



## chicago park district

# COMMUNITY GARDENS IN THE PARKS REGISTRATION MANUAL – EXISTING GROUP

## INTRODUCTION

Chicago has already made great strides toward becoming one of the leading “Green” cities in the country! The Chicago Park District is helping to promote and expand the greening efforts in our city by providing valuable outdoor space for communities in Chicago to garden together. We ask you to join us in this effort by officially registering your community garden through the following process.

Designing, planting, and caring for a garden can yield very rewarding results. Gardening gives us opportunities to be active, creative, and social, as well as establish a direct connection with nature. Gardening also promotes good overall fitness and health. As you know, maintaining a successful community garden is also a long-term responsibility which requires community support and dedicated, ongoing commitment by all members of your community gardening group.

This manual will guide you through the registration process.

## A CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT COMMUNITY GARDEN IS DEFINED AS:

An assigned space within a park that is reserved solely for the use of an organized group of community members for the purpose of growing ornamental or edible plants. The community gardening group is solely responsible for all necessary maintenance of this space.

## GARDEN TYPES:

1. **Ornamental Gardens:** Includes annuals, perennials, small shrubs, etc., with no plants intended for use as food. Ornamental gardens may be planted directly into existing soil.
2. **Edibles Gardens:** Includes plants for use as food and must be planted in raised beds\*.  
*\*Raised beds to conform to Park District requirements using new, clean soil and a special liner.*
3. **Combination Gardens:** Includes ornamental plants and plants intended for use as food.  
**Combination gardens must also be planted in raised beds\*.**

## TELL US ABOUT YOUR GROUP

Being community gardeners in the Chicago Park District is a grass-roots operation. Residents of Chicago who would like to develop a Community Garden in their neighborhood park should organize themselves as an official garden club or group (Group). As a public agency, Park District policy requires inclusiveness; anyone interested in joining the Group is to be fairly considered.

The Group should appoint a liaison, or group leader, who will serve as the Group’s representative to the Chicago Park District and to the public. The liaison will be responsible for organizing and monitoring all garden activities. It would be beneficial for your group to join the Advisory Council, especially for assistance in fundraising efforts.

Your Group must develop working relationships with the Park Supervisor, Area Manager, and the Advisory Council. Support from all of these parties is crucial.

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARK DISTRICT

The Park Supervisor and Area Manager are your main contacts for all departments within the Park District. Just as you have been given responsibility to maintain your garden in an appealing manner, your Park Supervisor and Area Manager will work with you by sharing information about any activities in the park which may impact your garden space.

Park District landscaping crews will be shown your garden space to assure that the boundaries are respected and to see where their maintenance responsibilities adjoin yours.

## TO REGISTER:

### REGISTRATION FORM, LETTER OF COMMITMENT & LIABILITY WAIVERS

Print out and complete the following from our website: [www.chicagoparkdistrict.com](http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com)

- Registration Form for Existing Gardens
- Letter of Commitment (all members must read and liaison signs)
- Liability Waiver (each member must sign)

### WRITTEN REPORT

A written report consists of the following documentation:

- **Group Membership roster.** Name of Group, park, contact information for the primary group leader, secondary group leader, and a complete listing of current group members.
- **Budget plan.** All costs for a Community Garden are the sole responsibility of the Group.
- **Existing garden design.** Include a sketch which can be basic and hand-drawn. Show the garden layout including dimensions, and locations of the water source, nearby buildings, and trees. Describe which direction it faces, how many hours of direct sunlight it gets per day, and the soil type.
- **Plant list.** Provide a list of plants to be used in the garden (Ornamental gardens only).
- **Maintenance plan.** Provide a detailed maintenance plan, indicating how the garden is cared for on a daily and seasonal basis, including watering, weeding, mulching, spring prepping and fall winterizing.

### SUBMIT THE PAPERWORK

Mail the following to the appropriate department by the deadline listed on our website:  
Registration Form, Written Report details, Letter of Commitment and Liability Waivers.

