shade and shadowing on adjacent properties.

If a flat or shallow roof form is proposed, the massing should be located to minimize impacts on adjacent neighbours.

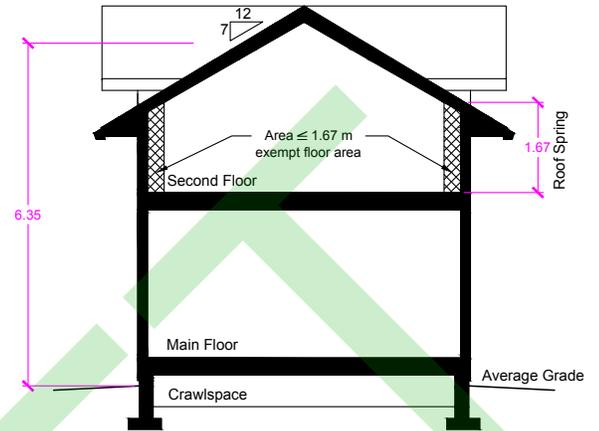


Figure 12: Cross section drawing of a Garden Suite showing an integrated roof form and a 1.67 m roof spring



Figure 13: Example of a Garden Suite that is stepped back on the second level to reduce overall massing (photo: [smallworks.ca](http://smallworks.ca))

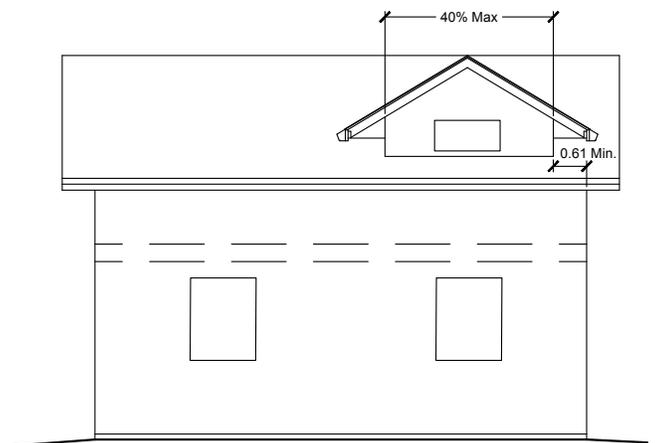


Figure 14: Elevation drawing showing gable end setbacks and total dormer width

# 4 SUSTAINABILITY

### Intent:

Garden suites should foster water conservation and rainwater management, as well as the efficient use of energy through thoughtful building and site design. Sustainability considerations are included here, as well as in other sections of these guidelines, including building design, landscaping, and parking and access.

### Guidelines:

- 4.1** Consider opportunities to reduce energy use in a garden suite by encouraging low carbon building design and landscaping. This may include energy efficiency such as passive solar design for heating and cooling, and internal infrastructure to support solar panels.
- 4.2** Building and landscape design that integrates water conservation is encouraged. This may include designing a roof to capture rain water to be stored in rain barrels and maximizing permeable surfaces on a site.
- 4.3** Rainwater management practices that mimic natural systems should be considered. The use of rain gardens, green roofs, bioswales, and landscaping (including retention of mature trees) can help to slow and clean rainwater, allowing it to slowly diffuse back to the natural water table.

# 5 OUTDOOR SPACE FOR RESIDENTS

### Intent:

Improved livability can be accomplished through a variety of means, including the provision of useable and private outdoor space for garden suite tenants.

### Guidelines:

- 5.1** At grade outdoor spaces should be defined and screened through the use of landscaping, plantings, fences or trellises, and/or changes in grade. Screening will provide privacy for tenants, as well as residents living in the adjacent unit or on a neighbouring property.



