



# City of Richmond

## Report to Committee

**To:** Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services  
Committee

**Date:** March 7, 2019

**From:** Todd Gross  
Director, Parks Services

**File:** 11-7200-20-  
CGAR1/2019-Vol 01

**Re:** Community Gardens Update

### Staff Recommendation

That the staff report titled "Community Gardens Update," dated March 7, 2019, from the Director, Parks Services, be received for information.

Todd Gross  
Director, Parks Services  
(604-247-4942)

Att. 1

<b>REPORT CONCURRENCE</b>	
<b>CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER</b>	
<b>REVIEWED BY STAFF REPORT / AGENDA REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE</b>	<b>INITIALS:</b>
<b>APPROVED BY CAO</b>	

## Staff Report

### Origin

At the December 4, 2018, Planning Committee meeting, staff received the following referral:

*That staff review how the community garden program is managed and how garden plots are assigned in order to encourage food production in the plots;*

*Examine options to encourage development of bee hives; and*

*Options to develop additional community garden plots and report back.*

### Analysis

#### The City of Richmond's Community Gardens Program

The City currently has 340 community garden plots in parks and schoolyards throughout the City. A community garden is a shared green space with individual and group garden plots which are maintained by community garden members to grow food, flowers, and other plants. The gardens provide opportunities for residents to not only cultivate, but also meet new friends, share knowledge, and build a sense of community. The food, flowers, and other plants grown in each plot belong to the registered gardeners, and cannot be used or sold for any commercial purposes.

Residents can rent community garden plots on a yearly basis for a fee ranging from \$40–\$90 per year, depending on plot size. Subsidies are available to those for whom the plot fee is a barrier to participating. The community garden plot fees pay for a portion of the costs related to administering the community garden program.

Since 2010, the City has had an agreement with the Richmond Food Security Society (RFSS) for administration of the City's community garden sites. RFSS is a non-profit organization with a mission to inspire a robust Richmond food system through education, advocacy, and community building initiatives. The City provides a base level of service to establish and support the infrastructure for each community garden site. RFSS administers the program partially through plot fees and secured grant funding.

The roles and responsibilities of the City, RFSS, and individual gardeners are as follow:

- City of Richmond provides and maintains land, site infrastructure, irrigation, water, mulch, and green bins.
- RFSS provides liability insurance, maintains garden waitlists, allocates plots, supplies, shared tools, manages grant applications, enforces garden rules, and liaises between the City and Gardeners.
- Gardeners maintain individual plots and common spaces, steward soil, manage compost, supply seeds and plants, grow food, flowers, and plants, food or flowers, and follow all garden rules.

Existing Level of Service

RFSS manages the City’s 340 allotment plots at nine community garden locations throughout Richmond. All of the community garden sites are full with a current waitlist of 265 individuals. The City’s nine community garden sites are outlined in Table 1 below:

Table 1 – City Community Garden Sites

<b>Location</b>	<b>No. of Individual Plots</b>	<b>No. of Community Group Plots</b>
Brighthouse Elementary	23	0
Garratt Wellness Centre	15	5 (VCH)
General Currie Elementary	10	0
Gilbert (South Dyke)	41	0
King George Park	34	6 (ERCA)
Paulik Park	24	0
Railway Avenue	82	0
Richmond High	12	0
Terra Nova Rural Park	99	11 (Various Groups)
<b>Total</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>22</b>

At three of the garden sites, community groups such as Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH), East Richmond Community Association (ERCA), and Richmond Society for Community Living (RSCL) have communal plots for their clientele. These plots are co-located with those administered by RFSS, but managed independently by each respective organization. The garden plots are used to support health and wellness programming by these organizations.

Other Community Garden Sites

In addition to the City’s community garden sites managed by RFSS, there are also community gardens built and managed independently by community groups or other government agencies. These garden sites are outlined in Table 2 below:

Table 2 – Other Community Garden Sites

<b>Location</b>	<b>Managed By</b>	<b>No. of Individual Plots</b>
10711 Palmberg Road	Richmond Allotment Garden Association	127
London Heritage Farm	London Heritage Farm Society	71
Rosewood Manor	BC Housing	25
<b>Total</b>		<b>223</b>

The community garden plots at Palmberg Road are available to the public, and there are currently no vacancies. The community garden plots at London Heritage Farm are open to members of the London Heritage Farm Society, and this site is also full. The plots at Rosewood

Manor are only available to residents living in neighbouring BC Housing units, and the site is currently at capacity.

