

The
**GreenThumb
Gardeners'
Handbook**
2021



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How to Read the GreenThumb Gardeners' Handbook

The 2021 Edition of the GreenThumb Gardeners' Handbook is intended to be a resource for community gardeners and the general public by answering frequently asked questions regarding a variety of topics, including event planning, construction work, accepting donations, selling garden produce, tree pruning, garden bylaws, and much more. The handbook aggregates many, but not all, GreenThumb, NYC Parks, New York City, and New York State best practices, policies, and laws that govern community gardens in the GreenThumb network, and helps gardeners in stewarding active and safe GreenThumb community gardens that bring neighbors together. Gardeners have helped to inform policies, guidelines, and protocols included in this Handbook, and GreenThumb is grateful for the immense time and grassroots effort community gardeners put into making gardens beautiful, productive, and community-centric for more than 40 years. In an effort to support gardeners in creating and sustaining these thriving public spaces, the Handbook is available to all garden members and members of the public in digital form in multiple languages on [our website](#).¹

COVID-19

As we complete this update to the GreenThumb Gardeners' Handbook, the world continues to suffer with the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has significantly impacted New York City government and many of our partners, leading to operational and programming changes, including to some of the resources included herein. While we hope that these impacts are temporary, we encourage you to visit the [GreenThumb website](#) for the latest updates related to COVID-19.

Please visit the official [City of New York COVID-19 Citywide Information Portal](#)² for more information on testing, food assistance, housing, and much more.

Community Gardens under NYC Parks vs. non-Parks gardens

Community gardens that operate on property owned by the City of New York and under the jurisdiction of NYC Parks are subject to NYC Parks rules and regulations, whereas community gardens that are not under the jurisdiction of NYC Parks and which operate on property under the ownership or jurisdiction of a land trust, private property owner, or a different city, state, or federal agency, are not subject to NYC Parks rules and regulations. We do our best in this Handbook to be clear when a policy or law applies only to gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction. For a complete set of rules and regulations for community gardens under jurisdictions other than NYC Parks, please confer with the respective city or state agency, land trust, or property owner.

Chapter Set-up

Each chapter of this handbook has all or some of these standard sections, with some exceptions:

- Introduction
- Guidelines
- GreenThumb policy
- NYC Parks Policy
- NYC and NY State Law
- Additional Resources

¹ Visit the GreenThumb website at nyc.gov/parks/greenthumb

² City of New York COVID-19 Citywide Information Portal: nyc.gov/covid19

This method of organization is meant to differentiate between GreenThumb policy and protocol, which is often just for community gardens under NYC Parks, and additional laws that regulate community garden practices.

Translation Requests

You may request to have portions or the entire GreenThumb Gardeners' Handbook translated into any language through your [Outreach Coordinator](#). For accessibility information, contact GreenThumb at greenthumbinfo@parks.nyc.gov.

GreenThumb Overview

Established in 1978, NYC Parks GreenThumb is proud to be the nation's largest municipally led urban gardening program, assisting over 550 gardens and over 20,000 volunteer gardeners throughout New York City. GreenThumb gardens create hubs of neighborhood pride and provide a myriad of environmental, health, economic, and social benefits to the neighborhoods in which they thrive.

The majority of GreenThumb gardens were abandoned lots transformed by volunteers into green spaces for relaxation, socializing, and growing food, or a combination. These community gardens are managed by neighborhood residents with GreenThumb support. Together GreenThumb and community gardeners make the city safer, healthier, stronger, and more sustainable.

GreenThumb supports and educates community gardeners and urban farmers across the five boroughs, while preserving open space. By providing free garden materials, technical assistance, educational workshops, and seasonal programs, GreenThumb supports neighborhood volunteers who steward community gardens as active resources that strengthen communities.

GreenThumb has three teams that supports gardeners and gardens:

Community Engagement

GreenThumb's Community Engagement team is the first point of contact for our network of community gardens. Outreach Coordinators assist gardeners with community organizing and development, and they also help garden groups with special projects and connecting gardeners with a variety of available resources. In addition, the Community Engagement Team administers the Youth Leadership Council, GreenThumb's annual volunteer program that engages youth in civic engagement and beautification projects at community gardens throughout the city.

Operations

GreenThumb Operations is our boots-on-the-ground team that provides material and operational support to community gardens. In addition, they support garden groups with handling a wide variety of property management issues. You may find them delivering clean topsoil and lumber, building new gardens from the ground up, preparing garden sites for planting, making repairs, caring for trees in gardens, or scoping projects in gardens. The Operations team also manages deliveries and seasonal supply distributions that provide gardeners with the tools, plants, and gardening materials they need to grow.

Planning and Programs

GreenThumb's Planning and Programs team lays the groundwork for GreenThumb's long-term success and provides gardeners access to technical skills, support, and resources needed to flourish. In addition to leading GreenThumb's effort to expand our reach and impact, this team oversees the annual GreenThumb GrowTogether conference, Harvest Fair, Open Garden Day NYC, and other large public events and programs. They also host 150+ workshops and numerous volunteer projects. The Planning and Programs team implements grants and produces quarterly publications that advertise GreenThumb's programs to gardeners and the general public. They also oversee data analysis and complicated projects such as new garden builds and provide a variety of services to community gardeners.

How to get news from GreenThumb:

- [Subscribe](#) to our email newsletter³
- Follow us on social media:
 - Instagram: @greenthumbgrows
 - Twitter: @greenthumbgrows
 - Facebook: facebook.com/GreenThumbNYC
 - YouTube: youtube.com/GreenThumbNYC

³ Subscribe to the GreenThumb newsletter at greenthumb.nycgovparks.org/newsletter_signup.html

Glossary of Terms and Definitions

Active Member – While all garden groups define membership differently, GreenThumb generally understands an “active member” to be someone who regularly participates in the upkeep of the garden, attends garden meetings, and/or helps the garden hold open hours.

Animal Nuisance – As defined in the NYC Health Code, animal nuisances include, but are not limited to, “animal feces, urine, blood, body parts, carcasses, vomitus, and pervasive odors; animals that carry or are ill with contagious diseases communicable to persons or other animals; and dangerous dogs. A beekeeping nuisance shall mean conditions that include, but are not limited to, aggressive or objectionable bee behaviors, hive placement, or bee movement that interferes with pedestrian traffic or persons residing on or adjacent to the hive premises; and overcrowded, deceased, or abandoned hives.”