Figure 15: Example of steps and entry porch projecting into the side yard setback, while remaining within the building envelope. (photo: [smallworks.ca](http://smallworks.ca))

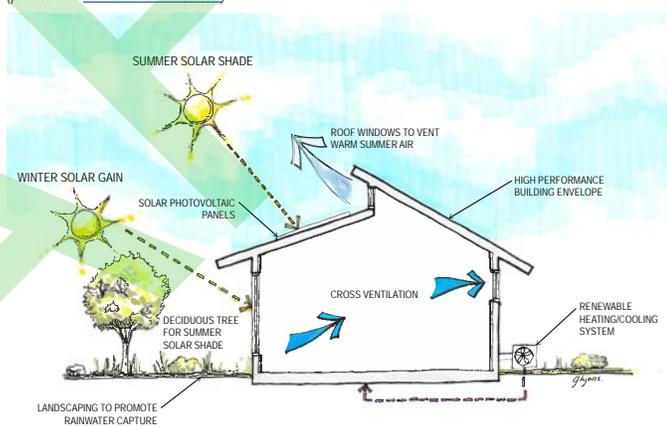


Figure 16: Example of a passive solar heating and cooling system



Figure 17: Example of the potential to add solar panels to the roof of a Garden Suite (photo: [lanefab.com](http://lanefab.com))

## 6 LANDSCAPING

### Intent:

Thoughtful landscape design is necessary to preserve neighbourhood character, maximize privacy, enhance remaining green space, protect biodiversity and provide permeability. Protection of mature trees is a key element in quality landscape design.

A landscape plan is required at the time of application.

### Guidelines:

Refer to the *Tree Protection Bylaw* for details on requirements for tree protection and replacement.

- 6.1** Mature trees and significant vegetation should be retained where possible.
- 6.2** Native and/or drought tolerant trees and plants suitable for the local climate should be planted to enhance the liveability and aesthetics of the front yard of the garden suite. Individual site characteristics should determine the full potential of trees planted on a property.
- 6.3** Drought tolerant plants and deciduous trees on the south and west elevations are encouraged.
- 6.4** Side yards should be landscaped and integrated into useable outdoor spaces, where possible. Landscaping should include permeable surfaces, as well as native and/or drought tolerant plants suitable for the local climate.
- 6.5** Landscaping and/or fencing is encouraged along interior side and rear lot lines. Chainlink fencing is not permitted.
- 6.6** Exterior side yards on corner lots should be designed and treated as the main entrance to the garden suite. Screening and landscaping between the street and outdoor space should be used to define the transition from public to private space.



Figure 18: Example of outdoor amenity space with screening for privacy (photo: [lanefab.com](http://lanefab.com))



Figure 19: Example of a clear and permeable pathway to a garden suite (photo: [lanefab.com](http://lanefab.com))



Figure 20: Example of a permeable outdoor amenity space (photo: [lanefab.com](http://lanefab.com))

## 7 PARKING AND ACCESS

### Intent:

Sufficient and useable on-site parking is a requirement for garden suites. Provision of parking will help to maintain the character of residential streets. Driveway and parking space design should consider rainwater management, protection of trees and impacts on adjacent properties. Parking spaces should also be functional and easy to access.

### Guidelines:

- 7.1** Driveway and parking space design should maximize rainwater infiltration through the use of permeable surfaces such as unit paving blocks, permeable concrete or asphalt, or driveway planting strips.
- 7.2** A minimum of 35% of the area of the front yard should be permeable.
- 7.3** Parking for the garden suite can be provided on a shared driveway with the single family house. A tandem parking configuration can work, but is discouraged for the garden suite.
- 7.4** For corner lots parking should be accessed via a driveway from the closest adjacent street.  
For lots flanking a busier road such as a collector road, access may be created from the adjacent residential street
- 7.5** Screening through the use of landscaping, plantings and/or fences should be used where driveway accesses and parking spaces are located along an interior side lot line.
- 7.6** At a minimum, one on-site parking space, for the garden suite or the principal dwelling, should feature an energized outlet<sup>1</sup> capable of providing "Level 2" electric vehicle charging<sup>2</sup> to the parking space.
- 7.7** A minimum of one secure and weather protected bicycle parking space should be provided for a garden suite.