### School Garden Sites

There are approximately 300 educational garden plots located on school grounds that are fully utilized by the school district. These plots are built and managed by each individual school, and they are used by students as part of the school curriculum.

### Food Production on Community Garden Plots

Food production is the main focus of the City's community gardens program. This emphasis on food production is outlined in the RFSS Richmond Community Garden Rules and Agreement which states that, "garden plots must be used to grow plants, with a focus on food production, throughout the growing season and cannot be left vacant..." (Attachment 2). It is estimated that 28,700 lbs of food is harvested through the City's community gardens program on an annual basis.

While food production is the main use of community gardens, some gardeners incorporate flowers and other pollinator plant species in their garden plots. The benefits of growing flowers alongside vegetables include pest control, nutrient replacement, alleviating stress, and support for pollinators.

There are no municipalities in Metro Vancouver that implement regulations or restrictions concerning the ratio of food to flower production.

### Pollinator Pastures

Food production is supported by pollinator pastures and designated flower beds near community garden sites. Pollinator pastures enhance the City's natural ecological networks, while supporting pollinators, such as bees and butterflies, which are a critical and endangered part of the ecosystem. The presence of pollinator pastures and flower beds around community garden sites alleviates the need for gardeners to plant their own flowers in order to achieve the same benefits. Pollinator pastures are planted annually by the City in Terra Nova Rural Park, Bridgeport Industrial Park and along the Railway Greenway Trail.

### Beehives at Community Garden Sites

Beehives in community gardens function as an important community resource. Plants grown in community gardens depend on pollinators such as bees to thrive. Beehives also act as an interactive tool to educate and inform residents on the importance of bees in urban areas.

Due to public safety concerns, beehives are typically not placed in high traffic areas. Proximity to other active hives is also taken into consideration when planning hive sites. The minimum foraging range around a beehive site is approximately 3.2 kilometers. Currently, the community gardens at Terra Nova Rural Park, South Dyke Agricultural Park, and Paulik Neighbourhood Park have beehives within foraging range. These hives act as a dynamic component in the community gardens that support multiple objectives.

Staff met with RFSS to identify potential opportunities for additional beehive placement at or near community garden sites. Through this review, it was identified that Garratt Community Gardens could benefit from the addition of two beehives. The addition of these beehives can be included as part of a planned expansion of the community garden site and be jointly funded through existing program budgets and fundraising efforts by RFSS. Signage and safety barriers would be installed to educate and caution park users about the beehives in the area.

### Planned Future Program Expansion

Opportunities for community gardens are considered in every park planning process. Garden sites are added in locations where there is demand and where park design allows. To expand the program, the following community garden locations are either in development or being considered:

#### **1. Garden City Lands**

A community garden site of approximately 100 garden plots is being planned for the Garden City Lands as part of the Council approved Park Development Plan for the site. Although community gardens are permitted under the provincial Agricultural Land Reserve legislation, staff have been advised by the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) that a non-farm use application will be required to allow public access to the site, including the parking of vehicles.

#### **2. The Gardens Agricultural Park**

As part of the park concept, Council approved 100 garden plots for the east side of the park. Further development of this park is pending the outcome of the George Massey Tunnel Replacement Project process. As this project progresses and the impacts are better understood, staff will review the number of plots and locations in a revised park concept and submit a capital request.

#### **3. Riverport Waterfront**

The community adjacent to this park space has expressed interest in formalizing community gardening activities which have been underway in this location. Staff will work with RFSS and the community to explore opportunities to create an official community garden location at this site with approximately 10-15 allotment plots. If the site is feasible, staff will submit a 2020 Capital Request for the creation of the Riverport Community Garden.

#### **4. Cook Neighbourhood Park**

This park has the potential to include the addition of a community garden with 25-35 community garden plots to serve the needs of the surrounding community. Staff are working with RFSS and the Richmond School District to explore opportunities in creating a garden location at this site. If the site is feasible, staff will submit a 2020 Capital Request for the creation of the Cook Community Garden.