For an <u>Ornamental</u> community garden:	For an <u>Edibles</u> or <u>Combination</u> community garden:
<b>Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR)</b> Chicago Park District 541 N. Fairbanks Ct., 6 <sup>th</sup> Fl. Chicago, IL 60611  Attn: Community Garden Application	<b>Environment, Culture &amp; Special Events (ECSE)</b> Chicago Park District 541 N. Fairbanks Ct., 4 <sup>th</sup> Fl. Chicago, IL 60611  Attn: Community Garden Application

## REGISTERED!

After the Park District has received all of the required documents, they will be reviewed and your liaison will be notified of your registration status. Finally, Congratulations! Successful community gardening is a big responsibility and we are pleased to be in this venture together.

**IMPORTANT:** Your Group will be required to renew its Community Garden registration every three years. You will be asked for a progress report on your garden, current membership details, and a budget plan for the next three years. Your Group may also be required to submit a renewed Letter of Commitment.

## APPENDIX A: DETAILS FROM THE LETTER OF COMMITMENT

The most important aspect of successful community gardening in a park is ongoing community support and communication between the community and the Chicago Park District. Listed below are the responsibilities and guidelines the Group must adhere to, and the community must support:

### **GARDEN/PLOT MAINTENANCE**

The Group is entirely responsible for the maintenance of the Community Garden. Keep in mind that the space allocated is on public land and must always be actively maintained. The Group is to provide the Chicago Park District with a schedule detailing routine maintenance procedures, spring prepping, and fall winterizing.

Pathways and areas between Garden Beds must be mulched and maintained by the group. The Park District will not do any maintenance within the Community Garden itself.

Through the Park District's independent observation, if the space is deemed unsightly, weedy or unkempt, the designated liaison will be given two separate warning notices both via two different means (for example, phone call and letter through the mail) each time. If the problem continues thereafter, the agreement will be revoked and the Group will be responsible for proposing a plan to restore the garden to parkland to the satisfaction of the Park District's Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

### **WATER**

Please conserve water!!! The water supply is **ONLY** to be used by gardeners caring for their assigned areas. Washing of cars or other personal non-garden related activities is prohibited.

### **ORGANIC PRACTICES**

It is strongly recommended that all cultivating practices be organic; to the extent possible only organic fertilizers should be applied in edibles gardens.

### **PEST & DISEASE CONTROL AND CHEMICALS**

Only organic means of disease and pest control may be used. **NO CHEMICAL PEST CONTROL MEASURES MAY BE USED WITHOUT PRIOR APPROVAL FROM THE PARK DISTRICT'S DNR/ECSE DEPARTMENTS.**

### **COMPOSTING**

Composting is encouraged, but only that which is organic and will decompose (e.g. plant material, fruit peels/cores). Avoid rodent-attracting foods such as rice, bread, meat, or grease. Inorganic or non-plant materials such as plastic, metal, kitty litter, feces, or any large or thorny branches are not suitable for compost. The compost must be contained in a manner approved by the Park District's DNR/ECSE departments such as a tumbler or open cage.

An alternative to a compost bin is bagged plant material waste which the Park District landscape crew will pick up upon notification.

### **STRUCTURES AND SIZABLE LANDSCAPE MATERIAL**

Structures such as trellises, walls, and permanent fences, or sizable plant material such as trees are not allowed, unless approved by the Park District's DNR/ECSE departments.

### **GARDEN BORDERS**

The garden boundaries must remain as submitted on the original design plans. Any proposed expansion must be reviewed and approved by the Park District's DNR/ECSE departments. **NO EXCEPTIONS.**

### **MONITORING THE COMMUNITY GARDEN**

The community, especially Group members, shall continually monitor the Community Garden for quality control and good management practices.

## **MANAGEMENT**

Frequent communication with the Chicago Park District regarding management of the Community Garden is required. If problems occur with the operation or patrons of the Community Garden, the Chicago Park District should be informed and involved in the resolution of any problems.

## **NEW MEMBERS**

The Group shall inform new members of the Community Garden rules and regulations; stressing the importance of ongoing maintenance. The group must follow a transparent membership process open to all. As a public agency, Park District policy requires inclusiveness; anyone interested in joining the Group is to be fairly considered.

## **LIABILITY**

The Park District is not responsible for the garden itself; or to anything in or pertaining to the garden. Each member of the gardening group must sign a waiver of liability.

## **FUNDRAISING**

The Group may organize fundraising events to finance needs of the Community Garden such as a compost bin, water hoses, plants, etc.

