



CHATHAM-KENT COMMUNITY GARDENS

MANUAL FOR DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

We are pleased that you are interested in starting a Community Garden. The Municipality of Chatham-Kent is helping to promote healthy eating and assist in finding locations to encourage communities to garden together.

Designing, planting and caring for a garden can yield very rewarding results. Community Gardens have demonstrated positive health benefits to participants and their families. Community gardens have been shown to provide better access to wholesome food including access to fresh produce, and cost-savings by substituting garden-grown produce for store-bought foods. They also increase physical activity in participants, especially seniors, and improve feelings of mental health and well-being when the gardens were seen as a retreat or an outlet to interact with nature. Gardens have been found to be an empowering experience and they can be an important place for building broader community involvement.

In order to form a Community Garden in Chatham-Kent, the following process must be completed. Use this detailed manual as your guide along with the Checklist which outlines the five steps. You may find it helpful to read through this manual in its entirety before beginning. Each of the required forms can be found on the CK Food Policy Council Website at www.letstalkfood-ck.com

DEFINITION

A Chatham-Kent Community Garden is a plot of land used to produce food, native and ornamental plants, edible berries, and food perennials. It is an area of publically or privately owned land, rooftop or other space managed and maintained by individuals and/or organizations, to grow and harvest food crops and/or non-food ornamental crops, such as flowers for personal or group use, consumption or donation. Community gardens may be divided into separate plots or may be farmed collectively and may include common areas maintained and used by community garden members.

STEP ONE: FORMING THE GARDEN GROUP

Creating a Community Garden in Chatham-Kent is a grassroots operation. This is a serious responsibility which will require community support and dedicated, ongoing commitment by all members of the Community Gardening Group. A Community Garden may consist of one or many participants. If you are working with others who would like to start a Community Garden, please note that it is important for Community Gardens to be inclusive; anyone interested in joining the Garden is to be considered.

It is important that a liaison or group leader be selected who will serve as the Garden's representative to the Chatham-Kent Community Garden Committee and to the public. The liaison will be responsible for organizing and monitoring all garden activities, as well as scheduling and attending the Chatham-Kent Community Garden meetings to present and discuss the proposed Community Garden.

Once established, your Community Garden members should be in contact with the Chatham-Kent Community Garden coordinator and the Chatham-Kent Public Health Unit (CKPHU) to receive ongoing support for the garden.

STEP TWO: DEFINE THE GARDEN TYPE AND LOCATION

Define the Garden Type

1. Ornamental Gardens: Include annuals, perennials, and small shrubs, with no plants intended for food. Ornamental gardens may be planted directly into existing soil. Native and drought-tolerant plants are encouraged.
2. Edible Gardens: Includes plants for use as food and may be planted directly into the soil or in raised beds.
3. Combination Gardens: Includes both ornamental plants and plants intended for use as food.

Selecting the Garden Location

The following factors must be considered in identifying and defining a site for a proposed Community Garden:

1. Permission from the owner of the land has been provided in writing that the land may be used as a site for a community garden.
2. Whenever possible, property should be accessible to pedestrians and persons requiring the use of mobility devices (wheelchairs, scooters, etc).
3. Community Garden sites must not present a conflict to existing uses of the property.
4. Consider the source of water that is available for the garden.
5. Consider sun exposure and shade from buildings, trees, etc. Full sun is best. Community Garden sites must not require the removal of any trees, significant vegetation, landmarks or amenities.
6. Community Garden sites should be in a location that is visible for surveillance purposes.
7. Property must have sufficient parking available in the vicinity of the garden.
8. Community gardens must be available to the community-at-large or to the community served by a sponsoring organization and must not be used to grow commercial produce or plants. Consider the number of households currently interested in the garden location.
9. Confirm that there is enough space to accommodate the garden and consider the type of garden that is planned to be used – in ground, raised beds, etc.
10. Proof of liability insurance (minimum of \$2 million) must be presented or it may be requested that the garden be covered under the policy of the Chatham-Kent Public Health Unit.
11. A budget must be submitted for initial start-up funding requests and consideration for future funding. Please include any additional sources of funding that are being considered.
12. A Site Plan must be submitted – demonstrating both the current site and the envisioned site.

