

**GREATER VERNON**

**COMMUNITY GARDEN NETWORK**

Starting a Community Garden

Application Guide



Greater Vernon Parks, Recreation, and Culture supports a public system of community allotment gardens through policy and is available to assist your group.

Please follow the process outlined in this handbook to increase your chances for a successful and rewarding community garden in your neighbourhood.

### **Tips**

- Start planning early
- Talk it up – you never know who may be interested in your plan
- Read through this entire booklet carefully to ensure nothing is missed in your application

### **NOTE**

The allotment gardening season typically begins the first week of April and continues through until October 31.

**APPLICATIONS ARE ACCEPTED AT ANY TIME, BUT THE  
DEADLINE FOR NEW GARDEN REQUESTS IS  
OCTOBER 31 FOR A SPRING START-UP**

## HOW COMMUNITY GARDENS ARE ADMINISTERED

### Background

The Community Garden Network evolved through the efforts of community garden champions, the Food Action Society of the North Okanagan ([www.foodaction.ca](http://www.foodaction.ca)), and with the support of local government and funding agencies. Previous to 2008, no public community gardens had been established in the Greater Vernon area. A food security assessment (2007) revealed that this gap in the community food system was important to fill in an effort to build more food secure communities. In addition to providing a healthy, more sustainable source of food, community gardens can offer important recreational and social benefits.

In 2008, the first Community (allotment) Garden was established in East Hill and became the model for future garden development. The land for the garden was leased from the property owner by Greater Vernon Parks, Recreation, and Culture via the Regional District of the North Okanagan. In-kind contributions also supported the garden, but the day to day operations of the garden were managed by a volunteer garden coordinator and steering committee. Allotment fees collected via registration at the Greater Vernon Services Recreation Centre supplied the garden with operational funds. These funds were then turned over to the Food Action Society of the North Okanagan, a non-profit charitable society, who agreed to manage them on behalf of the garden committees. Initially, community service groups helped provide the capital to get the garden set up, along with volunteer efforts by gardeners and community members.

A number of follow-up projects hosted by the Social Planning Council for the North Okanagan and the Food Action Society of the North Okanagan helped to secure and build upon the model for a Community Garden Network. This included hiring a coordinator to:

- develop an inventory of sites (public/park)
- research best practices and propose a model for the community garden network development
- provide a new garden start-up application guide
- facilitate the development of Community Garden policy,
- develop another garden demonstrating the proposed model (West Vernon Community Garden)
- continue to develop and refine the tools for future sustainability
- support and advise the individual community garden committees

There are presently three community gardens serving the greater Vernon area – the East Hill Community Garden, the Pleasant Valley Community Garden and the West Vernon Community Garden. Each of these gardens is striving to follow this model as the community garden network develops. Since it is still a “work in progress”, it will likely continue to evolve and adapt as needed in order to streamline and improve the process.

## Community Garden Network – The Basics

### Local Government Support via Greater Vernon Parks, Recreation and Culture (Regional District North Okanagan/RDNO)

Because of its recreational value and because of the Regional District's jurisdiction over Parks, it was felt that community gardens presented the best fit for their mandate. A policy strengthens this relationship and outlines the ways in which community gardeners are supported by our local government. This support can be summarized as:

- Help to identify and negotiate leases or agreements for appropriate land on which to develop community gardens – either private or public. See *inventory of sites*
- Facilitation and/or provision of needed water system infrastructures as approved
- Collection of allotment fees and registration at the Recreation Centre
- Promotion and advertising via the Leisure Guide and/or website
- Other in-kind contributions such as fencing or portapotties
- A maximum, one-time start-up grant for new gardens of \$2,500

### Volunteers Needed

As local government is *not* responsible for the day to day management or operations of the gardens, and there is no paid staff or coordinator at present to manage community gardens, committed volunteer efforts from the gardeners themselves must be established before a new garden can be successfully implemented into the network. Fees collected at registration go back into the garden operations and help cover on-going operational costs, including water. This booklet will outline the necessary process to follow.

### Questions?

After reading through this booklet and others found on the website above, and you still have questions or need advice, you may contact the ***RDNO Designate***:

**Tannis Nelson, Community Development Coordinator**  
**9848 Aberdeen Rd**  
**Coldstream, BC**  
**V1B 2K9**

**Phone: 250-550-3689**  
**Email: [tannis.nelson@rdno.ca](mailto:tannis.nelson@rdno.ca)**

## Getting Started

### STEP ONE

#### IDENTIFY THE FUTURE GARDENERS AND FORM A COMMITTEE

If you are already part of an organization or group who wants to start a community garden, great, you're halfway there.

