

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The City of Marion supports the development of community gardens and will adopt an encouraging approach to the appropriate establishment and enhancement of community gardens across the City.

The City of Marion recognises that community gardens contribute to the wellbeing of communities and provide diverse health, social, environmental and cultural benefits. In particular:

- Community gardens have the potential to connect communities, build friendships and provide a recreation and educational resource for all age groups.
- Community gardens enable people to pursue horticultural activities in an urban environment and can be particularly valuable in medium and higher density areas where people may have limited garden space.
- Community gardens provide an opportunity to grow food in an environmentally sustainable way and contribute to addressing food security.

Whilst the City of Marion is supportive of community gardens it is essential that these gardens are based on a strong community commitment and are appropriately located, managed and connected to the community in order to be sustainable and viable. The purpose of the Community Garden Policy is to provide policy directions that ensure community gardens in the City of Marion are based on best practice and will benefit communities across the City for years to come.

2. DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this Policy a community garden on City of Marion owned or managed land is defined as:

“A dedicated area of public land that is used by the community for horticultural based activities including the growing of ‘food’ plants and other plants, the demonstration of gardening and environmental best practice and the sharing of ‘gardening’ information and ideas.”

A community garden should be ‘not for profit’, have strong community involvement and commitment and cater for a diversity of people.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

As a result of the research and consultation, two documents have been developed to guide the future provision, development, management and use of community gardens. These include:

- **The Community Garden Policy** which reflects Council’s commitment to community gardens and provides an overriding direction for community gardens through policy principles.
- **A Community Garden Framework** which provides further direction and detail to assist in the appropriate provision, location, development, management and use of community gardens in the City of Marion.

The Community Garden Policy only relates to community gardens on Council owned or managed land, whereas the Community Garden Framework has been designed to also assist community gardens on land owned by other stakeholders such as schools, churches, nursing homes and other locations.

The Community Garden Policy is consistent with the City of Marion Strategic Plan 2010-2020 and connected to other Council policies. In particular:

- The Community Garden Policy reinforces a number of Strategic Plan Directions including:
 - CW1: Strong engaged communities
 - CW4: Healthy lifestyles and healthy communities
 - HE5: An environmentally aware and engaged community
- Where trees are included in a community garden consideration must be given to the requirements of Council's Tree Management Policy.
- The Community Garden Policy includes principles for garden verges and productive landscapes which will be relevant to the Tree Management Policy (e.g. street trees and trees in parks).
- The Community Garden Policy recommends appropriate community engagement in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Policy.

4. COMMUNITY GARDEN PRINCIPLES

The following overriding principles will be adopted and promoted across Council with the aim to guide the future provision, development, management and use of community gardens on Council owned or managed land in the City of Marion.

Council Support

The City of Marion will encourage and support the development of appropriately located, developed and managed community gardens across the City providing there is demand and available land and resources.

Community Commitment

Demand and commitment from the community or related stakeholders will be essential for a community garden to be established. This includes community members and other stakeholders being committed to achieving, resourcing, managing and using a community garden.

Demand and Feasibility

Before developing a new community garden, a Demand and Feasibility Assessment must be undertaken to show that the garden will benefit the community and can be sustained in the future. A guide for undertaking the Demand and Feasibility Assessment is provided in the Community Garden Framework and Council may assist with this assessment.

Level of Provision

The provision of community gardens in the City of Marion will be 'needs based' and as such Council will not limit the opportunities through a predetermined number of facilities. However, before committing to a new community garden, consideration must be given to the provision and capacity of other existing community gardens in the area to ensure there is not a duplication of facilities or inappropriate allocation of resources.

Community Garden Distribution

Whilst Council is keen to see an equitable spread of community gardens across the City, the distribution will depend on community and stakeholder interest and the appropriateness of sites.

Diversity of Provision

A mix of community garden types and diverse activities and uses within community gardens will be encouraged to meet a diversity of community needs and achieve vibrant gardens. This could include the provision of communal gardens used by a range of people, dedicated allotments for community hire, 'open community gardens' as part of urban greening projects, and demonstration gardens linked to education.

Community Garden Purpose

Community gardens should have diverse purposes including social connection and friendships, recreation, education, food security and environmental sustainability, and aim to provide a valuable resource that benefits a range of people in the community.

