



Let's grow together

Yarra Urban Agriculture Resource Booklet





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Yarra Urban Agriculture Resource Booklet

This booklet includes information that will help you successfully apply for, set up and maintain your community growing space.

The City of Yarra recognises the importance of urban agriculture in creating a sustainable city where a robust, multicultural community lives and thrives. Community growing spaces provide an opportunity for the community to work together, building more resilient and liveable neighbourhoods through growing, producing and sharing fresh and healthy food. These gardens are an effective means of inspiring and enabling food growing in the city and building social and economic wellbeing from the ground up – created for and by local people.

Community growing spaces can be located on public land, supported by Council, tended and cared for by the community. They may be:



**a planter box on a
footpath or roadway**



a productive tree



**a nature strip
garden**

If you would like to start a community growing space, Council has created a process to assist in the establishment of your garden, making it simple, fun and safe. The following steps have been outlined below:

The process for developing a community growing space

1.

Education

Twice a year Council will sponsor an event which will provide the community an opportunity to join the food growing community in Yarra, learn how to develop a community growing space and prepare a successful “Urban Agriculture” application. On this day council’s Urban Agriculture facilitator will provide advice and assistance with the following:

means of gaining local neighbourhood support for your initiative;

preferred sites and locations for planter boxes and fruit trees and how you can address potential hazards for pedestrians and other traffic;

ensuring a suitable site which does not obstruct visibility;

sustainable sources of soils, fertilisers and pest control products;

any safety issues you need to consider and;

completing a thorough application to assist with an efficient approval process

The useful information section in this booklet provides information on the development, care and enjoyment of your garden as well as links to other sources of information.

We ask that everyone attend a community growing space workshop prior to submitting an application.

Site selection

The selection of an appropriate site is an important consideration in the development of a successful community growing space. Many factors must be taken into consideration to ensure the safety of the community and the gardeners.

Choosing an appropriate location

Growing spaces need to consider multiple factors such as pedestrian access, parking, visibility, street sweepers etc. Speak to the Urban Agriculture Facilitator for specific advice regarding your location. Things to look out for include:

Proximity to Services

Make sure you know what service infrastructure exists (such as sewage pipes, power lines etc) to avoid any damage. Your growing space will be in a public place and therefore you should be aware that service authorities may need to access or maintain their assets. It will be your responsibility to negotiate the protection and/or reinstatement of your planter box with the relevant service authorities.

A planter box must be located a minimum distance of 0.5 metres from service infrastructure. Specifically, this includes infrastructure related to: water; electricity/ power; street cleaning; rubbish/recycling collection and emergency services (fire hydrants, emergency panels, etc). A planter box must not be located between any Council infrastructure and a property or boundary line (eg. Council seating and the property line, etc).

Roads and Traffic

When choosing a location for planter boxes, make sure you observe the minimum clearance distances that are relevant to your chosen location.

Proximity to Intersection

In order to maintain visibility for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists entering an intersection a planter box must not be installed within 7 metres of the intersection.

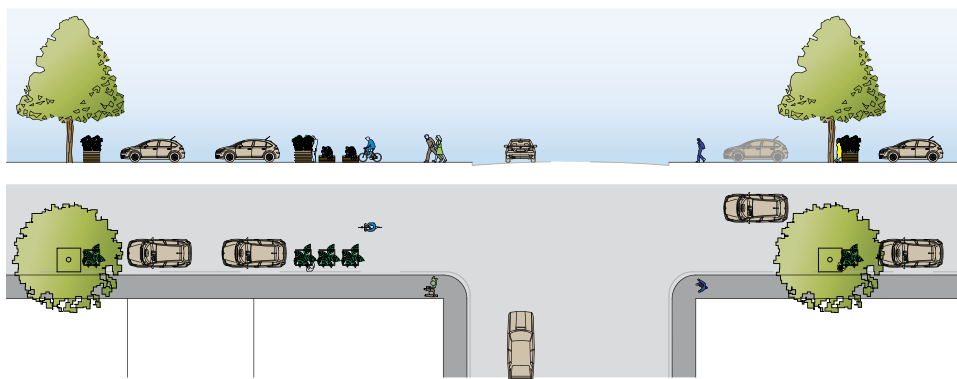
Proximity to Kerb/Footpath

A footpath planter box or nature strip garden must maintain a 0.6 metre buffer to the edge of any kerb to allow for street cleaning, parking, and the free flow of water and materials. A footpath planter box must be placed so that a minimum footpath width of 1.5 metres from the property line directly across the footpath is clear and unobstructed.

