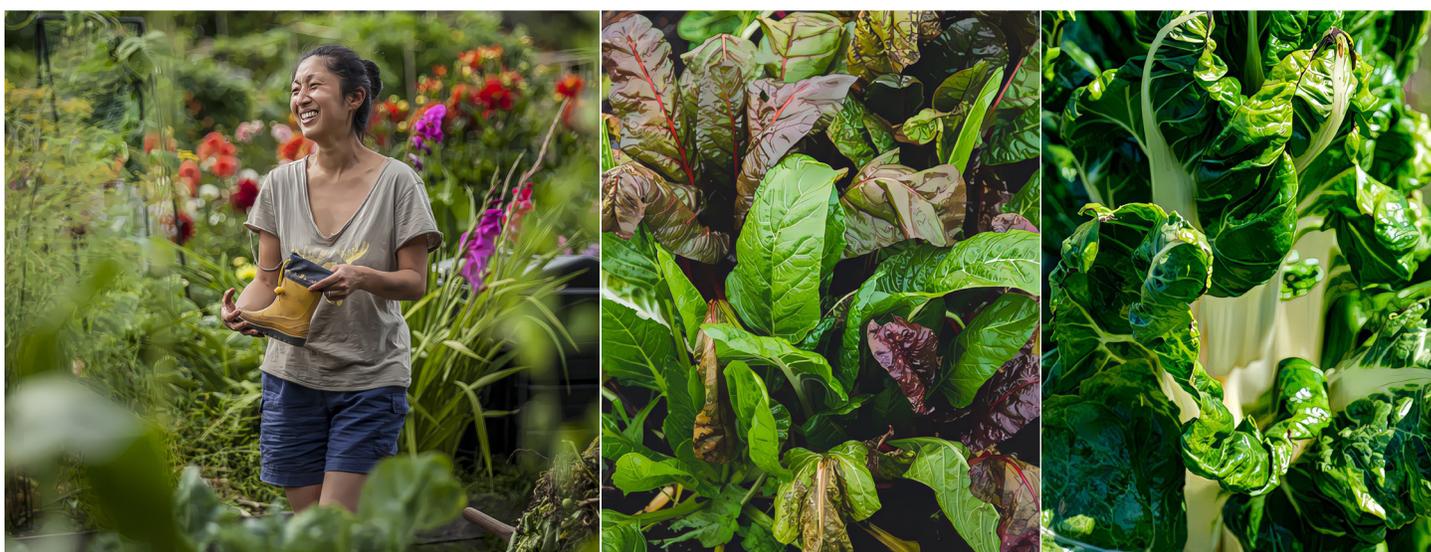


# What are Community Gardens and why do we need them?

Community gardens (also known as allotment gardens) are spaces where people who wish to garden come together in a communal area to grow food, flowers and enjoy gardening in a public setting.

When they are located in the urban environment, some people refer to it as urban agriculture.

Community gardens are often located where multiple plots are in close proximity with each other. This allows residents to grow food, experience nature in the city and create community connections in the urban environment. Community garden members come from all walks of life, ages and abilities and the spaces are co-managed by these members who contribute their time, money and sweat equity.



## Benefits and concerns of Community Gardens

As much as there are huge benefits to community gardens, there are some potential concerns to keep in mind.

### Potential concerns

- Some gardeners are capable and skilled enough to commit to maintaining their plots on a regular basis. There also may be different levels of expectations for what is considered a well-maintained garden; what is “tidy” for some may be considered “unkempt” by others. Consequently, the public perception of community gardens may vary across the city.
- Due to their public location, food and flowers may be stolen at night or vandalism may occur.
- Wildlife may congregate nearby because of the increased food sources.
- On a seasonal basis, there may be the potential and temporary smell of fresh manure or compost when newly applied to garden beds.
- Gardeners may not live in the immediate area, and so added vehicles may be parked in neighbourhoods.

## Benefits

There are numerous benefits to community gardens. These include:

- Providing residents a location to garden, develop new skills, grow food they can eat and establish community connections.
- The social aspect of community gardens is often cited as one of the key positive benefits of these spaces. Informal meetings and interactions often occur when one visits their own garden plot.
- Resources such as tools, hoses, compost areas and wheelbarrows are communally shared and gardeners interact to help one another and develop friendships.
- Often these spaces include common areas with seating where meals are shared and conversations occur.
- Gardeners often plant flowers, which in-turn feed and provide stopping points for beneficial and pollinating insects such as bumble bees and butterflies.
- Community garden members and visitors have the opportunity to learn about the biology and agricultural aspect of the plant species linked to community garden spaces.



## Community Gardens in Richmond

In Richmond, community gardens located on public land are owned by the City of Richmond and administered by the Park Services Department. [Urban Bounty](#) (formerly known as Richmond Food Security Society) is the non-profit society that manages each individual community garden on behalf of the City.

At Council's direction, prospective locations are identified and funded by the City.

The City provides the land and basic infrastructure for each community garden. This includes a water connection, a perimeter fence, signage, a tool shed, gravel pathways and receptacles for yard (green) waste and garbage. On an annual basis, the City will also provide wood chips (to be used as mulch or pathway surfacing) and compost amendments.

In turn, Urban Bounty, through their own resources, constructs the raised beds (typically done by each garden plot gardener), provides soil for each plot and manages the day-to-day operations of each garden site. They also administer the overall community garden program which includes managing the membership and waitlist and collecting annual fees, which subsidizes their operations and garden site resources such as tools, hoses and equipment.



Richmond residents who would like a community garden plot must put their name on a waitlist.

Residents can provide the name of their preferred community garden location. When it becomes available, wait-listed residents are offered a plot at their community garden location of choice, at which time they may either accept or decline the offer. Upon acceptance, an annual fee is charged and community garden guidelines are provided. Because of this very high demand, Council has made it a priority for more community gardens sites be constructed.

### Richmond Community Gardens at a glance:

- Total number of community garden sites: **11**
- Total individual garden plots: **434**
- Largest community garden: **Terra Nova (109 plots)**
- Smallest community garden: **Richmond Secondary School (7 plots)**



## Community Garden considerations and characteristics

Community gardens are located on City-owned public land throughout Richmond. Wherever they are, there are some general considerations and characteristics for each location.

- Proximity to transportation options: some gardeners drive cars to their plots while others walk, use transit or ride bikes.
- Locations: some community gardens are located in City parks such as Cook Park or Paulik Park. Some are located in parks with a more rural setting such as Terra Nova and the Garden City Lands. And others are located close to where residents live such as Riverport and Homma (along the Railway Greenway). In short, community gardens can be constructed and adapted to a wide range of sites.
- Individual garden plots vary in size (**4'x8', 8'x10' or 10'x20'**). Depending on the size of the plot and each gardener's capabilities, a plot can either be overwhelming to manage or not large enough.
- Community gardens are typically surrounded by a 3' tall fence. In some areas, the gardens are set far back from surrounding uses by open grass areas or plantings. Depending on the surroundings, trees and shrubs may be planted to provide additional screening.

For more information, email [parks@richmond.ca](mailto:parks@richmond.ca).