



Berkeley Community Garden Handbook

Created by the Berkeley Climate Action
Coalition Land Use Working Group
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Table of Contents

- I. **Introduction:** What is a Community Garden?
 - a. Why start a Community Garden?
 - II. **Choosing a Site**
 - a. Criteria
 - b. Identifying owners
 - III. **Berkeley Municipal Code Section 23C.26 - Urban Agriculture (Aug 2018)**
 - IV. **Getting permission**
 - a. City-Owned Land
 - b. Private Land
 - c. Zoning
 - V. **Community Outreach**
 - VI. **Costs of Starting a Community Garden**
 - VII. **Operating the garden**
 - a. Community Garden Guidelines
 - b. Training the Gardeners
 - c. Insurance
 - VIII. **Resources**
-

I. Introduction: What is a Community Garden?

- ✓ **Community Garden** - Any piece of land, public or private, that is maintained by a group of individuals in the community that is used for the cultivation of fruits, vegetables, plants, flowers, herbs or ornamental plants, and may be used for educational purposes, group class instruction or community gatherings.
- ✓ Community gardens may produce food for individual consumption, donation, trade, or limited seasonal sales as an exempt accessory activity subject to certain limitations. Community gardens may also have accessory structures including, but not limited to tool sheds, greenhouses, pergolas, and trellises by right with a Zoning Certificate.

The city of Berkeley has shown overwhelming support for community gardens. There are many benefits to starting a community garden. Here are just a few of the reasons why you should get involved in a community garden or help start one:

- ✓ **Access to Healthy Food**
Community gardens provide access to nutritionally rich foods that may otherwise be unavailable to low-income families and individuals.
- ✓ **Nutrition and Improvement of Individual Overall Health**
Community gardeners tend to eat more fruits and vegetables improving their overall health. Probiotics found in the earth's soil are beneficial for one's digestive health.
- ✓ **Physical Activity and Exercise**
Gardening provides opportunities for light stretching and exercise. This improves individual health and reduces stress.
- ✓ **Carbon Impact Reduction**
Community gardens increase consumption of food from local sources, reducing carbon emissions needed to transport food. Gardens also sequester a small amount of carbon.
- ✓ **Adaptation and Food Security**
Community gardens increase the resilience and adaptive capacity of cities to climate change by cooling areas, providing a source of fresh affordable food, and providing supplemental income when extra produce is sold.
- ✓ **Community Building and Crime Reduction**
Community gardens provide a place for people to meet their neighbors and for people of diverse backgrounds to interact and share traditions. This fosters a sense of pride and stewardship in the community which in-turn reduces crime.
- ✓ **Habitat Restoration**
Pollinators are provided with enough undisturbed habitat to maintain their life cycles.
- ✓ **Water Conservation and Purification**
Community gardens with a drip system use less water than a lawn of equal size. Gardens help contain storm water keeping contaminated run-off out of our watersheds.

✓ **Air Pollution Reduction**

Community gardens help sequester and trap air pollutants that cause or aggravate respiratory illnesses such as asthma.

✓ **Education**

Community gardens offer opportunities for individuals to engage in constructive activities, contribute to the community, learn about where food comes from, learn practical math skills, and raise awareness about environmental sustainability.

II. Choosing a Site

There are certain things every garden needs in order to be healthy and useful to the community. Spend some time prioritizing the criteria below.

- Size of land plot
 - Six hours of direct sunlight (preferably south-facing)
 - Accessibility to community (visible, flat, availability to transit)
 - Soil contaminants and toxicity
 - Water access
 - Proximity to sources of pollution
 - Public land vs. private land
-

III. Berkeley Municipal Code Chapter 23C.26- Urban Agriculture (UA) Zoning Ordinance

- ✓ On August 23, 2018, the [Berkeley Municipal Code Chapter 23C.26 – Urban Agriculture](#) became effective. Community Gardens established after this date must comply with the new Zoning regulations in this chapter.

