

COUNCIL POLICY

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY GARDENS		
DATE:	MARCH 31, 2003	REFERENCE: 03/CW

Background

Saanich has recognized the value of community gardens since the mid-1970's when the first allotment gardens in the district were started. There are currently two allotment garden sites on publically-owned land, supporting over 200 garden plots in Saanich.

Policy Definition

The District of Saanich recognizes community gardening as a valuable community recreation activity that contributes to health and well-being, positive social interaction, community development, cultural expression, connection to nature, protection and use of open space, and economical food production. Saanich encourages community gardening by supporting the development of new sites, and the retention of existing ones.

A "community garden" is defined as a site operated by volunteers where:

- a parcel of land is used for the production of produce for the personal use of its members through allotments or shared plots
- demonstration gardening or other instructional programming may be offered
- plots and services such as water, tilling and shared tools are usually provided to members in exchange for a fee.

Goals

Existing community gardens in Saanich have waiting lists, as do other gardens throughout the region. Population projections for Saanich suggest population growth, particularly in the older age cohorts. More households will be living in multi-family housing which is the type of living arrangement that generates demand for community gardens. In order to meet existing and future demand for community gardens, Saanich endorses the following goals:

- support the establishment of one community garden for each neighbourhood (local area)
- recognize the need for community gardens as parks are being acquired or redeveloped.

Support for Community Gardens

Saanich supports community gardening by working with community partners, helping to identify/secure/retain suitable sites, and contributing to site development activities. Assistance will be provided in the following ways:

- promoting and raising awareness of community gardening
- providing contact information to the public for existing community garden organizations
- providing information to the public on how to develop and operate community gardens
- assisting interested groups in searching for suitable land for the development of community gardens from an inventory of municipal land, land owned by other government agencies, and privately-owned land
- assisting in securing land for community gardens through the use of zoning, lease agreements, and partnerships with private and public sector organizations
- where appropriate, offering Saanich-owned land such as undeveloped parcels, closed road rights of way, or parks for garden sites
- assisting with site development activities such as site planning and design, surveying, clearing, and irrigation improvements
- providing municipal water at a special rate
- providing recreation programming for various groups at community garden sites
- using the Saanich Recreation Guide to promote community gardening
- offering one-time matching grants to help with start up.

Conditions of Use

The following conditions apply to community gardens sited on Saanich-owned land, and should act as a guideline for other sites in Saanich:

- the garden is developed at minimal cost to Saanich
- a community planning process is undertaken to determine how the garden and neighbourhood can benefit and support each other
- for new or expanded community gardens, Saanich Parks will offer assistance with clearing the site, surveying and layout planning, irrigation management, water hookup and other site development activities
- expressions of public art are welcomed and encouraged
- environmental innovation and demonstration, such as composting toilets, are encouraged
- the non-profit organization agrees to develop, manage and operate the community garden according to a user agreement which specifies the terms of use, management responsibilities, user fees, and access procedures which include the following:
 - a) user agreement of at least five years
 - b) membership to the gardening organization and the opportunity to garden must be open to any resident of the District of Saanich
 - c) a list of regulations are developed for use of the site by members, and members are required to sign a contract indicating their compliance
 - d) membership and use of the site can be revoked for non-compliance with the organization's bylaws and regulations
 - e) participation must be made from a waiting list on a first-come, first-serve basis
 - f) no pesticides are to be used; produce is to be organically grown
 - g) produce grown on the site is not to be sold
 - h) access to the site for enjoyment by the general public is permitted and facilitated.

Guidelines for Selecting New Sites

Saanich supports the development of community gardens, particularly in urban areas of the municipality. Saanich will assist in locating new garden sites where available land exists, where neighbours are supportive, and where a gardening group demonstrates an interest and commitment. In identifying new sites for community gardens, the following **guidelines** should be considered:

- interest and commitment of a gardening group
- supportive neighbours
- availability of the site
- proximity to urban neighbourhoods and areas of population density
- volunteers willing to operate and manage the site
- site accessibility year-round
- soil quality and drainage
- sun exposure
- accessibility by public transit
- availability of parking
- access to municipal water
- an area to support at least 20 plots (or approximately 300m²)
- a minimum five-year use agreement
- consideration of the impact of the flood plain on suitability
- the parcel is outside areas of environmental hazard (steep slope, erosion)
- riparian areas and Environmentally Sensitive Areas are protected.

Retaining Existing Sites

Considering the challenge of establishing new community garden sites, protection of existing sites is an essential part of this policy. Saanich endeavours to do the following to retain existing community garden sites as a valuable use of public open space:

- a) provide assistance to community gardening organizations in securing lease agreements from public and private property owners
- b) pursue or assist in long-term lease arrangements or ownership of sites by the municipality, land trusts, or other non-profit organization
- c) rezone established sites to a P-4 (Recreation and Open Space) zone
- d) partner with non-profit organizations to support the promotion, retention, expansion, or acquisition of community gardening sites.

Saanich Community Gardens Contact Information

Capital City Allotment Association

641 Kent Road

Web Site: www.ccaagardens.org

Email: info@ccaagardens.org

Agnes Street Gardeners' Association

613 Agnes Street

Web Site: www.members.shaw.ca/agnesstcg/

Email: agnesstcg@shaw.ca