The Process
> 5 step process to create a community garden

STEP 1: Application

STEP 2: Assessment

STEP 3: Consultation

STEP 4: Construction

STEP 5: Review
> **STEP 1: Application**

**Aim**
To bring together a group of potential garden members from which a steering committee is formed and open communication is encouraged.

**Process**
To assist motivated and enthusiastic community groups in preparing an application to Council for the establishment of a community garden.

**Outcome**
To submit a complete application to Council.

**Cultivating a good first impression**
Once the core group has established a committee, an initial meeting between Council and community garden representatives is recommended.

This meeting will assist in personalising the application process, as well as provide an opportunity for further clarification.

Preparation for this meeting is encouraged, and garden members should anticipate Council’s questions regarding:

- list of members and contact details for steering committee
- possible/potential locations for the garden
- concept Plan or Sketch design of proposed garden layout
- existing/required elements of a garden design e.g. storage area and/or water tank
- future funding and resource needs and how members intend to meet them
- research of already existing community gardens
- the garden team showing a willingness to lead the process to fruition.

**Application & Assessment**

When is ‘Filling out a Form’ Fun?
The following Application form can be photocopied, if necessary, to assist the steering committee and/or members of the community garden in gathering as much information as possible on each potential site. This can be fun.

This journey of discovery will reveal much about the establishment and on-going maintenance necessary for healthy future growth of the garden, the community and the membership as a whole. It will also help to uncover any problems with each possible site and eliminate future difficulties early in the process. Using this method of discernment will hopefully lead to the optimum location being chosen together with a greater understanding of the site and it’s ultimate potential.

You will find the Application Form at the back of this document. There is a hard copy that remains with the Guideline, together with a tear-out copy that can be photocopied as many times as necessary to thoroughly research all potential locations and aspects of your future community garden. Take the opportunity to enjoy and learn from the experience. The healthy growth of the community garden will benefit much from the careful preparation and ‘ground work’ put in at the start of this process.
“Out of gardens grow fleeting flowers but lasting friendships”

// Beverly Rose Hopper
STEP 2: Assessment

Aim
To assess each Application on a case by case basis, after careful consideration of the information provided by the representatives of the Community Garden.

Process
The Community Garden’s Application is to be submitted to the Council for consideration and review as the first check point for ensuring that the group is ready to move to the next step. This review will be carried out in line with Council policies and management plans.

Outcome
To establish a clear line of communication between the Community Garden steering committee and Council, ensuring that the criteria for the establishment of a Community Garden have been met.
> **STEP 3: Consultation**

**Aim**
To undertake the planning and design of a new garden utilising a foundation of sustainable design principles, creating a space to socialise, learn and grow healthy food.

**Process**
The design process is driven by the steering committee usually comprising of five key members. This steering committee’s role is to move the process forward by holding a series of community workshops to develop a preferred functional layout for the garden.

Council is available to assist with workshop facilitation, advertising, meeting venues and mail outs.

Workshops may include:
- park analysis and garden site selection
- garden structure and design planning
- group organisation and operation
- communicating with existing community garden expertise providing guidance and information regarding:
  - how to run positive and constructive workshops (see helpful information)
  - members agreements and by-laws
  - defining roles and responsibilities
  - garden layouts and practices
  - when it is relevant to seek Council support

**Outcome**
1. Define a preferred location and functional layout of the proposed community garden through the creation of a design that combines essential elements with art and ideas and creates opportunities for future growth. The design should be a reflection of the people who will use the garden.
2. Formalise group membership and operational roles
3. Complete a construction action plan for delivery.
Designing the Garden

Basing the design on sustainable principles will require careful consideration and use of all resources. A successful design should create a space where people can learn from the garden and each other.

Harvesting the natural elements will affect the shaping of your design:

- **water** - attaching a water tank to the storage shed at the highest point of the site will allow water catchment as well as gravity-fed watering across the site
- **sun** - placing shortest to tallest elements from East to West will create optimum sun harvesting
- **wind** - constructing wind-breaks to buffer against the harsh westerly winds, while allowing gentle breezes that encourage pollination and reduce bacterial and fungal diseases
- **earth** - working with the natural soil type, structure and topography to build a healthy garden from the ground up.

Materials used in the construction should also be taken into consideration. Are they environmentally friendly? Can any existing materials on the site be recycled or re-used?

Another significant aim for the design of the garden is caring for people. The design should cater to all ages and abilities, encouraging social interaction at all levels.

