



City of Alexandria

Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

Community Garden Plot Regulations: 2023 Gardening Season

The City of Alexandria (“City”) provides public land for Community Gardens and offers individual garden plots for annual rental through the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities. Community gardening is one way that the City is helping to increase Alexandria residents’ access to locally grown, environmentally sustainable foods as part of the Healthy Food Alexandria initiative. Community gardens provide a location for residents to grow an array of fruits, vegetables, and flowers for their personal enjoyment.

This document, the Community Garden Plot Regulations (“Regulations”), details the terms and conditions for use of a community garden plot. Gardeners must comply with all laws and City Park rules and regulations, including those herein, and interact with cooperation and courtesy toward other Gardeners. Any questions or concerns about the following terms and conditions should be directed to the City Representative whose contact information is provided at the end of this document. **Organic gardening practices are required at all City Community Gardens.**

You must provide an email to the City representative and keep him/her informed of any change. Gardening information, plot application and registration, plot monitoring and citation letters, and all other official correspondence is conducted via email. **It is your responsibility to read City emails and respond accordingly, and to do so in a timely fashion.**

1. Season. The official gardening season runs from March 1 through November 30.

- October: Renewal applications are sent out by the City to current gardeners.
- November 30: Final deadline for non-opt out gardeners to complete volunteer hours
- November 30: Final deadline for returning gardeners to submit renewal applications
- November 30: Gardening season officially ends. End of Season Clean-up must be completed.
- December 15: Final deadline for returning gardeners to pay plot rental fee
- December - January: Plots are assigned to returning gardeners.
- January - February: Available plots are assigned to applicants on the Waiting List.
- March 1: Gardening season officially begins. Gardeners may access plots.

2. Fees. Rental permit fees are subject to the provisions of the City of Alexandria’s Resource Allocation and Cost Recovery Policy, are subject to change annually, and are guided by the Community Garden PARKnership Agreement signed by each garden’s Volunteer Advisory Board. For the 2023 gardening season, the Rental Permit Fees are:

| | | | | |
|---|--------------------|----------|-----------------------|----------|
| Rental Fees (Volunteer Opt In): | Resident Full Plot | \$ 60.00 | Nonresident Full Plot | \$120.00 |
| | Resident Half Plot | \$ 30.00 | Nonresident Half Plot | \$ 60.00 |
| Rental Fees (Volunteer Opt Out): | Resident Full Plot | \$120.00 | Nonresident Full Plot | \$240.00 |
| | Resident Half Plot | \$ 60.00 | Nonresident Half Plot | \$120.00 |

Additional Costs: Due to the seasonal nature of gardening and the complexities associated with record-keeping, registration, fee processing, and maintenance of the property, community garden plot fees are non-refundable.

3. City Resident Priority. City residents will be given priority with regard to the rental and assignment of garden plots. Non-residents (including those who have rented plots in the past) may not rent a plot until all City residents, including those renewing plot rentals and those on the Waiting List, have been given the opportunity to do so. Current non-resident Gardeners who have rented plots as non-residents continuously for five (5) or more years are exempt from this requirement and may continue to request to rent a plot if they comply with all other guidelines and remain in good standing.

4. Registration and Assignment Process. Only one (1) garden plot may be requested or assigned per household. Gardeners who comply with the City's Community Garden Plot Regulations and meet all qualifications for renewal will, under most circumstances and at the sole discretion of the City, be invited back the next year to renew the rental of the same plot. Failure of any Gardener to submit the required application and plot permit rental fee by the publicly announced deadline, or failure to provide all the information requested by the City, will result in the application being denied and the plot forfeited.

The renewal process begins in October with the sending of renewal invitations to current gardeners. The invitation includes an application form that must be completed and returned to the City by the deadline specified on the form. **Payment for a plot must be made after receiving a plot assignment confirmation email.** Payment may be made online using the City's WebTrac system or at the City's Recreation and Park Operations office. The address for Park Operations is located on page 6 of this document. Payment must be postmarked or paid online by the specified deadline. The permit to garden will not be valid until payment is made.