The Urban Agriculture (UA) Ordinance (Section 23C.26) establishes:

- ✓ **A definition of UA** (including community gardens) as *the production of horticultural crops for harvest, sale, and/or donation including community gardens. Urban Agriculture does not include cannabis cultivation and does not pertain to raising animals.*
- ✓ **UA shall be allowed in all zoning districts in the City (except for Environmental Safety- residential, ES-R)**
 - A. [City of Berkeley Zoning Map](#)
- ✓ **UA uses & levels of discretion (Low-Impact Urban Agriculture, LIUA, vs.**

High-Impact Urban Agriculture, HIUA)

LIUA meets all or falls below the thresholds listed in Section [23C.26.040](#), and is allowed by right with a **Zoning Certificate (ZC)**

HIUA does not meet one or more of the thresholds listed in Section [23C.26.040](#), and may be permitted by an **Administrative Use Permit (AUP)**

✓ **Levels of discretion for Urban Agriculture are based on the following thresholds:**

- A. Maximum parcel size of 7,500 square feet.
- B. Maximum lot coverage of 20% for accessory structures and buildings, per definition of 'coverage area' in Section [23F.04.010](#).
- C. Hours of operation is 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m., including but not limited to activities related to gardening and planting of horticultural crops, group classes, and sales.
- D. Maximum group classes and workshops of 20 participants per class conducted no more than three times per week.
- E. Use of organic pesticides. (Ord. 7620-NS § 1 (part), 2018)

✓ **Operation Standards**

- A. The growing, production, or sale of Urban Agricultural Products do not involve hazardous materials or processes or create offensive or objectionable noise, vibration, odors, heat, dirt, or electrical disturbance perceptible by a person beyond the lot line of the subject lot.
- B. Sales and/or donations of Urban Agricultural Products grown and produced on-site are permitted.
- C. If selling or donating Urban Agricultural Products to the public, the Urban Agriculture use shall comply with all applicable food safety laws, including the California Health and Safety Code.
- D. Garbage and compost receptacles must be screened from the street and adjacent properties by utilizing landscaping, fencing or storage structures and all garbage shall be removed from the site weekly. Compost piles and containers must be set back at least 10 feet from residential buildings when an Urban Agriculture uses about a residential use.
- E. Use of mechanized farm equipment is prohibited in residential districts and when the Urban Agriculture use abuts a residential use, with the following exceptions:
 - 1. Heavy equipment may be used initially to prepare the land for agriculture use.
 - 2. Landscaping equipment designed for household use is permitted.
 - 3. Equipment when not in use must be enclosed or otherwise screened from sight. (Ord. 7620-NS § 1 (part), 2018)

✓ **Complaints**

- A. Uses, activities or events associated with Urban Agriculture are subject to Chapters [23B.64](#) and [12.92](#) if found to be non-compliant with the provisions set forth in this chapter. (Ord. 7620-NS § 1 (part), 2018)

IV. Getting Permission

In order to start gardening on your site, you'll need permission from the owners and some documents that outline the terms of agreement.

Public Land

There are currently 6 community gardens in Berkeley operating on public land coordinated by the City of Berkeley. The existing gardens are overseen by Berkeley's Parks, Recreation, and Waterfront (PRW) Department, in partnership with the Berkeley Community Gardening Collaborative.

The opportunity for establishing new community gardens on public land will vary depending on ownership (BART, City, State, etc...) and restrictions at the site. If the public land owner is able and willing to allow the land to be used for community gardening, it is possible that a licensing agreement or lease could be issued for that purpose. Here is the information to get in contact with the PRW department:

<https://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/PRW/>
2180 Milvia Street, Berkeley, CA 94704
TEL: (510) 981-6700, TDD: (510) 981-6903, FAX: (510) 981-6710
Office Hours: Mon-Fri 8am-5pm,
Email: parks@cityofberkeley.info

Roger Miller works for the PRW department, and is the Secretary of the Parks & Recreation Commission. He would also be a good general contact for licensing and/or leasing of city land for community gardening.

Roger Miller
Parks, Recreation and Waterfront Department City
of Berkeley
TEL: (510) 981-6704
Email: rmiller@cityofberkeley.info

Private Land

Private owners often hesitate to lease their valuable land out to a group who would want to use it for several years. Here are some steps to start the process of negotiating with a private land

owner:

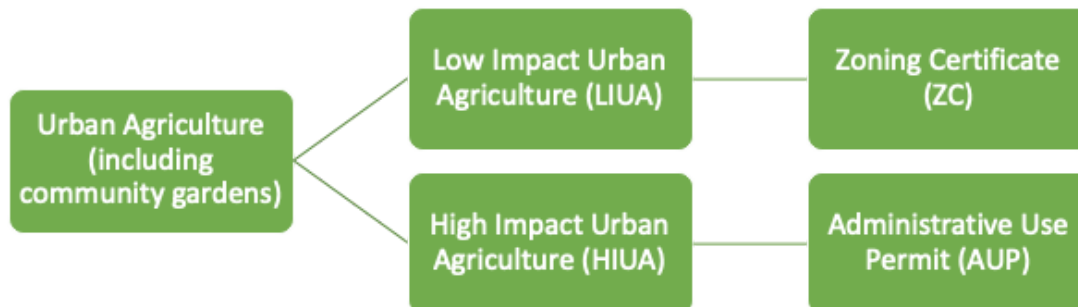
1. First, identify the owner. Here are some websites to find out who owns the lot:
 - a. <https://www.acgov.org/assessor/maps2.htm>
 - b. <https://www.cityofberkeley.info/ppop>
2. Contact the owner, describing to him/her your intentions, goals, structure, and community support. Request a time to meet.
3. If he/she is amenable to the idea, draft a Lease Agreement together. An example Lease Agreement can be found here, which you can modify to suit both parties: <https://changelabsolutions.org/publications/ground-rules>. A ToolKit for Community Gardens
4. If you personally do not want to enter into a Lease Agreement, then consider partnering with a non-profit organization in the area to sign the lease. Such as Berkeley Partners for Parks:

<https://www.ecologycenter.org/bcgc/>
P.O. Box 2801
Berkeley, CA 94702
TEL: 510--883--9096

<https://www.bpfp.org/>
P.O. Box 13673
Berkeley, CA 94712
TEL: 510--849--1969

5. On August 23, 2018, the [Berkeley Municipal Code Chapter 23C.26 – Urban Agriculture](#) became effective. Community Gardens established after this date must comply with the new Zoning regulations in this chapter.

Zoning Requirements



Low-Impact Urban Agriculture (LIUA) meets all or falls below the thresholds listed in Section 23C.26.040, and is allowed by right with a **Zoning Certificate**.

High-Impact Urban Agriculture (HIUA) does NOT meet one or more of the thresholds listed in Section 23C.26.040, and may be permitted by an **Administrative Use Permit (AUP)**.

Levels of discretion for Urban Agriculture: Thresholds

- Maximum parcel size of 7,500 sq. feet
- Maximum Lot Coverage of 20% for accessory structures and buildings
- Hours of operation are 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- Maximum group classes & workshops of 20 participants per class, conducted no more than three times per week
- Use of organic pesticides

V. Community Outreach

It might be obvious, but in order for any community garden to be successful, you first need the support of the community. Spend some time early on in your efforts to reach out to community members, gauge their interest, assess their needs, and get their contact information. This can be done in a variety of ways:

- Neighborhood door-to-door outreach
- Sign-up sheet at local plant nurseries
- Canvassing at local farmers markets
- Email or call members of community who have shown interest

VI. Costs of Starting a Community Garden

The costs of starting a community garden can vary greatly depending on size, complexity, and materials, but should not be underestimated. Below is a table that gives an idea of materials that would be needed and a general cost per amount. Blank spaces are left for you to fill in any additional needed materials.

Item or service	# of units	Estimated cost/unit	Potential places to purchase/ask for donations
Water hookup (New Meter cost)	1" meter	PG&E.Com Click Water tab then go to Rates and	EBMUD (1-866-403-2683 ext 4)
Water hookup			

Two options for the same item!

(Existing meter, need to set up new account)		Fees	
	800	\$4,000	Economy Lumber (https://www.economylumberco.com/)
	12 2x4 units (\$8.37) x 5 beds at 40x4ft	\$502.20	Home Depot (https://www.homedepot.com/)
	\$3.70 a block x 136 per bed x 5 beds 40x4ft	\$2,561	Ashby Lumber (https://www.ashbylumber.com/)
	\$1.97 a block x 136 per bed x 5 beds 40x4ft	\$1,339	Home Depot (https://www.homedepot.com/)
88'x102' Wire and Wood Fence		\$20,000	North American Fencing (http://www.noramfence.com)
		(galvanized chain-link fence, 6' height, 4 sides)	Tri-City Fence Company (https://tricityfence.com/)
			Bailey Fencing Company (https://www.baileyfenceco.com/)
Mulch		Free	Parks Dept.
	5 cu yd bulk	\$410	Mountain Magic
Topsoil	46 cubic yards	\$1679	East Bay Nursery (https://www.eastbaynursery.com/)
			Berkeley Horticultural Nursery (https://mail.berkeleyhort.com/)
			Spiral Gardens (https://www.spiralgardens.org/)
Fertilizer	4 lb bags	\$15	Westbrae Nursery