Borough-Block-Lot (BBL) Number — BBL numbers identify the locations of buildings or properties, also known as tax lots. The borough number (Manhattan: 1, Bronx: 2, Brooklyn: 3, Queens: 4, and Staten Island: 5) indicates the borough, block number (1 to 5 digits) indicates the city block; the lot number (1 to 3 digits) indicates the lot within the block.

City of New York (City) – The government of New York City.

Community Board (CB) — A local representative body selected by the Borough President and City Council Members within that Community District. Zoning changes, building permits, and other land-use issues come before the CB for review, including the creation of a new garden. CBs are organized in committees; community gardening matters are usually discussed in the Parks and Environmental committees/subcommittees.

Community Garden – Publicly accessible open space that is stewarded collectively by a group of volunteers. These spaces may use shared or individual plots and may grow botanical plants, fruits, and/or vegetables. Community gardens and the gardeners who steward them contribute to the environmental sustainability, public health, and community resilience of their neighborhoods and cities.

Cubic Yard – A measurement of volume in the shape of a cube that is 3 ft. x 3 ft. x 3 ft.

Department of Sanitation (DSNY) — The city agency charged with waste collection and disposal. DSNY also assists with major cleanups for garden sites coordinated through GreenThumb. The NYC Compost Project is a project of DSNY.

Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) – The city agency that manages the city's water supply and works to reduce air, noise, and hazardous materials pollution. DEP issues hydrant permits to NYC community gardens annually.

Fiscal Sponsor — An organization that receives grants or funds on behalf of a group that does not have the ability to do so. These organizations are typically registered as 501(c)(3) nonprofits and are tax-exempt. Local nonprofits or greening partner organizations are sometimes able to act as a fiscal sponsor on behalf of a community garden group. GreenThumb is not able to serve as a fiscal sponsor.

Garden Contacts — A GreenThumb garden group's designated liaisons with GreenThumb. GreenThumb requires every garden to provide a primary and secondary contact that will serve as contact people. Both contact people must provide current phone numbers, mailing addresses, and email addresses (if available), which may be shared when GreenThumb receives public inquiries about contacting the garden group. Garden contacts are designated by each group and are not necessarily the designated leaders of the group.

Good Standing — A GreenThumb registered and/or licensed community garden group that operates in compliance with the GreenThumb Registration Agreement and/or License Agreement and does not have any outstanding violations. Gardens that are not in good standing are not eligible to receive support from GreenThumb.

Greening Partner — Nonprofits, grassroots organizations, botanical gardens, and other organizations that provide events, workshops, materials, and other support for community gardens.

GreenThumb Garden Group (“garden group”) – A group of individuals that collectively receives support from GreenThumb to care for a community garden that is registered with GreenThumb.

GreenThumb Garden Recognition Awards – GreenThumb has honored GreenThumb garden groups and partners for their hard work and dedication through the GreenThumb Garden Recognition Awards since 2016. Gardeners can submit nominations for a variety of award categories in the summer through the program guide or the GreenThumb website.

GreenThumb Operations — Formerly known as the Land Restoration Project (LRP), GreenThumb Operations is an integral part of GreenThumb, taking on large-scale projects such as soil and lumber delivery, fence construction and repair, tree planting and pruning, pathway construction and repair, and other tasks to support the operation and maintenance of GreenThumb gardens.

GrowNYC School Gardens — The citywide school garden initiative for NYC. Established in 2010, GrowNYC School Gardens is managed today through a partnership between GrowNYC, NYC Parks GreenThumb, and the Department of Education’s Office of School Food. GrowNYC School Gardens provides the ongoing resources, technical assistance, and training to get learning gardens growing in every NYC school.

Land Trust – Many community gardens are on properties owned by a land trust, which is an organization that conserves and stewards land for a specific purpose, often stated in the organization’s mission. In NYC, several land trusts own the properties underlying community gardens, to be preserved as community-managed open space in perpetuity. Land trusts in New York City include but are not limited to the Bronx Land Trust (BLT), Brooklyn Alliance of Neighborhood Gardens (BANG), Brooklyn Queens Land Trust (BQLT), Manhattan Land Trust (MLT), and New York Restoration Project (NYRP). Land trusts provide gardens on their property with technical support and organizing assistance, such as environmental education and programming. Most land trust gardens in New York City have gardens that are registered with GreenThumb.

License Agreement and Licensed Community Garden Group — The GreenThumb License Agreement (“License”) grants a GreenThumb Garden Group on property under NYC Parks jurisdiction legal permission to garden on NYC Parks property. The licensed garden groups of the renewable four-year License Agreement (referenced as Licensed Community Garden Group) must operate in accordance with the Agreement and the garden governance as indicated in the group’s bylaws.

Licensee - The Licensee of the GreenThumb License Agreement is the garden group named on the License Agreement. (See GreenThumb Garden Group)

Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) – Garden groups on property that is not under the jurisdiction of NYC Parks that want to register with GreenThumb are required to sign an MOA. The MOA ensures that the garden group agrees to adhere to certain minimum requirements in operating a publicly accessible open space and community garden in exchange for receiving free support from GreenThumb.

Open Hours — Licensed and/or registered GreenThumb Gardens must remain open and accessible to the public for a minimum of 20 hours per week during the official GreenThumb garden season from April 1 through October 31. A sign with a schedule indicating at least 10 of those 20 hours a week must be posted on the garden gate. For garden groups operating under the GreenThumb License Agreement, GreenThumb Gardens must be open for at least five hours each weekend (Saturday and/or Sunday) during the season. Posted hours can be changed with reasonable notice to GreenThumb.

Outreach Coordinator (OC) — First point of contact at GreenThumb for community gardeners. Each OC is responsible for communicating and sharing information with the garden contacts on a geographic basis. Each OC completes Annual Outreach Coordinator Garden Visits at all gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction, helping GreenThumb understand the needs of the gardeners. They also facilitate workshops,

plan and manage events, and assist gardeners by coordinating supply deliveries, supporting garden group development and organizational structure, and providing technical assistance. For a staff directory, please check the [GreenThumb website](#).⁴

Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) — PEP personnel are uniformed, shielded (with NYC Special Patrolman and New York State Peace Officer status) officers who provide security and safety in city parks, provide information about Parks rules to park patrons, and safeguard Parks wildlife and facilities. PEP officers are empowered to enforce the NYS Penal Code, NYC Health Code, and NYC Parks Rules & Regulations. PEP officers are responsible for protecting city property under NYC Parks jurisdiction and ensuring safety for people who use it. They may be contacted regarding violations or offenses that occur at NYC Parks gardens and parks. To report an issue to PEP, call 311. In case of an emergency, please dial 911.

