

# Boise Parks and Recreation Community Garden Manual



## INTRODUCTION

Boise City recognizes Community Gardens as a valuable recreational activity that contribute to community development, environmental awareness, and positive social interaction, and that support increased local food production and food security. To encourage the development and maintenance of Community Gardens, Boise City's Department of Parks and Recreation will collaborate with qualified Garden Groups to develop Community Gardens on select City-owned property.

The Community Garden program offered by the Boise City Parks and Recreation Department serves to support the long-term sustainability of your Community Garden by offering technical support, education, and networking opportunities, and by promoting Community Garden best practices. The management and care of your Community Garden remains with you and the members of your Garden Group.

The purpose of this Community Garden Manual is to make clear the expectations that are involved with starting and managing a Community Garden on property owned or managed by the Boise City Parks and Recreation Department. This Manual describes in detail the tasks and duties of your Garden Group, maintenance and management expectations, and how to plan and build your new Community Garden.

## DEFINITIONS

- **Community Garden**

A Boise Parks and Recreation Community Garden is defined as a defined area of Boise City-owned or managed real property that is gardened by a Qualified Entity or Entities to produce any combination of fruit, vegetables, and ornamental flowers for the personal use of the participants of the Qualified Entity.

- **Qualified Entity ("QE")**

*Becoming a registered community Garden Group (QE) is required to maintain a garden on park property.*

A Qualified Entity is a group of two (2) or more people belonging to, or affiliated with, a non-profit organization or registered neighborhood association within Boise City ("City").

- **Mini Park**

A Mini Park is less than 2 acres in size and is considered a single purpose property that offers a limited range of passive or active recreational uses.

- **Neighborhood Park**

A Neighborhood Park serves people living within a ½ mile radius and is 5 to 10 acres in size. Neighborhood Parks are often located adjacent to or near public school properties. Amenities at Neighborhood Parks may include open turf areas, trees, paved walking paths, playgrounds, sitting areas, restroom facilities and passive open space.

- **Boise Urban Garden School**

Boise Urban Garden School (BUGS) is a program of the City of Boise, Parks and Recreation Department. Boise Urban Garden School staff members are employees of the Boise Parks and Recreation department. Members of the BUGS staff will act as the City representative and liaison for each community Garden Group (QE) to the larger Parks and Recreation department.

## **STARTING A NEW COMMUNITY GARDEN**

Outlined below is a step by step process for starting a new Community Garden. BUGS staff members are happy to guide you through this process and answer any questions you may have along the way. It can take anywhere from 2 - 6 months to get your Community Garden up and running, depending in large part on the location you've selected and the time of year you wish to begin. We welcome your application anytime, and recommend fall as the best time for your group to get started planning.

### **Step 1: Forming a Garden Group (Qualified Entity)**

Residents of Boise who would like to develop a Community Garden at a Mini Park or Neighborhood Park owned or managed by the Boise City Parks and Recreation Department are required to organize themselves as an official Garden Group (Qualified Entity, or "QE"). As a public agency, Boise City policy requires inclusiveness, and each Community Garden must have a membership policy that it is open and available to any resident of the city of Boise City, pursuant to Boise City Code Chapter 6-02.

Your Garden Group (QE) is responsible for the total care of your Community Garden, both financially and in garden maintenance and management. Each Garden Group must nominate a garden manager, who will serve as the Garden Group's liaison to the BUGS staff.

### **Step 2: Identify the Proposed Garden Location**

The Boise City Parks and Recreation Department highly encourages community gardening on appropriate parks properties. When seeking a space to garden in a Mini or Neighborhood Park, look for underutilized sections or areas within the park that will not interfere with park aesthetics or existing uses. Please keep in mind that not all Mini or Neighborhood Parks are well suited for a Community Garden. BUGS staff will guide you through the site selection process.

To be eligible for selection as a Community Garden site, the proposed property shall:

- Be located at a Mini or Neighborhood Park location.
- Have sufficient parking capacity to accommodate community gardeners and park visitors.
- Have an adequate irrigation system currently installed, or have capacity for the installation of an irrigation system.
- Have sufficient population density surrounding the potential Community Garden location to support minimum Community Garden participation.

