

TO: PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

FROM: DAREN ANDERSON **DEPARTMENT: COMMUNITY SERVICES**

DATE: OCTOBER 22, 2019

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY GARDEN PROGRAM GUIDELINES

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) review and comment on the Community Garden Guidelines (Attachment A).

BACKGROUND

Community Services Department began managing the Community Garden Program in the 1970s. The program currently supports five different garden locations. Three of the gardens (Rinconada, Johnson, and Eleanor Pardee) on the north side and two gardens (Arastradero and Ventura) on the south side of Palo Alto, consisting of a total of 408 garden plots. The program has volunteer garden liaisons at each site to assist the Community Garden Coordinator with ensuring the rules of the garden are adhered to by the plot renters. All existing and new gardeners receive a license and the guidelines at the beginning of each year.

The program has had many challenges most in part due to the diversity gardening techniques and practices. The Community Garden Guidelines will help ensure that the gardeners have a safe, attractive, and well-maintained place to garden.

DISCUSSION

On September 24, 2019, the Parks and Recreation Commission voted unanimously to recommend that Council adopt the revised Park and Open Space Regulations as proposed by staff and the Commission Ad Hoc Committee. Regulation R1-40, which pertains to the Community Garden Program, was edited to remove the community garden regulations that merely provided administrative details of the garden program. Regulation R1-40 was also edited to allow the Director of Community Services to promulgate guidelines for the registration and use of the community gardens.

The Ad Hoc Committee and staff created a new document, the Community Garden Guidelines, which incorporates the administrative details of the community garden program along with responsibilities of the program participants that are identified in the garden licensing agreement.

The Community Garden Guidelines consist largely of existing practices and policies. However, the Ad Hoc Committee and staff identified opportunities to add new policies and procedures aimed at enhancing the community garden program. New guidelines were added to address issues related to communication, the acceptable use of trellises, the use of fences and gates, appropriate materials used in gardens, appropriate garden behavior, hours of operation, and violations that warrant termination of a gardener's license.

New Guidelines

The following new guidelines listed under section “III. Plot Allocation, Registration and Fees” were added to help staff better communicate with gardeners and ensure that gardeners understand expectations and responsibilities regarding planting and maintenance of their plots:

III Plot Allocation, Registration and Fees

- 5. The Primary Gardener may choose to have a garden helper noted on the registration to help maintain the plot in the gardener’s absence due to family emergency, illness, vacation, or other unforeseen circumstances.*
- 6. If a non-speaking English gardener, please provide a contact name, email and phone number for interpretation purposes.*
- 7. The person whose signature appears as the Primary Gardener on the License is ultimately responsible for the maintenance of the entire plot and for payment of all fees and charges.*
- 15. New gardeners must begin gardening within two weeks of the date they are assigned their plot, or their license becomes void.*
- 16. New gardeners will be required to take a new garden orientation class within the first month of acquiring a plot scheduled by garden liaison per location.*

The following new guidelines listed under section “IV. Maintenance” were added to address issues with garden hoses being stored inappropriately; provide clarification on the appropriate height of trellises; and to ensure that trellises not being used are removed:

IV Maintenance

B. Gardeners Responsibility

- 7. No hoses or other items should block any pathways. Hoses should not be pulled across or placed on neighboring plots.*
- 8. All PVC pipe used for potable water or irrigation must be appropriately NSF rated.*
- 9. No trellis or similar may be more than 7ft high starting from the ground up and must not cause shade on any neighboring plot.*
- 10. Any trellis or other structure will only be allowed if it is functional, orderly, safe, in use and contributes to the community garden overall visual continuity. Any trellis or structure not in use for 3 months out of a 12-month period must be removed.*
- 11. City recommends using natural materials such as unpainted wood when developing garden plots. Any new garden structure over 2’6” high (trellis, fence arbors, etc.) starting from ground up must be pre-approved by the Garden Coordinator and/or Garden Liaison.*
- 12. No concrete footings are allowed when installing trellis, planter beds, or similar installations. Gardeners who violate this rule are required to remove all concrete installed.*

The following new guidelines listed under section “V. Garden Participate Expectations” were added to ensure that gardeners are appropriately maintaining their plot and communicate with the Garden Coordinator (poorly maintained plots make it difficult for staff to know if a plot has been abandoned):

V. Garden Participate Expectations

2. Plot preparation for Spring plantings should be started by April 1st.

3. Crops must be harvested and not left on the ground to rot. Use of the Free Produce Kiosk is highly encouraged if applicable at your garden site.

11. In the event of a gardener’s inability to maintain their plot due to illness, the Gardener must notify the Community Garden Coordinator. The Gardener may be provided 4 weeks for recovery. If at the end of 4 weeks the plot has not been maintained, the Community Garden Coordinator will determine whether the Gardener will have to give up the plot.

12. If the Gardener foresees being away from the garden longer than 2 weeks, they should make special arrangements to have their plot maintained while they are gone. The Community Garden Coordinator needs to be notified of this arrangement.

The following new guidelines listed under section “VI. Organic Gardening Plantings and the Use of Plots” were added to address challenges with gardeners adding fences around individual plots that changed the look and feel of the gardens, cause shading issues for other garden plots, and make it difficult to control weeds around the fences:

VI. Organic gardening plantings and the use of plots

7. No fences allowed around individual plots in any garden location except Rinconada Garden: Existing individual plot fences at Rinconada Garden must meet the following conditions:*

- a. Made of material that allows for plot visibility no industrial fencing material allowed*
- b. Does not shade neighbors plot*
- c. Be secured, safe, tidy, stable, and in good repair*
- d. Be safe, free of protruding nails, wood, aged broken parts, rusty, or other materials that could cause injury.*
- e. No gates shall be installed, and no water spigots enclosed in individual plots.*

**After October 22, 2019 no additional fences will be allowed.*

The following new guidelines listed under section “VII. Garden Violation Policy” were added to clarify violations that are grounds for termination of garden license:

VII. Garden Violation Policy

The following violations will be cause for immediate termination by the City.

- 1. *Theft of tools and equipment*
- 2. Theft of produce and plants*
- 3. *Vandalism of tools, equipment and City Property, including but not limited to animals.*

4. **The use of foul language and offensive behavior including but not limited to threats, intimidation, violence, racial/ethnic slurs, sexual harassment, and any sexual acts within the garden.*
5. **The use of alcoholic beverages and drugs of any kind in any area of the City's Community Gardens.*
6. *The use of nonorganic pesticides and herbicides.*
7. *Receiving 3 violations in the calendar year.*
8. *Receipt of 4 written notices of non-compliance within 24 calendar months.*
9. *Failure to pay registration fee within two months of due date.*
**These violations will be reported to the Palo Alto Police Department*

The Guidelines will be sent to all participants in the City's community garden program and included in the community garden license agreement. They will also be posted on the Community Garden webpage.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Community Garden Guidelines and Expectations