

COMMUNITY GARDENS IN THE PARKS MANUAL FOR COMMUNITY GARDEN DEVELOPMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations! We are pleased that you would like to work together with us and your neighbors to start a community garden in your local park. The City of Fayetteville is helping promote and expand greening efforts in our community by providing valuable outdoor space for citizens in Fayetteville to garden together. **To participate in an existing community garden e-mail lnetherland@ci.fayetteville.ar.us or go to www.fayettevillegardens.org for contact information.**

Designing, planting, and caring for a garden can yield very rewarding results. Gardening gives us opportunities to be active, creative and social, as well as to establish a direct connection with nature. Gardening promotes good overall fitness and health. Maintaining a successful community garden is also a long-term responsibility which requires community support and dedicated, ongoing commitment by all participants.

In order to form a community garden in a Fayetteville park, the following six-step process must be completed by your group. Use this detailed manual as your guide along with the Community Gardens in the Parks Checklist which outlines the steps.

DEFINITION

A Park Community Garden is defined as an assigned space within a park that is reserved solely for the use of an organized group of community members for the purpose of growing vegetables and flowers. The community gardening group is solely responsible for all necessary maintenance of this space.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

The Park Horticulturist and Maintenance Superintendent are your main contacts within the Parks and Recreation Department. Just as it will be your responsibility to maintain your garden in an appealing manner, the Parks and Recreation Horticulturist (479-444-3467) and Maintenance Superintendent (479-575-8368) will work with you by sharing information about any activities in the park which may impact your garden space.

Parks and Recreation maintenance crews will be made aware of your garden space to assure that the boundaries are respected and to see where their maintenance responsibilities adjoin yours.

STEP ONE: FORMING A GARDEN GROUP

Creating a Community Garden is a grass-roots operation; it is a long-term responsibility which will require community support and dedicated, on-going commitment by all members of the community gardening group.

We recommend that residents of Fayetteville who would like to develop a Community Garden in their neighborhood park organize themselves as an official Garden Group (Group). As a public agency, the City of Fayetteville policy requires inclusiveness; anyone interested in joining the Group is to be fairly considered.

The Group will appoint a liaison, or Group Leader, who will serve as the Group's representative to the Parks and Recreation Department and to the public. The liaison will be responsible for monitoring all garden activities and assisting with organization of all garden programs such as registration and events. Once established, it is important that your Group develop working relationships with the Park Horticulturist, Neighborhood Association leaders and/or nearby schools. Support from all of these parties is crucial to the long-term success of a Community Garden.

STEP TWO: SELECTING THE LOCATION

First, check with the Park Horticulturist to see if an area has been identified suitable for a Community Garden. Consider these factors which must be used in identifying and defining a site for a proposed Community Garden:

1. Confirm with the Park Horticulturist that the specific location is owned by the Parks and Recreation Department.
2. Look for any under-utilized sections of parks or playgrounds which will not interfere with park aesthetics or existing park uses.
3. Is the space large enough to accommodate an appropriate number of garden plots?
4. **AN EXISTING WATER SOURCE IS HIGHLY DESIRABLE. An area located within 100 feet of a functioning water source is preferred. The use of fire hydrants or drinking fountains is not an option.**
5. Consider sun exposure and shade from buildings, trees, etc. Full sun to mostly sunny is best.
6. Are there restroom facilities nearby? If not, what options do the gardeners have?
7. Will fencing be needed? The Garden Group is responsible for all costs associated with fence construction (See the City of Fayetteville Community Garden Fence Specifications).
8. Will a storage facility be needed? If so, how much space will be required?
9. After these determinations are made, inform the Park Horticulturist to see if this fits with Parks and Recreation plans.

STEP THREE: APPLICATION

Upon completion of Steps One and Two, submit an Application Form to:

**Fayetteville Parks and Recreation Department
Community Garden Request
113 W. Mountain Street
Fayetteville, AR 72701**

- Please keep in mind that not all parks are available for community gardening.
- All application forms received will be responded to within 30 days.
- The Group's liaison will then receive an Application Approval Letter from the Parks and Recreation Department directing you to proceed to Step 4 **OR** requesting more information.