All Gardeners must provide the City with their current mailing address, physical (residence) address, e-mail address, and phone number on the application form. The City is not responsible for renewal invitations that are not received due to incorrect or out-of-date contact information, or that are not responded to by the announced deadlines. Gardeners should contact the City Representative if they have any questions about the plot rental/renewal process or the timing of communications.

Immediately following assignment of plots to returning Gardeners, the City will make available to those on the Waiting List all remaining unassigned plots.

5. Waiting List. All persons not currently renting a garden plot who are interested in obtaining a garden plot rental must fill out an official application form. The form is available at www.alexandriava.gov/CommunityGardens. The City (or designee) will maintain a Waiting List of prospective gardeners who have submitted completed applications. The Waiting List will be maintained in the order the completed applications are received by the City. When plots are available for assignment, the City will offer plots to those on the Waiting List in sequential order with priority given to city residents. Plots will be assigned to those who respond within the time period proscribed in the offer. Prospective Gardeners who fail to respond in the allotted time or who choose not to rent an available plot will be removed from the Waiting List. The City is not responsible for plot rental invitations that are not delivered due to incorrect or out-of-date contact information, or that are not opened or responded to promptly. **New Gardeners will be assigned their plot "as is" and are expected to clear abandoned and unkempt plots upon assignment within the first month of rental.**

6. Boundaries. Full plots are approximately 300 sq. ft. Half plots (Berms) are approximately 150 sq. ft. Gardeners shall not expand the limits of their plot, and they shall not intrude into adjacent plots or surrounding paths. The City retains the right to reassign plots, realign the layout of the Garden area

(including individual plots), modify the size, shape, and total area of any plot in any Community Garden, eliminate plots, revise this policy, or otherwise make changes to the Community Garden and its operation in order to meet the City's needs. Gardeners must adjust any fences or bordering materials to comply with the new boundary alignment.

7. Appearance and Access. The Community Garden is public parkland. The garden must be kept clean and reasonably free from weeds and other unsightly debris. Weeds taller than twelve (12) inches in the plots are a violation of City Code Section 5-9-2. Each Gardener is responsible not only for maintaining the appearance of his/her plot, but also for keeping the paths on all sides of the plot well-groomed and free of weeds (growing or pulled), stakes, rocks, tools, or other materials. Storage of any materials or trash on the paths is not permitted. Gardeners must keep plants contained within the plot boundaries and may not block paths, from underfoot to overhead, with plants or other materials that might impede access to other gardens in any way.

8. Volunteer Hours. As part of the PARKnership agreement signed by the volunteer advisory board at each community garden, volunteer hours will be required of all gardeners. Gardeners may choose to opt out of the volunteer requirement but will be required to pay the higher plot permit rental fee. Please contact your respective volunteer advisory board chairperson or volunteer coordinator for more information. Each advisory board determines the final volunteer hour requirement before the season begins March 1st. Please see the schedule below for approximate hours:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| • Chinquapin Organic Gardens | 4 hours per season |
| • Holmes Run Community Garden | 5 hours per season |

9. Management and Monitoring of all Community Garden Plots. The City owns and manages the Community Garden plots. At both community gardens, a Volunteer Advisory Board of gardeners assists with operation and management of the gardens. Gardeners at each City Community Garden will be called upon to serve on a monitoring team during the gardening season or to assist with other volunteer work at their Community Garden. The City periodically monitors all garden plots to ensure proper utilization and compliance with Community Garden Plot Policies and may act as described in Section 10.

10. Plot Monitoring and Violations. Plot monitoring for compliance with the Regulations by volunteer Gardeners and the City will occur periodically throughout the season.

Plot monitoring by volunteers organized by the Advisory Board and the City occurs five (5) times during the season, approximately as follows:

- End of April
- Mid-June
- Early Aug.
- Early Oct.
- After Nov. 30 (end of season)

Volunteer Gardener monitoring usually is held on Saturday mornings, with a Volunteer Advisory Board Member serving as team leader.

All plots rented by March 1st must show evidence of gardening by mid-April. During the season, plots must be worked, maintained and crops must be harvested in a timely manner. Permit holders for plots that are found to be in violation of the Regulations will be notified by the City at the contact email address provided during registration and given a reasonable time to correct the infraction. Failure to comply with the corrective measures within the timeframes specified may subject the Gardener to loss of the plot without reimbursement.