Figure 21: Example of permeable interlocking pavers (Photo: <http://www.gtlandscaping.com>)

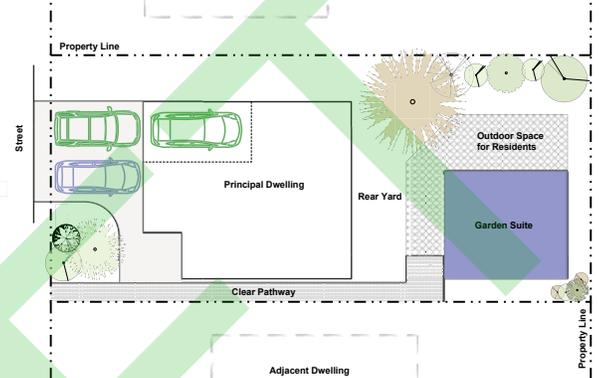


Figure 22: Example of a parking layout for a shared driveway

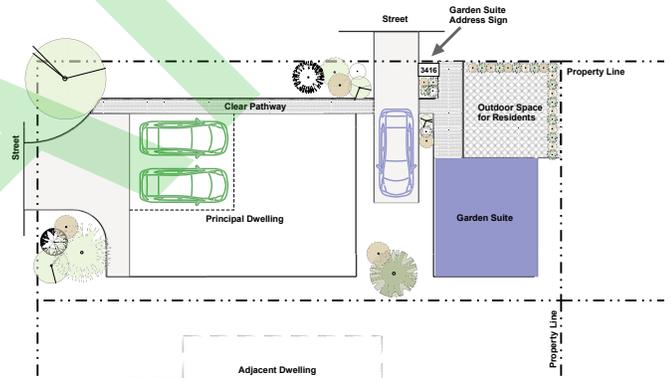


Figure 23: Example of a parking layout on a corner lot. The Garden Suite parking space (purple car) is accessed from the exterior side yard and the Principal Dwelling spaces are from the front yard



Figure 24: Example of a parking space with an energized outlet for an electric vehicle

<sup>1</sup> An "energized outlet" means a connected point in an electrical wiring installation at which current is taken to supply utilization equipment. The energized outlet may be an electrical receptacle ("plug") or a junction box for permanent connection.

<sup>2</sup> Level 2 charging is defined by the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE International) J1772 Standard:

Charge Method	Nominal Supply Voltage (V)	Max Current Range (Amps-continuous)
AC Level 2	208 or 240 V AC, single phase	From 16A to 80 A

## 8 WASTE AND RECYCLING

### Intent:

Storage of waste and recycling containers should consider impacts on adjacent neighbours.

### Guidelines:

- 8.1** Space for garbage and recycling containers should be provided for the garden suite and it should be screened from view. Where possible containers should not be stored in a rear or interior side yard setbacks.

## 9 HERITAGE

### Intent:

Garden suites may be encouraged on properties with existing Heritage Buildings.

### Guidelines:

- 9.1** Where the principal dwelling on a lot is a Heritage Registered building, the owner is encouraged to seek *Heritage Designation* prior to construction of a garden suite.
- 9.2** If a garden suite is proposed on a property where the principal dwelling is a *Designated or Heritage Registered building*, a *Heritage Alteration Permit* is **not** required, but the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* should be considered.
- 9.3** If an existing accessory building is a Designated Heritage building and the owner wishes to convert it to a garden suite, a Heritage Alteration Permit is required and the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* apply.



Figure 25: Example of secure and weather protected bicycle parking



Figure 26: Example of secure and weather protected bicycle parking combined with screened waste and recycling containers



Figure 27: Example of a heritage building in Saanich

## DEFINITIONS

**Cantilevered Balcony** – means a platform which projects from or is recessed into the wall of a building, is located above a first storey and is partially enclosed by a low parapet or railing in such a manner as to remain permanently exposed to outside weather. Access to a balcony is from within the building. There is no exterior access.