Primary and Secondary Contacts – Please see “Garden Contacts.”

Program Guide — Quarterly guides produced and distributed by GreenThumb that include information about upcoming GreenThumb and greening partner events, workshops, supply distributions, gardening news, and other gardener services. To download a digital version of the program guide, please check the [GreenThumb website](#).

Registered Community Garden Group and Registration Packet — Community garden groups across the city, regardless of land jurisdiction, may be eligible to register with GreenThumb and receive free support from us. To do so, garden groups must adhere to several requirements that ensure that the garden is publicly accessible and aligned with GreenThumb’s mission. Interested gardens should contact GreenThumb to inquire about eligibility to complete a Registration Packet and join the GreenThumb network.

School Garden – An educational garden managed by a school. School gardens may register with the GrowNYC School Gardens citywide school garden initiative for NYC. The GrowNYC School Gardens program has Outreach Coordinators who are the main points of contact for school gardens in NYC.

⁴ GreenThumb Staff Contact List: https://greenthumb.nycgovparks.org/staff_list.html

General Information

Contact Information

- **Phone:** (212) 602-5300
- **Email:** greenthumbinfo@parks.nyc.gov
- **Website:** nyc.gov/parks/greenthumb
- **Facebook:** GreenThumbNYC
- **Instagram:** @greenthumbgrows
- **Twitter:** @greenthumbgrows

Gardening Support

GreenThumb gardens in good standing are eligible to receive various gardening supplies and resources throughout the year. Gardeners are no longer required to attend workshops before requesting supplies.

Soil, Compost, Wood Chips, and Mulch

Gardens can request topsoil, compost, mulch, wood chips, and/or clean fill from GreenThumb. To receive these supplies, the garden contact must complete a Materials Request Form, available through your Outreach Coordinator. GreenThumb will then follow up with an update on supply availability and to schedule a delivery, which could take several weeks or even months, depending on the availability of the materials and staff. Please note that these deliveries are “bulk deliveries,” meaning the material will be in a pile, not in bags, unless otherwise noted by GreenThumb Operations or your Outreach Coordinator.

MATERIAL		
Type	Description	Purpose
Soil	Topsoil is a mix of sand, silt, and clay, with some organic matter	Use this to fill your raised beds and other growing areas. The minerals provide structure, drainage, and nutrients, while the organic matter supplies additional nutrients and water retention.
Compost	Decomposed organic matter that is high in nutrients and beneficial microbes.	Incorporate some DSNY compost into your raised beds to add nutrition and boost soil life. Compost may also help prevent the uptake of heavy metals into your fruit and vegetable plants.
Composted Horse Manure	Composted horse manure	High in nitrogen, this compost can be a great fertilizer for plants. Subject to availability.
Mulch	Finely ground wood chips	Keep your perennial plants healthy by adding mulch to the surface of the surrounding soil to prevent weed growth and keep the soil moist.
Wood Chips	Wood Chips (large chips, not fine mulch)	Cover your paths with woodchips (at least 3 inches deep) to keep dust down and prevent exposure to heavy metals. Also a great bulking agent for compost. 1 cubic yard will cover 100 square feet when spread 3 inches deep.

<p>Clean Fill PUREsoil NYC</p>	<p>Low-nutrient soil</p>	<p>Clean fill is good for filling holes or leveling the garden and has no nutritional value for plants. It can be amended with compost to produce a growing medium. Managed under the Mayor's Office of Environmental Remediation's (MOER) PUREsoil NYC program, clean fill is excavated from deep below the ground during building construction in NYC. More information on the use of clean fill can be found at nyc.gov/oer. Subject to availability, but if you are interested, please contact your Outreach Coordinator directly.</p>
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Quantities for woodchip, mulch, soil, and clean fill deliveries

4 cubic yards (cy)



4 cy of woodchips pictured



Requires

- 10' wide gate
- 10' wide sidewalk for sidewalk drop

For woodchips spread 4" thick:

- covers a 15'x20' space or 300 sq. ft.

For soil:

- fills 2 raised beds*

7 cubic yards



7 cy of woodchips pictured



Requires:

- 10' wide gate
- 13' wide sidewalk for sidewalk drop

For woodchips spread 4" thick:

- covers a 23'x25' space or 575 sq. ft.

For soil:

- fills 3.5 raised beds*

14 cubic yards



14 cy of topsoil pictured



Requires:

- 10' wide gate
- Sidewalk drop not permitted

For woodchips spread 4" thick:

- covers a 33'x33' space or 1,089 sq. ft.

For soil:

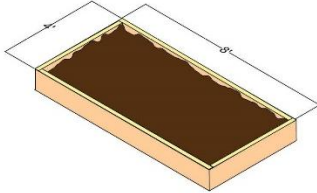
- fills 7 raised beds*

* indicates double raised beds measuring 8'x4'x20"

Quantities for lumber

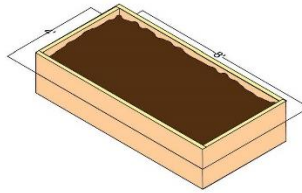
Single raised bed:

- 3 pieces of 8' x 10" x 2" lumber
- 1 cubic yard of soil



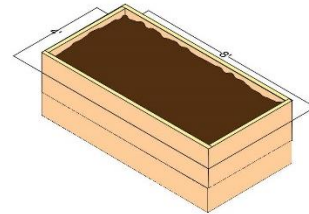
Double raised bed:

- 6 pieces of 8' x 10" x 2" lumber
- 2 cubic yard of soil



Triple raised bed:

- 9 pieces of 8' x 10" x 2" lumber
- 3 cubic yard of soil



Illustrations by Babbie Dunnington, NYC Parks GreenThumb

Lumber

Gardens can request untreated lumber from GreenThumb to build raised beds or other projects. If you have a larger project that requires more lumber, please speak with your Outreach Coordinator to determine availability.

Supply Distributions

GreenThumb organizes two large, seasonal supply distributions each year—one in the spring and one in the fall. Garden groups must be in good standing to be eligible to pick up or receive supplies.

Supplies we have given out in the past include:

Spring: Garbage bags, shovels, hoes, rakes, hoses, wheelbarrows, and other gardening equipment, bagged compost

Fall: Icebreakers, garbage bags, calcium chloride, snow shovels

Please note that materials vary each year and are subject to availability.