STEP FOUR: PETITION, COMMUNITY SUPPORT & PROPOSAL

Community consent and support is vital in obtaining the Parks and Recreation Department's approval for a successful Community Garden. After receiving your Application Approval Letter complete the following five parts:

IDENTIFY FUNDING

One of the necessary initial steps is to locate funds and supplies to develop and operate this garden. Please refer to Appendix A on page 7 for ideas.

PETITION

- A petition of support (form supplied) must be circulated within the neighborhood surrounding the proposed site. It is recommended petitioning at least three blocks in each direction. A minimum of 15 signatures are needed, with only one signature per household.
- **IMPORTANT:** Include the signatures of both gardeners and non-gardeners. Members of the Garden Group are not permitted to sign.

SITE & USAGE SURVEYS

- Survey visits determine activity in the area of the park surrounding your proposed garden. Identify types of park usage, times of heaviest usage, various types of sporting activities, etc.
- Arrange for the Park Horticulturist (479-444-3467) or a Park Planner (479-444-3471) to accompany you on your first survey visit.
- Two separate survey visits are to be conducted over a period of one to two weeks.
- Of these two required visits to the park, one is to be during peak usage time on a weekday and one during peak usage time on a weekend (work with the Park Horticulturist to find peak usage times).

LETTER OF SUPPORT

The Group should seek participation from the park's closest Neighborhood Association in order to ensure inclusion and request assistance with garden issues and safety concerns. Collect letters of support from the local Neighborhood Association. If a Neighborhood Association is not available, solicit a letter or two from a neighborhood governing association, local block club or school.

A PUBLIC NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING

A minimum of one public meeting must be held to receive a consensus of the neighbors surrounding the proposed Community Garden. This meeting should be arranged by the liaison and can be held at the park or coordinated with the Neighborhood Association.

IMPORTANT: The Park Horticulturist **must be notified** in advance of the date, time and location of this meeting.

WRITTEN PROPOSAL

A written proposal consists of the following documentation:

- **Group Membership roster.** Name of Group, park, contact information of the primary Group Leader, secondary Group Leader, and a complete listing of current Group members.
- **Funding plan.** All costs for the proposed Community Garden are the sole responsibility of the Group.
- **Garden design.** Include a sketch which can be basic and hand-drawn. Show the garden layout including dimensions, location of the water source, and nearby buildings and trees. Describe which direction the site faces, how many hours of direct sunlight per day, and the soil type.
- **Installation, Labor and Supply.** Answer the following:
How will your garden be installed?
Who will your laborers be?
What is the source for materials such as lumber, fencing and soil?
- **Maintenance plan.** Provide a detailed maintenance plan, indicating how the garden will be cared for on a weekly and seasonal basis, including watering, weeding, mulching, spring prepping and winterizing.

SUBMIT THE PAPERWORK

Mail to the Fayetteville Parks and Recreation Department, Community Garden Request at the above address:

- Petition
- 2 Site and Usage Surveys
- Letter of Support
- Written Proposal Details
- Copy of Application Approval Letter

Your proposal package will be reviewed and responded to within 30 days. You will be notified if your proposal has been approved, or if further information is needed. Once your proposal is approved, you will be required to sign and submit a Letter of Commitment (Step #5).

STEP FIVE: LETTER OF COMMITMENT *(sample)*

The most important aspect of successful community gardening in a park is on-going community support and communication between the community and the Parks and Recreation Department. Listed below are the responsibilities and guidelines the Group must adhere to, and the community must support:

GARDEN/PLOT MAINTENANCE

The Group is entirely responsible for the maintenance of the Community Garden. Keep in mind that the space allocated is on public land and must always be actively maintained. The Group is to provide Parks and Recreation with a schedule detailing routine maintenance procedures including keeping the fence line trimmed, spring prepping, and fall winterizing.

