



Bridge Housing's **Community Garden** Guidelines

A guide to growing successful gardens
and inclusive neighbourhoods



Acknowledgements

City of Sydney
Leichhardt Council Community Garden Policy
Royal Botanic Gardening Community Greening Program

This document draws on the 'Getting Started In Community Gardening – A guide to planning, design, and implementation of community garden projects' developed by the City of Sydney, the 'Community Gardening in South Australia Resource Kit' developed by the Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network (ACFCGN), the Leichhardt Council Community Garden Policy and the Royal Botanic Gardening Community Greening Program.

Contents

Introduction to the community garden guidelines	2
Getting started	3
Establishing a community gardening group	4
Designing and planning your community garden	5
Once your plan is approved	6
What if there is already a community garden in my block	7
What happens if the community garden fails	8
Ongoing support	8
Further information	8
Attachments	
Community garden application	9
Your garden plan	10
Dispute resolution guide	17



Introduction to the Community Garden Guidelines

Community gardens represent spaces of health, learning, sharing and enrich both the natural and build environment. Bridge Housing would like to improve the spaces in which our residents can come together, and we think community gardens are a great way to do this. The benefits of community gardening are well documented, and include:

- ▶ providing spaces where people can grow fresh, healthy food and participate in physical activity
- ▶ encouraging people to learn about growing plants , fresh food and composting and recycling
- ▶ providing a place where people can come together to socialise, solve problems and get to know each other
- ▶ improving the common areas in our blocks to be more productive and appealing

The Community Gardens Program was identified as a priority initiative under Building Bridges – Bridge Housing’s Community Building and Engagement Strategy 2014-2017. The program is part of the Our Place Green Space initiative which aims to “involve tenants in the provision and maintenance of appropriate and healthy housing” (Building Bridges p24).

The community garden guidelines aim to support tenant participation in garden projects that:

- ▶ provide opportunities to gain new skills in gardening and sustainability
- ▶ provide opportunities to engage with nature and improve health and wellbeing
- ▶ provide opportunities for tenants to grow their own food
- ▶ bring people together from a wide variety of backgrounds
- ▶ reduce social isolation.

The Bridge Housing Community Gardens Guidelines have been designed to assist and support residents who would like to establish a community garden at a Bridge Housing property. These guidelines provide advice on what residents can expect from Bridge Housing and what Bridge Housing expects from tenants when they are developing a community garden. Important details and processes are set out in these guidelines to ensure residents create inclusive and successful community gardens that are places of learning, sharing, relaxation and enjoyment.

Bridge Housing is ultimately responsible for and owns all community gardening infrastructure within its properties. The Guidelines outline the criteria that Bridge Housing will use to approve, alter or decommission any community gardens.

If you would like to make any alterations or changes to the communal area within your block, you must first seek permission in writing from Bridge Housing. If you are living in a block that has a community garden that has not been approved by Bridge Housing, please call Bridge Housing on **8324 0800** or email **community@bridgehousing.org.au**.



Getting Started

“You will find that good thinking and planning in the beginning pays off in the long run”

Anonymous



To ensure your community garden is successful, it is crucial that detailed planning and design is undertaken prior to the garden being established. Bridge Housing will support residents who would like to initiate a community garden to plan, design and promote their community garden to other residents within their block, as well as other community members and organisations.

The first steps to getting your community garden started

It is important to establish a strong foundation for your community garden. This doesn't mean establishing a strong garden bed, but ensuring that sufficient thought is put into the planning, design and organisational structure that your community garden will have.

Ask yourself these questions to see if a community garden is right for you and your block:

- ▶ is there sufficient space in your block to support a community garden?
- ▶ do you think there will be enough interest from other residents in the block to share the work involved to maintain a community garden?
- ▶ are you willing to work with other residents in the block to create and maintain a garden?
- ▶ are you willing to commit enough of your time to tend to a community garden?
- ▶ do you agree with Bridge Housing's Community Garden Aims and Objectives (these can be found on page 4)?