Supplies at GreenThumb Workshops

Some supplies are distributed at our workshops throughout the year. Workshops are listed in the quarterly GreenThumb Program Guide, which can be found on our [website](#), social media, and at GreenThumb events. You can also request to receive a printed copy in the mail through a [form on our website](#).⁵ Workshops are also listed in the GreenThumb [events calendar](#) on the website.

Sample supplies offered at workshops have included books, seed starting materials, season extension equipment, trellising equipment, hand pruners, and other gardening supplies.

Plant Material

GreenThumb offers community gardeners a limited amount of free plants once a year in the spring at our annual GreenThumb Plant Distribution. Each registered community garden group in good standing may pick up a variety of vegetable, herb, and native plant starts to share amongst their fellow gardeners, subject to availability.

⁵ Sign up to receive a hard copy of the GreenThumb Program Guide in the mail at bit.ly/GTProgramGuide

Keep an eye out for plant sales and giveaways by other greening partner organizations, including GrowNYC, Butterfly Project NYC, Bronx Green-Up of the New York Botanical Garden, New Yorkers for Parks, and New York Restoration Project. GrowNYC has an annual plant sale, Butterfly Project NYC and Bronx Green-Up offer free native plants, New Yorkers for Parks offers free daffodil bulbs, Brooklyn Botanic Garden offers bulbs and other plants to community gardens registered in their alliance, New York Restoration Project offers free trees through Million Trees NYC, and more.

If your garden has a special request for plants that fall outside of these opportunities, please talk to your Outreach Coordinator to determine if GreenThumb can help.

DSNY Compost Give-Backs

DSNY offers compost give-backs through the NYC Compost Project where gardeners can apply to receive pallets of bagged or bulk compost at their gardens. Look out for the application each January and/or February at nyc.gov/getcompost. A pallet includes 60 40-pound bags. Various greening partners distribute these bags as well if you need less than a pallet. GreenThumb typically distributes bags of compost at the Spring Supply Distribution, and some gardens host an annual compost give-back in the spring and the fall.

Public Programs

Each year, GreenThumb offers more than 150 educational workshops and large public events. Over 1,000 people attend our in-person events, and with our expansion into virtual webinars during the COVID-19 pandemic, our participation rates have tripled. All GreenThumb workshops, trainings, and events are free and open to the public.

GreenThumb GrowTogether Conference

Since 1984, GreenThumb has kicked off the growing season with our annual GreenThumb GrowTogether conference. The conference is a full day of speakers, workshops, hands-on activities, and networking, and is a great opportunity to celebrate the start of the garden season, catch up with old friends and meet community gardeners from across the city.

GreenThumb Harvest Fair

Each fall since 1979, GreenThumb has celebrated the hard work that NYC community gardeners commit to making the gardens spaces of abundance. This annual celebration honors community gardeners and greening partners from across the city for their work and gives them the opportunity to show off their harvest. The judges' favorite veggies, fruits, and flowers are awarded prestigious ribbons. At the annual Fresh Chef contest, gardeners compete to amaze judges and crowds with their kitchen improvisation skills using fresh ingredients, often provided directly by GreenThumb gardens. Like a block party, the GreenThumb Harvest Fair is a family-friendly event with hands-on workshops, recreation activities, and crafts.

GreenThumb Open Garden Day NYC

Each summer since 2018, GreenThumb encourages community gardeners to open their gates to the public on the same day with free activities, tours, performances, educational workshops, volunteer days, and more. Open Garden Day NYC inspires members of the public to learn about and join a community garden in their neighborhood.

GreenThumb Workshops

Throughout the year, GreenThumb offers workshops on a variety of topics from introductory to advanced gardening, composting, carpentry, herbalism, community organizing, group structure, fundraising, and more. All workshops are posted to the [events](#)⁶ page of our website and shared through our [digital newsletter](#).⁷ Sign up for our [mailing list](#)⁶ to receive the printed version our quarterly program guide or [download a digital copy](#)⁸ from the GreenThumb website, which includes all of GreenThumb's workshops and special events. With advanced notice, GreenThumb may be able to provide language accessibility services at GreenThumb workshops and events. GreenThumb webinar recordings are available at bit.ly/GreenThumbWebinars.

GreenThumb Trainings

GreenThumb trainings are courses or certifications that fall outside of our usual year-round workshop series, are multiple days, and go in-depth on a specific subject. Most of these programs are reserved for members of registered GreenThumb community gardens and require gardeners to apply. GreenThumb trainings include the GreenThumb Leadership Academy, Uprooting Racism, the GreenThumb Pruning Brigade, and more. When applications are open, trainings are advertised to community gardeners through their Outreach Coordinators and our program guide; details are also available on the GreenThumb homepage.

Technical Assistance

GreenThumb offers garden groups technical assistance and organizing support. Staff can help garden groups organize workdays and volunteer events, develop processes and bylaws for garden governance, connect with information and resources, navigate GreenThumb rules and regulations, build membership, establish new garden groups, and get assistance on their garden related projects from horticulture to chicken coops to building accessible pathways.

Portable Toilets

As a registered GreenThumb garden group in good standing, you are eligible to rent a portable toilet through GreenThumb at a discounted rate. Delivery, pick-up and maintenance are provided by the portable toilet vendor, but it is the responsibility of the garden group to communicate with the vendor about delivery. GreenThumb accepts portable toilet requests twice annually, with due dates communicated by Outreach Coordinators. Failure to meet the requisition deadlines or to comply with delivery, pick-up, and maintenance protocols will result in disqualification for future requests.

Waste Management⁹

Organic Waste

If there is debris in your garden that is compostable (leaves, branches, plants), then please compost it on-site or sign up for DSNY organics collection service. You can contact the [NYC Compost Project](#)¹⁰ to learn

⁶ All GreenThumb events are listed at: <https://greenthumb.nycgovparks.org/gardenevents.html>

⁷ Subscribe to receive GreenThumb's email newsletter or request quarterly paper copies of the GreenThumb Program Guide mailed to your home at <http://bit.ly/GTProgramGuide>

⁸ Download a PDF of the quarterly GreenThumb Program Guide at <https://greenthumb.nycgovparks.org/publications.html>

⁹ For updates to DSNY services changes due to COVID-19, visit www1.nyc.gov/assets/dsny/site/news/third-news-article

¹⁰ Visit the NYC Compost Project website at nyc.gov/compostproject

how to set up an on-site composting operation.¹¹ Learn more through GreenThumb's [Composting Toolkit](#).¹²

If you are in a neighborhood that has DSNY curbside organics collection service, you can enroll your garden to receive convenient [curbside collection service](#).¹³ Once you have submitted all the proper paperwork, DSNY will provide the garden with brown bins with a latching lid that can be lined with a clear plastic liner for you to compost your yard waste, leaves, grass clippings and garden trimmings. You can also place food waste in your brown bin.