## **CLEAN-UP ACTIVITIES**

The Group will be expected to participate in park clean-up days such as Earth Day (April), and Clean & Green (May & October) events, and those held in conjunction with the Friends of the Parks organization.

## **SIGNAGE**

Each Community Garden will have a sign indicating the name of the Community Garden Group and other information as required by the Chicago Park District. Signage will be provided by the Park District.

## **VEHICLES**

Park patrons are permitted to use motorized vehicles within a park **ONLY** on designated roadways, driveways and parking facilities. **The parking or driving of motorized vehicles by any park patron on walkways, restricted-access drives, lawn areas, under trees, or within landscaped areas is strictly forbidden.**

## **PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES**

- **Littering, dumping, alcohol consumption** and other unlawful activities
- **Amplified sound**
- **Pets** are not allowed in the garden per the Code of the Chicago Park District
- **Ball playing** or other forms of active recreation
- **Vehicular traffic** inside the park

## **GARDEN TERMINATION**

If the Group decides to no longer maintain their space, they must immediately notify the Park District's DNR/ECSE departments and the Park Supervisor and Area Manager. Group will be responsible for proposing a plan to restore the garden to parkland to the satisfaction of the Park District's Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

## **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

A Chicago Park District representative may attend a neighborhood association and/or park Advisory Council meeting to review the successes or challenges experienced by the Community Gardeners. The Park District will take appropriate action based on that assessment. Failure by the Community Gardeners to provide the required operational and financial support will result in the removal of the garden by the Park District.

## APPENDIX: FUNDING IDEAS, RESOURCES and CLASSES

Here are a few ideas for locating funds and/or horticultural resources for your Community Garden:

- **Parkways Foundation** is the non-profit partner of the Chicago Park District which is offering grant opportunities to officially registered community garden groups. Community gardens must be fully registered with the Park District prior to the grant application deadline. Contact <http://www.parkways.org> or (312) 742-4808 for grant information.
- Your park **Advisory Council** can work with your Group to hold fundraising events; auctions, plant sales, concerts, etc.
- **GreenNet** is a coalition of non-profit organizations and public agencies committed to supporting community greening in Chicago. Their website lists guides, other community gardens, ideas, resources, organizations and potential funding: [www.greennetchicago.org](http://www.greennetchicago.org)
- **GreenCorps**, which is found under the Dept. of Environment, City of Chicago, suggests grants, resources, and support: [www.cityofchicago.org](http://www.cityofchicago.org)
- **Growing Power**, an organization that inspires communities to build sustainable food systems that are equitable and ecologically sound, creating a just world, one food-secure community at a time. [www.growingpower.org](http://www.growingpower.org)
- **Friends of the Parks** has mini-seed grants available: [www.fotp.org](http://www.fotp.org)
- **Kilbourn Park Organic Greenhouse** offers workshops and lectures, as well as their annual plant sale and Harvest Festival. They provide horticultural ideas, resources, and help.
- **Garfield Park Conservatory** provides a wealth of information, ideas and resources for horticulture. They also host workshops and lectures.
- **Wicker Park Garden Club** is a highly successful community garden that provides many resources, workshops, lectures and events: [www.wpgarden.org](http://www.wpgarden.org)
- **Openlands** supports community gardens under their Urban Greening program: [www.openlands.org](http://www.openlands.org)
- **Chicago Botanic Garden** has an extensive line of lectures, classes and workshops available. They also have wonderful demonstration gardens of various types and designs.
- **University of Illinois Extension** website supplies a wealth of resources: [web.extension.uiuc.edu](http://web.extension.uiuc.edu) They have a plant clinic based at the Garfield Park Conservatory where they can troubleshoot many individual plant/gardening problems. Master Gardener and Master Composter certification classes are also available.
- **American Community Garden Association** works to create new resources for community gardens, coordinates an annual conference, and has online resources and informative lists of all topics involving community gardens: [www.communitygarden.org](http://www.communitygarden.org)
- **National Gardening Association** promotes the environment, is a resource of plant information, has a free newsletter, and provides links for gardeners. Periodically, they provide information about grants and other funds available: [www.garden.org](http://www.garden.org)
- **Local businesses** may be interested in donating materials, monetarily, and/or with volunteer hours.
- **Local officials** may have funds available to support such a community improvement project.