Proximity to Parking Bays

If placed on the footpath, a planter box must maintain a 0.6 metre buffer to the nearest edge of the any parking bay to allow for car doors to open and be accessed.

For specific site considerations speak directly with the Urban Agriculture Facilitator. Site selection will be considered carefully by Council prior to the granting of the Urban Agriculture Agreement.



Things to consider when locating planting boxes in the road reserve

The legal requirements that govern where you may and may not locate a planter box in the road reserve will depend on a range of factors (such as road width, traffic speed, bicycle lanes, etc.) and will therefore be site specific. As a general rule, it is a good idea to consider the following when deciding where to locate your planter box, however, alternate arrangements can be discussed with Council's Community Gardens Facilitator:

have you maintained clear lines of sight for other road users including pedestrians, cyclists and motorists when locating your planter box?

will the combined height of your planter box and plants reduce visibility for other road users including pedestrians, cyclists and motorists?

have you left enough space between your planter box and the back of kerb to accommodate street cleaning?

have you left enough space between the planter box and the car park to enable a car door to open and a person to alight to the footpath?

have you located your planter box clear of dedicated disabled car spaces?

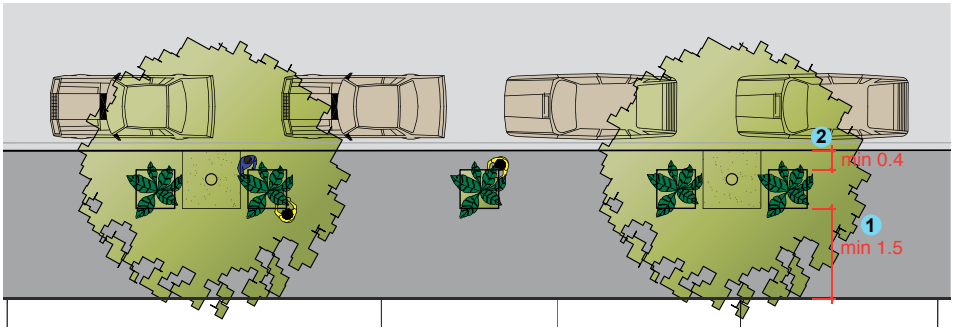
have you maintained enough space on the footpath for unobstructed pedestrian movement?

will your planter box be visible to drivers reversing into a parallel car park?

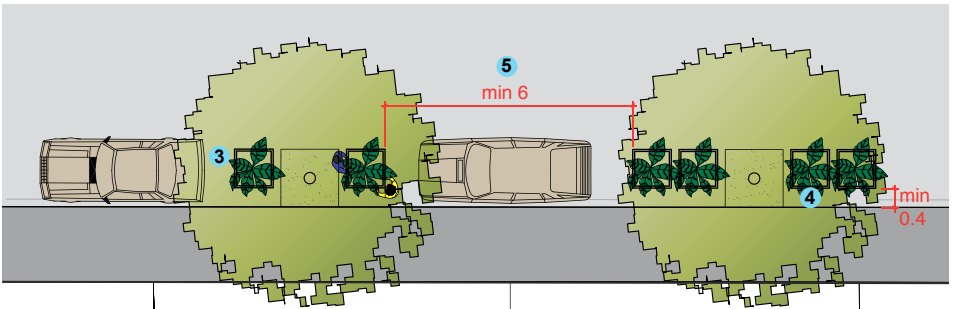
does your planter box protrude into the roadway (ie greater than the width of the car space)?

have you located your planter box clear of any service/drainage/side entry pits?

is your planter box located clear of driveways, crossovers and other services and signs?



