

Merri Corner Community Garden Inc

Rules, Guidelines and Expectations for Gardeners

MCCG Annual General Meeting 22nd October 2011

INTRODUCTION

The Merri Corner Community Garden (the Garden) provides the opportunity for local residents to grow herbs, vegetables and flowers for personal use. The gardens also provide a space for people to come together and socialise.

The Garden includes garden plots for individuals, communal garden plots, a sensory garden and a community meeting space.

The aim of the Garden is to contribute to local food security by offering plots to people who do not otherwise have access to gardening space, particularly those living in high density housing.

The Garden is chemical free and of water-wise design, and we actively encourage community participation.

People can become involved in the Garden by joining the Merri Corner Community Garden Inc (MCCG), an incorporated association with rules on membership and governance.

The MCCG Committee is responsible for managing the Garden and the affairs of the association. The Moreland City Council owns the land and leases it to the MCCG Inc under a lease agreement. It is a condition of our lease and planning permit that the Garden have appropriate rules and that these are followed.

MCCG members and plot holders are referred to in these rules as 'gardeners'.

1. GENERAL CONDUCT AND EXPECTATION IN THE GARDEN AND RELATED ACTIVITIES

- We respect each other and support each other.
- We encourage sharing and learning from each other, and active participation in garden maintenance and communal areas.
- We comply with government restrictions on water use and weeds.
- We share responsibility for the peoples' personal security, safety and harmony of the Garden.
- We are mindful of neighbours when making noise, and respect peoples quiet enjoyment of the garden and surrounding areas
- We welcome children in the Garden and keep them under adult supervision for their safety.
- We don't have dogs in the Garden because their waste can be a health hazard and their digging can cause damage to other peoples plots.
- We don't consume alcohol or illegal substances at the Garden.

1.1 Disputes Warning and discipline procedure

If gardeners have any inquiries or concerns about the Garden or the conduct of gardeners they should contact the Committee. The Committee will deal with any disputes or breaches of these rules in accordance with the MCCG articles of association. The committee may also from time to time advise individual gardeners in writing or verbally if they feel individuals are not following the rules as set out in this document, asking them to cease problem activity. The Committee can be contacted via the website www.merricorner.org or by email at info@merricorner.org.

2. WHO CAN HAVE A PLOT (ELIGIBILITY)?

Priority for plots goes to:

- 1) People living local to the garden (local is determined as within 3km of the garden and not eligible to be part of another garden in Moreland Council or any another municipality e.g Melbourne City or Darebin Councils)
- 2) Households with limited or no space to garden
- 3) People on low incomes or at risk of experiencing food insecurity
- 4) Priority will be given to those who have been members of the MCCG for the longest and who have participated in garden activities such as fundraisers, attending busy bees, meetings and assisting with tending communal spaces.
- 5) Other individuals or organisations may also be eligible for a garden plot at the discretion of the Committee.

3. APPLYING FOR A PLOT AND LEASE AGREEMENTS

3.1 Applications

Applicants must:

- (1) meet the eligibility requirements and
- (2) be a paid member of Merri Corner Community Garden Inc. and
- (3) complete an application form that states they agree to abide by these Rules and Guidelines.

The Committee will allocate a plot to applicants who meet these requirements or if none are available they will place the applicant(s) on a waiting list. Applicants will progress through the waiting list in accordance with the eligibility criteria in section 2 above.

3.2 Sub-Lease agreements

Once allocated a plot, plot holders must complete an MCCG sublease contract. The person or persons named in the sub lease contract are the 'plot holder(s)'.

Plots are not transferable without the permission of Committee.

4. SIZE OF PLOTS

4.1 Size of plots

Plots are allocated on the following criteria:

Small Plot (5 – 7 m ²)	1-2 People
Medium plot (8 -10 m ²)	2 people
Large plot (11-13m ²)	3 or more people

Each **household** is entitled to **one plot**. If a plot holder would like to upgrade to a larger plot they should put their name on the waiting list. If no larger plots become available the Committee may decide to allocate an additional plot to a member but only if a vacant plot becomes available and there are no other applicants on the waiting list.

Plot holders who want extra planting space such as polystyrene boxes, planter boxes and containers, must seek permission from the Committee.

5. FORFEITURE OF GARDEN PLOTS

If a plot holder no longer wishes to or is unable to maintain their plot they should notify the committee in writing or via email.

If a plot holder moves from the local area, or experiences any change in circumstance relevant to the eligibility outlined in Section 2 they should advise the Committee immediately. The Committee will decide if the plot should be reallocated.

