

City of Alexandria
Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
Community Garden Plot Policies: 2015 Gardening Season

The City of Alexandria (“City”) provides land for Community Gardens on City property 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 Policies (“Plot Policies”), 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; please visit the following website, www.chinquapingardens.org for information regarding organic gardening practices.

1. Season. The official gardening season runs from March 1 through November 30. The water for the gardens will be turned on about April 15 and turned off about November 15. These dates may vary in years with unusually mild or severe weather conditions or due to other factors.

Typically, important dates are as follows:

- Late January/early February: Residents may apply for plots for the upcoming growing season.
- Mid-Late February: Plots are assigned.
- March 1: Gardening season begins.
- Mid April: All plots must show evidence of gardening or they may be reassigned.
- Nov. 30: Gardening season ends.

2. Fees. Rental permit fees are subject to the provisions of the City of Alexandria’s Resource Allocation and Cost Recovery Policy and are subject to change annually by the City. For the 2015 gardening season, the Rental Permit Fees are:

- Resident: Full Plot \$75
- Resident: Half Plot \$50
- Non-resident: Full Plot \$150
- Non-resident: Half Plot \$100

3. City Resident Priority. City residents will be given preference over non-residents 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 Policies 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 rental of the same plot. Under limited circumstances, the City may ask a Gardener to maintain, or assist with the maintenance of, more than one plot on a temporary basis.

The renewal process usually begins early February with the sending of renewal invitations to Gardeners. The invitation will include an application form that must be completed and returned to the City with appropriate payment by the deadline specified on the form. All Gardeners must provide the City with their current mailing address, physical (residence) address, e-mail address, and phone number on the application form. Failure to respond by the deadline may result in re-assignment of a Gardener's plot. The City is not responsible for renewal invitations that are not delivered due to incorrect or out-of-date contact information.

Immediately following assignment of plots to returning gardeners, the City will make available to those on the Waiting List all remaining unassigned plots. Available plots will include any plots not renewed for the current year and plots forfeited by failure to comply with the Community Garden Plot Policies. Forfeited plots will be re-assigned without reimbursement. Issuance of new rental permits and assignment of available plots usually occurs in March.

5. Waiting List. All persons not currently renting a garden plot who are interested in obtaining a garden plot rental must fill out completely an official application form, including the applicant's permanent residence address among other information. (The form is available at www.alexandriava.gov/CommunityGardens and on the Chinquapin Gardens website at www.chinquapingardens.org). The City 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, with earlier applications having priority. The City will offer plots to those on the Waiting List in sequential order and 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. Plots will be offered to non-residents only when there are no City residents on the Waiting List who wish to obtain a plot permit.

The City Representative will update the Waiting List annually by sending a notice to everyone on the list, requiring each person to verify his or her continued interest in remaining on the Waiting List and to update the information contained in his or her application form. Those who respond to the notice within the time set forth in the notice

will maintain their position on the Waiting List. Those who fail to respond within the time set forth in the notice will be removed from the Waiting List.

6. Boundaries. Full-size plots are approximately 15 x 20 feet. Half-size plots are approximately 10 x 15 feet. Gardeners shall not expand the limits of their plot beyond these size limits. 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. As the City takes steps to straighten, level, and improve the safety of the paths in the gardens, the boundaries of some plots will be realigned. 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. Management and Monitoring of all Community Garden Plots. The City owns and manages the Community Garden plots. At Chinquapin Gardens, an advisory board of gardeners assists with operation and management of the gardens, particularly by performing inspections of the plots for compliance with the Community Garden Plot Policies. Gardeners at Holmes Run may find it desirable to form an Advisory Board for their Community Garden in order to cooperatively manage the Community Garden with the City. Gardeners at each City Community Garden may 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 will monitor all garden plots to ensure proper utilization and compliance with Community Garden Plot Policies, and may take action as described in Section 9.