Pathways and areas between Garden Beds must be mulched and maintained by the Group. The Parks and Recreation Department will not perform any maintenance within the Community Garden.

If the space is deemed unsightly, weedy or unkempt by the Parks and Recreation Department's independent observation, the designated liaison will be given two separate warning notices both via two different communication means, such as a phone call, e-mail or letter through the U.S. Postal Service each time. If the problem continues thereafter, the agreement will be revoked and the Group will be responsible for proposing a plan to restore the garden to park land to the satisfaction of the Parks and Recreation Department.

SOIL TESTING and ORGANIC PRACTICES

It is required that a copy of results from a soil test report be submitted to the Parks and Recreation Department. Soil testing is available through the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture (See Appendix A, page 7). The first test must be received prior to the addition of any soil amendments or fertilizers. Additional soil tests will be required every three years.

According to Rules Governing the Arkansas Soil Nutrient and Poultry Litter Application and Management Program Title 22 (effective January 1, 2010) a landowner or resident making a nutrient application is required to maintain documentation of each nutrient application for a minimum of five years sufficient to demonstrate compliance. It is strongly recommended that all cultivating practices be organic; to the extent possible only organic fertilizers should be applied.

WATER

Please conserve water!!! Although the gardeners are responsible for paying water usage, any water usage inconsistent with normal watering will be determined by meter reads. The water supply is **ONLY**

to be used by gardeners caring for their assigned areas. Washing of cars or other personal non-garden related activities is prohibited.

PEST and DISEASE CONTROL with CHEMICALS

Only organic means of disease and pest control may be used. **NO CHEMICAL PEST CONTROL MEASURES MAY BE USED. NO EXCEPTIONS.**

COMPOSTING

Composting is encouraged, but only that which is organic and will decompose (e.g. plant material, fruit peels/cores). **Do not use** rodent-attracting foods such as rice, bread, meat, or grease. Inorganic or non-plant materials such as plastic, metal, kitty litter, feces, or any large or thorny branches are not suitable for compost. The compost must be contained in a manner approved by the Parks and Recreation Department such as a tumbler or open cage. Periodically the Parks and Recreation Department can provide grass clippings that can be incorporated into a compost pile. Please notify the Park Horticulturist if your Group is interested.

STRUCTURES AND SIZABLE LANDSCAPE MATERIAL

Structures such as garden storage shed and trellises must be approved by the Parks and Recreation Department. If a fence surrounding the garden is desired, it must be constructed to meet the City of Fayetteville Community Garden Fence Specifications. Walls and sizable plant material such as trees and shrubs are not allowed, unless approved by the Parks and Recreation Department.

GARDEN BOUNDARIES

The garden boundaries must remain as submitted on the original design plans. Any proposed expansion must be reviewed and approved by the Parks and Recreation Department. **NO EXCEPTIONS.**

MONITORING THE COMMUNITY GARDEN

The community, especially Group members, shall continually monitor the Community Garden for quality control and good management practices.

MANAGEMENT

Frequent communication with the Parks and Recreation Department regarding management of the Community Garden is required. If problems occur with the operation or patrons of the Community Garden, the Parks and Recreation Department should be informed and involved in the resolution of any problems.

NEW MEMBERS

The Group shall inform new gardeners and Group members of the Community Garden Rules and the Letter of Commitment; stressing the importance of ongoing maintenance. The Group must follow a transparent membership process open to all. As a public agency, the Parks and Recreation Department requires inclusiveness; anyone interested in joining the Group is to be fairly considered.

LIABILITY and CODE OF CONDUCT

The Parks and Recreation Department is not responsible for the garden itself; or to anything in or pertaining to the garden. Each participating Garden Group must sign an Annual Lease Agreement. Each participating gardener must sign a Code of Conduct form.

FUNDRAISING

The Group may organize fundraising events to finance needs of the Community Garden such as a compost bin, water hoses, plants, etc. Prior approval from the Parks and Recreation Department must be obtained, if the meetings are to be held in the park.