If you answered YES to all of these questions, you're ready to move onto the next step involved in setting up your community garden.

Establishing a community garden group

You will need to

- ▶ Conduct a letterbox drop asking your neighbours if they would like to get involved in a community garden
- ▶ Establish a community gardening group with (at least 2) interested people in your block
- ▶ Nominate two people from your group to be the main contacts for your community garden
- ▶ As a group, complete the 'Community Garden Application' and return it to Bridge Housing (see Attachment one page 11)

Bridge Housing will

- ▶ Assess your application
- ▶ Notify you of the outcome within 14 days

Information you might need to consider

Community gardens are as much about people as they are about the garden itself. Sustainable community gardens are built on a sense of community and have broad participation by local residents. Community gardens can not succeed on the enthusiasm of one person alone. Establishing a gardening group in your block is a very important step in the groundwork of creating a great community garden.

To start a community garden with Bridge Housing there needs to be at least two residents in your block who are interested in taking the project on. If you are interested in starting a community garden you will need to speak with your neighbours in your block to generate some interest. This can be done in many ways, but we suggest dropping a letter or note in everyone's letterbox or talking to your neighbours face to face. If you find this difficult, Bridge Housing can support you in setting up a block meeting in order to discuss the idea with other residents in your block.

Bridge Housing understands that you may not get on with all your neighbours, but in order for the community garden to work, all residents in the block must be given the opportunity to participate. After all, all residents in the block are entitled to use the common areas.

What if no-one is interested?

If you are having difficulty establishing a community garden group, or the communal area within your block is unsuitable, Bridge Housing can help you locate an existing community garden in your area. For example, the City of Sydney have 22 community gardens and Marrickville Council have 10 community gardens scattered throughout their local areas that you could get involved with. Other local councils may also have various opportunities for you to get involved. Jump onto your council's website, or call their main phone number to speak with someone who can help you and direct you to an established community garden. Or visit www.theurbangardener.com.au or communitygarden.org.au to find a community garden near you!

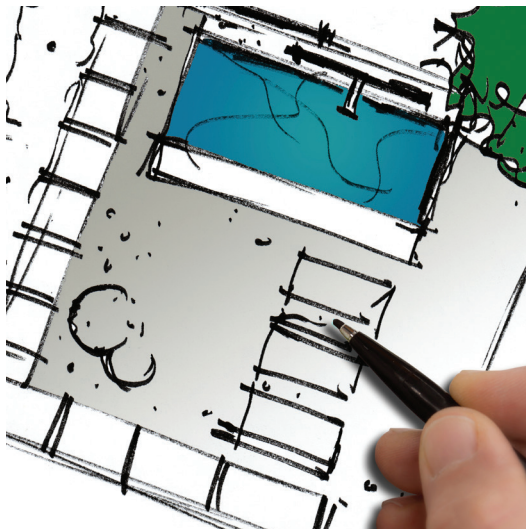
Designing and planning your community garden

Once you have received approval to plan a garden your group needs to:

- ▶ organise a gardening workshop to create a plan for your garden with the assistance of the Community Greening Program and Bridge Housing
- ▶ complete the 'Garden Plan' application (see Attachment two page 12.)
- ▶ submit your Garden Plan to Bridge Housing for approval.

Bridge Housing will

- ▶ assess your garden plan
- ▶ notify you of the outcome within 21 days.



Information you might need to consider

Designing the community gardening site is an important step in the process. A good design will make managing the garden in the future much easier. Once you have generated interest in your block to start a community garden, and have formed a community gardening group, Bridge Housing will hold an initial community garden meeting. We will also invite our community gardens partner – the Royal Botanic Gardens Community Greening Program along for a planning workshop.

At this planning workshop, Bridge Housing, the Community Gardening Program and members of the gardening group will decide what kind of community garden will work well in the space available. The size of community gardens will be proportionate with the number of tenants that are interested in setting up a garden club.

