

Growing Community Gardens in the City of St. John's



A Guide for Community Gardens on City-Owned Land



Updated October 2020

ST. JOHN'S



About this Guide

The City of St. John's recognizes that community gardens help build local and sustainable food systems. Community Gardens help to ensure that nutritious and affordable food is available in neighbourhoods across St. John's.

There are numerous community gardens in St. John's. Many of the gardens work in partnership with non-profits, schools, faith-based organizations, and City initiatives. This guide aims to outline the necessary steps and considerations to starting a community garden on City-owned land.

What is a Community Garden?

A community garden is a shared space, where residents get together to grow vegetables, fruits, and flowers for themselves or others. There are several types of community gardens.

Collective gardens – All vegetables and fruits grown are cared for, harvested, and shared between all gardeners.

Allotment gardens – Community garden beds are available for use by one gardener or family. These beds are cared for and harvested by one person or family.

Combination – Some garden beds are cared for by one gardener or family. The other garden beds are grown for everyone.



How a Community Garden Supports a Healthy Community

Community gardens are a place where social connections are made. Social connections are important for people's sense of belonging and for physical and mental health. Community gardens contribute to the well-being of residents. They are important for the health of neighbourhoods and they create a place of gathering for people of all ages and backgrounds.

Benefits of taking part in a community garden

- ✓ Affordable opportunities to eat healthy
- ✓ Physical activity
- ✓ Supports mental well-being
- ✓ Builds social connections
- ✓ Allows sharing of food skills with others

City of St. John's Support for Community Gardens

Subject to resources and capacity, the City of St. John's will:

- Promote community gardening.
- Help build connections to other community gardens in St. John's and others that support community gardening, when possible.
- Provide a staff contact liaison for community garden projects.
- Help find City-land that is suitable for starting a community garden.
- Provide helpful information and resources on starting a community garden.



Community Garden Projects on City-Owned Land

The City of St. John's supports new community gardens in residential areas, neighbourhood parks and open spaces. All new community garden projects on City-owned land will be subject to the following requirements as part of the approval process:

A. Garden Committee

A required first step is to start a 'garden committee'. The 'garden committee' will create a project plan to make sure the project operates as an effective and sustainable garden. A project plan makes sure that the workload is shared, and everyone has clear roles and responsibilities.

Garden committees should work with existing community gardens and organizations that support community gardening. This will help the garden committee gain valuable information and insight. The City of St. John's recommends that all new garden committees visit the Cavell Park Community Garden. The Cavell Park Community Garden is found at the base of Signal Hill at the end of [Cavell Avenue](#). This community garden is an example of a successful community garden on City-owned land. Visitors are welcome. Please follow their garden rules, including not picking any plants.



B. Finding a Good Garden Location

Recommended locations for community gardens are green spaces and open parks. There should be easy access to resources, such as paths and water. Locations that would not be ideal include sites near traffic intersections, traffic islands, or close to city streets.

Consider the Following

- 1) Approximately 6 hours of full sun exposure daily, such as visible flat green spaces away from streets and shade.
- 2) Easy access to water, such as:
 - ✓ Hooking up a hose to public water lines
 - ✓ Securing rain barrels near the garden
 - ✓ Using a nearby resident's water supply
 - ✓ Working with the City to get water from a nearby fire hydrant

Proposed garden sites will be reviewed on a case by case basis. This means that not all green spaces and open parks are suitable for a community garden. The City will not prepare land, provide gardening materials or signage, or maintain the community garden. All work is to be done by the garden committee.

C. Community Engagement

Starting a small manageable garden that can grow over time will be more practical for volunteers and Garden Committees. Before starting, find out:

- How many residents are interested in participating in a garden?
- How much space is needed?



- What resources and funds are required?

Connect with other community gardens for valuable information on starting a community garden. There are community gardens across the city that can share experiences, Contact [Food First NL](#) for a current list of community gardens in your area.

D. Development Approval

New garden projects must submit a development application to the City of St. John's. The application can be found at stjohns.ca/forms-permits. Committees should connect with healthycommunities@stjohns.ca before submitting the development application. Submitting the application starts a review process. Applications will be reviewed to determine if the garden committee has met the requirements. The development application is submitted to:

Access Centre
First Floor City Hall
10 New Gower Street, St. John's
accessstjohns@stjohns.ca

The development application should include the following information:

- 1) Project Description - describe the proposed goal for the garden. Tell us about the type and size of garden your committee would like to build and include the number and size of beds and any signage or other infrastructure.
- 2) Project Location - tell us the specific location where you would like to build the community garden. Include a site map (drawn, aerial map or photo) with the proposed location clearly identified.
- 3) Access to Water - clearly outline the most appropriate and accessible water

source for the community garden. If the garden committee is unsure of a water source, please include ideas on how the committee can work with the City of St. John's to collectively secure a water source.

Please note: No one water supply method will work for all garden proposals. Each garden will be considered case-by-case, as each option is dependent upon the proposed location of the garden project.

- 4) Garden Committee and/or Partners - provide a description of your committee (who you are and how you assembled). Identify all garden committee members by name and include at least one committee members email address and phone number. List any other partners that will be involved in the development of your garden project.

E. License

For Community gardens on City-owned land, a license of 'land-use agreement' is required between the City of St. John's and the garden committee. Licenses will be subject to council approval and terms may vary based on location and size of gardens.





Planning for Success

Accessibility, Inclusion and Safety

All community gardens should be as accessible and inclusive as possible. An accessible garden allows all members of the community be able to participate.

Community Gardens May Include

- ✓ Having adaptable tools
- ✓ Having a variety of garden beds, such as raised or platform beds
- ✓ A location with hard surfaces; this makes it easier to navigate with mobility assisting devices

The City of St. John's is working on Accessibility Guidelines for community gardens. As a reference, please refer to [City of Vancouver Guidelines](#). If you need more information, please connect with us.

For safety reasons, the city only allows the use of raised beds for community gardens. Raised beds are more visible, ergonomic, and promote the use of safe, good quality soil. To learn more about safe soil, please visit [St. John's Safer Soil](#).

Volunteers

Having trusted volunteers care for the garden helps to create a welcoming community space. It is important to share tasks through the seasons and build up new volunteers to sustain the garden.

Financial Considerations

There are several ways garden committees can finance the cost of starting a community garden. Some examples are, fundraising money or supplies, finding sponsors, and applying for grants.

Examples of grants that can be used for

community gardens include:

[City of St. John's Community Grants](#)

[The Wellness Coalition - Avalon East \(only available to members of the Wellness Coalition\)](#)

[Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, Community Healthy Living Fund](#)

[Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Fisheries and Land Resources – Community Garden Support Program](#)

Some community gardens charge an annual membership fee to use a garden plot. This is a the seasonal fee to help cover costs of general upkeep and supplies.

Conclusion

We look forward to working with garden committees across the city. This guide is an overview of some considerations before starting a community garden on City-owned land. Additional steps may be required. Each community garden proposal will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

For a more detailed review on how to start a community garden, please see Food First NL's [Community Garden Best Practices Toolkit: A Guide for Community Organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador](#).

Connect With Us

Do you have questions about this guide or about starting a community garden in the City of St. John's? Connect with us at Healthy City St. John's by email at healthycommunities@stjohns.ca or by phone at 709-576-8628.