Additionally, when you have identified a Mini or Neighborhood Park that you think could be well suited for your Community Garden, please consider:

- Sun exposure and shade from buildings, trees, etc. Full sun is best. Also, no existing healthy trees will be removed to accommodate a Community Garden.
- Is it within a reasonable distance of existing restroom facilities and parking?
- Community Gardens should be situated in areas that will NOT require a fence.

### **Step 3: Submit your Initial Application**

Once you have identified a location and space that you feel may be suitable for your Community Garden, submit your "Initial Application for a New Community Garden" (available at the Boise Parks and Recreation website) along with the required documentation and a letter of support from your partner non-profit organization or registered Neighborhood Association to: [BUGS@cityofboise.org](mailto:BUGS@cityofboise.org).

After your application is received by the BUGS staff, it will be reviewed as soon as possible. Your Garden Group's liaison will then receive either an Application Approval Letter from BUGS directing you to proceed to Step 4 or a request for more information. In some circumstances, the requested location may be denied. If the requested location is denied, a member of the BUGS staff will work with your Garden Group (QE) to locate a more suitable location.

#### **Step 4: Financial Support**

It is vital to create a plan for funding the establishment and upkeep of your Community Garden. Your Garden Group will need to fund the entire cost of building the new Community Garden, and will be required to provide ongoing funding for the annual upkeep and maintenance of the Community Garden.

- Grants may be available through Boise City's Neighborhood Reinvestment Grant Program to help fund the establishment of your Community Garden. More information is available at:  
<http://pds.cityofboise.org/planning/comp/neighborhood/neighborhood-reinvestment/grants>
- Each Community Garden may establish participant fees to help fund the costs of the garden's operations. Costs of operation may include those for watering, maintaining, and improving the Community Garden, including those for the purchase of supplies and amenities for the Community Garden. In no event shall any Garden Group's members share of the costs of operation be excessive or serve to exclude or deter a member of the community from participating in the Community Garden.
- Other funding sources may include: Fundraising events, grants from other foundations or programs in our community, and local business sponsorship.
- The American Community Garden Association works to create new resources for Community Gardens, coordinates an annual conference, and has online resources and informative lists covering all topics involving community gardens: [www.communitygarden.org](http://www.communitygarden.org)
- The National Gardening Association promotes the environment, is a resource for plant information, has a free newsletter, and provides links for gardeners. Periodically, they provide information about grants and other funding resources that may be available: [www.garden.org](http://www.garden.org)

#### **Step 5: Community Support**

To build a new Community Garden at an existing park site will require a change to the park's Master Plan. This may require you to obtain community consent and support for approval of the proposed Community Garden site. A member of the BUGS staff will work with your Garden Group (QE) to understand and implement this process.

The process to change or update a current park's Master Plan includes the following steps:

- 1) Notify all property owners within ½ mile of the neighborhood park of a public meeting to seek input on the needs of the neighbors.
- 2) Hold a public meeting where neighbors are given the opportunity to voice their opinions on what deficiencies exist in the neighborhood that could be remedied with parks. Neighbors are given information on the type of park, who the park is intended to serve, and what amenities or activities can be planned in the park. Public input is recorded and serves as the foundation for the design of the park and the addition of the proposed Community Garden.
- 3) Design staff compiles input from neighbors and updates the Master Plan concepts that address the implementation of a new Community Garden. These concepts are sent to meeting attendees and posted on the Boise City Parks and Recreation website to obtain input from neighbors on the preferred concept.

- 4) Design staff presents the updated Master Plan to the Parks and Recreation Commission for approval during a public meeting, in which residents to offer testimony supporting or opposing the Master Plan updates.
- 5) Any significant changes or amendments to the updated Master Plan must then go through the same neighborhood outreach process, and neighbors can comment on the proposed change.

#### **Step 6: Submit your Final Proposal**

After you have received initial approval for the proposed location of your Community Garden and have gained the necessary community and financial support, you will need to submit your “Final Application for a Community Garden” (available at the Boise Parks and Recreation website) along with the required documentation to: BUGS@cityofboise.org. The “Final Application for a Community Garden” is a more detailed description of your Community Garden plans that the Boise Parks and Recreation and the BUGS staff will use to support your final design and installation process.