Wood Debris

Gardeners enrolled in organics collection can set out their woody debris in bundles of 2 feet by 4 feet or smaller and this material will get composted by DSNY. If you have a large amount of woody debris that is bigger than a 2 feet by 4 feet bundle, or are not enrolled in DSNY curbside organics collection, you can request a pick-up from NYC Parks at 311 or on the [website](#).¹⁴

Fall Leaves

Leaves make a great addition to compost! However, if your garden does not yet have a compost system, you can do the following:

If your garden receives organics curbside collection, you can place leaves and yard waste directly in your brown organics bin. Yard waste that does not fit in the brown bin can be set out in a paper lawn and leaf bag or in an unlined container labeled "Yard Waste Only". Do not put leaves in plastic bags. Leaves in plastic bags will be collected as garbage. DSNY offers free leaf bags at events and paper leaf bags are available at many hardware stores.

If your neighborhood does not receive curbside organics collection, please check the DSNY website to determine if your community district will get fall leaf collection.

Inorganic Waste

One-Time Pickups

If your debris cannot be composted (garbage, bricks, metal, etc.), you will need to make arrangements with GreenThumb and/or DSNY to have it picked up. If you are planning a garden cleanup day, please contact your GreenThumb Outreach Coordinator at least six weeks before the event takes place to make arrangements. Please have everything sorted and bagged in heavy, black plastic bags and placed at the curb before the scheduled pickup time.

If someone else dumps debris in your garden, call 311 immediately to report it and ask for it to be picked up. You can also report dumping through the NYC 311 app. Always record the "request number" that they give you for your records. Please contact your GreenThumb Outreach Coordinator if dumping becomes a recurring issue.

It can also be helpful to make a personal connection with the sanitation workers in your neighborhood. Find out who picks up debris in your neighborhood, then introduce yourself to that person and explain how the GreenThumb gardening program works. Invite the sanitation workers to come and visit your garden. Remember that reaching out not only helps to strengthen the community, but it helps to ensure the continued success of your garden. Your Outreach Coordinator may be able to introduce you to the right contact people.

¹¹ Learn more about the NYC Compost Project at nyc.gov/compostproject

¹² Explore the GreenThumb Composting Toolkit at: https://greenthumb.nycgovparks.org/news.html?news_id=481

¹³ Enroll in curbside organics collection at on.nyc.gov/request-organics

¹⁴ Request a woody debris pick-up at nycgovparks.org/services/forestry/wood-debris-removal

Ongoing Pickups

Garden groups that need ongoing curbside pickup of their garden waste should contact DSNY. Requests for collection services can be sent via email to newservice@dsny.nyc.gov or by mail to:

NYC Department of Sanitation
Attention: New Service
125 Worth St., Room 700
New York, N.Y. 10013

The service request should include the following information:

1. Full address of the garden, including block and lot numbers
2. Name and daytime phone number of a contact person
3. A copy of the garden's GreenThumb License Agreement (or MOA with GreenThumb for gardens not under the jurisdiction of NYC Parks)
4. A letter from GreenThumb stating the current registration status of the garden

Requests for collection services can also be submitted [online](#).¹⁵

The applicant will be notified of the scheduled start date of services and the days of collection approximately two weeks after the Collection Office receives the request with all the required documents. For additional information, please contact the Collection Office at (646) 885-4830.

For more information on DSNY, please refer to their [website](#).¹⁶ If your garden is experiencing inconsistent pickup, please reach out to your Outreach Coordinator so that GreenThumb can help.

¹⁵ Request collection services online at: www1.nyc.gov/assets/dsny/site/contact/request-collection-service

¹⁶ Department of Sanitation website: <http://nyc.gov/dsny>

License and Registration Requirements for Gardens Under NYC Parks

Garden groups must execute (sign) several documents to become and remain eligible for support from GreenThumb.

License Agreement

The GreenThumb License Agreement grants a GreenThumb Garden Group on property under NYC Parks jurisdiction legal permission to garden on NYC Parks property. The signatories of the renewable four-year License Agreement (referenced as Licensed Community Garden Group) must operate in accordance with the Agreement and the garden governance as indicated in the group's bylaws.

Licensing and Registration Packet

All gardens must complete a licensing and registration packet every four years, with annual updates to the membership section upon request. The GreenThumb registration packet ensures that we have up-to-date information about your community garden and allows us to evaluate whether your garden group meets GreenThumb's requirements for receiving support.

For gardens under the jurisdiction of NYC Parks, a complete licensing packet includes:

- Full contact information for all garden members: phone number, mailing address, and email address.¹⁷
- Copies of all keys and/or codes for combination locks for interior fences or storage structures. Copies of keys and/or combination lock code for exterior garden gate(s) if a daisy chained lock is not possible.
- Complete GreenThumb Garden Registration.
- A copy of the garden's bylaws.
- Fully executed License Agreement between NYC Parks and the garden group.

To remain in good standing, all GreenThumb garden groups operating on lots under the jurisdiction of NYC Parks must execute the GreenThumb License Agreement, complete the licensing and registration packet, and:

Post correct signage — All GreenThumb gardens must post a sign provided by GreenThumb with information about the program and contact information. Gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction must post the NYC Parks sign provided by GreenThumb.

Post and maintain open hours — All GreenThumb community gardens must remain open to the public at least 20 hours per week from April 1 through October 31, though gardeners are encouraged to keep gardens open as much as possible. At least 10 of the 20 public hours must be consistent from week to week and be clearly posted on the garden's gate. Gardens must be open to the public at the posted times. Of those 10 posted hours, gardens must be open to the public for a total of at least five hours each weekend (Saturday and/or Sunday) during the season. If you are unable to make your own sign, we are happy to make a sign for you. Please ask your Outreach Coordinator.

Maintain an active garden membership — All GreenThumb gardens must have an active and inclusive membership, and the group must have a documented process for accepting new members. A complete list of garden members, including mailing addresses and phone numbers, must be given to GreenThumb

¹⁷ GreenThumb will not share this information with anyone unless ordered by a court to do so.

with garden registration. GreenThumb uses this information internally and will never share it. Updates to the garden membership list can be sent to your GreenThumb Outreach Coordinator by mail or email.