Planning and Policy Requirements

The provision, location, design and management of a community garden must be in accordance with the requirements of existing Council plans, policies and procedures including the relevant Community Land Management Plan, and Occupational Health and Safety and Environmental Sustainability policies.

Community Garden Location

Community gardens on public land must be appropriately located in accordance with the site assessment criteria provided in the Community Garden Framework. A community garden should not have a detrimental impact on other existing or potential site users. Particular support will be given to locating community gardens near higher density residential areas where there is demand.

Links to Community Facilities

Opportunities to link community gardens to community facilities or infrastructure should be considered to enable the shared use of facilities, avoid additional infrastructure development (e.g. toilets and meeting spaces) and achieve vibrant community and activity hubs.

Hierarchy Approach

Each community garden will be allocated a hierarchy level and developed in accordance with the hierarchy. The hierarchy will consider location and profile, land size, links to other facilities, potential catchment, potential use and other factors. A Hierarchy Guide is included in the Community Garden Framework.

Community Garden Size

The size of a community garden will be influenced by demand, site character and hierarchy. However, a community garden should be large enough to include a mix of garden areas (e.g. communal space, allotments) as well as infrastructure such as shelter, toilet, rainwater tank, storage shed and seating, unless these are provided in an existing connected facility such as a community centre.

Approach to Land Allocation

The allocation of public land for a community garden will be formalised between Council and the community garden managing body through a lease arrangement, unless the land is part of a Council managed community centre. Initially a 2 year lease will be allocated and to provide greater security of tenure this will be followed by a 5 year lease (providing the community garden is still required and feasible). The terms of the lease arrangements will be in accordance with Council's current Leasing and Licensing Policy.

Community Garden Management

The management of a community garden is to be undertaken by the community or a supporting organisation such as a community centre, church or school. In the case of a community group or non Council organisation, the managing body must be incorporated and have public liability insurance of at least \$10 million and it is the lessee's responsibility to ensure that the insurance is adequate for its own purposes. The managing body must develop a Management Plan for the community garden to guide management activities (a Guide for developing the Management Plan is included in the Community Garden Framework).

Community Garden Design

Community gardens should be designed to be both innovative and functional including the integration of best practice sustainability design features (water collection, shelter/ shade, recycling, solar panels) and social connection opportunities (meeting spaces, education opportunities). The design and materials used will require Council approval.

Community Garden Access

Community gardens should be designed to be accessible and cater for a range of community groups and needs. If fencing is required for security and safety reasons the community garden should be designed and managed to be accessible to the broad community during daylight hours and when gardeners are present. Level pathways, raised garden beds and accessible buildings should also be considered to support people with disabilities and older people, including pathways to the community garden.

Community Garden Function

Whilst the specific function of the community garden will be determined by the managing body, the following broad principles should be taken into consideration:

- The community garden should be managed by a committee or designated coordinator to ensure the smooth running of day to day operations and ongoing planning and promotion.
- A democratic and consultative approach to planning and decision making should be adopted.
- The community garden should aim to support as many people in the community as possible. The garden should not be held for the exclusive use of a small number of people.
- Community gardens should aim to target all age groups and genders (children, older people, middle aged, young adults).
- The community garden should be accessible to the broad community with no discrimination due to race, culture, social status, ability or sexuality. This includes supporting people with disabilities.
- A key focus of a community garden should be on growing 'food' plants to contribute to food security.
- The community garden should ideally include communal spaces to encourage the interaction of individuals and enable demonstration gardening (versus only providing individual allotments).
- The community garden should include activities that benefit gardeners from the broad community, e.g. advice and information that people can use in their own gardens and programs targeting the broad community. This will ensure community gardens benefit a range of people and also contribute to the greening of the City of Marion.
- The community garden should have access to water and power, with dedicated meters for the community garden (separate to other open space or connected community buildings). The water

and electricity costs should be covered by the community garden group and through user fees or grants.

- The community garden should include access to basic infrastructure including toilets, activity space and storage.
- Community garden allotments and activities should aim to be affordable and consider capacity to pay.
- Gardeners should have the potential for 'security of tenure' when obtaining a community garden allotment to encourage commitment. This could involve allocating a licence for a 6 month to 2 year period with a 'right of renewal' if appropriate.
- The ongoing allocation of allotments (beyond 2 years) should be based on use and community benefit.
- Codes of conduct, user rules and agreements should be simple and achievable.
- Community gardens should be maintained to a high quality on an ongoing basis (managing weeds, collecting produce, maintaining infrastructure, general maintenance).
- Community gardens should meet basic occupational health and safety requirements and have no major safety or health issues.
- Community garden sites should be checked for soil contamination prior to establishment.
- Community gardens should be designed to minimise security issues (i.e. ensure the space and related facilities meet Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles).