As a group you will also need to come up with rules that are specific to your garden, for example, when will you need to meet to work on the garden or who will water the garden. This will form part of 'Your Gardening Guide' on page 11. Bridge Housing will then assess your garden plan and will let you know whether it is approved, or if not, let you know why. Depending on the reason for Bridge Housing not approving your application, you may be given the opportunity to change your garden plan and resubmit.

Once your plan is approved

Bridge Housing will

- ▶ contact the nominated person to notify them of them of any special conditions for starting or running the garden
- ▶ supply the nominated person with a community garden tool kit to support the garden, which contains:
 - 1 x Garden Hose
 - 1 x Watering can
 - 2 x Pairs of gardening gloves
 - 1 x Garden spade
 - 1x Garden fork
 - 1 x Multi purpose bucket
 - 1 x Pair of secateurs
 - 1 x Light weight shovel
 - 1 x Mat for kneeling on
 - 1 x Storage container
- ▶ write to everyone in the block informing them that the garden has been approved and that anyone interested should talk to the nominated contacted person
- ▶ once Bridge has notified everyone in the block you can start working on the garden.

Funding is available from Bridge Housing for new gardening groups to purchase garden beds, pots, plants, soil, and additional gardening equipment. Bridge Housing will purchase some of the initial materials and equipment that is needed to start up your garden, in line with the approved garden plan that you have submitted. Residents can also purchase their own plants and accessories for their community gardens, in consultation with the gardening group. Residents are expected to maintain their community gardens, in line with these guidelines, without assistance from Bridge Housing.

Additional Funding

Many councils support the idea of community gardens and often offer funding to community gardening groups to support them. Bridge Housing can support you in searching and applying for additional funding for your garden.

What if there is already a community garden in my block?

You will need to:

- ▶ let Bridge Housing know if you have an existing community garden in your block
- ▶ complete an application for a Bridge Housing Community Garden
- ▶ submit your Application to Bridge Housing for approval.

Bridge Housing will

- ▶ Add your garden to the register of Bridge Housing Community Gardens
- ▶ Visit your garden on an annual basis
- ▶ Help you to organise a workshop with Community Greening Program if you wish to.

If you already have a community garden in your block it is important to let Bridge Housing know. We need to make sure that it is a safe place for residents and that it is not damaging the communal area of your property. If you have any questions about your existing community garden or would like to register your community garden, please call the Community Team at Bridge Housing on **02 8324 0800** or email **community@bridgehousing.org.au**.



What happens if your community garden fails?

You will need to

- ▶ Let Bridge Housing know if there are any issues with the community garden or if the community garden falls into disrepair.

Bridge Housing may decide to “decommission” a garden at any time. If so Bridge Housing will:

- ▶ notify tenants that the garden is being decommissioned
- ▶ engage a contractor to return the garden bed to it’s previous state
- ▶ collect tools and equipment purchased for the garden.

Bridge Housing will monitor and assess all community gardens on an ongoing basis. Bridge Housing may “decommission” a garden if any of the following happens:

- ▶ the garden falls into disrepair
- ▶ the garden has caused damage to the property or surrounding properties
- ▶ the garden is the source of neighbourhood disputes
- ▶ unsafe gardening practises are used such as the application of dangerous chemicals
- ▶ tools are not stored properly
- ▶ the garden is frequently vandalised.

Following your progress

Bridge Housing will

- ▶ Visit your garden once per year
- ▶ Keep a register of all community gardens across Bridge Housing.



Further Information

Further information can be found by visiting your local library or searching on the internet. Some good places to start are:

- ▶ *Getting Started In Community Gardening: A guide to planning, design and implementation of community garden projects* by the City of Sydney: **www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au** or call the Community Gardens Coordinator on **9265 9786**
- ▶ *The Good practice guide for community gardens by Cultivating Community 2002*: **www.communitygarden.org.au**
- ▶ *Community Gardens Manual by Sustainable Gardening Australia*: **www.sgaonline.org.au**.