#### **LIABILITY AGREEMENT AND LIABILITY INSURANCE**

Working with a member of the BUGS staff, each Garden Group must enter into a License Agreement with Boise City, through its Department of Parks & Recreation, before installation of the Community Garden.

Additionally, the Garden Group (QE) must provide proof of liability insurance, as outlined in the License Agreement. Grant funds (up to \$500.00) may be available through the City of Boise to cover the cost of premiums for the required liability insurance. To access these grant funds, your Garden Group (QE) must contact its neighborhood association and ask it to apply for Neighborhood Reinvestment Program (NRP) funds to cover the cost of the liability insurance. Garden Groups are encouraged to contact their neighborhood association in June or July of each year to allow sufficient time for the grant application process. NRP applications must be submitted by November 1st of each year. Contact information for each of the City’s registered neighborhood associations can be accessed at the following website:

<http://pds.cityofboise.org/planning/comp/neighborhood/associations/>.

As a general guideline, insurance and indemnification requirements may be as follows:

- The Licensee shall indemnify and save and hold harmless the Licensor from and for any and all losses, claims, actions, judgments for damages, or injury to persons or property and losses and expenses caused or incurred by the Licensee, its servants, agents employees, guests, and business invitees, and not caused by or arising out of the tortious conduct of Licensor or its employees.
- The Licensee shall maintain, and agrees that it will maintain throughout the term of the License Agreement, liability insurance in the minimum amount of \$500,000. Additionally, the Boise City must be named an additional insured.

#### **REGISTRATION ACCEPTANCE**

IMPORTANT: Your Garden Group (QE) is required to submit a Letter of Commitment each year. Within this Letter of Commitment, your Garden Group (QE) needs to provide a short progress report on your Community Garden, including current membership details, the annual budget for your Community Garden, and 3-4 recent photos of your Community Garden space. The Letter of Commitment is due each year by November 1<sup>st</sup>.

#### **GARDEN ADMINISTRATION**

The most important aspects of a successful Community Garden are ongoing community support and communication between the Garden Group (QE) and BUGS staff. Listed below are the responsibilities and guidelines the Garden Group (QE) must follow:

- **Management**

The BUGS staff will help your Garden Group (QE) start your garden, and will help you sustain a positive and productive presence in the park in which your Community Garden is located. Maintaining communication with members of the BUGS staff regarding management of the Community Garden is expected. Information about changes in leadership, events, etc. that are hosted in your Community Garden should be shared with the BUGS staff. In the event the garden leader needs to step down, he or she is responsible for recruiting and facilitating new garden leadership.

The Garden Group (QE) shall inform new members of the Community Garden of the rules and regulations of your garden, stressing the importance of ongoing maintenance. Participation in a Community Garden shall be open and available to any resident of the city of Boise City, pursuant to Boise City Code § 6-02.

If problems occur with the operation or patrons of the Community Garden, a member of the BUGS staff should be informed and, if necessary, involved in the resolution of any problems.

- **Garden Rules and Bylaws**

Garden rules/bylaws are required for each Community Garden. These rules/bylaws are the best way to ensure that each community gardener understands the operations of the Community Garden and what is expected of each gardener. The rules/bylaws are established by the individual Garden Groups (QE), and must be submitted as an attachment with your “Final Application for a Community Garden.”

Bylaws should address the following topics:

- 1) Mission Statement.
- 2) Membership policies.
- 3) Garden plot fees and assignments.
- 4) Watering, weeding, and harvesting rules and schedules.
- 5) Organic gardening policies.
- 6) End of season clean up policies.
- 7) General rules and policies.
- 8) Conflict resolution policies.
- 9) Meeting schedules.
- 10) Garden Committee rules and responsibilities.
- 11) Financial oversight policies.

- **Community Garden Maintenance**

The Garden Group is entirely responsible for the maintenance of the Community Garden and for the organization and management of the Garden Group members. The garden space allocated is located on public park land and must be actively maintained.