Gardeners unable to maintain their plot should request a release (in writing) from the City for the remainder of the growing season, or provide a temporary, substitute Gardener to maintain the plot for that season. The City reserves the right to re-assign a plot at any time.

11. Composted Leaf Mulch and Wood Chips. Gardeners organize their own deliveries. The Department of Transportation and Environmental Services has mulch at certain times of the year. Also, wood chips are procured from one of the City's tree care contractors. Contact your Advisory Board Chairperson for more information.

12. Disposal of Materials. All debris from the garden must be placed into the cans that are distributed throughout the Garden or the City Solid Waste crews will not remove it.

GREEN Cans (labeled "Yard Waste") These are only for weeds, grass, leaves, vegetables, dead plants, and similar organic matter. All these materials will be recycled/reused by T&ES with other, yard waste they collect in the City. Do not put plastic bags, soil or other trash in these containers. Please make an effort to remove all dirt from plant roots before putting these into the bins. Non-yard waste trash and dirt in these containers will cause them not to be emptied at all.

Diseased/blighted plants should not be discarded in the Yard Waste bins to be mulched or composted as the pathogens from those plants will be transferred back into the soil where the mulch/compost is applied. Place such items into a black trash bag and discard with other non-organic waste in the BLACK Trash cans.

BLACK cans (labeled "Trash") These are only for non-yard waste such as plastic pots, plastic bags, wood pieces, food waste, and similar items. Yard waste in these containers will cause the material to be rejected.

Any discarded rocks or soil should not be put in trash cans but should be placed in designated areas. These cans also should not be used for large items such as boards, metal fence posts, broken tomato cages, etc.; large items should be placed in the designated area behind the mulch bins in the lower garden. Contact your Volunteer Advisory Board Chairperson for location of designated areas for items not allowed in the trash.

13. Hives. Limited space is available at Chinquapin Organic Gardens for honeybee hives in the current designated location. Beekeepers must submit an application and obtain city approval before setting up their hive(s). Beekeepers will be held responsible for the installation, maintenance, and removal of their hive(s). Hives must have owner's contact information visible in case of emergency. Please contact the City Representative listed at the end of these regulations for more information or if you have any questions. Hives are subject to inspection by City staff. Violations may be issued if the hives are not maintained. The City of Alexandria reserves the right to remove hives if required information is not posted or hives become a safety issue.

14. Animals. Animals (except service dogs) are prohibited in garden plot areas. All animals (including service dogs) are required by law to be leashed. Owners/handlers must pick up after their animals.

15. Water. The water for the gardens will be turned on in April and turned off in November. Exact dates may vary in years with unusually mild or severe weather conditions or due to other factors. Although the City provides water throughout the Garden, irrigation of each plot and the proper use and storage of hoses is the responsibility of each Gardener.

16. Timely Harvest/Rodents/Mosquitoes. Crops must be harvested in a timely manner since rotting produce attracts rodents and other pests. Only rodent-resistant compost enclosures are permitted. Minimization of rodents, mosquitoes, and other pests is in everyone's best interest; please be alerted to steps you can take to reduce their presence.

17. Prohibited Practices.

- a. Chemical pesticides (including fungicides, herbicides weed killers, and insecticides) are prohibited. Only organic practices and materials may be used.
- b. The use of tobacco products including cigarettes, cigars, pipes, and chewing tobacco is prohibited in the garden area which includes the sitting & picnic area at the western end of the garden and the Dale May Memorial Grove. Mosaic virus disease common to tobacco can infect tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants, and can spread to plants in other gardens. In addition, tobacco smoke is harmful to human health.
- c. Illegal drug-producing plants are prohibited. Gardeners convicted of growing drug-producing plants will lose their plots without reimbursement.
- d. No planting shrubs or trees that grow to a medium or large size. Existing trees and shrubs must be pruned so they do not shadow neighboring plots, overhang the plot boundaries, or interfere with movement on the paths.
- e. No unsightly, tattered, garish, or obtrusive materials may be installed or suspended in the vicinity of any garden plot. This includes cans on wires, reflectors, lights and twirling pie plates.
- f. The use of carpeting, pressed board, arsenic-treated wood and other similar materials on paths or plots is prohibited.
- g. Avoid leaving personal property in the garden. Tools, rototillers, and other garden equipment pose a safety hazard and invite theft.
- h. Running water or sprinklers should not be left unattended.
- i. Birdfeeders and birdbaths are prohibited.
- j. No standing water, including in watering cans and on plastic weed barriers, is allowed.
- k. Garden plots are for individual use only and must not be used for business or commercial purposes. Produce from the gardens is for personal use and should not be sold or otherwise used for or in commercial activity.