CLEAN-UP ACTIVITIES

The Group will be expected to help clean up litter in the park, especially in the area of the garden, and are encouraged to participate in the Adopt-A-Park or Adopt-A-Trail program.

SIGNAGE

Each Community Garden will have a sign indicating the name of the Community Garden Group and other information as required by the Parks and Recreation Department. Signage will be provided and installed by the Parks and Recreation Department.

VEHICLES

Parking or driving motorized vehicles by any park patron on walkways, restricted-access drives, lawn areas, under trees, or within landscaped areas is strictly forbidden. Park patrons are permitted to use motorized vehicles within a park **ONLY** on designated roadways, driveways and parking facilities, according to City Codes

PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES

- **Littering, dumping, alcohol consumption** and other unlawful activities
- **Amplified sound**
- **Pets** are not allowed in the garden. Pets are allowed in the park only if on a leash and the owner picks up their pet's waste according to City Code.
- **Ball playing** or other forms of active recreation are to be performed on ball fields or open spaces away from the garden.
- **Vehicular traffic** inside the park

GARDEN TERMINATION

If the Group decides to no longer maintain their space, they must immediately notify the Parks and Recreation Department. The Group will be responsible for proposing a plan to restore the garden to parkland to the satisfaction of the Parks and Recreation Department.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

An annual report must be submitted to the Parks and Recreation Department summarizing the successes and challenges experienced by the Community Gardeners. If needed, the Department will take appropriate action based on these assessments.

STEP SIX: ANNUAL LEASE AGREEMENT

Each year an Annual Lease Agreement must be read and signed by all new and existing Garden Groups.

GARDEN FEES

When a site is approved for a Community Garden, the Parks and Recreation Department will install a back-flow preventer and water meter. It will be the responsibility of the Garden Group to have the water turned on and to pay the monthly water bills. **It will be necessary to winterize the water system by the first of November; this will be the responsibility of the Garden Group.** Failure to winterize could result in permanent damage to the equipment; it would then be the responsibility of the Garden Group to replace any damaged equipment. The Parks and Recreation Department will charge the Garden Group a nominal annual fee for park land use.

FINISH: INSTALLATION OF THE GARDEN

After the Parks and Recreation Department has accepted your signed Letter of Commitment, Annual Lease and Liability Agreement, and final garden design, it is time to take a soil sample for analysis and begin to create the garden.

CODE OF CONDUCT

As new gardeners join it will be up to the Garden Group Liaison to make sure they sign a Code of Conduct form. The Garden Liaison will provide copies of these forms to the Parks and Recreation Department.

IMPORTANT: Your Group will be required to renew its Community Garden registration every three years. You will be asked for a progress report on your garden, current membership details, and a budget plan for the next 3 years. Your Group may also be required to submit a renewed Letter of Commitment.

FINALLY, CONGRATULATIONS!

You have raised all the community support and commitment needed for a successful Community Garden. This is a big responsibility and we are pleased to be in this venture together and wish your Group great success.

APPENDIX A: FUNDING IDEAS, RESOURCES and CLASSES

- Fayetteville Community Garden Coalition: <http://fayettevillegardens.org>
E-mail: fayettevillegardens@gmail.com
- American Community Garden Association: <http://www.communitygarden.org>
- National Gardening Association: <http://www.garden.org>
- Fayetteville Council of Neighborhoods and Registered Neighborhood Associations: http://www.accessfayetteville.org/government/neighborhood_resources/index.cfm
- Fayetteville Parks and Recreation – Community Gardens, Adopt-A-Park Program: Phone: 479-444-3471 ext. 471; e-mail: lnetherland@ci.fayetteville.ar.us
- University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, Washington County Extension: Phone: 479-444-1755; e-mail: bkurz@uark.edu
- International Ag Labs: <http://www.aglabs.com>
- Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin, Inc. <http://www.cacscw.org/gardens>