The Garden Group must provide continuous clean-up of all debris and trash caused or created by the Garden Group, its members, and its guests in the area and immediately adjacent to the Community Garden. No debris, organic or otherwise, shall be stored outside the garden area. Pathways and areas between garden beds must be relatively weed free, mulched, and maintained by the Group. Staff from Boise Parks and Recreation and BUGS will not do any maintenance within the Community Garden itself.

The Garden Group must maintain its Community Garden and all related equipment, and pay for any special service maintenance resulting from operation of the garden, including the upkeep of irrigation, soil amenities, pathways, and fencing.

The Garden Group (QE) must also pay for all damages to the garden site caused by group members, garden equipment, garden members, and guests that is not a result of normal wear and tear that would have occurred had the garden not been in operation in the park.

Through BUGS' independent observation, if the space is deemed unsightly, weedy, or otherwise neglected, the designated liaison will get two separate warning notices. If the problem continues thereafter, the Garden Group's agreement may be terminated.

The Garden Group must follow the Maintenance Plan (see Step 4 of your "Final Application for a New Community Garden"). All Community Garden crops and annual ornamentals are expected to be cleaned up and put to bed by late fall each year. It is up to the discretion of the individual Garden Groups to determine the date by which crops must be cleaned up and put to bed, subject to direction from BUGS staff. A tidy plot with perennials is acceptable to winter over in the garden, but is not required - the planting of perennial crops is also left to the discretion of each Garden Group.

- **Water**

Please conserve water! The water supply is ONLY to be used by gardeners caring for their assigned areas. Drip hoses or other water conserving devices are encouraged, and all watering systems are under the complete care of the Garden Group. Neither Boise Parks and Recreation nor the BUGS program is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the garden irrigation system.

- **Organic Garden Practices**

In keeping with the Boise Parks and Recreation Department's commitment to sustainability, and for the health and safety of all park patrons, it is required that all gardening practices, including disease and pest control, follow organic gardening methods. No unapproved pesticides, herbicides, or fertilizers shall be used in any Community Garden.

Boise city compost is approved for use and available for free delivery through the Community Giveback Program: <https://www.cityofboise.org/departments/public-works/curb-it/compost/#getfreecompost>

- **Soil and Composting**

It is the responsibility of the Garden Group to ensure that the soil used in its Community Garden is clean and safe. Garden Groups planting and caring for vegetables should take care to test the soil regularly to ensure it is safe for edible crops.

Composting of on-site garden waste is encouraged. Please do not bring material from outside sources. Avoid rodent-attracting foods such as meat, starches, and cheese. Also avoid large or thorny branches and diseased plant material. To obtain information on proper composting methods, please contact a member of the BUGS staff for a list of resources.

- **Permanent Structures and Sizeable Landscape Material**

Permanent structures such as fences, walls, greenhouses, garden sheds, and sizeable plant material such as trees are allowed, but must be expressly agreed upon in writing by a member of the BUGS staff prior to being installed in a Community Garden. Small trellises are permitted, but must be removed and stored by the Garden Group at the end of each garden season.

- **Bees and Livestock**

In June of 2012, Boise City adopted the Urban Farm Ordinance (Ordinance No. 6849) to provide zoning for areas in which Beekeeping, Livestock (commercial and residential), and Urban Farms are allowed. Also, Boise Parks

and Recreation has the right and responsibility to regulate the use of its facilities and sites. At times, this may include restricting or prohibiting uses that would otherwise be allowed by the zoning ordinance. Most park sites are not suitable for beekeeping and livestock activities, and any such activities must be expressly agreed upon in writing by a member of the BUGS staff before incorporating bees or livestock into Community Garden spaces.

- **Garden Borders**

The boundaries of each Community Garden must remain as submitted on the original design plans. Any proposed modification or expansion requests must be approved in writing by the Boise City Parks and Recreation Department BEFORE any changes are made. Please contact the BUGS staff for further guidance and instructions.

- **Vandalism**

Like drought, hail, and freezing temperatures, theft and vandalism are among the assumed risks of gardening in the park. All Community Gardens located within a Boise City park are and will continue to be public property. While Boise Parks and Recreation will support efforts to reduce unnecessary vandalism or theft, there obviously is no guarantee that any Community Garden will be free from the risk.