The members of a community garden are a major resource. Their skills and experience will help to give each design a unique identity. Their involvement ensures the dual growth of both community spirit and the garden.
Seeking Support

Prior to construction, Council will require that foundations of strong community and financial support are in place. Many opportunities for such support may already have been established while compiling your application. Networking yields great rewards for community projects.

Support may come in many forms, such as sponsorship by local business, grants, supply of labour and materials, membership fees, fund-raising and donations.

Whether monetary or in the form of donated materials, services, advice or other (e.g. topping up water tanks), all contributions should be carefully considered.

Think about what the garden may offer to businesses and others donating goods and services. Invite potential supporters to visit the garden, take a stroll, have a cuppa. Aim to build ongoing relationships.

Consider negotiating ongoing discounts with local garden suppliers and asking nurseries to donate plants that are unsaleable.

State and federal government representatives may assist with photocopying.

Council may also provide assistance in setting up incorporated groups and applying for grants, assisting with mail-outs and community consultation.

Grants

It requires ongoing effort to seek funding opportunities and prepare submissions. Therefore, it is a distinct benefit to have a person who is prepared to work on grant applications as part of their support for the garden.

Links to selected sources of government financial assistance to community groups may be found on the Parliament of Australia website (refer below*).

Each grant will have different requirements. Some grant funding may be possible without incorporation. However, most will require the organisation to be incorporated or under the auspice of an organisation that is incorporated. Networking with other community groups can be helpful in this situation.

Make contact with organisations, ask questions, find out if your community garden is the kind of project they are looking to fund.

Target funding bodies specific to what you are seeking funding for - funding for fruit trees might be sought from one body, a community event from another.

Arts grants can be very useful for funding garden projects. Often paying wages and funding community projects, mosaics, trellises, etc.

Most benefactors require regular detailed reports on the progress of the project.

Therefore, acknowledgement of grant providers is critically important for the success of future funding. Suggested ways of doing this are:

- promoting their logo.
- including them in local media articles.
- inviting their representatives to attend events.
- a letter of appreciation.

Grant Links*

www.ourcommunity.com.au/goldcoastgives/for_groups/grant_help_sheets.jsp
The following is a Wish List of options for design to help you in planning the site layout that may also be useful for considering funding elements.

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STEP 4: Construction

Aim
To create a community garden

Process
The construction phase is a great way to establish a sense of belonging to the site and attract new members to the community garden group.

It should be intended that the garden construction is of a manageable scale for current members. Some of the most successful, established community gardens started small.

Allow room for potential expansion as the need arises.

The community garden group may be expected to drive the construction process in accordance with Council conditions.

Outcome
At the minimum, the construction of key garden elements, including:

- safe environment for all users.
- access to Water.
- areas to grow plants.
- a shady space for people to share food and conversation.
STEP 5: Review

Aim
To foster the establishment of a garden, promoting continuous improvement, enjoyment and community sharing.

Process
Set a list of practical, achievable and specific goals at commencement, and review at regular intervals.
Conduct regular steering committee meetings with clear agendas.
Establish members meetings and arrange for Annual General Meetings for re-election of ongoing steering committee and possible sub-committees in line with By-Laws.
Keep reliable records of the group progress.
Recognise and reward great achievements.

Outcome
The community garden group meets all legal requirements of funding bodies and Government.
The group has the ability to operate autonomously.
Key performance indicators are met.
Please note – should group performance not be met, Council will endeavour to assist.
However, gardens that struggle across a range of performance indicators may be decommissioned.

Setting Goals
Setting goals for your garden will guide decision making.
Garden goals to consider:
• growing healthy, organic food
• sharing and learning from information and new ideas
• maintaining a harmonious community atmosphere
• increasing the public awareness of the benefits of community gardening
• promoting an Active & Healthy lifestyle

Reviewing Goals
Garden goals can be reviewed by asking simple questions, such as:
• has this been successful?
• is this what we set out to achieve?
• is our aim being met?
• why does it work/not work?
• what can we do to make it work better?

In the first year of establishment, the group will be assisted by Council and a health check of the gardens will be carried out against the performance criteria with the aim of identifying strengths and weaknesses to aid the group with ongoing development needs.
Performance Indicators

- Successful fund raising
- Membership numbers maintained
- Democratic and participatory process achieved
- Administration system established
- Up to date financial record keeping
- Health and Safety systems in place and observed (incl. OHS, safety and environmental protection)
- Risk Management considered
- Crime, vandalism and theft minimised
- Workshops and/or training sessions commenced
- Community partnerships forged
- More than 75% of gardens under production within 3 months of construction
- Grounds and gardens maintained
- Public Liability Insurance cover
- All legal requirements met
- Monitoring and review complete
Helpful Information Tips for Facilitators & Workshops
Existing community garden network

There are several thriving community gardens on the Gold Coast all net-working well together. Contact details have been included and a visit to these well established gardens is recommended.

