



CITY OF COSTA MESA • PARKS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT
COMMUNITY GARDENS PROGRAM RULES AND REGULATIONS

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Contact Information:

City Hall: Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Closed every other Friday)
 (714) 754-5300
CMgardens@CostaMesaCA.gov

Garden Locations:

Del Mar 170 Del Mar Avenue
 Hamilton 532 Hamilton Avenue

Garden Hours:

Monday - Saturday, 8:00 a.m. to dusk; Sunday, 9:00 a.m. to dusk
 Motorized equipment cannot be used before 9:00 a.m. on Monday - Saturday and 11:00 a.m. on Sunday

II. INTRODUCTION

The City of Costa Mesa has designated a portion of its property for a Community Garden at the addresses listed above. The garden will consist of individual plots, each measuring at 195 sq. ft. (~13' by 15'), as well as raised beds available in 20 sq. ft. (2' by 10') and 30 sq. ft. (3' by 10') configurations. Parcels will be assigned by Parks and Community Services Department staff. The City may assign parcels to community/charitable organizations as appropriate.

III. GARDEN PURPOSE

The Community Garden Program is designed to empower individuals to grow their own food and plants, promoting personal fulfillment, environmental stewardship, and a sense of community.

IV. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To join and maintain membership in the Community Garden, you must:

1. Maintain Residency in Costa Mesa

You must be a current resident of Costa Mesa. Business addresses and P.O. boxes are not eligible. Proof of residency is required at the time of key pick up for new members and will be periodically verified through an auditing process for current members.

Acceptable Proof of Residency includes:

- A valid California driver's license or ID card, or a valid passport, AND
- A current utility bill (issued within the last 60 days) showing a Costa Mesa address. Acceptable utility bills include those for gas, water, electricity, or refuse services.

Note: Members who move out of Costa Mesa will forfeit their garden plot. One plot per household.

2. Sign the Community Garden Agreement

You must agree to follow the Community Garden Rules and Regulations.

3. Actively Garden Your Plot

Your plot must be regularly maintained to remain in good standing.

4. Complete Annual Community Service

Perform a minimum of 4 hours of community service at the garden each year.

5. Stay Current on Dues and Fees

Ensure dues and fees are paid in full and on time.

Note: In the event of a member's death, the surviving spouse or partner residing at the same address may inherit the plot.

V. MEMBER CODE CONDUCT

Members shall:

- Be kind and courteous. Treat all staff, members, visitors, and neighbors with respect and kindness.
- Adhere to the established hours of operation for the community garden.
- Regularly check and read all email and mail correspondence for important updates and information.
- Ensure that children are supervised at all times while in the garden.
- Use all community garden equipment responsibly, returning it clean and in good condition. Ensure wheelbarrows are emptied after use.
- Conserve water at all times:
 - Stay with the hose while watering.
 - Must be done by hand using ONLY nozzles with automatic shut-off.
 - All watering must be contained within the parcel boundary, with no overflow.
 - Ensure water is turned off completely.
- Report urgent issues to the City:
 - Monday to Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Closed every other Friday) – Contact the Parks and Community Services Department at (714) 754-5300.
 - Evenings and Weekends- The Costa Mesa Police Department non-emergency line at (714) 754-5252.
- Be allowed, with prior approval from Parks and Community Services staff, to bring private vehicles to load/unload supplies or equipment in the common area only and only for the time needed to load/unload.

Members shall not:

- Sell or use garden produce for profit.
- Transfer, sell, or sublet garden space.
- Vehicles are not permitted in garden aisles at any time.
- No animals, including those on leashes, are allowed in the garden, with the exception of service animals.
- Allow children or guests to wander into neighbors' gardens or common areas.
- Enter another member's garden without explicit written permission. Removal of any item (crop, plant, tool, etc.) that is not yours is considered theft and cause for permanent loss of membership.
- Destroy or damage any other member's property or property of the Community Garden.
- Consume alcohol or smoke.
- Loiter in the garden after dusk.

VI. GENERAL GARDEN AND RAISED BED REQUIREMENTS

1. **Planting and Harvesting:**

- Keep your garden or raised bed fully planted with seasonal vegetables (no cover crops allowed). Ensure all crops are harvested before they rot.

2. **Edible Crops:**

- At least 80% of your parcel or 90% of your raised bed must be planted with edible crops and or flowers.
- The remaining area (20% for parcels, 10% for raised beds) may include:
 - One plastic storage container,
 - Two plastic or composite garden chairs or one small bench,
 - Two approved composting containers, or
 - For raised beds only: One small folding stool under the elevated bed.
- If using a trellis to support a growing crop, it counts as part of the planted area. If not in use, it will count as part of the unplanted area.