Or you can ring Bridge Housing’s Community Development Officer on **8324 0827** or email **community@bridgehousing.org.au**.

Attachment 1. Community Garden Application

Address	
Location of garden onsite	
Did you ask your neighbours if they wanted to get involved with the community garden?	
Were there any objections from your neighbours?	
Proposed meeting days and times	
Nominated contact person Please include contact phone number and address	Name: Address: Contact No:
Second Nominated contact person Please include contact phone number and address	Name: Address: Contact No:

Nominated contact person - I have read, understand and agree to adhere to the terms and conditions for the creation of a community garden	Signature: Date:
---	-------------------------

Internal Use Only	Comments:
Community Development Officer Name _____ Date _____	
Director of Housing Name _____ Date _____	
Director of Assets Name _____ Date _____	
Sustainable Communities Manager Name _____ Date _____	

Attachment 2. Your Garden Plan

1. Contact Details

Address	
Nominate two contact people for your garden:	
Person 1.	Person 2.
Name:	Name:
Phone number:	Phone number:
Email address:	Email address:
This is where you start planning you gardening. This plan contains:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ A checklist for your group to fill out to decide on what kind of garden you would like▶ A risk checklist for your garden▶ Rules for your garden▶ A space to plan your community garden▶ Additional equipment or special conditions▶ Dispute Resolution▶ Decommissioning Gardens	

2. Garden Checklist

What is the main purpose of the community garden?
<input type="checkbox"/> A place for people to get to know each other
<input type="checkbox"/> A place where people can bring their children
<input type="checkbox"/> A place to access freshly grown food
<input type="checkbox"/> A place to grow non edible plants
<input type="checkbox"/> A place where people can learn gardening techniques
<input type="checkbox"/> Other purpose (please list)
What types of plants will we grow in the garden?
<input type="checkbox"/> Vegetables <input type="checkbox"/> Herbs <input type="checkbox"/> Fruit/ nut trees
<input type="checkbox"/> Flowers/ Shrubs <input type="checkbox"/> Berry fruit shrubs <input type="checkbox"/> Medicinal plants (must be legal)
<input type="checkbox"/> Bush foods Herbal tea plants <input type="checkbox"/> Native or indigenous plants
What does the garden group need to know more about
<input type="checkbox"/> What kind of plants to grow and when <input type="checkbox"/> Improving soil quality
<input type="checkbox"/> Using mulch <input type="checkbox"/> Pest management
<input type="checkbox"/> Seed growing and saving <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking using the food that is grown

How will we garden?

Organic

Non organic

Reasons...

Any other comments about what kind of garden your group would like?

3. The Risks in Your Garden

While Bridge Housing and the Community Greening Program will aim to design a garden that is safe, you shouldn't underestimate that a serious injury or accident could happen in a community garden. You can use this space to identify any risks in your garden and identify how you will manage them.

**1. Are there any potential hazards or safety risks in your garden? If yes, where and what are they?
Can they be made less of a risk?**

2. Do you intend to use chemicals in your garden? Please outline what chemicals you intend to use and how these will be safely stored.

3. How will you safely store your garden tools?

4. Who will be responsible for the tools?

4. Rules for your garden

Bridge Housing has come up with some standard rules that we expect all of our residents to follow.

Residents must agree to:

▶ **Be inclusive**

Make sure the community garden is open to all residents in the block and that they are able to participate in the community garden. The community garden is there for all residents to enjoy.

▶ **Share garden produce**

Gardeners should be willing to share their produce with the whole block. Everyone on the block needs to respect the work of the gardeners and ask the contact person if they may use some of the produce. If you use the produce regularly you should be prepared to do your bit to help the garden thrive.