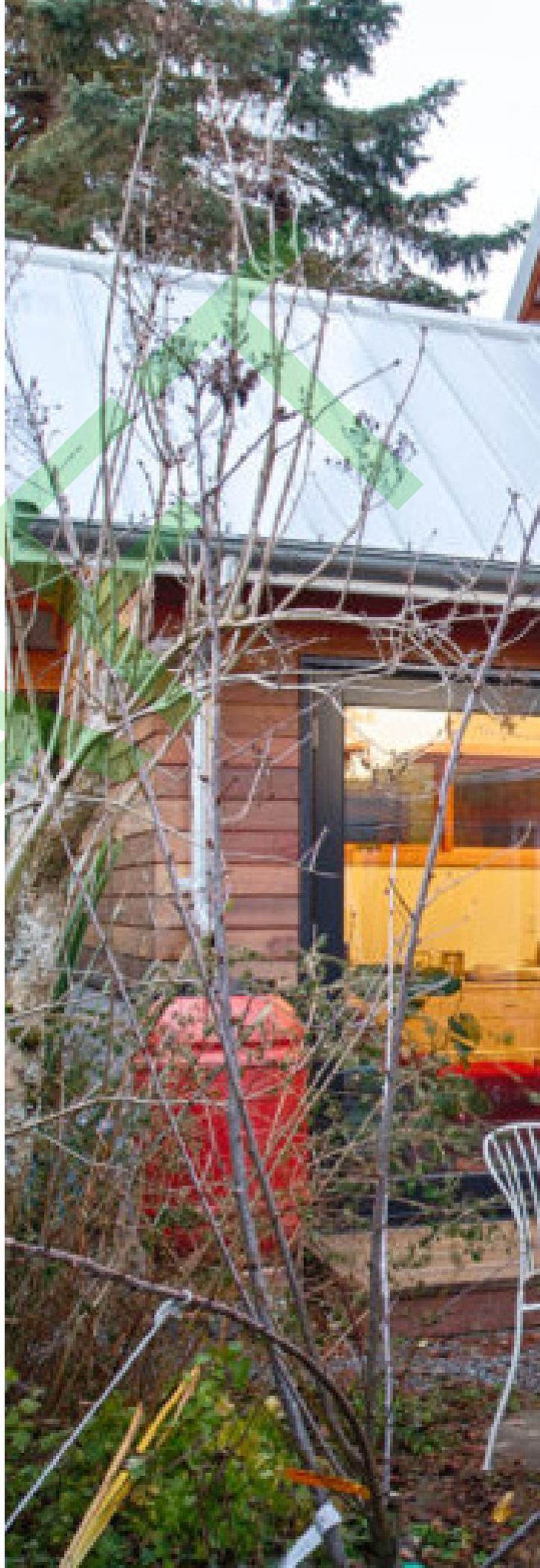
**Cantilevered Porch** – a low, outdoor structure usually constructed at the entrance of a garden suite. It is usually an extension of the main structure, that may include steps and a landing area. A porch may be covered.

**Dormer** – a roofed-structure, often containing a window that projects vertically beyond the plane of a sloping roof.

**Heritage Designation** – a site or building with identified heritage value that is significant to the community is protected by a Heritage Designation Bylaw. With this level of protection, Council must approve alterations to the heritage site or building that may affect its heritage character and/or value.

**Heritage Registered** – a site or building with identified heritage value that is significant to the community is listed on the Community Heritage Register. Being registered does not impose restrictions on the use of the building or the rights of the owner to make changes.

**Patio** – a structure used as an outdoor amenity area that is less than 0.61 m above grade, does not have railings or walls, and can be accessed from inside or outside the building.



(Photo: [CAST architecture](#) - used with permission)



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