Sustainability and Environmental Best Practice

Community gardens should be used to endorse and promote sustainability and environmental best practice, including management of water use, water capture (rainwater tanks), reduced use of chemicals, composting, worm farms, recycling, organic gardening, energy efficient design of buildings and structures, and other sustainability practices.

Communication and Awareness

Community gardens and related activities should be widely promoted to the broad community to encourage use and participation in programs and activities. In addition, Council will be committed to communicating with community garden managers on an ongoing basis.

Community Engagement

Communities surrounding or affected by a proposed community garden will be appropriately consulted in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Policy to ensure the location, design, use and management of the community garden does not impact on the health and wellbeing of the wider community.

Partnerships and Networks

Partnerships and networks should be established between community gardens and with garden organisations to enable the sharing of ideas and ensure best practice approaches to design and function are adopted. In addition, Council and community groups should establish partnerships with State Government bodies and other agencies when considering the opportunities for establishing and funding community gardens (State Government land, grant funding etc).

Resource Allocation

A partnership approach to allocating resources to achieve and enhance community gardens will be required. This could include resource contributions by Council but will also require funding innovations by garden groups and grant funding.

Commercial Considerations

Community gardens should operate as 'not for profit' entities and commercial activities will generally not be supported by Council. However, opportunities to raise revenue for the operations or enhancement of the community garden (e.g. through the sale of affordable food and plants or education programs) or to contribute to charities or other 'not for profit' organisations may be supported by Council.

Species Selection

Plant species selected for community gardens should be appropriate to the climatic and soil conditions and must be non invasive, e.g. avoid the creation of weed or pest outbreaks, minimise the impacts of root systems on surrounding buildings, footpaths and residents, manage water use and minimise other potential impacts.

Centres of Excellence

The development of some strategically located community garden 'centres of excellence' that include diverse activity and education opportunities and benefit the broad community will be encouraged by Council. This includes supporting existing best practice community gardens linked to community facilities, e.g. Glandore Community Garden.

Productive Landscapes

Council may consider establishing or allowing productive landscapes such as an orchard of fruit or nut trees on public land, providing the productive landscape does not create maintenance or social issues. Generally there would need to be a commitment by a community group to maintain the productive landscape and the site would need to remain accessible to the general public.

Verge Gardens

Generally community gardens will be located in open spaces or linked to community facilities and not located on verges. However, Council may consider allowing a verge community garden if there is strong interest by the surrounding community (e.g. a number of households in a street), a commitment to ongoing maintenance by the community and the verge garden does not impact on the walkability of the neighbourhood (i.e. stop people from walking along the verge). There could be some instances where Council believes it is appropriate to establish a productive landscape on a verge, e.g. as a design feature or gateway statement. Given a verge is defined as a 'Road' in the Local Government Act, a verge garden will require a Section 221 authorisation and a Section 222 permit and potential impacts on utilities will need to be assessed by Council in consultation with relevant agencies.

5. LEGISLATION CONSIDERATIONS

Community gardens in the City of Marion must comply with relevant Legislation including:

- The South Australian Local Government Act 1999 and in particular sections relating to the management and use of community land.
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and the need for community facilities to be accessible and available to the broad community.

6. OTHER DEFINITIONS

Other key terms used in the Community Garden Policy are defined as follows:

Public Land: Community land as defined in the Local Government Act 1999.

Community Facilities: Building and infrastructure that is provided for community use and benefit.

Sustainability: Longer term endurance (the ability to 'keep alive').

Best Practice: Leading or innovative approach or practice from an industry perspective.

Feasibility: Realistic or viable (socially, economically, environmentally).

Resources: People or funding required to achieve a facility, service or activity.

Commercial: Where the primary focus of the activity, item or facility is 'financial profit'.

Productive Landscape: A landscape that produces food (e.g. trees that bear fruit or nuts).

Verge: Land between a formalised road and an allotment (house, park, commercial development etc).