If the Committee decides to reallocate the plot the plot holder will be permitted to harvest any seasonal produce already planted. The Committee will decide if the plot fees will be reimbursed.

6. FEES

Plot holders are liable to pay a annual fee for a garden plot. The fee is set by the Committee and collected once yearly in November (plot holders can request to pay quarterly or bi annually by contacting the committee in advance. The money is used for garden supplies, maintenance and social gatherings for the Garden. Gardeners can make suggestions to the Committee about products or services that might be covered by the fees.

The fee structure includes the annual membership fee of \$20 full and \$10 concession or \$40 for family. Gardeners who are not plot holders are required to pay this amount separately to ensure their membership is current.

If the gardener fails to pay the annual fees within 2 calendar months of the due date and has failed to make prior arrangement with the committee the gardener may be at risk of forfeiting their plot. The committee will write to the gardener and advise that unless they make immediate payment within a fortnight their plot will be forfeited, gardeners will be given the opportunity to remove any items from their plot before it is allocated to a member on the waiting list.

7. SECURITY AND ACCESS CODES

The garden and storage areas are kept locked to protect plants and equipment from damage by vandalism or theft.

The Garden has a number of coded padlocks to gain access through gates and to the lockable storage area. Plot holders and active gardeners will be advised of the code on being allocated a plot. Plot holders and other gardeners are not to pass the codes onto non members. Exceptions can be made for people tending a plot whilst a person is away, but it is best to ask a fellow gardener to tend your plot in your absence. If you provide the codes to outside people you are responsible for ensuring they abide by these Rules and any breach is your responsibility.

Gardeners should lock the gates and storage area if it is not in use when they exit the Garden.

8. NO FENCES AND BUILDING ON PLOTS

No fencing around a plot is permitted, however borders such as flowers, sleepers, or rocks are acceptable.

Gardeners are not permitted to build permanent structures on garden plots or on vacant areas of the Garden or to use the Garden to store building or other materials.

No treated wood should be used in any construction.

Trellises and other structures solely for growing produce on are permitted up to a height of 1.5m. Tall plants should be located close to paths or in the middle of plots out of respect for other gardeners' solar access and in consultation where possible.

If a plot has structures that do not meet these restrictions the committee may ask the plot holder to remove them within a reasonable time frame and if they are not removed the committee may choose to have the items removed.

9. RESPONSIBILITIES OF PLOT HOLDERS FOR THEIR PLOTS

9.1 General maintenance of plots

Plot holders are responsible for the care and maintenance of their individual plots throughout the year, even during the winter months. Plot holders are also responsible for maintaining the pathways around their plot, keeping it free of weeds, rubbish and any items that may be obstructing the pathways. We encourage mulching (covering plots with straw) to control weed growth.

If a plot holder is unable to tend a plot for two months or more, they are asked to discuss their situation with the committee. If a plot is left unattended for three months and the plot holder has not contacted the committee the plot holder may lose their plot.

9.2. Appropriate plants

Gardeners should use stakes for climbing plants, such as tomatoes and beans.

Trees, vines and large permanent shrubs are not suitable for individual plots because they may block sun to other plots and are difficult to remove when a plot holder moves on. Large plants may be suitable for communal areas and gardeners are encouraged to ask the Committee if they would like to plant large plants suitable for communal areas.

Gardeners should not cultivate plants that are on the Invasive Plant list on the Department of Primary Industries Victoria website.

Gardeners are not to cultivate plants that are prone to escape to other plots or difficult to remove such as jasmine, Jerusalem artichokes and mint. Some of these plants may be suitable for communal areas and gardeners are encouraged to suggest them to the Committee.

9.3 Soil

Gardeners are encouraged to improve the condition of the soil in their plot, putting nutrients back into the soil after every season by adding manure, compost and mulch.

Gardeners must not remove soil from individual plots or communal beds whether in use or vacant.

9.4 Sharing and selling produce

Garden plots are available for personal use only. Gardeners are not permitted to sell plants or produce grown in the Garden.

Gardeners are encouraged to swap produce with other gardeners and to share it with the local community.

Gardeners must not take produce or plants from another gardener's plot without their direct permission.

The Committee may sell plants or produce from communal beds from time to time to raise money for the MCCG.

10. COMMON GARDEN BEDS AND PUBLIC AREAS

All gardeners are expected to help with the care, maintenance and development of common garden beds and public areas in the Garden.