▶ **Manage conflict**

Take the time to discuss and resolve any issues that may arise from the community garden and always treat other residents with respect and listen to all points of view at all times. You must also follow the dispute resolution guide - Attachment 1: Dispute Resolution Guide

▶ **Take responsibility**

Take responsibility for, and commit sufficient time to, the community garden to ensure it is successful. You also need to be responsible for your actions, whether that is in the way you interact with other group members or that you are working in a safe way in the garden.

▶ **Communicate**

Meet with other community garden group members on a regular basis and make sure Bridge Housing is notified if the community garden falls into disrepair or if there are any other issues.

▶ **Be flexible and open to suggestions**

Often, different people have different views on what they would like to see happen. Remember to listen to other points of view and compromise often.

▶ **Be realistic**

It may not be possible to do what you would like to do, for example, it might not be possible to do something due to the amount of funding available or because there is too much interference in other residents' rights to use the common area.

▶ **Review and evaluate**

To ensure that your community garden is going in the direction that you intended it to, make sure you are constantly reviewing and evaluating. This will give your group a chance to see if what you are doing aligns with your garden's aims and objectives.

As a group, you might also want to come up with some rules that are specific to your garden such as when you will meet to work on the garden or who will water the garden.

Rule 1.

Rule 2.

Rule 3.

Rule 4.

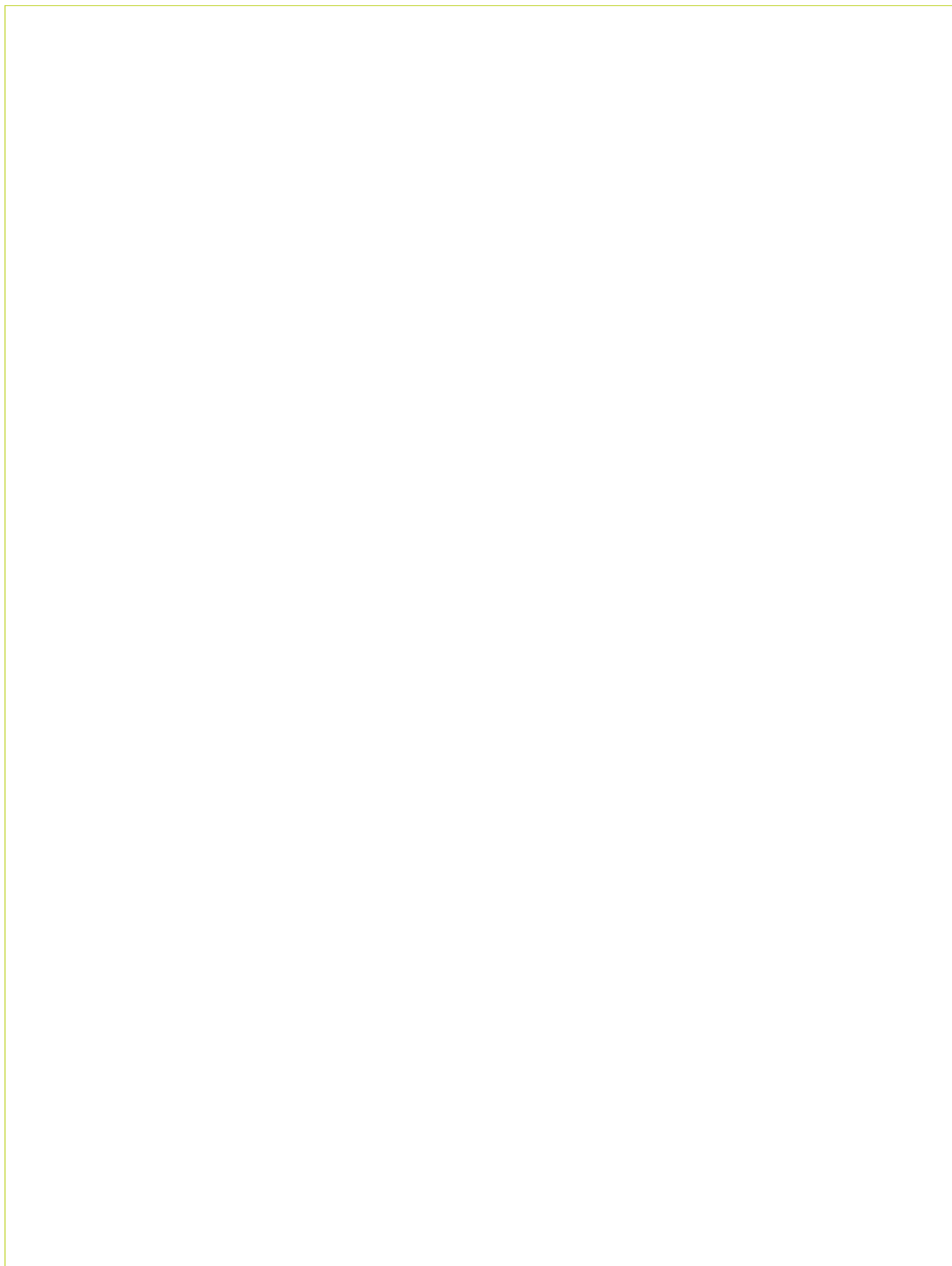
Rule 5.