...on the footpath



...on the road

Planter boxes adjacent to parallel parking

As a guide, the following heights and setbacks shall apply, unless otherwise agreed with the Community Gardens

Facilitator:

- 1 Minimum width of 1.5 metres from the property line is clear for the footpath
- 2 Minimum clearance of 0.4 metres between your planter box and the side of the parking bay to allow car doors to open

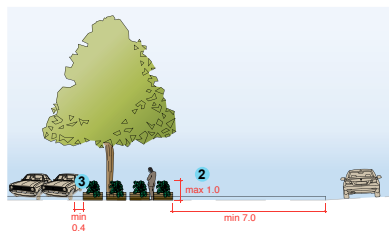
- 3 Minimum height of 1.1 metres for planter boxes (including plants) for visibility when parking

- 4 Minimum clearance of 0.4 metres between your planter box and the back of kerb to accommodate street cleaning

- 5 Minimum length of 6 metres is retained for each car space



...90° parking



...60° parking

Planter boxes adjacent to angle parking

As a guide, the following heights and setbacks shall apply, unless otherwise agreed with the Community Gardens Facilitator:

- 1 Minimum clearance of 0.4 metres between your planter box and the back of kerb to accommodate street cleaning
- 2 Maximum height of 1.0 metre for planter box (including plants) to enable visibility for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists
- 3 Minimum clearance of 0.4 metres from parking bay to allow car doors to open

Consultation

This stage begins with your neighbours. We ask you to discuss the project with your neighbours to ensure they are supportive of your idea and invite them to be involved. We encourage you to speak with all of your neighbours within 25m of the proposed community growing space. We suggest you arrange a neighbourhood gathering to explain your initiative and give participants an opportunity to have their say. Be prepared to compromise if necessary in order to secure broad support and participation in the project. If some residents/owners cannot attend the group event, it is good to make sure that you contact them individually so that they are informed. You can refer your neighbours to similar projects that have already been completed in Yarra or elsewhere and diagrams that you have drawn up of where the community growing space will be located. You may also wish to talk to others who have completed similar projects for hints on successful consultation. Evidence of this local consultation must be supplied with your application.

We encourage groups of three or more people living in the area to form a small growing community. Your growing spaces don't have to be located together – you can each have one near your house – however being connected allows you to work together in the preparation of the application, as well as ongoing management of the community growing space. (eg. watering and sharing of produce, ideas, and gardening tips). Once you have established your group, complete the form and submit to council. Please make your application as clear and thorough as possible, including clear diagrams of how you propose to lay out the growing space. This will assist council in a timely approval process and ensure your application has the best possibility of success.

Your application must be submitted to council by the deadline communicated on the workshop day.

To be included in your application:

the proposed location and design of your community growing space;

the name of the community group that you have formed;

evidence that you have engaged with your local community;

any relevant feedback expressed by neighbouring residents and

name and contact details of the person nominated as the primary contact for the growing group

The Application

Should your application be successful, Council will enter into a simple written agreement with you, noting the community group that you belong to. The Agreement will document:

details of the initiative as discussed with neighbouring residents and property owners

any specific conditions relating to:

- the provision of public liability insurance cover related to the growing space and,
- removal of the growing space if no longer required

The extent of the agreement as set out by Council (typically 2 years)

By entering into the Agreement you ensure that you are covered through Council's public liability insurance policy, otherwise you may be personally liable.

Your application can be submitted online at yarracity.vic.gov.au or visit Council offices at Richmond Town Hall (333 Bridge Road, Richmond) or Collingwood Town Hall (140 Hoddle Street, Abbotsford) using the application form attached. You can expect to receive a recommendation from the Urban Agriculture Facilitator on your neighbourhood garden proposal within 30 days of the submission date. Large gardens may take more time.



5.

Delivery

Council is responsible for placing the planter box on site. It is up to the growing group to ensure the box is received and secured before planting.

It is the grower's responsibility to provide soil and all materials required to establish the garden with the exception of the box.



7.

Nuture and enjoy

Enjoy and make the most of your growing space. Please consider the visual impact of your space on the streetscape and maintain your garden accordingly. An untended garden can appear as if no one is using it and may attract vandalism or complaints. If you find that you cannot adequately maintain your garden, please contact Council to discuss options to share or forfeit your growing space. If your garden is clearly left unattended for an extended period of time, Council may remove it following consultation with the primary contact person or nearby residents.

6.

Measure

To measure the benefits of this program, Council will map the community growing spaces and encourage participants to record the harvests of their garden, see section on 'Recording your data' on page 8. Recording the productivity of your garden can be very rewarding and will help future Urban Agriculture projects gain support.