We encourage 'active gardening' including:

- Report leaking taps, damage to the gardens, lost or broken equipment to the committee
- Removing weeds on the border of garden plots and pathways adjacent to garden beds and external fence line.
- Picking up and disposing of any rubbish around the garden.
- Turning the contents of the compost bays and keeping an eye out for inappropriate contents.
- Participating in at least one (1) Working Bee/ Clean Up per year (this does not necessarily mean heavy labour), or joining one of the teams responsible for specific areas such as the sensory garden, the communal beds and the compost system,
- Attending plot holder meetings.

Communal beds are for communal use and harvests from communal beds are shared among the gardeners. Information about communal plants and harvests is displayed on the black board. Ask the garden manager or a member of the Garden Management Team if you have any questions.

Gardeners are encouraged to identify areas of improvement at the garden. If gardeners have ideas for specific projects (such as art or further construction) they are encouraged to get in touch with the garden manager or committee.

11. COMPOST AND WASTE

There is a recycling bin provided by council which gardeners are encouraged to use, if the bin is full gardeners should put the bin out for collection (Monday evening for Tuesday mornings) and it is asked that gardeners bring the bin in once it is empty and place the bin back in the locked storage tank area.

We have compost bays for garden waste and black compost bins for kitchen waste. We encourage gardeners to use them as they help to reduce household waste, and support the production of good compost for use in garden plots. If you need advice about using the compost facilities contact the committee.

Gardeners are asked to chop up or break up plant matter into small pieces before adding to the compost bays using the palette and shovel provided as this will assist in the composting process. Only waste that can easily decompose should be placed in the bins or bays. Do not put meat, fish or chicken in the compost bins. Wood, plastic bags, or tin cans should not be added to the compost.

We distribute compost to plot holders periodically, with preference given to those who have assisted in maintaining the compost system.

Recyclables such as plastic, polystyrene foam boxes and tin cans should be placed in the recycling bin. Gardeners are asked to keep an eye on the bin to ensure it is put out on rubbish day (Tuesday am) when full, and brought back in.

Keep paper and cardboard in the shed for use in mulching and compost.
Gardeners should take all other rubbish home or otherwise dispose of it off-site.

12. WATER MANAGEMENT

Gardeners should conserve water in the garden. Hoses should be hand held and shouldn't be left in plots running unattended. We encourage gardeners to use water from the water tank with watering cans. Signs will be erected to advise gardeners if for some reason they are unable to access tank water. Gardeners are encouraged to use the tank water in preference to mains water, when it is available. The committee monitors the water level in the tank and may at times restrict tank water being used by gardeners if the water level is below a third full (there is a very small catchment space compared with tank size). Watering cans only should be used for tank water. Either check the black board or simply try the tap marked rainwater to see if rain water is available.

13. CONTROL OF GARDEN PESTS

Gardeners are not to use insecticides, **herbicides or toxic chemicals** for pests and weeds. Gardeners can use safe, environmentally friendly products such as garlic or rhubarb sprays. Please ask the committee if you have any queries.

14. GARDEN TOOLS

Gardeners should provide their own tools e.g., hand trowels. Larger gardening tools are locked in the shed. These tools are for the communal use of the gardeners and to be used only in the Garden.

Garden hoses need to be neatly packed away on allocated reels, or returned to storage shed if that is where they were found.

When using communal equipment please return it to the storage area and clean it if needed. Gardeners should report to the Committee if garden equipment is missing or broken.

15. PLOT HOLDER WORKSHOPS & MEETINGS

The committee and the Garden Management Team will endeavour to hold two plot holder meetings per year for the spring/summer season (in conjunction with the AGM) and the autumn/winter season. To update the plot holders on activities of the garden and gain input from plot holders on the management of the garden. There will also from time to time be workshops organised by the committee or plot holders that are deigned to share knowledge and skills amongst gardeners. Gardeners with ideas on suitable workshops are encouraged to contact the committee to discuss them.

17. AMENDMENTS TO RULES AND GUIDELINES

Members can propose amendments to these Rules at the AGM or a special meeting of the association.

Members proposing an amendment must provide it to the Committee who will then place them on the agenda for the next AGM or special meeting. The committee will circulate the proposed amendments to all members along with other the papers for the AGM at least 28 days prior to the meeting.

18. CONTACTING THE COMMITTEE

Gardeners can contact the committee via the website www.merricorner.org.au or via email info@merricorner.org.au. The Committee meet monthly so it may take some time to have your request/questions dealt with please remember the garden is run entirely by volunteers and is funded by the plot holder fees and other small contributions so are limited by these constraints.