In addition to the program expansion opportunities identified above, a total of 18 additional garden plots will be added to both the Garratt Wellness Centre and Gilbert (South Dyke) community garden sites in 2019, increasing the capacity at those locations. This program expansion will be funded primarily through grants received by RFSS.

A summary of program expansion opportunities is identified in Table 3 below:

Table 3 – Summary of Community Garden Program Expansion Opportunities

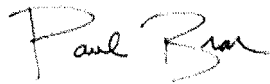
<b>Location</b>	<b>No. of Plots</b>	<b>Projected Timeline</b>
Garratt Wellness Centre	13	2019
Gilbert (South Dyke)	5	2019
Garden City Lands	100	2019/2020
Riverport Waterfront	10-15	2020
Cook Neighbourhood Park	25-35	2020
The Gardens Agricultural Park	80-100	TBD (pending outcome of tunnel replacement project)
<b>Total</b>	<b>233-268</b>	

**Financial Impact**

None.

**Conclusion**

Richmond’s community gardens are valuable green spaces within the community and provide healthy food for garden members, space for social interactions, and create recreational activities for community members of all ages, abilities and backgrounds. To meet the demand of the City’s current and future growth, staff will continue to explore opportunities for including additional community garden sites in future park planning processes.



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Emily Sargent  
 Acting Coordinator, Leisure Services  
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Att. 1: Richmond Food Security Society Richmond Community Garden Rules and Agreement

# Richmond Community Garden Rules and Agreement 2019

The Community Garden Rules & Agreement ensure that the community gardens are maintained as vibrant, shared, green spaces within the City of Richmond. Garden members are required to agree to and honour the rules in exchange for the privilege of gardening on public land. We reserve the right to make exceptions to these rules in extenuating or justified circumstances.

The following is a bullet-point summary of the Community Garden Rules & Agreement that must be followed by all gardeners at any community garden site in Richmond. For a full description and to understand their application and interpretation, please see the expanded section below.

Community Gardeners must:

- Follow all rules as outlined in these Rules & Agreement;
- Pay their plot fee on time;
- Volunteer time in the gardens (beyond time spent working in their personal plot) to contribute to the general operations and maintenance of the garden site shared spaces;
- Rent only one garden plot per household;
- Use the garden plot for personal gardening only, and not for any commercial business;
- Treat fellow gardeners, community members, and Richmond Food Security Society employees with respect;
- Supervise all guests in the garden, especially children;
- Clean and return the common tools to the storage area and help to keep the shed tidy and organized;
- Not remove communal garden tools from the garden site;
- Not drive vehicles on the pathways, plaza, or within the community garden area;
- Not use abusive or obscene language while in the garden;
- Not bring dogs or other domestic animals into the gardens;
- Follow all City of Richmond public parks bylaws; and
- Contact and receive permission from the garden coordinator prior to making any structural changes to the plot;
- Keep in contact with the Urban Agriculture Program Coordinator, either by responding to phone calls or emails, or reaching out if circumstances prevent you from gardening at anytime;



While gardening at your community garden you should:

- Have fun!
- Actively cultivate your garden plot to grow food and other plants;
- Only use organic growing methods;
- Receive training and approval prior to using weed-eaters in the community gardens, and to not use any other power tools in the community gardens;
- Take responsibility for garden waste by composting in the garden plot, taking compost home, or using the on-site green bins;
- Not leave garbage or useless gardening materials at the garden site or in the garden shed;
- Not dump green waste into bushes and/or surrounding garden areas;
- Not harvest or remove anything from garden plots other than the garden plot to which the gardener has been assigned;
- Follow water restrictions when in effect and conserve water by hand watering and using mulch to reduce water evaporation; and
- Not use any pesticides, herbicides (weed killers), insecticides, chemical fertilizers, animal poisons, and non-organic materials including pressure treated wood in the garden plot, and comply with the Pesticide Use Control Bylaw #8514 and Public Health Protection Bylaw # 8969

**Important dates:**

**May 1st:** Last day to prepare your garden plot for the growing season.

**November 1st:** Last day to have your garden bed cleaned for the winter. A clean garden bed can include cover crops, mulch, perennials, and overwintering plants.