3. **Cleanliness and Weed Control:**

- Maintain your garden or bed in a clean, neat, and weed-free condition at all times.
- Remove weeds by hand and promptly address any pests or diseases by trimming or removing affected plants.

4. **Fertilizers and Soil Amendments:**

- Only neutral fertilizers are allowed.
- All soil amendments must be organic and free of synthetic ingredients.
- No chemical products are permitted.

5. **Personal Items:**

- Store all personal items, including plants, pots, tools, bins, etc., within the boundaries of your parcel or bed.
- The City is not responsible for the theft of crops, tools, or other personal belongings.

6. **Parcel and Bed Boundaries:**

- Keep parcel and bed boundaries as originally defined.
- Parcels are 195 sq. ft. (~13' by 15'). The City may re-stake or adjust boundaries as needed.
- Ensure boundary markers are visible and free of soil, plants, or debris.

7. **Aisleways:**

- Keep the aisleways surrounding your parcel or raised bed clean, neat, and free of weeds and obstacles such as tools, pots, and plants.
- Trim any plants that extend beyond your parcel or bed into the aisle.

VII. GARDEN MAINTENANCE AND MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

Members Shall:

- **Dispose of Organic Waste Properly**

Use the Green Waste dumpster for organic materials, yard waste, and other biodegradable substances. Acceptable items include grass clippings, leaves, tree branches, plant trimmings, wood chips, fruit and vegetable food waste, and compostable materials like coffee grounds and filters. Do not include non-compostable items such as plastic bags, metal, or glass.

- **Use the Black Trash Cart for Non-Organic Waste**

The black trash cart is for non-recyclable, non-organic waste. Dispose of items such as plastic plant

containers, broken tools, non-recyclable packaging, and general garden debris. It is also for non-compostable materials like certain weeds, soil, diseased plants, and broken pottery or metal parts.

- **Arrange Care for Your Parcel**

Garden parcels must be actively tended. Ensure someone is available to tend your garden parcel during absences (e.g., vacation or illness). The City is not responsible for the maintenance of any individual garden parcel. Any parcel left unmaintained for 30 days will be reassigned.

- **Use Proper Materials for Frames and Supports**

Frames must be constructed from simple stakes, string, or prefabricated lightweight wire frames available at nurseries.

- **Trellises and Supports:** Trellises and plant supports must not exceed 6 feet in height, and stakes must not be driven deeper than 1 foot into the ground. Supports that create excessive shade on neighboring plots must be removed.
- **Prohibited Household Items:** Do not use household items such as baby gates, tires, bookcases, shelves, construction materials, screen doors, or mailboxes in the garden.
- **Rusted Items:** Rusted stakes, supports, fences, or structures must be removed for safety reasons.

- **Use Approved Storage Containers for Tools and Supplies**

One outdoor, weather-resistant storage container for tools and supplies is permitted.

- **Inground Parcels:** The maximum allowable height is 3.5 feet.
- **Raised Bed Parcels:** The maximum allowable height is 2.5 feet, and the container must fit under the bed.

- **Follow Proper Hose Use and Maintenance**

- Hoses must not exceed 50 feet in length.
- Hoses must be properly stored on hose hangers, wound without kinks, and arranged in concentric rings when not in use.
- Any issues with hoses, hose hangers, or water sources must be reported to the City immediately.
- Gardeners are responsible for purchasing and maintaining their own hoses, including those shared with others.

- **Compost Responsibly (Inground Parcels Only)**

- Composting must be done in covered containers; open composting in soil is not allowed.
- No more than two (2) compost containers are allowed per inground parcel.
- All compost must be covered with dirt or manure to prevent pests and animals.
- Meat scraps and weeds are not permitted in compost containers.
- Compost is considered part of the required 20% non-planted area of your parcel.

Members Shall Not:

- **Bring Broken Cement or Asphalt**

Do not bring broken cement, asphalt, or similar materials into the garden for use in parcels.

- **Encroach on Common Areas or Other Parcels**

Do not extend your garden or encroach into common areas or other garden parcels.

- **Use Chemical Products**

Chemical products such as synthetic pesticides, fungicides, fertilizers, and herbicides are prohibited.

- **Exceed Height Limits or Cause Shading to Neighboring Parcels**

Keep all plants, trees, trellises, and structures in your garden parcel under six (6) feet in height.

Additionally, do not allow plants or items to cast shade onto another garden parcel. If a member's garden negatively impacts another parcel, Parks and Community Services staff may require trimming or other actions to resolve the issue.

- **Place Items Near Fencing or Common Areas Without Permission**

Do not place or grow any plants, shrubs, trees, vines, or items on or near garden fencing or common areas without prior approval from the City.