8.

Share

We encourage you and your gardening group to attend the next workshop event to build your skills and share your experiences.

Useful information

Size (Physical and Vegetative)

Council provides two sizes of planter box: 1000mmL x 1000mmW x 60mmH and 1200mmL x 600mmW x 600mmH. Choose the size that best fits your location. The maximum height of the planter box, including vegetation, is 1.1 metres. This is in order to maintain visibility for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists.



Soils

All soils in the inner city contain some level of contamination. Council advises you to build raised garden beds unless soil testing is undertaken. It is best to use fresh, well-draining, soil preferably composted (such as a three-way mix). The drainage qualities and nutrient content of the soil used will have a significant impact on the success of your plants.



Being safe while working on your garden

When you work on your growing space, health & safety is your responsibility. Consider the following basic precautions: appropriate clothing, appropriate and safe use of tools, being sun smart, careful handling of materials and soils.

Also be aware of the space that you are in and keep an eye out for passing cars, bicycles and pedestrians.

Compost

Composted organic matter is an excellent soil conditioner and source of nutrients for your plants. For information on setting up a compost bin or worm farm, see the Food Know How website: foodknowhow.org.au.

If you do not have space for a compost bin or worm farm, a worm tower can be added to raised garden beds. For more information on these, see: theslowpoke.com/worm-towers.



Planting in public spaces

Since your garden will be in a public location it is likely that passers-by will want to harvest some of your produce. Encourage them to do this respectfully by posting a small sign asking they pick only what they need, leaving enough for others or to help themselves to certain plants, but leave others. It is also a good idea to grow plants which lend themselves to being shared, such as leafy greens, herbs and prolific fruited (eg. cherry tomatoes and zucchinis) or underground crops (eg. carrots, garlic, potato, parsnip) which are not easy to see and pick.

Organic gardening

Yarra City Council encourages the use of sustainable gardening practices. Consider using organic products rather than standard chemicals. Council's Urban Agriculture Facilitator can advise on a list of suitable alternatives.



Networks

It is a great idea to join one or a few gardening networks to get ideas, advice and hear about upcoming events. You might like to look on Facebook or perhaps start your own network with the people in your community.

Recording your data

Yarra encourages you to record your harvests and the food scraps that you compost. This information can be both rewarding and informative for you, and the data you record helps us to see just how beneficial urban agriculture can be.

Yarra City Council suggests Farming Concrete (farmingconcrete.org) as a method of recording your results. Worksheet templates are available for you to adapt (they currently only use Imperial units) to record your harvests, or put a shortcut on your smartphone to upload your harvests each time you record them.



Useful websites

Giving and receiving excess home grown produce – [**ripenear.me**](https://www.ripenear.me)

Local food initiatives and businesses in your area – [**localharvest.org.au**](https://www.localharvest.org.au)

A map of unharvested fruit trees in Melbourne – [**feralfruitmelbourne.wordpress.com**](https://feralfruitmelbourne.wordpress.com)

Sharing and connecting with your local community – [**streetbank.com**](https://www.streetbank.com)

Seasonal gardening tips – [**sgaonline.org.au**](https://www.sgaonline.org.au)

Food waste reduction and composting – [**foodknowhow.org.au**](https://www.foodknowhow.org.au)

What to plant and when – [**gardenate.com/zones/Australia**](https://www.gardenate.com/zones/Australia)

Record your harvest – [**farmingconcrete.org**](https://www.farmingconcrete.org)

Composting – [**theslowpoke.com/worm-towers**](https://www.theslowpoke.com/worm-towers)

Dial before you dig – [**1100.com.au**](https://www.1100.com.au)