Complete the Site & Usage Survey (Form #2)

- Survey visits determine what's going on in the area surrounding your proposed Community Garden site by identifying who's there, times of heaviest usage, various types of activities, etc.
- Using the Community Gardens Site and Usage Survey, three separate site visits are to be conducted over a period of one to two weeks.
- The Chatham-Kent Community Gardens Coordinator or Staff Support from the CKPHU must accompany you on your first survey visit.

STEP THREE: COMPILING AND SUBMITTING THE PROPOSAL

Written Proposal

Submit a written proposal, which should contain the following documentation:

1. Complete the "Application for a New Garden" (Form 1) see below

2. Group membership roster: name of your Community Garden, contact information for the primary group leader/ liaison, secondary liaison (if applicable) and a complete listing of current members. **IMPORTANT:** A Community Garden must benefit at least 7 separate households.
3. Funding Plan: provide a detailed funding plan, outlining how much the garden will cost, and sources of funding, including the amount of start-up funding requested from the Chatham-Kent Community Gardens Committee.
4. Garden design: provide a detailed design, and include the garden layout with dimensions of the beds or plots, dimensions of the garden as a whole, the location of the water source, any potential buildings/structures (sheds, etc), nearby streets, buildings and trees. Please include information on all the factors considered in Step Two (garden type, location etc.). If structures (ie sheds) are being considered, please indicate if you have contacted the Building Department of the Municipality of Chatham-Kent.
5. Installation, labour and supply plan: should answer each of the following questions:
 - a. How and by whom will your garden be installed? For example, will a day be coordinated that all gardeners will be involved in this installation or has an outside group been approached to assist in this?
 - b. What is the source of materials such as lumber or soil? For example, “for raised beds the wood used will be cedar and the soil will be purchased from (name of) landscaping company”.
6. Maintenance Plan: provide a detailed maintenance plan, indicating how the garden will be cared for on a daily and seasonal basis, including watering, weeding, mulching, spring prepping and winterizing.
7. Submit the required documentation: include the permission letter from the landowner and insurance documentation or request for CKPHU coverage.

Submit the Paperwork

Be sure that all required documents are completely and accurately filled out to avoid a delay in processing. Mail or email required documentation by following step four. Once your written proposal is approved, you will be notified and the Chatham-Kent Community Garden Coordinator will monitor the installation process.

STEP FOUR: APPLICATION (Form 1)

Upon completion of Steps One and Two, submit the Application for Starting a New Community Garden, Garden Proposal and photos to:

Sharmini Balakrishnan, MPH, RD

Chatham-Kent Public Health Unit

435 Grand Ave W, PO Box 1136

Chatham, ON N7M 5L8

sharminib@chatham-kent.ca

- All application forms and proposals will be reviewed by the Chatham-Kent Public Health Unit and the Chatham-Kent Community Garden Committee at the next meeting date (note meetings are scheduled monthly).
- After the application is received by the Chatham-Kent Public Health Unit, the Chatham-Kent Community Garden committee may request additional information before final approval is made.
- The Garden's liaison will receive either an Application Approval Letter from the CKPHU directing you to proceed to Step 5 OR a request for more information. In some circumstances, the requested location may be denied.

STEP FIVE: LETTER OF COMMITMENT, CODE OF CONDUCT & LIABILITY WAIVERS (Forms 3A, 3B and 3C)

The most important aspects of successful community gardening are ongoing community support and communication between the community and the Chatham-Kent Community Garden Committee. Listed below are the responsibilities and guidelines the Community Garden Group must follow.

Before the garden is installed you must submit one Letter of Commitment [Form 3A] signed by the garden leader, Liability Waivers [Form 3B] and Code of Conduct [Form 3C] signed by every person who will be working in the garden.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**GARDEN/PLOT MAINTENANCE**

The Community Garden Group is entirely responsible for the maintenance of the Community Garden. Keep in mind that the space allocated is on private/public land and must always be actively maintained. The Group must follow the Maintenance plan, step 6 of your Written Proposal.

Pathways and areas between garden beds must be mulched and maintained by the Group.