**Garden Plot Reviews**

Garden reviews are done three times each year, in spring, summer, and fall. Reviews may also be done outside of these times if necessary. Garden Review Volunteers will visit each site, and thoroughly review each garden plot to ensure plot holders are following the rules set out in the Community Garden Rules & Agreement. During reviews, the rules will be defined and enforced according to their expanded definitions below. If you have received an infraction notice and have any questions or concerns about it, please [contact the community gardens program coordinator](#).

To pass a review you must ensure that:



- Your plot and pathways are weed free;
- Your plot has been planted and is being actively used;
- There are no trees, non-edible shrubs, Jerusalem artichokes, raspberries, blackberries, or invasive species according to provincial regulations;
- There are no materials in or around garden plots or in common areas;
- There are no objects including but not limited to chairs, containers, pots, planters, pieces of wood, bricks, cardboard, or plastic lumber wrap in common areas or pathways;
- There are no structures of any kind in the garden plots, including greenhouses;
- You do not grow plants or erect any structures including trellises and bean poles over 6 feet;
- You have a compost bin, and it is within your plot; and
- There is no treated or painted lumber in your garden plot.

### **Infractions**

By reading these rules & agreement, you indicate that you understand and agree to follow all rules set out by Richmond Food Security Society. This is further agreed upon by paying for and registering as a tenant of an assigned garden plot.

Volunteer Reviewers will look at all plots 3 times per year: in case of an infraction the first notice will be a written (paper or email) notice with explanation. **Pllotholders will be given 14 days to correct the identified issue(s).**

**If there are no significant changes, you will receive a second notice (paper or email) with a date that the plot rental is cancelled and you must forfeit your plot.**

Forfeiting plots is done on a case by case basis. Our intention with this process is to ensure that people gardening at the community gardens are using the land to grow food for themselves and their families. We understand that circumstances change throughout the growing season and if something has come up please let us know by contacting the community gardens program coordinator to explain your specific situation. We can often find resources to help!

### **Community Garden Rules and Agreement – Expanded**

Community Gardeners must:

#### **Follow all rules as outlined in these Rules & Agreement:**

This includes all of the rules outlined in the rules & agreement above and detailed below, as well as respecting deadlines regarding plot renewals.

#### **Pay their plot fee on time:**

When current gardeners pay late, it slows down the renewal process. It is hard for us to know if someone isn't going to renew, and that we can then allocate a plot to the next person on the waitlist. Having this done earlier in the season allows us to proactively ensure all plots are being used.



**Volunteer time in the gardens (beyond time spent working in their personal plot) to contribute to the general operations and maintenance of the garden site shared spaces:**

All members of the Richmond Community Gardens are required to maintain the shared spaces at the garden sites, to the best of their ability. We have developed new volunteer positions for gardeners to contribute to their garden site including mulch monitoring, communications coordinator, and tool coordinator, among others. If you are interested in one of these positions please contact us.

**Rent only one garden plot per household.**

To allow more of Richmond households to have access to a garden, we only allow one plot per household.

**Use the garden plot for personal gardening only, and not for any commercial business:**

Commercial business includes, but is not limited to, the sale of produce grown in the garden plot.

**Treat fellow gardeners, community members, and Richmond Food Security Society employees with respect:**

Being respectful of all people at the community gardens allows for the gardens to become the safe and shared space that they were intended to be.

**Supervise all guests in the garden, especially children:**

Family members and friends are more than welcome to join garden members in the community gardens. Just like gardeners, they are required to follow these rules and it is the responsibility of the individual community gardener to make sure this happens. Please ensure your guests do not pick produce or make changes to any garden plot but your own. The gardens can be educational and engaging green spaces for children to enjoy, but also have tripping hazards and sharp tools. Please keep a close eye on young children in the gardens.

**Clean and return the common tools to the storage area and help to keep the shed tidy and organized:**

We hope that every community gardener is proud of the community garden sites and will maintain them in a way that reflects this. Maintenance of these community spaces is a shared responsibility of all of the community gardeners at each garden.

**Not remove communal garden tools from the garden site:**

Garden tools are provided for gardeners to use at the garden sites and must be kept in the locked sheds. If you can't remember the code for the tool shed and need to return a tool, please [contact the community garden program coordinator](#) to request the access code.