Yarra Libraries Sustainable Living Book Collection – Garden

Backyard Farmer – **Earth Garden books**

Backyard self-sufficiency – **Jackie French**

The Garden Guru's guide to waterwise gardening – **Neville Passmore**

Permaculture: principles and pathways beyond sustainability – **David Holmgren**

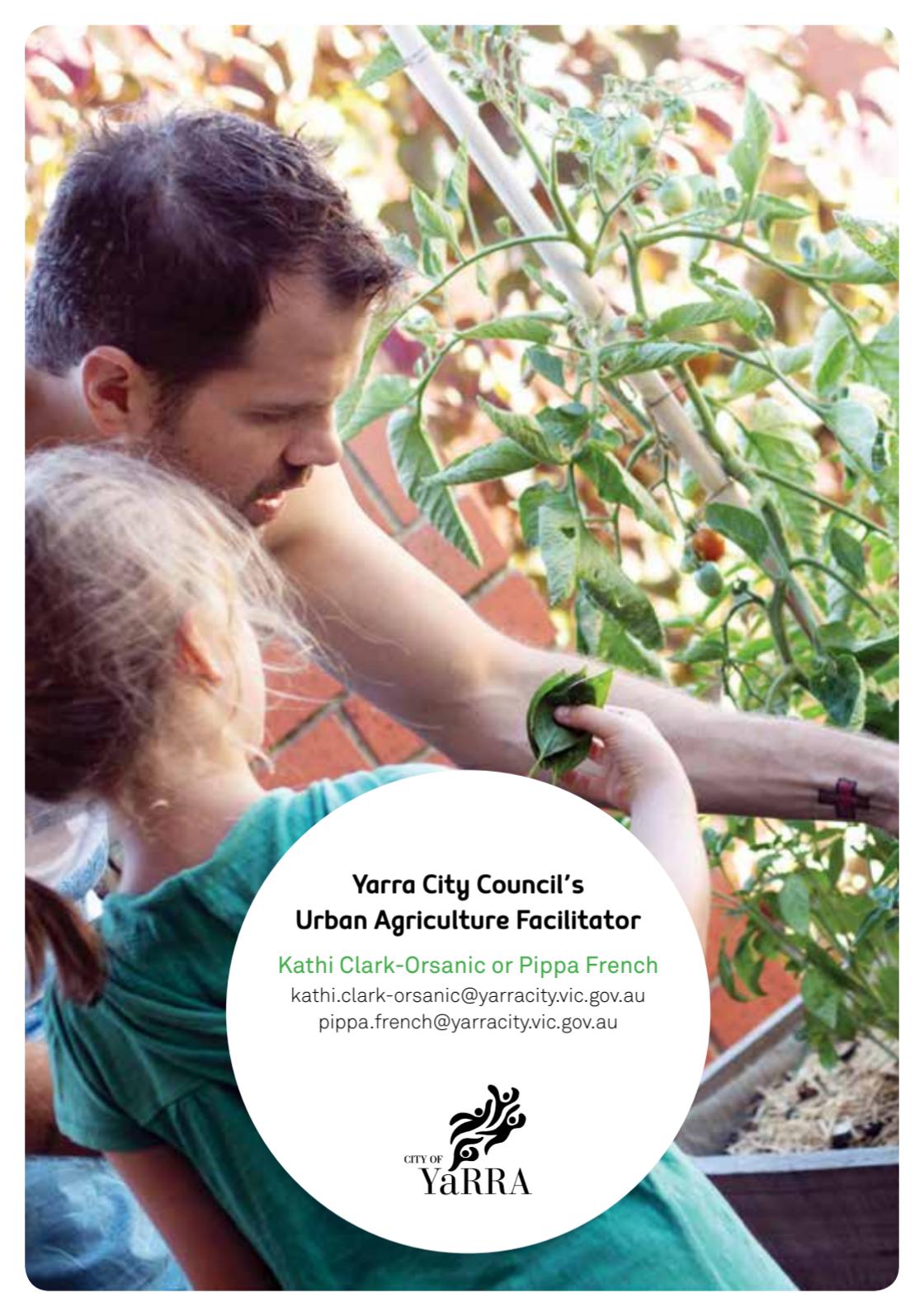
Water-saving gardening in Australia – **Kevin Walsh**

The water-wise garden: how to grow healthy plants using less water – **Jeffrey Hodges**

The green gardener: sustainable gardening in your own backyard – **Josh Byrne**

The organic gardener's handbook – **Michael Littlewood**

Sustainable gardens – **Robert Cross**



**Yarra City Council's
Urban Agriculture Facilitator**

Kathi Clark-Orsanic or Pippa French

kathi.clark-orsanic@yarracity.vic.gov.au

pippa.french@yarracity.vic.gov.au