Maintain a safe and attractive garden space — Be creative. Your garden is a reflection of your community, and we hope that you will have fun with garden design and layout. However, we do ask that you follow a few simple requirements:

- All vegetables and herbs must be grown in raised beds that are filled with clean soil lined with landscape fabric. Please see the Safe Soil Gardening Requirements chapter of this Handbook for more information.
- Keep sidewalks, walkways, and curbs inside and adjacent to the garden clean and free of snow, ice, garbage, and plant debris.
- Remove all trash, debris, and personal items from your garden in a prompt manner. Remember, it's easier to get rid of garbage than the rats it will attract!
- Keep all sources of water (barrels, rainwater harvesting systems, etc.) covered. Standing water attracts mosquitoes.
- Ensure that all structures (gazebos, casitas, sheds, etc.) built inside a community garden are in compliance with GreenThumb and the Department of Building's guidelines. You must contact your Outreach Coordinator for approval before building any structure in the garden. For more information on these guidelines, refer to the Structures section in the GreenThumb Handbook.
- Keep all fences, raised beds, tables, benches, chairs, and other items clean and well maintained.
- Keep all tools tidy, in secure storage areas such as sheds or locked toolboxes.
- Maintain clear lines of sight into the garden from the sidewalk to help ensure public safety and promote a sense of openness to the community.

Maintain the garden as open public space – GreenThumb gardens are open and accessible to the public. They are inclusive spaces regardless of age, race, citizenship status, skin color, disability, gender, gender identity, marital status, national origin, pregnancy, religion, sexual orientation, and military or veteran status. Your garden should be a welcoming space and have a clear process in place for accepting new members.

Host public events — All GreenThumb gardens, regardless of land ownership and jurisdiction, must host at least two free public events per year. Garden groups on NYC Parks property are required to obtain prior approval of events in advance. We can post your event(s) on GreenThumb's website and the Parks Calendar if you'd like. Please see the [Events](#) chapter of this Handbook for more information.

Secure the garden when not in use — Community gardens under the jurisdiction of NYC Parks must make use of a daisy chain interlocking lock system (see image on right) or as otherwise directed and approved by GreenThumb. If GreenThumb deems the garden gate to not be suitable for a daisy chain interlocking system, then the garden, at its own expense, shall provide GreenThumb with the combination or two copies of all keys to all locks used at the garden, including entry ways and storage facilities. Failure to do so will result in GreenThumb removing any such locks.

GreenThumb needs to be able to access the garden in the event of an emergency, or for deliveries and garden visits. For community gardens under the jurisdiction of NYC Parks, GreenThumb reserves the right to cut locks if the daisy chain system has been removed or a key has not been provided to GreenThumb.

Gardens may continue using their own locks and keys for garden gates and will no longer be required to provide keys to GreenThumb every time the lock and/or keys are changed out. Instead, gardens will now be required to lock their garden lock through a lock that has been provided by GreenThumb (as in the image). GreenThumb will maintain sole access to that lock. This is how Parks will maintain access to the garden.



Daisy chained garden locks

Ensure that the garden is stewarded by neighborhood volunteers — GreenThumb community gardens are stewarded by groups of volunteers from the community. All Licensees must adhere to all terms of the License, including membership and bylaws, regardless of whether the Garden is affiliated with a school, church, non-profit, or other organization. Organizations that have existing bylaws that are not specific to the community garden must prepare separate bylaws for the garden space. All neighbors must remain welcome to join GreenThumb gardens as members, and to participate in decision-making and governance as outlined in the License and garden’s bylaws. Membership may never be conditioned upon membership in an external organization.

Have primary and secondary garden contacts sign the License Agreement — Community gardens under the jurisdiction of NYC Parks must sign a GreenThumb License Agreement in order to operate. Signatories of the License Agreement must be two separate individual members of the garden group that are signing in their individual capacities, not as representatives of an incorporated or other external organization. Signatories do not assume authority over the garden; group governance and decision-making structures are decided by the garden group. Please see [Writing and Amending Bylaws](#) and [Role of Garden Contacts](#) chapters of this Handbook for more information.

Assumption of risk — Twice each year, the garden group should instruct members (at a membership meeting, by email or text, or however garden leadership prefers to communicate with garden members) that a community garden involves activities that pose risks of serious bodily injury and even death, including but not limited to, engaging in strenuous physical activities, using (or being in the presence of others using) garden equipment, constructing raised gardening beds, snow removal, and walking on uneven walkways.

Liability -The Assumption of Risk clause, which is stated above and in the License Agreement, informs garden members that they take on the risks of participating in certain activities at the site. This is consistent with the general responsibility that the public has in using city property or engaging in activities that have an inherent risk of injury, such as organized sports. Liability for potential injuries depends on the particular and unique circumstances of any given case. To help reduce the potential for injuries in gardens, it is important for Parks to understand what is occurring on public property under its jurisdiction. This is why garden groups must inform Parks of planned public programming (please see the Events chapter for more information).

Until 2007, the City required gardeners to obtain a liability insurance policy in order to be licensed by NYC Parks. As the cost of providing insurance increased, some garden groups requested that the City remove this requirement, and in response the City did so. Some garden groups, however, have determined that it is beneficial to incorporate their garden groups and continue obtaining liability insurance to protect the group in the event of an injury. Garden groups have the option to incorporate and obtain liability insurance, but the License Agreement does not require them to do so.

If you have further questions on liability, Outreach Coordinators can direct gardeners to free and low-cost resources, including free legal sessions provided by pro bono legal service providers unaffiliated with the City.

Signage

The following types of signs are required and may be provided by GreenThumb:

- **NYC Parks Sign** — For community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction, GreenThumb installs a sign that explains that the garden is registered with GreenThumb, as well as rules and/or related information in multiple languages.

- **GreenThumb Sign** – For community gardens that are not under NYC Parks jurisdiction, GreenThumb provides a sign that explains that the garden is registered with GreenThumb.
- **Open Hours Sign** — A sign with garden’s weekly schedule of open hours for the growing season (April 1 to October 31). Your Outreach Coordinator can make one upon request. This sign must include garden contact information. Open hours signs are required at all gardens registered with GreenThumb.
- **Assumption of Risk Sign** — For community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction, GreenThumb installs this sign that instructs members that a community garden involves activities that pose risks of serious bodily injury and even death, including but not limited to, engaging in strenuous physical activities, using (or being in the presence of others using) garden equipment, constructing raised gardening beds, snow removal, and walking on uneven walkways.

Please contact your Outreach Coordinator if your signs are damaged or missing.