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

At Chinquapin Gardens, plot monitoring by volunteers organized by the Advisory Board and the City will occur five (5) times during the season as follows:

- Mid April
- Early June
- Mid July
- Early September
- After Nov. 30 (end of season)

Volunteer Gardener monitoring usually is held on Saturday mornings, with an Advisory Board Member serving as team leader. Gardeners are encouraged to volunteer to

assist with the monitoring, and can indicate that preference on the plot registration form submitted at the beginning of the season.

All plots must show evidence of gardening by mid-April. This does not mean the plot has to be fully dug and planted, but it must be evident that the plot is being worked. During the season, plots must be worked and maintained and crops must be harvested in a timely manner. Permit holders for plots that are found to be in violation of the Plot Policies will be notified by the City at the contact address provided during registration and given a reasonable time to correct the infraction. Failure to comply with the corrective measures in the timeframes specified may subject the Gardener to loss of the plot without reimbursement. Gardeners unable to maintain their plots should release them in writing to 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.

10. Trash. All trash must be placed in the trash cans or bagged and placed beside the cans or the City trash crews will not remove it. Place trash bags where they will not block access to pathways or to other plots, particularly those along the road at Chinquapin Gardens. Any discarded rocks should not be put in trash cans, but should be placed in designated rock piles. At Chinquapin, this is located near the beehive area on the north side of the lower garden area. At Holmes Run, rocks should be placed next to (not in) the trash cans so they can be identified and removed by City staff.

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

12. Timely Harvest/Rodents/Mosquitoes. Crops must be harvested as they mature since rotting produce attracts rodents and other pests. Only rodent-resistant compost enclosures are permitted. Birdbaths are prohibited since they provide standing water that attracts mosquitoes. Ensure that faucets are turned off, watering cans are emptied, and puddles on plastic weed barriers are swept clear to reduce mosquito infestation. Minimization of rodents, mosquitoes, and other pests is in everyone's best interest; please be alert to steps you can take to reduce their presence.

13. 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. Mosaic virus disease common to tobacco can infect tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants, and can spread to plants in other gardens.
- c. Illegal drug-producing plants are prohibited. Gardeners convicted of growing drug-producing plants will lose their plots without reimbursement.
- d. No plant-supporting structure may be taller than 72 inches or extend beyond the limits of the garden plot.
- e. Planting large shrubs or trees which grow to a size that impacts other

- gardeners or their plots is prohibited. 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.
- f. 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, twirling pie plates.
 - g. The use of carpeting, pressed board, most pressure-treated wood and other similar materials on paths or plots is prohibited. Some of these materials might provide cover for rodents and possibly present a hazard to other Gardeners navigating the paths. Carpeting, pressed board and some pressure-treated wood often contain hazardous chemicals that may leach into the soil as they deteriorate. Lumber treated with arsenic compounds should not be used.
 - h. Avoid leaving personal property in the garden. Tools, roto-tillers, and other garden equipment pose a safety hazard and invite theft.
 - i. Running water or sprinklers should not be left unattended.
 - j. Birdfeeders and birdbaths are prohibited.
 - k. No standing water, including in watering cans and on plastic weed barriers, is allowed.
 - l. 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.

14. Trellises and Fencing. Trellises, plant-support structures, fencing, and all other non-plant structures in the plots, should be constructed of lightweight materials that are self-supporting and do not lean into or obstruct adjacent paths or neighboring plots. Fences should be constructed of materials with uniform appearance and height. Fencing material must not block paths or create a trip or other hazard. The height of fences is limited to 48 inches. No permanent structure may be built in any garden plot. No structure shall be taller than seventy-two (72) inches. The City must approve any variation from these standards in writing. Existing fences or garden structures in violation of these Policies must be removed or modified by the Gardener, or they will be removed by the City. See Section 17 below for requirements associated with removal of these items at the end of the gardening season.

15. 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.

16. 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 Chinquapin Organic Gardens Advisory Board at Chinquapin Gardens, 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.

17. 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, trellises, 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.

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