To ensure that your community garden is going in the direction that you intended it to, make sure you review what you are doing and how you are doing it on a regular basis. If you need some advice call the Community Development Officer on **8324 0827** or **community@bridgehousing.org.au**.



5. What would you like your garden to look like?

Use this space to come up with a layout for your community garden. Don't forget to put in your building, existing gardens and trees, walls / fences and any other permanent items.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for drawing a garden layout. The box is currently blank.

6. Additional equipment or special conditions

1. If your garden is approved you will be supplied with a community garden kit containing:

- ▶ 1 x Garden Hose
- ▶ 1 x Watering can
- ▶ 2 x Pairs of gardening gloves
- ▶ 1 x Garden spade
- ▶ 1x Garden fork
- ▶ 1 x Multi purpose bucket
- ▶ 1 x Pair of secateurs
- ▶ 1 x Light weight shovel
- ▶ 1 x Mat for kneeling on
- ▶ 1 x Storage container

2. Is there anything else you need to establish your community garden?

Please be specific with your request.

7. Dispute Resolution

Have all the members of the gardening group read, and agreed to the rules outlined above?

Yes No

Please ensure that everyone also reads Attachment 3 - Dispute Resolution Guide

8. Decommissioning

Have all the members of the gardening group read and agreed to the decommissioning rules on page 9?

Yes No

Office use only		
Comments Community Team		
Approved Community Team	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Name	Date	
Technical Officer Comments/Further Work Required		
Estimated Costs:		
Approved Assets - Technical Officer	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Name	Date	
Approved - Director of Assets:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Name	Date	
Garden approved with conditions:		
Approved - Sustainable Communities Manager :	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Name	Date	
Contact person notified:	Name	Date
Block notified:	Name	Date
Garden Plan registered on SDM:	Name	Date

Attachment 3. Dispute Resolution Guide

We expect all tenants and residents to treat each other with respect and not to engage in anti-social behaviour towards one another. To try and reduce the risk of disputes occurring in your community garden, you should:

- ▶ Ensure respectful communication is used between all group members and with other residents in your block
- ▶ Discuss disagreements openly and respectfully with everyone concerned
- ▶ Be open to compromise
- ▶ Consider using an external mediation service to help try and resolve issues (Bridge Housing can help you get in contact with the Community Justice Centre, or you can call them directly on freecall 1800 990 777).

Bridge Housing has a Good Neighbour Policy about managing conflicts and disputes, and in the first instance we urge residents to approach the person in question directly. You might be surprised at the outcome of speaking with your neighbour about the problem you are experiencing, and it may be resolved without having to speak with Bridge Housing. However, if are unable to approach the person you are having a dispute with, you will need to follow the process outlined in the Good Neighbour Policy and Fact Sheet, which is available on our website www.bridgehousing.org.au.