The construction of obstructive features, such as fencing and locking gates, is discouraged; however, in extreme cases of vandalism, fencing options will be considered. The installation of fencing must be expressly agreed upon in writing by a member of the BUGS staff in advance of installation, and all costs of constructing, installing, and maintaining the fence will be the responsibility of the Garden Group.

Your Garden Group (QE) may install informational signs at your garden, and include vandalism warnings to discourage potential vandals.

- **Signage**

The Community Garden shall pay for the design, construction, and installation of any and all signs indicating the garden's purpose; the design and locations of which shall be subject to prior written approval from the Parks and Recreation Department. No Garden Group member shall place any unapproved sign or item within any Community Garden, including within their individual garden plot.

- **Vehicles**

Park patrons are permitted to use motorized vehicles within a park ONLY on designated roadways, driveways and parking facilities. The parking or driving of motorized vehicles by any park patron on walkways, restricted-access drives, lawn areas, under trees, or within landscaped areas is strictly forbidden. Garden Group members are not exempt from the requirements and restrictions contained in Boise City Code Chapter 13-03.

- **Liability**

Neither the Boise City Parks and Recreation Department nor the BUGS program will be responsible for any Community Garden or anything in or pertaining to the Community Garden. Each Community Garden is required to release Boise City of its liability, and hold Boise City harmless against liability. Each Garden Group member must also agree to and sign a liability release.

## **GARDEN TERMINATION**

Each Community Garden term shall last for an initial term of three (3) years, renewable for two (2) additional terms of three (3) years each, unless earlier terminated by the Garden Group (QE) or Boise Parks and Recreation.

If the Garden Group decides to no longer maintain its Community Garden, the designated liaison for the Garden Group (QE) must immediately notify the Boise City Parks and Recreation Department. The Garden Group (QE) may terminate

the License Agreement without cause by providing a member of the BUGS staff thirty (30) days written notice. The Garden Group (QE) will be responsible for proposing a plan to restore the former Community Garden to the condition in which it existed prior to creation of the Community Garden, to the satisfaction of Boise Parks and Recreation, or to help find a suitable Garden Group (QE) to assume management of the Community Garden.

While it is very unlikely to happen, the Boise City Parks and Recreation Department reserves the right to remove any Community Garden at any time. Department staff will make every effort to provide notification prior to removal.

### **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

A Boise Parks and Recreation representative may attend neighborhood association and/or garden committee meetings to review the successes or challenges experienced by the Community Gardeners. Boise Parks and Recreation will take appropriate action based on that assessment. Failure by the Community Gardeners to provide the required operational and financial support will result in removal of that Community Garden.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES OF BOISE PARKS AND RECREATION**

Boise Parks and Recreation crews will review your garden space to ensure that park boundaries are respected and to determine where their maintenance responsibilities adjoin yours. Maintenance of plumbing features, when necessary, will remain the joint responsibility of Boise Parks and Recreation, and the individual Garden Groups.

BUGS staff members are your primary contacts for all Community Garden -related questions. BUGS staff will coordinate with Boise Parks and Recreation staff to promote the success of your Community Garden by:

- Making information publicly available on the development and operation of Community Gardens.
- Assisting Garden Groups (QEs) to evaluate and determine appropriate and eligible properties that are suitable for the development of a Community Garden.
- Providing limited staff support for the design and development of Community Gardens.
- Drafting, negotiating, and approving User Agreements for each Community Garden.
- Using Boise City websites, social media, and publications to identify, promote, and raise public awareness of existing Community Gardens.
- Assisting Garden Group (QE) members who are affiliated with recognized Neighborhood Associations in applying for neighborhood reinvestment grant funds to pay general liability insurance premiums for their Community Garden.
- Monitoring compliance with Garden Group (QE) and Boise City User Agreements.

Thank you for your interest in starting a new Community Garden on a Boise Parks and Recreation park site. Please contact a member of the BUGS staff if you have any questions.

Boise Urban Garden School  
Comba Park  
2995 N. Five Mile Road  
Boise, Idaho 83713  
208-972-8630  
[BUGS@cityofboise.org](mailto:BUGS@cityofboise.org)