If you are an individual wanting to garden but don't know where to start, your first step is to find some like-minded people who want to be gardeners. Start with your neighbours, your church, your friends, and see if you can find enough people interested and committed.

Host a neighbourhood meeting and see where it goes. Put an announcement in the local newspaper's Community Calendar. Without the identification of a number of gardeners and the support of a committee, a community garden cannot be considered for development.

Once your committee is formed, and you have a list of interested gardeners, you will need to identify a representative for the group.

- Interested gardeners have been identified**
- Planning Committee has been formed**
- Garden Representative has been named**

## STEP TWO IDENTIFY AND SECURE A SITE

Please use the Community Garden *Inventory and Assessment of Public Sites* as a guide to determine an appropriate garden location. You may already have a site in mind. If the site is on private land, you will need to contact the owner to see if they are willing to enter into an agreement to donate the use of the land for a garden. Access to water is key. If the site isn't serviced for water, or there isn't nearby water access, it will not be suitable for a community garden.

Once you have reached this stage, arrange a "walk-about" with the RDNO Designate to confirm that the site is appropriate for development. This should be done well before the October deadline for New Garden Applications.

Once the initial assessment has been done, Greater Vernon Parks, Recreation and Culture (RDNO) will negotiate a lease or agreement with the property owner if needed. Talk to the neighbours to ensure their cooperation. Include some letters of support.

- Ownership of the site is determined and the land owner has agreed to donate it for community garden use and has filled out the land donor form (if applicable) Form D**
- Site assessed by the RDNO Designate and initial approval given**
- Letters of support included**

### **Some things to consider in a community garden location:**

- Are there residents nearby? (on a bus route and/or within walking/cycling distance is preferred)
- Is there parking space and loading/unloading near the site?
- Is it serviced for water?
- Is it in an area at risk for vandalism?
- Is it in a peaceful location?
- Is it relatively level?
- Does it receive at least 6 hours of sun exposure (full sun exposure is preferred)
- Can the space accommodate the number of gardeners interested and enough beds to cover the year to year operational costs? (# beds x allotment fee)
- If you are planning traditional garden allotment beds, what is the condition of the soil? Are there noxious weeds present?

**NOTE: Raised boxed beds of 4'x8' are recommended in park or public locations or in areas with poor soil quality. Keep in mind that many gardeners will want to garden more than one bed at this size.**

## **STEP THREE DESIGN YOUR COMMUNITY GARDEN**

Once you have a site identified and initially approved, you are ready to design the site. You will need to start by measuring the area to be used and determining how many gardens can be constructed. Include some photos.

If the garden is located in a public park, it is suggested that your garden beds be a standard 4' x 8' and 12" or 24" deep, boxed bed. The higher beds are suggested for gardeners who may have trouble bending, or for those who are in wheelchairs. You will need at least a 4' path around each for mobility. Indicate where your water sources are. Ideally, a hose bib for every 6- 10 beds is best, but less is doable. Include a sketch in your application. Be sure to plan for parking, seating, a garden shed or storage area, composting, a portapotty or other restroom access. Shade is desirable, so if there are no trees on the site, you may want to include an umbrella in your seating area. If you need fencing, measure the perimeter, leaving enough room to walk around on the inside of the fence and plan gates to accommodate garden equipment or loading. A bulletin board is very helpful.

\*fencing may be provided for community gardens where dogs or other interference is likely.

### **Design Elements to Plan for:**

- Location of water access points (hose bibs) and number needed
- Number of beds – must be enough beds to cover your operation costs
- Pathways of 4 feet around each bed
- Seating and gathering areas
- Garden shed or storage area
- Bulletin Board and signage
- Composting
- Shade – be careful of trees that may shade some allotments
- Parking/loading and unloading
- Portapotty location
- Fencing where there could be disturbances (if needed)
- Other features such as a children's area, flower beds, communal beds or beds for donation if desired

NOTE: If the water access points are not flexible, it may be best to identify their location and design your garden around them, rather than try to incorporate after the design is complete.

- Photos and sketch of site design is complete**
- Number of allotments is determined, and other design features are noted**
- Length of fencing included if required**

## **STEP FOUR DETERMINE YOUR FUNDING NEEDS**

Now that you have your site plan in place, you can begin to determine your start-up budget. Make a list and get estimates of costs. Ask around – someone may be able to donate some of equipment or materials needed. You are eligible to apply for a seed grant up to \$2500. If additional funding is needed, your group will be responsible for raising it.