Through the Chatham-Kent Community Garden Committee's independent observation, if the space is deemed unsightly, weedy or unkempt, the designated liaison will be given two separate warning notices via two different means (for example, phone call and email). If the problem continues thereafter, the agreement will be revoked and the Community Garden Group will be responsible for proposing a plan to restore the garden to its original form.

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. Irrigation systems are discouraged. Drip hoses, rain barrels or other water conserving devices are encouraged.

ORGANIC PRACTICES

For the health and safety of all gardeners, it is required that all gardening practices be organic. Only organic means of disease and pest control may be used, unless there are extenuating circumstances and prior approval was requested through the Chatham-Kent Community Garden Committee.

COMPOSTING

Composting of on-site garden waste is encouraged; do not bring material from outside sources. Avoid rodent-attracting foods such as meat, starches, cheese, and grease. Also avoid large or thorny branches and diseased plant material. Ensure that all composters are designed to keep rodents out and must be constructed with chicken wire at a minimum using appropriate composting containers is recommended.

PERMANENT STRUCTURES AND SIZEABLE LANDSCAPE MATERIAL

Permanent structures such as sheds, fences, walls, and or sizeable plant material such as trees must meet all municipal by-laws and should be erected only after approval from the Building Department of the Municipality of Chatham-Kent. Trellises are permitted and must be removed and stored by the Community Garden Group at the end of each gardening season.

GARDEN BORDERS

The garden boundaries must remain as submitted on the original design plans. Any proposed expansion requests must be submitted in writing and reviewed by Chatham-Kent Community Gardens Committee.

MONITORING THE COMMUNITY GARDEN

The community, especially the Community Gardens Committee Group members, shall continually monitor the Community Garden for quality control and good management practices. The Chatham-Kent Community Garden Coordinator and the Staff Support from the CKPHU will monitor the gardens periodically throughout the gardening season.

VANDALISM

Like drought, hail and freezing temperatures, theft and vandalism are among the assumed risks of community gardening. While the Chatham-Kent Community Gardens program continues to support efforts to reduce unnecessary vandalism or theft, we cannot guarantee that any garden is free from the risk.

MANAGEMENT

Frequent communication with the Chatham-Kent Community Gardens Coordinator and the CKPHU regarding management of the Community Garden is required. If problems occur with the operation or patrons of the Community Garden, staff support from the CKPHU should be informed and involved in the resolution of any problems.

NEW MEMBERS

The Community Gardens 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. Anyone interested in joining the Group is to be fairly considered.

LIABILITY

The Chatham-Kent Community Gardens Committee and the Chatham-Kent Public Health Unit are not responsible for the garden itself, or to anything in or pertaining to the garden. EACH MEMBER OF THE GROUP MUST SIGN A WAIVER OF LIABILITY [FORM 4B].

FUNDRAISING

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

SIGNAGE

Each Community Garden will be provided with a sign by the Chatham-Kent Community Gardens Committee/CKPHU.

FINISH: INSTALLATION OF THE GARDEN

After the Chatham-Kent Community Gardens Committee has approved your application it's time to install the garden.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHATHAM-KENT PUBLIC HEALTH UNIT:

The Chatham-Kent Public Health Unit will assist in the promotion of and help to raise awareness of a Community Gardens through the CK Food Policy Council website and other opportunities that are available. The Chatham-Kent Public Health Unit, with the support of the Chatham-Kent Community Gardens Committee will support the development of community gardens, in accordance with available resources by:

- a) Providing access to information on the development and operation of community gardens
- b) Helping develop user agreements with the owners of sites chosen for new gardens
- c) Helping develop a community-led environmental education program
- d) Assisting in the evaluation and approval of potential community garden sites;

- e) If approved by the Community Gardens Committee, may provide some funding for initial start-up costs. All requests for start-up funding will be submitted in writing and are subject to the approval of the Chatham-Kent Community Gardens Committee;
- f) Monitoring the Garden Sites periodically during the gardening season.

Appendices:

Chatham-Kent Community Garden Policy

Chatham-Kent Community Gardens Checklist

Chatham-Kent Community Gardens Application: Proposal for a New Garden

Chatham-Kent Community Gardens Site & Usage Survey

Chatham-Kent Community Gardens Letter of Commitment

Chatham-Kent Community Gardens Liability Waiver

Chatham-Kent Community Gardens Gardeners Code of Conduct