	<p>WELCOME Please be courteous and respectful to others.</p> <p>RULES PROHIBIT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Littering • Smoking • Consumption of alcohol • Amplified sound, except by permit • Vending, except as allowed by law or permit • Motor vehicles without specific authorization <p>DOGS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Except for service animals, dogs must be leashed at all times. • You must monitor and control your dog at all times. • Dogs must be properly licensed and vaccinated. • You must pick up after your dog. <p>For questions about Parks or to report an incident, please call 311 or visit nyc.gov/parks.</p>	<p>欢迎 请对他人保持礼貌和尊重。</p> <p>规则禁止：</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 乱扔垃圾 • 吸烟 • 饮酒 • 使用扩音器，除非获得许可 • 售货，除依法允许或获得许可外 • 无特定授权为机动车辆 <p>狗</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 除了服务性动物以外，其他的狗必须时刻牵上 leash。 • 您必须时刻是控制您的狗。 • 狗必须有执照并接种疫苗。 • 您必须立刻清理狗的粪便。 <p>欲了解更多关于公园的信息，或举报事件，请拨打电话311或访问 nyc.gov/parks。</p>
<p>VON KING KITCHEN GARDEN</p>	<p>BIENVENIDO Sea amable y respetuoso con los demás.</p> <p>LAS REGLAS PROHIBEN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrojar basura • Fumar • Consumir alcohol • Utilizar equipos de sonido amplificados, excepto con permiso • Vender, excepto si está permitido por ley o con autorización • Usar vehículos motorizados sin autorización específica <p>PERROS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excepto en el caso de animales de servicio, los perros deben estar sujetos con una correa en todo momento. Usted debe supervisar y controlar a su perro en todo momento. • Los perros deben estar autorizados y vacunados. • Usted debe recoger los excrementos de su perro. <p>Para hacer preguntas acerca de Parks o reportar un incidente, llame al 311 o visite nyc.gov/parks.</p>	 <p>THIS IS A GREENTHUMB COMMUNITY GARDEN GreenThumb is the largest community gardening program in the nation. Volunteer gardeners care for over 650 community gardens across New York City while providing free community programming and horticultural opportunities. Contact us at (212) 502-5900, greenthumbinfo@parks.nyc.gov, or nyc.gov/parks/greenthumb.</p> <p>ESTE ES UN JARDÍN COMUNITARIO DE GREENTHUMB GreenThumb es el programa de jardinería comunitaria más grande de la nación. Jardineros voluntarios cuidan más de 650 jardines comunitarios en la Ciudad de Nueva York al mismo tiempo que ofrecen programación comunitaria y oportunidades hortícolas. Contáctenos al (212) 502-5900, greenthumbinfo@parks.nyc.gov, o nyc.gov/parks/greenthumb.</p>
<p>7420 Shore Road</p>	<p>OPERATING HOURS This garden is open to the public 20 hours per week from April 1–October 31, as posted.</p>	

Sample NYC Parks Sign

**Welcome to
[Garden Name]**

OPEN HOURS:
Saturdays, 10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.
Sundays, 12:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m.

Visitors also welcome when the gate is open.

To learn more about getting involved at this garden, please email [email address].



NYC Parks
GreenThumb

Sample Open Hours Sign

GARDEN MEMBERS:
Participation in a community garden involves activities that pose risks of serious injury. These risks include, but are not limited to, engaging in strenuous activities, constructing raised garden beds, removing snow, using (or being in the presence of others using) garden equipment, and walking on uneven walkways. Your participation in this community garden indicates that you understand and assume these risks.

MIEMBROS DEL JARDÍN:
La participación en un jardín comunitario implica actividades que presentan riesgos de lesiones graves. Entre estos riesgos se encuentran participar en actividades extenuantes, construir cancheros elevados, quitar nieve, usar (o estar en la cercanía de otros que usen) equipos de jardín y caminar por veredas irregulares. Su participación en este jardín comunitario indica que comprende y asume estos riesgos.

MEMBRES DU JARDIN:
La participation à un jardin communautaire implique des activités qui présentent un risque de blessure grave. Ces risques peuvent notamment survenir lors d'activités physiques intenses, de la construction de plates-bandes surélevées, du déneigement, de l'utilisation (ou de la présence pendant l'utilisation) de matériel de jardinage ou de déplacements sur un sol inégal. En participant à ce jardin communautaire, vous comprenez et assumez ces risques.

REDUCE YOUR LEAD EXPOSURE BY:

- Planting produce in raised beds
- Washing produce and peeling root vegetables
- Mulching garden paths to minimize dust
- Washing your hands after gardening
- Clearing dirt from your shoes and equipment before going indoors

REDUZCA SU EXPOSICIÓN AL PLOMO:

- Sembrando en cancheros elevados
- Lavando los productos y pelando las hortalizas de raíz
- Cubriendo pasarelas con mantillo para reducir la cantidad de polvo
- Lavándose las manos después de trabajos en la huerta
- Limpiando la suciedad de sus zapatos y su equipo antes de entrar

LIMITEZ VOTRE EXPOSITION AU PLOMB EN:

- Plantant des produits dans des plates-bandes surélevées
- Lavant les produits et en pelant les légumes racines
- Pailant les allées de jardin pour minimiser la poussière
- Vous lavant les mains après le jardinage
- Nettoyant vos chaussures et vos équipements avant de rentrer à l'intérieur



This is a GreenThumb Community Garden

GreenThumb is the largest community gardening program in the nation. Volunteer gardeners care for over 550 community gardens across New York City while providing free community programming and horticultural opportunities.

Contact us at greenthumbinfo@parks.nyc.gov, (212) 602-5300, or nyc.gov/parks/greenthumb.



OPERATING HOURS
This garden is open to the public 20 hours per week from April 1–October 31, as posted.



GreenThumb sign for gardens not under NYC Parks jurisdiction

Assumption of Risk Sign

Annual Outreach Coordinator Garden Visits

Once a year during the growing season, GreenThumb Outreach Coordinators visit every garden under NYC Parks jurisdiction in order to help GreenThumb identify garden and gardener needs and plan our support for the year to come. Outreach Coordinators evaluate a number of factors related to garden maintenance, such as the state of fencing and sidewalks, the safety of structures, the general appearance of the garden, living conditions of any animals, as well as factors pertaining to group dynamics, including whether or not garden groups possess bylaws or a sufficient number of members. These visits ensure that garden groups are able to operate safely and function in accordance with the GreenThumb License Agreement and applicable NYS and NYC laws and regulations, and helps GreenThumb understand the needs of the gardeners to support them in the stewardship of community gardens.