			(https://westbrae-nursery.com/)
Seeds	20 packs	\$80 (\$4 per pack)	Kitazawa Seed Co. (https://www.kitazawaseed.com/) Berkeley Bowl (https://www.berkeleybowl.com/)) Ecology Center BASIL Seed Library (https://ecologycenter.org/basil/))
Tools: Shovels Garden Hoes Wheelbarrows	Depending on item quantity needed	\$200-500	Ashby Lumber Home Depot Orchard Supply Hardware East Bay Nursery Ace hardware
Water bill	Per year	\$500	EBMUD may offer discounts
Two options for same item!	Shed (7'x7' plastic)	1	\$800 Home Depot
	8'x4' wood	1	\$3000 Home Depot
	Homemade shed	1	\$500-\$1,000 Reclaimed lumber and doors at Urban Ore https://urbanore.com

Free compost and mulch is available from the city on the last Saturday of each month, February through October. Go to the Berkeley Marina on Marina Blvd., across from the Double Tree Hotel. Get there before it starts at 7:30 am as supplies go fast. For more information, call the Berkeley Marina office at (510) 981-6740. This is sponsored by the PRW Department.

If no water service has ever been established, setting up new service is likely to cost thousands of dollars. Estimated cost for installing a new meter in paved conditions \$9,000+ in unpaved conditions \$5,000+. Should a trench and conduit from the new meter at the sidewalk into a property be required then expect to pay an additional \$2,000 - \$3,000. The length is the determining factor for this expense. However, if the site already has an existing meter or piping from the main, opening a new account is \$63.00. If the account is established as "irrigation only", no sewer service fees are assessed, representing a significant savings over residential or commercial rates. New service can be established by contacting EBMUD's customer service number at 1-866-403-2683 ext 4

If establishing water service is infeasible, putting water tanks on site may be a good option. These tanks could be filled by a water trucking service. EBMUD does not require permits for tanks, but the

City of Berkeley may require zoning, plumbing, and/or building permits depending on the size and location of the tanks. If they include pumps, electric permits are needed from the City of Berkeley.

If you are developing your garden independently, you may want to consider obtaining 501(c)3 tax-exempt status, or partnering with a tax-exempt organization, to become eligible to receive tax deductible charitable donations. You also may also apply for funding from foundations.

VII. Operating the Garden

Community Garden Guidelines

Community Gardens established after August 23, 2018, shall comply with the Berkeley Municipal Code Chapter 23C.26 – Urban Agriculture.

To help you run your garden, you will first need to designate who will make decisions and how responsibilities will be shared. Work with others to draft Community Garden Guidelines that present these roles clearly, and have all gardeners sign it in order to start gardening. Another good resource is ChangeLab Solutions Legal Toolkit for Community Gardens (<https://changelabsolutions.org/publications/ground-rules>), and other guides are listed in the Resources section below. Below are the key elements of it which you will need to consider:

1. Decide on how decisions will be made. Will there be a democratic process with a simple majority? How will votes be cast? Will a Steering Committee decide?
2. Establish a process for electing Steering Committee members. Some important roles include: Garden Coordinator, Secretary, Treasurer, Special Events Coordinator, and Community Relations. Not all of these roles are necessary, and some can even be collapsed into one person's responsibility, for example a Secretary-Treasurer.
3. Establish garden fees or membership dues. These will help with common area maintenance, tools, water bills, improvements, and repairs.
4. Clearly define the number of hours the garden will be open for the public, supervised by a plot owner. These open hours can be used for community education or special events.
5. Clearly define the number of meetings plot holders must attend, and minimum number of hours per year towards common area maintenance and supervising open hours.
6. Clearly define what can be grown and how it should be harvested. If the garden is on public land, it cannot be sold, but can be donated. If it is on private land, the harvest may be sold.
7. Establish an open and equitable process for waitlisters.
8. Consider purchasing liability insurance in case someone is hurt in the garden.