Joan Park Community Garden
Joan Street,
Southport  Qld 4215
President - Gaven on 0415 777 896

Varsity Vegies Community Garden
Jim Harris Park,
Mattocks Road,
Varsity Lakes  Qld 4227
President - Sheila on 0421 640 651

Musgrave  Park Community Garden
Musgrave Park,
Musgrave Ave,
Labador  Qld  4215
President - Lyn on 0409 645 888

Peachey Community Garden
Cnr McCreddie & Tillyroen Roads,
Ormeau  Qld  4208
President - Liz on 0419 759 756
peacheycg@gmail.com

Permaculture Gold Coast
Contact Leah on 0406 897 195

Other Regional Community Gardens -
• Northey Street City Farm and Beelarong Community Farm are also well established examples located in nearby Brisbane.

Other Organic Gardening groups -
• Gold Coast Organic Growers
• Tamborine Sustainable Gardeners Society
• Brisbane Organic Growers Inc.

Internet Links:
• www.gcparks.com.au/activities
• www.communityfoods.org.au
• www.communitygarden.org.au
• www.northeystreetcityfarm.org.au
• www.growingcommunities.org.au
• www.ceres.org.au
• www.marrickville.nsw.gov.au/environment/parks/communitygardens.htm
• www.canh.asn.au/community_gardening
• www.vegout.asn.au
• www.peacheycommunitygarden.org.au
Facilitating workshops & meetings

The long term success of running a community garden relies on communicating, leading, learning and sharing. It is imperative for meetings to be productive, and to achieve the objectives and goals of the group.

Tips for running successful workshops

1. Pick a date and time for the workshop when most people will be available, particularly any special guests or speakers (avoid holidays, special days, conflicting events, consider working people and families, dinner times etc).

2. Prepare an agenda for the workshop covering start and finish times, the key points to be discussed and key attendees/speakers.

3. Inspect the suitability of the venue and facilities before the workshop. Arrive at the venue early for set up and consider: seating, lighting, media/display requirements, refreshments and toilets.

4. Invites can be in many forms: group emails, flyers, public notice boards, public mail-outs, community notices, GCCC website, local councilors offices and editorials in local papers, insure invites are sent out providing adequate notice.

5. Organise invites for the meeting which include the date, time, location, room number or building name, agenda, and request an RSVP for catering purposes.

6. Keep a record of attendees and ensure you have contact details: Name, Address, Phone and Email for future contact.

7. Appoint a facilitator/MC from within the group to welcome guests, start and finish on time and keep to the agenda. Explain the agenda for the evening to attendees, housekeeping, and what is expected from them.

8. Ensure speakers are given adequate time, attendees are given an opportunity to comment, ensure questions are kept short and people are given the opportunity to contribute to creating an action plan.

9. Gain consensus on issues where needed and appoint someone to take minutes of what was discussed and agreed. Organize action plans, agenda and times for the next meeting or workshop.

10. Close on time (a short meeting is a good meeting) invite attendees to continue discussions over refreshments.

11. Deal with confusion by seeking confirmation or further explanation prior to continuing the meeting. Avoid confusing words or acronyms.

12. Notice when agreement has been reached. You may double check to confirm everyone agrees.

13. Ensure everyone is given an opportunity to speak and encourage honesty, thoughtfulness and generosity.
Tips for facilitators

1. People need to feel safe to participate.
2. The job of facilitator is not to keep everyone happy but to assist in reaching a workable solution to any goal or conflict.
3. The facilitator should ask the group to agree to listen to each other with respect. Gentle reminders may need to be given to those who talk at length, or talk over others.
4. Your views may be communicated to the group in the meeting by someone who agrees with your point of view, or the facilitator can organize this prior to the meeting.
5. Break a discussion down into sections and suggest a structure.
6. Ensure priorities are dealt with first in case the meeting runs out of time.
7. Take note of each point of view and ensure they are concise and not repetitive.
8. Deal with confusion by seeking clarification or further explanation prior to continuing the meeting. Avoid confusing words or acronyms.
9. Notice when agreement has been reached. You may double check to confirm everyone agrees.
10. Ensure everyone is given an opportunity to speak and encourage honesty, thoughtfulness and generosity.
“Flowers grow in flower gardens, vegetables grow in vegetable gardens, & people grow in community gardens”

//Auckland City Gardens Policy, 2002