**Not drive vehicles on the pathways, plaza, or within the community garden area:**

Please park in designated parking areas outside of the community gardens. If needed, wheelbarrows are available at the garden sites to carry heavy materials into the gardens.

**Not use abusive or obscene language while in the garden:**

The community gardens are safe, welcoming, and shared spaces where all community members are



treated with respect at all times.

**Not bring dogs or other domestic animals into the gardens:**

While we encourage gardeners to invite family and friends with them to the gardens, please leave your four-legged and other domestic animals at home.

**Follow all City of Richmond public parks bylaws:**

The City of Richmond [Public Parks and School Ground Regulations](#) apply to all public parks, which includes community gardens. For everyone's safety, public parks (including the community gardens), are closed from 11:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m., unless otherwise posted.

**Contact and receive permission from the garden coordinator prior to making any structural changes to the plot:**

Structural changes include, but are not limited to, building, replacing, or extending plot borders, or building any type of significant trellising or fencing structure.

**While gardening at your community garden you should:**

**Have fun!**

Community gardens are spaces to grow food and help build a more food secure Richmond but also they are a space to meet new neighbours, forge friendships, and strengthen community.

**Actively cultivate your garden plot to grow food and other plants:**

Garden plots must be used to grow plants, with a focus on food production, throughout the summer season and cannot be left vacant. This supports the intention for the community gardens to be vibrant green spaces that are used by community members to grow food, flowers, and other useful plants.

**Only use organic growing methods:**

No synthetic fertilizers or pesticides are allowed in the gardens. If you are unsure if a product is okay to be used in the community gardens, please contact the community gardens program coordinator.

**Receive training and approval prior to using weed-eaters in the community gardens, and to not use any other power tools in the community gardens:**

No power tools of any kind are allowed to be used in the community gardens, except for by garden members who have received training and approval by Richmond Food Security Society to use weed-eaters. If you are interested in operating a weed-eater in the community gardens, and would like to know more about receiving this training, [contact the community garden coordinator](#).

**Take responsibility for garden waste by composting in the garden plot, taking compost home, or using the on-site green bins.**

Green waste should only be put into the compost bin that is inside your plot. If your compost bin is full, you can put your compost into the communal bins at your garden site. These are provided by the city and get picked up weekly.

**Not leave garbage or useless gardening materials at the garden site or in the garden shed:**

Please practice the “pack out what you pack in” principle. Garbage bins are not provided at the garden sites for gardening materials, and any significant garden-related garbage or other gardening materials must be taken home. The garbage cans are provided for wastes associated with use of the community gardens as a public, shared park, and can be used of to dispose of a small amount of waste, such as food wrappers, seed packages, or other small debris.

**Not dump green waste into bushes and/or surrounding garden areas:**

You should never dump any green waste into bushes and/or surrounding garden area. Dumping green waste around the garden site could spread weeds to neighbouring plots and throughout the garden, this is unacceptable. If your compost bin in your plot is full, you can either take the compost home with you or use one of the communal green bins at your garden site.

**Not harvest or remove any plants or items from garden plots other than the garden plot to which the gardener has been assigned:**

Taking plants from any plot that is not your own is considered theft. Changing or altering any plot other than your own is also not acceptable.

**Follow water restrictions when in effect and conserve water by hand watering and using mulch to reduce water evaporation:**

Automatic watering is not permitted in any of the Richmond Community Gardens. More information regarding Richmond water restrictions can be found on the City of Richmond [water restrictions website](#).

**Not use any pesticides, herbicides (weed killers), insecticides, chemical fertilizers, animal poisons, and non-organic materials including treated wood in the garden plot, and will comply with the Pesticide Use Control Bylaw #8514 and Public Health Protection Bylaw # 8969:**

Please [contact the community gardens program coordinator](#) if you have any questions regarding products that are allowed in the community gardens. Pressure treated wood is treated with chemical preservatives, and is not suitable for use in organic food producing gardens. Wooden plot borders are not mandatory, and are not supplied; they must added and maintained by gardeners at their own expense. When choosing a wooden border, please consider using cedar which is naturally rot resistant.

Important Dates:

**Prepare the garden plot for planting by May 1st at the latest:**

The plot must be actively cultivated beginning May 1st and through the duration of the gardening season.