Insurance

- For those on private property, we suggest liability insurance:
 - <https://www.insurancebee.com/garden/insurance>
 - <https://www.brunswickcompanies.com>
 - <https://www.liability.riskinsurance>
- Garden walk-through of potential dangers (safety check)

Training the Gardeners

Individuals all come to the community garden with different levels of experience in gardening and different skills. The community garden should be an opportunity to share these skills and learn from each other. It is open to people new to gardening and with various levels of experience. Here are some ideas to help identify people's skill levels, aspects of gardening they would like to learn and how to foster an atmosphere of sharing and community:

- Introduction and open forum for individuals new to the garden including
- Booklet given to each new member includes the basic layout and operation of the community garden and basic planting and harvesting tips
- Handout a questionnaire new members can fill out detailing their skills, experience level and what kind of classes they would like and or ideas they have
- Hands-on classes and skills swap days given by different community garden members or guest speakers
- Lending Library with books on different aspects of gardening
- Members could partner with each other based on experience or skills they would like to swap
- Monthly potluck, open forum and check-in
- Community garden members email list serve for questions, concerns or ideas concerning the garden

VIII. Resources

Guides for How to Start a Community Garden

- Rebel Tomato
<https://www.communitygarden.org/rebeltomato/roots/figuring-costs.php#cost>
- American Community Gardening Association <http://www.communitygarden.org/>
- Start a Community Garden
<https://www.urbanharvest.org/cgardens/startguide/budgeting.html#raisedbeds>
- A Legal Toolkit for Community Gardens (ChangeLab Solutions)
<https://changelabsolutions.org/publications/ground-rules>

Garden Materials

- Berkeley Tool Library (Berkeley)
https://www.berkeleypubliclibrary.org/about_the_library/neighborhood_branches/tool_lending_library/
- Economy Lumber (Oakland) <https://www.economylumberco.com/>
- Just Fencing (San Pablo)
<https://www.justfencing.com/ContactUs.html>
- Crown Hill Materials (Vallejo) <https://www.crownhillmaterials.com/>
- USA Seed Store <https://www.usaseedstore.com/>
- Green Waste Recycle Yard (Berkeley)
<https://www.greenwasterecycleyard.com/contactus.htm>
- Ponderosa Tree Service (Berkeley) <https://www.ponderosatreeservice.com/>

Garden How--To's

- How to build a storage shed
<https://www.diynetwork.com/how-to/how-to-create-a-storage-shed/index.html>
- Soil testing <https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/gama/>
- Companion Plants <https://www.belizeagreport.com/companionplants.pdf>
- How to Build Compost Bins
<https://www.treehugger.com/lawn-garden/4-diy-compost-bins-you-can-build-one-day-video.html>
- How to start seeds indoors
<https://www.organicgardening.com/learn-and-grow/starting-seeds-indoors>
- Natural ways to keep slugs out of your garden
https://green.thefuntimesguide.com/2009/08/natural_garden_slug_control.php
- Natural Pest Control For your Garden
https://green.thefuntimesguide.com/2009/08/natural_garden_slug_control.php
- Vegetable Garden Plan and Design
<https://home.howstuffworks.com/designing-a-vegetable-garden.htm>
- Getting your soil to the correct PH for growing vegetables
https://www.savvygardener.com/Features/soil_ph.html

City/County Resources

- City of Berkeley Municipal Code Chapter 23C.26 – Urban Agriculture
<https://www.codepublishing.com/CA/Berkeley/?comp-Berkeley23C/Berkeley23C26/Berkeley23C26.html>
- City of Berkeley Organization Chart
<https://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/ContentDisplay.aspx?id=31570>
- Parks, Recreation, and Waterfront (PRW) department
<https://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/PRW/> | TEL: (510) 981-6700
- Alameda County Assessor Parcel Maps: to identify owners of vacant lots
<https://www.acgov.org/assessor/maps2.htm>
- Berkeley Zoned Areas
https://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/Planning_and_Development/Home/Zoning_by_Address.aspx
[X](#)

Funding Opportunities

- Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Foundation <https://www.haasjr.org/>
- East Bay Community Foundation <https://www.ebcf.org/>
- Berkeley Community Foundation <https://www.berkfund.org/>
- Cliff Bar Family Foundation <https://www.clifbarfamilyfoundation.org/>