### **Budget items to consider:**

- Lumber for beds
- Soil mix
- Garden shed – if required
- Tools, hoses, watering cans, locks, keys
- Bulletin board and signage
- Picnic table (s) or benches
- Composting bins
- Hired equipment/operators – ie bobcat

### **Allotment Fees and Annual Operational Budget**

Allotment fees paid by the individual gardeners are designed to cover the costs of your water annually, supplies, and then any desired design elements over and above the necessities. You will need to provide enough beds so that the fees will cover your operating costs. ie 10 beds @ \$15 per bed would only generate a *maximum* of \$150 per year. This may not be enough to sustain the operation. Water costs will be your largest budget item, and it is mandatory that your garden bring in enough revenue to cover this cost once the garden is fully built. There may be equipment purchases or repairs or unexpected costs to plan for in your annual budget, as well as photocopying and other printed materials.

### **Sustainability**

A well planned and maintained garden in a high demand area should attract new gardeners annually and while turnover is expected, you may need to make efforts to advertise and promote the garden so that you have full allocation of your allotments. Greater Vernon Recreation Services provides website space, and has made space in the Leisure Guide to promote community gardens. Additionally, you may want to pass out flyers in the neighbourhood, use the local newspaper and other venues to encourage new gardeners as needed.

### **To estimate the amount of lumber you will need**

Lumber comes in standard sizes. The ones you will most likely use are

2x2" 2x4" 2x6" 2x8" 2x10" 2x12"

These dimensions refer to the thickness and height of the board. They also come in a few standard lengths – 8 foot, 10 foot or 12 foot, for example.

These sizes are called nominal which means that they don't really measure 2 x 2. They did when they were first cut, but they have been dried or treated. This means that a 2x4 really measures 1 ½" x 3 ½"

If you were to build a 4x8 foot bed that is 12 inches deep, you would likely order 3 - 2x12's in 8' lengths and cut one board in half to make the 4' ends. Double this amount for a 24" depth. Don't forget to order four 2x4's for the corners. This will make the bed more secure.

### **To estimate the amount of soil volume you require:**

If you are filling a boxed bed, you can determine the volume as such:

**Length x Width x Depth = Volume**

Take the area (length x width) and then decide how deep you want it and multiply by that number to get the cubic measurement (volume).

For example a 4' x 8' bed would have an area of 32 sq ft' X depth of 2' (24") = 64 cubic feet

Make sure all the measurements are in the same unit of measurement.

### **Convert Cubic Feet to Cubic Yards**

Soil is sold in cubic yards, not feet, so you have to convert.

The cubic feet are then divided by 27 (that's because one cubic yard is 3'x3'x3' = 27). So, in our example, you would divide 64 cubic feet by 27 for the volume of soil needed to fill a 4'x8'x2' foot bed. 64 divided by 27 = 2.37 or 2.4 cubic yards per bed.

Generally you order a little extra because there will be some compaction upon delivery. Any left over can be used for topping up beds for the next season.

- Budget estimate complete**
- Fundraising plan in place**

**STEP FIVE  
COMPLETE THE REQUEST FORM and LETTER OF COMMITMENT**

Fill out the Request Form included in this package. A letter of commitment is required indicating that the committee is willing to fulfill their duties for a 3 yr term. A template is included in this package.

- Request Form completed (Form A)**
  - Letter of Commitment signed (Form B)**
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**STEP SIX  
APPLY FOR COMMUNITY GARDEN START UP GRANT**

Based on your budget estimate, you may apply for a Community Garden start-up grant provided by the Regional District through Parks Recreation and Culture to cover some of the capital costs. Fill out the application form included. (Form C) Please note and apply for only those items eligible for funding.

**Maximum funding allowed per garden is \$2500.**

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**Final Checklist**

- New Garden Request Form (Form A)**
- Letters of commitment from committee members (Form B)**
- Letters of support from area neighbours and organizations**
- Landowner agreement included if applicable (Form D)**
- Site design sketches and photos**
- Budget estimate**
- Application for Community Garden Start-Up Grant (Form C)**

**Application packages can be emailed, mailed, or dropped off to:  
Regional District of North Okanagan  
Parks, Recreation and Culture  
9848 Aberdeen Road  
Coldstream, BC V1B 2K9**

**You can expect to be notified of your application status by January of the following year, or sooner depending on the projected start date**

A.