**Clean up the garden plot by October 31st, except for a planted cover crop, mulch, perennials, and overwintering plants:**

Besides a planted cover crop, mulch, perennials, and overwintering plants the plots should be cleaned up and tidy for the winter. This includes organizing and tidying any trellising materials and the removal of dead plants and weeds. Plot holders are responsible for their plot 12 months of the year and therefore are required to ensure that the plot and pathways are kept reasonably weed free, even during the winter months. Using a mulch, such as straw or leaves, or planting a cover crop to protect the soil and suppress weeds during the winter is highly recommended but not mandatory. However, using a

mulch or cover crop will significantly reduce the amount of work required during the winter months in keeping the plot weed free and tidy.

During a review you must ensure that:

**Your plot and pathways are weed free:**

The plot and the pathways surrounding the plot are the responsibility of the plot holder to maintain. Depending on the garden site, the pathway may be maintained as either mulch, gravel, or dirt. If bark mulch is used, the weeds need to be dug up and removed prior to adding bark mulch. The plot must be kept reasonably free of weeds at all times of the year, and gardeners must make sure that weeds do not go to seed.

**Your plot has been planted and is being actively used:**

During the growing season you must have your plot planted with vegetables and herbs before May 1st. You must actively harvest from your plot to ensure that plants do not go to seed and spread to neighbouring plots. There is a long waitlist and we want to ensure that the community gardens are being actively used and are thriving. If something comes up throughout the growing season and you are unable to attend to your plot, please contact the community garden coordinator to discuss your specific situation in more detail.

**There are no planted trees and non-edible shrubs, Jerusalem artichokes, raspberries, blackberries, or invasive species according to provincial regulations:**

No trees, non-edible shrubs, Jerusalem artichokes, blackberries, or invasive species can be planted in the community gardens. Edible shrubs such as blueberries or rosemary are accepted plants in the community gardens. Edible shrubs must follow all other garden rules, such as not growing taller than six feet or overhanging into pathways. Garden members must choose plant species/varieties that are appropriate for raised-bed, small-space gardening, and that have growth patterns that will allow them to abide by all other garden rules.

**There are no materials in or around garden plots or in common areas:**

A reasonable amount of gardening materials, such as planting pots and trellis structures, which are currently being used, may be kept in the plot. However, items that are extra, unused, or unrelated to gardening cannot be stored in or around the garden plot or in common areas.

**There are no objects including but not limited to chairs, containers, pots, planters, pieces of wood, bricks, cardboard, or plastic lumber wrap in common areas or pathways.**

All items must be stored within the plot borders, and pathways must be free of tripping hazards. As of 2018, Gardeners agreed to not use plastic lumber wrap in pathways to keep down weeds. Lumber wrap does not help with weed control, the best weed control is persistence! If your plot already had lumber wrap around it prior to 2018, it can stay until it deteriorates but no new lumber wrap will be allowed at the gardens moving forward.

**There are no structures of any kind in the garden plots, including greenhouses:**

As of 2017, no new garden structures may be built in the community gardens, including greenhouses. We are working with the City of Richmond to get clarity on exactly what is allowed.

**You do not grow plants or erect any structures including trellises and bean poles over 6 feet:**

All plants and trellis structures must be no taller than six feet. This measurement is taken from the top of the garden plot border. In the absence of a garden plot border, this measurement will be taken from the surface of the soil at the base of the garden structure. The occasional tall plant is okay if it is an annual such as sunflowers.

**You have a compost bin and it is within your plot:**

Green waste must be composted within the garden plot, taken home, or disposed of in the on-site green bins. Green waste cannot be piled next to the garden plot or anywhere else in the garden. Green bins are provided at the community garden sites for materials that cannot be composted within individual garden plot composts. Gardeners should compost green waste on their plot as much as possible, but may use the on-site green bins for excess plant matter, or challenging green wastes such as:

- Weeds with seeds
- Diseased plants
- Invasive plants (such as horsetail, buttercups, knotweed, etc.)
- Large plants or stalks that will not break down quickly (such as brussel sprout stalks)

**There is no treated or painted lumber in your garden plot:**

Lumber that is treated with chemicals to preserve the wood from weather damage is not suitable for organic growing. Wooden borders are not required for your garden plot but if you would like one we suggest using cedar as it is naturally rot resistant and will last a long time.