- **Play Amplified Music**

To respect fellow gardeners and the surrounding neighborhood, do not play amplified music in the garden.

VIII. RESTRICTED AND PROHIBITED PLANTS

Restricted Plants - Allowed Only in a Grow Bag or Sealed-Bottom Container

Some invasive yet beneficial plants may be grown **only** if placed in a grow bag or sealed-bottom container. This list includes, but is not limited to:

Cactus	Horseradish	Lemon Balm	Mint
Passion Fruit	Petunia	Plumeria	Potatoes
Succulent	Roses		

Prohibited Plants

The following plants are **not allowed** in the Costa Mesa Community Garden because they are invasive, toxic, capable of spreading plant diseases, attracting harmful insects, or causing physical damage. This list includes, but is not limited to:

Bamboo	Castor Oil Plant	Dandelion	Datura
Four O’Clock	Illegal Plants	Morning Glory	Poisonous Nightshade
Sugar Cane	Trees* / Citrus Trees**	Tropical Milkweed	

* Trees planted in a parcel prior to 2015 are grandfathered in and will be removed as members leave the garden. The City may also require removal if a grandfathered tree is not properly maintained.

**A plant disease (Huanglongbing or citrus greening) that kills citrus trees has been found in California. Our gardens are located inside an HLB (Huanglongbing or citrus greening) quarantine area. As result, the transport or growth of any citrus plant is regulated to prevent the spread of this disease.

IX. COMMUNITY SERVICE WORK PARTIES

To help maintain the common areas of the community gardens, work parties are scheduled throughout the year. All members are expected to contribute through community service.

1. Annual Service Requirement

Each member (per parcel/raised bed) is required to attend two (2) work parties per year, contributing a total of at least four (4) hours of service to the common areas. If joining after July 1st, the hours are prorated, and those members will be required to contribute two (2) hours of service. If you are not able to attend, before and after photos can be emailed for work credit of areas serviced.

2. Service Deadlines

Members must complete two (2) hours by May 31st and the remaining two (2) hours by October 31st.

3. Work Party Scheduling

Work parties will be scheduled at least four (4) times per year, with dates posted at least three (3) weeks in advance through bulletin boards, email, and online. Work parties will be scheduled on various days of the week, each lasting two (2) hours.

4. Check-In Process

Check-in will begin 15 minutes before the start time of each work party. Members must sign in and sign out to earn credit for their service hours.

5. Age Restrictions

No one under the age of 18 may attend or work during a work party unless directly supervised by a parent or guardian throughout the event.

6. Work Party Attire

Personal gardening is not permitted during work parties. Members must wear closed-toe shoes, gloves, and appropriate clothing for safety and comfort.

7. Completion Deadline

Community service must be completed by the final work party of the year, typically held at the beginning of October (weather and conditions permitting). There will be no carry-over of service hours from previous years, and no grace period or waivers will be granted for missed hours.

X. NON-COMPLIANCE RESOLUTION PROCESS

City staff will conduct regular inspections of garden plots to ensure adherence to the Community Garden Rules and Regulations. If a garden plot is found to be out of compliance with the Community Garden Rules and Regulations, the following steps will be taken to address the issue:

1. Initial Notice (1st Notice):

A notification will be sent via **email, phone call, and/or mail** informing the member of the non-compliance issue. The member will be given **7 days** to correct the problem. A follow-up inspection will occur at the end of this period to verify resolution.

2. Second Notice (2nd Notice):

If the issue is not resolved after the first notice, a **second notification** will be issued via **email, phone call, and/or mail**. The member will again be given a 7-day period to correct the issue. A second follow-up inspection will be conducted to assess compliance.

3. Final Notice (3rd Notice):

If the issue persists after the second notice, a **final notice** will be issued via **email, phone call, and mail**. This notice will inform the gardener that failure to comply may result in the termination of their gardening privileges. The member will be given a **final opportunity** to address the non-compliance issue within 7 days.

4. Termination of Gardening Privileges:

If the issue remains unresolved after the final notice, a **termination notice** will be issued via **phone call, email, and mail**. This notice will inform the member that their garden plot is being revoked and they are no longer in good standing. It will also provide clear instructions on how to vacate the plot, retrieve any deposits, and collect personal items.

Policy for Compliance Violations:

The City enforces this policy for non-compliance with the Community Garden Rules and Regulations within a single calendar year. Each notice (Initial, Second, and Final) constitutes one strike. If a member accrues three strikes, their gardening privileges will be terminated.

For violations deemed by the City to be of a serious nature, such as those involving safety, property damage, or other significant concerns, the City reserves the right to bypass the strike process and terminate gardening privileges immediately.