**Greater Vernon Community Garden Network  
COMMUNITY GARDEN DEVELOPMENT REQUEST FORM  
*Please Print***

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Estimated Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Garden/Committee Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Garden Representative**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (day) \_\_\_\_\_ Evenings \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Alternate Contact**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (day) \_\_\_\_\_ Evenings \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Committee Members** (please print)

Name	Email	Phone
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**Proposed location of Community Garden (describe)**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Proposed number and size of garden beds/allotments** \_\_\_\_\_

**Current number of interested gardeners listed** \_\_\_\_\_

**Estimated length of fencing required if applicable** \_\_\_\_\_

**Site assessment has been conducted with a RDNO designate and initial approval given.**      Yes      No

**Comments or additional information:** Feel free to add as attachments

**B.**

**Greater Vernon Community Garden Network  
Letter of Commitment for New Garden Development  
Garden Committee/Garden Representative(s)**

As the volunteer Community Garden Committee representing the \_\_\_\_\_ Garden, we understand that should our application be approved, our commitment includes:

- Leading the construction of the community garden and any tasks inherent in its development and maintenance
- Maintaining the leadership necessary to run the garden, including naming a garden representative
- Administering the Community Garden grant funding and fees and following the budget outlined
- Promoting the garden and ensuring that beds are allocated for the growing season each year
- Establishing a communication system with the gardeners to notify them of workdays, new developments and events
- Ensuring the gardeners understand and comply to the rules of use of the community garden as per the gardener agreement (once operating)
- Holding committee and all gardener meetings as needed
- Ensuring that the water payment agreement is followed
- Preparing the vacated garden beds for new gardeners each season as needed
- Generally taking responsibility for the day to day and year to year operation and management of the community garden and any associated tasks
- Remediation of the site at the end of the term if agreement is not renewed or the commitment cannot be fulfilled
- A minimum three year term (3 growing seasons from spring to fall)

**Start date** \_\_\_\_\_ **End of Term** \_\_\_\_\_

We understand that in the case that we cannot keep our commitment for the term of this agreement, and if no other leadership steps forward, that we must give notice to the RDNO Designate by October 31 for the following season and that the site must be remediated as per the agreement.

*We, the undersigned, on behalf of, and as representatives of the committee, declare that each member of the Garden Committee has read the above terms and agrees to abide by them for the term of our commitment.*

**Garden Representative**

Name (print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Alternate Contact**

Name (print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Greater Vernon Community Garden Network Start Up Grant Information

### Purpose

The purpose of the Community Garden Grant is to assist with **new** public community garden development.

### Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for the grant, the application must be submitted by the garden committee requesting a permit to development a *new* community garden along with their budget for the garden development.

The grant may be used towards basic garden equipment and essentials such as:

- Wood and materials for garden beds
- Soil to fill the beds
- Watering and gardening tools like hoses, water barrels, and cans
- Picnic tables, umbrellas, or other seating or sun barriers
- A small garden shed or storage bin
- A bulletin board

*Seeds and supplementary implements (trellises, etc) are to be provided by the individual gardeners or through committee fundraising.*

**Maximum Funding Allocated per garden is \$2500.** Any funding needed over and above that must be raised by the garden committee.

Funding must be spent by the garden committee within the first year of garden development. It is expected that Garden Committees will also try to find donations where possible.

### Arrange for Administration of Funds

The Food Action Society of the North Okanagan is a registered charitable non-profit society and who has agreed to support the Community Garden Network by administering garden funding on behalf of the garden committees. They will deposit and hold your grants and revenues and will provide them to the garden through a reimbursement system. They charge a modest administration fee of 10% on collected allotment fees. This will go back into supporting the Network in other ways. This does not include grants or other donations. They can be reached at [info@foodaction.ca](mailto:info@foodaction.ca) or by calling 250-542-6920.

***Any equipment or supplies purchased with the grant remains the property of the Community Garden Network should the garden no longer operate.***



D.

**Greater Vernon Community Garden Network  
Private Land Donor Form**

As a land owner, your property at \_\_\_\_\_, has been identified as one having Community Garden potential.

Land leases or agreements for community gardens are typically negotiated for a minimum of 3 years in exchange for a charitable tax donation based on the value of the property. Reimbursements for water costs are calculated based on anticipated usage, past history of water use for the property and whether or not they are metered for agricultural use and separate from domestic use. Gardeners may or may not have year round access and there are very specific rules of usage that each gardener and committee are expected to follow.

Before this is negotiated in full, we require some basic information about the property and your commitment to donating the site.

Name of legal owner(s)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Legal description of property:

Approximate size of property to be leased:

Is there fencing? buildings? Describe.

Water source and available water infrastructures:

Previous use of land: (ie pasture for horses, lawn, gas station, etc)

To your knowledge, have pesticides or other toxic materials been used on the site?

For how long and under what conditions are you interested in donating the property?

Other comments: