

1. RATIONALE

Community gardens are increasingly recognised as important sites for community connection, urban food production and environmental education. There is also widespread recognition that community gardens have a range of health, environmental, social, cultural, food security and economic benefits for the community. This policy outlines Council's approach to supporting community gardens.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

Council will support the development of a network of appropriately located, designed, managed and resourced community gardens across the city.

3. OBJECTIVES

Council's approach to supporting community gardening in the City of Marion includes:

3.1 A community development approach

Council takes a community development approach to community gardens where community groups manage the gardens themselves with the support of Council and other partnering organisations.

3.2 Building the capacity of community gardening groups

Council recognises that there are varying degrees of community capacity and skills available to establish and maintain community gardens. As a result, Council has an important role to play in identifying opportunities, building community capacity and supporting communities to establish and maintain community gardens.

3.3 Fostering a diversity and geographic spread of community gardens

Council aims to foster a mix of community garden types and activities to meet diverse community needs, and achieve vibrant gardens across the whole Council area. Council will take a strategic approach to the location and type of community gardens it fosters. Garden types may include communal gardens, dedicated allotments, community orchards, indigenous bush tucker gardens or demonstration gardens for the purpose of education.

3.4 Encouraging accessible and inclusive community gardens

Community gardens should be accessible and cater for a range of community groups and needs including people with disabilities, children, older people, Aboriginal people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Community gardens should be designed and managed so they are open to the broader community on a regular basis and when gardeners are present.

3.5 Building and facilitating partnerships

Council will develop strong partnerships with new and existing community gardening groups. It will also assist these groups to connect with relevant agencies, local organisations, neighbourhood centres, schools, businesses, funding bodies and other community gardens to provide opportunities for forming mutually beneficial partnerships.

3.6 Assisting community gardening groups during the establishment phase

Council recognises the significant amount of resources, time and labour required to establish a new community garden. Council will work closely with community garden groups during the

establishment phase and strive to support those groups to get their community garden up and running in 12 months. Community garden groups can apply to the City of Marion Community Grants program to obtain funding to establish their garden. In addition, Council may provide one-off financial assistance for essential infrastructure in new community gardens provided that community gardening groups demonstrate a strong commitment to managing their garden responsibly. Funding for community gardens is dependent on budget constraints and demand.

3.7 Security of tenure for community gardens

3.8 Community gardening groups should have the potential for security of tenure so they can plan for the long-term future and viability of the garden. In most cases, the allocation of Council land for community gardens will be formalised through a Community Gardens Agreement. Once approved, community gardens can obtain an initial 2-year agreement. This will be followed by a 5-year agreement, provided that the site is being managed effectively and there is ongoing demand for a community garden. Each Community Gardens Agreement will be developed in partnership with community gardening groups and will reflect the scale and nature of their specific community garden. **Minimising the ongoing expenses for community gardens**

Council will not charge community gardens for water use provided that community gardening groups use water responsibly. In addition, Council will not charge an annual fee to community gardens on the understanding that they are run by volunteers on a not-for-profit basis for the benefit of the community. Community gardening groups are responsible for all other ongoing community garden expenses as set out in the Community Gardens Agreement.

3.9 Ensuring community gardens are visually appealing

Council requires community gardening groups to ensure their community gardens are visually appealing, tidy and well maintained.

4. POLICY SCOPE AND IMPLEMENTATION

While community gardens may operate on private land, this policy applies to community gardens on land that Council owns and/or manages.

This policy does not outline the procedure for starting new community gardens. This detail is contained in the City of Marion Community Gardens Guidelines.

This policy does not apply to verge gardens. Council's position on verge gardening is outlined in the City of Marion Verge Development Guidelines.

5. DEFINITIONS

Community Garden – Community Gardens are community led and managed, not-for-profit initiatives, where members of the local community come together to garden in individual or shared plots and produce is intended for the consumption of the gardeners and fundraising for community gardening purposes. Community gardens are open to the public on a regular basis and anyone can become a member.

Community Gardens Agreement – An agreement between a community group and Council regarding the use of Council land for a community garden.

Community Gardening Group – A not-for-profit community group or organisation using Council land for the purpose of a community garden.

Community Capacity – The skills, knowledge, resources, social networks and volunteer time available in a given community that can be dedicated to community initiatives such as a community garden.

Verge Garden - A garden located on the area between the kerb and the property boundary that is managed by one or more adjacent households.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

To ensure community gardens on Council land are appropriately located, designed, managed, and resourced Council will:

- Provide advice to community groups on planning, design and management of community gardens, which may include templates of various documents needed for the formal registration of the group as an association, as well as ongoing operation of the community garden.
- Assess proposed community garden locations based on site selection criteria outlined in the Community Garden Guidelines.
- Undertake soil testing at proposed community garden sites to manage soil contamination and protect public health.
- Ensure there is sufficient demand and local community support before approving new community gardens.
- Undertake appropriate community engagement and consultation processes for new community gardens.
- Require community gardens to be managed by an incorporated group or organisation with sufficient capacity and commitment.
- Ensure community gardens have appropriate safety measures in place.
- Require community gardening groups to obtain a Community Gardens Agreement for use of Council land.
- Promote community gardens as sites for environmental education and building community connections.
- Encourage best practice water and waste management in community gardens.
- Aspire to support new community gardens to start operating within a 12 month timeframe from receipt of application.

Community gardening groups managing community gardens on Council land must:

- Liaise with Council's Community Gardens Coordinator throughout the process of establishing a community garden.
- Ensure the group is incorporated and has the capacity to manage the garden.
- Design the garden for accessibility and ensure it is inclusive of a range of community groups and needs.
- Engage with the local community and communicate with neighbours to seek support for the garden.
- Ensure the community garden is open to the broader community on a regular basis and when gardeners are present.
- Develop a management plan for Council approval that includes procedures for responsible management of water and waste in the garden.
- Develop a Gardeners Code of Conduct and ensure it is shared amongst community garden members.

- Develop a safety plan for the garden to ensure appropriate safety measures are in place.
- Prepare a budget for the community garden and take responsibility for sourcing funding.
- Arrange appropriate insurances including public liability insurance.
- Obtain development approval for community garden structures or features as required before such structures are erected.
- Negotiate a Community Gardens Agreement with Council before using the land.
- Ensure community gardens remain visually appealing.

Roles and responsibilities of both Council and Community Gardening Groups will be outlined in each Community Gardens Agreement.

7. REFERENCES

- City of Marion Community Gardens Guidelines
- City of Marion Verge Development Guidelines
- City of Marion Tree Management Policy
- City of Marion Environmental Policy
- City of Marion Open Space Policy
- City of Marion Community Land Management Plans
- City of Marion Public Consultation Policy
- City of Marion Open Space by-laws

8. REVIEW AND EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed once within the term of Council. The review will be scheduled by the Governance Department in coordination with the Environment Sustainability Team.