18. Trellises and Fencing. Trellises, plant-support structures, fencing, and all other non-plant structures in the plots, must be constructed of lightweight materials that are self-supporting and do not lean into or obstruct adjacent paths or neighboring plots. Fences must be constructed of materials with uniform appearance and height. Materials recommended are sturdy mesh plastic or wire and metal fencing posts. Bright colors such as orange or lime green are not allowed. Fencing material must not block paths or create a tripping or other hazard. All fencing must be removable, and no permanent structure may be built in any garden plot. No structure including fencing or fence posts shall be taller than seventy-two (72) inches. Any annual climbing plants on trellises or fences shall be removed at the end of the garden season. If there are questions, Garden Advisory Board members should be consulted prior to installation.

19. Vandalism/Damage/Theft. Report incidents of vandalism, tampering with plots without permission, theft of produce, or any other property destruction immediately to the Alexandria Police Department (Non-emergency number is 703-746-4444). Be sure to include a description of any person(s) and/or vehicle, and the license plate number, when possible. In addition, report the incident to the City Representative listed at the end of these Plot Policies.

20. Liability. By obtaining a plot rental permit within a City of Alexandria community garden, Gardeners agree to hold harmless the City of Alexandria and the Advisory Board at each garden, for any and all liability which may be attributed to the Gardener, or an authorized third party, as a result of utilizing a City garden plot.

21. End of Season Clean Up. The gardening season officially ends November 30. Dead plants, crop remains, and other debris must be removed by that date. Stakes, tomato cages, and other plant supporting structures must be removed from the ground. Gardeners are encouraged to take these materials

home but those who expect to return the following year may leave stakes and other materials stacked neatly in the center of the plot away from paths. Cold frames, fencing, and trellises needed to support certain perennial plants may be left in place if approved by the City in writing. Rodent-resistant compost enclosures also may remain in the plots of Gardeners who expect to return the following year. Hoses must be neatly coiled and removed from the paths.

Contact Information:

City of Alexandria RPCA Representative:

Maureen Sturgill, CPRP
Acting Division Chief
Park Operations, Dept. of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
City of Alexandria
2900-A Business Center Drive
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
Office: 703.746.5428
Cell: 571.255.0516
RPCAGardens@alexandriava.gov, or maureen.sturgill@alexandriava.gov

Chinquapin Organic Gardens:

Chairperson: Richard Dorrier, richard.dorrier@gmail.com
Vice Chairperson: Anne Saul (annesaul@comcast.net)
Volunteer Coordinators: Anne Saul (annesaul@comcast.net) and Richard Dorrier (richard.dorrier@gmail.com)
Information & Updates: www.chinquapingardens.org , Facebook: Chinquapin Organic Gardens
Volunteer Advisory Board Meeting: Third Tuesday of the month, 7 pm, Mount Vernon Rec Center (date and time may change) currently via ZOOM

Holmes Run Community Garden:

Chairperson: Jennifer Lee, jfl0909@hotmail.com
Vice Chairperson: Derek Walker, cderekwalker@gmail.com
Barb Carroll: barbcarroll321@gmail.com

Information & Updates: www.holmesrungarden.weebly.com, Facebook Group: Holmes Run Community Gardens
Gardens Volunteer Advisory Board Meeting: Second Tuesday of the month, 6 pm, via ZOOM

Dale Street Community Garden:

Garden Manager: Lea Blubaugh, dalestgarden@gmail.com
Garden Secretary: Kelly Haisfield, dalestgarden@gmail.com

Information & Updates: Dale St is setting up a website and is self-managing. The Garden Board oversees the waiting list, registration, and daily management of the community garden. Please contact the Garden Manager for more information.