Outreach Coordinators also use these visits as an opportunity to engage with the garden group, and we invite and welcome garden representatives to join us. We will notify the garden group in advance of the annual Outreach Coordinator garden visit to invite gardeners to attend and participate in the process. Garden visits are a great opportunity for gardeners and Outreach Coordinators to discuss the needs of the garden. GreenThumb may conduct additional garden visits as deemed necessary.

Your Outreach Coordinator can provide you with a complete list of what they will be looking for during the garden visit. As part of the garden visit process, the following categories of items, if present, will be reviewed and documented:

- Infrastructure (fences, gates, sidewalks, retaining walls, utilities)

- Structures (casitas, gazebos, stages, storage, composting, seating, etc.)
- Landscape (trees, art, plants, open space, paths, etc.)
- Maintenance
- Animals
- Group Development
- Encroachment and illegal egress
- Compliance with the GreenThumb License Agreement

Following garden visits, your Outreach Coordinator will communicate the feedback with your garden group, and they will work with your group to come up with a plan to address anything of concern. Please note that GreenThumb may issue formal violations for areas of significant noncompliance with the GreenThumb License Agreement.

Serious Violations and Consequences

Garden groups that have abandoned their gardens or are determined by GreenThumb to be unable or unwilling to address and rectify violations will be at risk of having their License Agreement terminated by GreenThumb, and their access to the garden revoked. Abandonment includes but is not limited to failing to maintain the garden, respond to correspondence, or hold required public hours and events.

Garden members who are accused of serious violations including but not limited to breaking the law or the GreenThumb License Agreement may be investigated by NYC Parks, and NYC Parks will take appropriate action.

Registration Requirements for Gardens Under All Other Jurisdictions

This section is for community gardens under the jurisdiction of any city, state, or federal agency other than NYC Parks, as well as community gardens on land trusts or private property.

Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

Community gardens that are not under the jurisdiction of NYC Parks will be required to sign an MOA that states that the garden group agrees to:

- Design and install a plant garden for the benefit of the surrounding community.
- Remain open and accessible to the public at least 20 hours per week from the period of April 1 to October 31 annually, and make best efforts to maintain five total hours of public access during weekends (Saturday and Sunday).
- Host at least two free community events each season.
- Send a representative to at least one GreenThumb-sponsored event per year.
- Post a sign on the external fence of the garden indicating the name of the group, a contact name and number, that the garden is open to new members, and indicating the hours during which the garden is open to the public.
- Make gardening plots and/or membership at the garden available to the public on a first-come, first-served basis, through the use of a waiting list if necessary, and will make best efforts to include members of the public who wish to join even when plots are not available.

If the garden group agrees to these minimum requirements:

- GreenThumb will provide to the garden limited amounts of basic gardening materials and supplies, including soil, lumber, plants, and gardening tools.
- GreenThumb will provide to the garden programming and technical assistance, including but not limited to group development support, networking events, resource fairs, and educational workshops, subject to capacity and staff availability.
- GreenThumb may host workshops at the garden from time to time, with advance agreement of the garden.

Registration

All gardens must complete a registration packet every four years that includes:

- Full membership list
- Complete GreenThumb Garden Registration packet
- A copy of the garden's bylaws (optional)
- Written proof that the garden group has permission to garden on the property if it has expired since the last registration
- A signed copy of the MOA

Safe Soil Gardening Requirements

Growing food in urban soils can be a challenge, and it is important that all food grown in GreenThumb gardens is done in the safest manner possible. Soil contamination comes from a variety of sources, including historic use of leaded gasoline, garbage dumps, old building materials that may contain peeling paint, air and water pollution, and other sources.

GreenThumb Policies:

GreenThumb follows the framework for understanding urban soils outlined in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) document *Reusing Potentially Contaminated Landscapes: Growing Gardens in Urban Soils*.¹⁸ Minimize the likelihood of heavy metals entering your food by adhering to these GreenThumb requirements:

- Grow any fruits and vegetables that are available for human consumption using best practices that minimize the likelihood of contact with potentially contaminated soil. This includes growing all fruits and vegetables in enclosed raised beds and placing barriers (like landscape fabric) between these areas and the surrounding soil.
- Keep all play areas, seating areas, pathways, and other areas with exposed soil covered in mulch (i.e. wood chips), grass, or another ground cover. This prevents dust migration and splash back on crops and protects against human exposure when gardening.
- Every fall or spring fill each raised bed back to the top with a couple inches of compost and spread a couple inches of new woodchips over the garden paths.
- GreenThumb will use reasonable efforts to assist the garden group in complying with this requirement, subject to the availability of resources.

For free lumber, soil, compost, wood chips, and mulch, you can request a Materials Request Form through your Outreach Coordinator. In addition to these requirements, GreenThumb recommends you:

- Add organic matter such as compost to your soil. Organic particles may bind with metals and help prevent them from being absorbed by your plants.
- Keep pH levels close to neutral and make sure drainage is adequate. This helps to assure that the contaminants don't move in your soil. Your ideal pH level is between 6.5 and 6.8. If soils contain heavy metals, a pH closer to 7.0 is better.
- Wear gloves when gardening and thoroughly wash hands after gardening. Shake off any excess soil from boots and clothes before going home.
- Thoroughly wash produce and peel root vegetables before eating.

Purchasing Soil

While it is possible to receive a limited amount of free soil and compost through GreenThumb, garden groups may seek to purchase their own. The following applies to the purchase of bulk soil, not bagged soil, though we encourage garden groups to avoid bagged soil with synthetic fertilizers or pesticides. GreenThumb requires all bulk soil brought into community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction to adhere to the following specifications:

- Vendors must be approved by NYC Parks

¹⁸ Download a copy of this document at epa.gov/sites/production/files/2014-03/documents/urban_gardening_fina_fact_sheet.pdf

- Topsoil must be tested, usually by the vendor, and meet certain requirements for organic matter, pH, texture, and heavy metals before it is approved for delivery.
- Delivery:
 - The Contractor is liable for any damage to property caused by delivery of topsoil, and all areas disturbed or damaged shall be restored to their original condition, to the satisfaction of GreenThumb.
 - The Contractor shall notify GreenThumb a minimum of five business days prior to the intended topsoil delivery date.
 - The topsoil shall NOT be dumped at the delivery site until the specified soil sampling and testing is completed, unless otherwise directed.

This list is a summary. For a complete version of these guidelines that must be followed by the vendor or contractor, please see [Appendix A](#). GreenThumb reserves the right to reject any topsoil which does not fall within acceptable limitations of these specifications.

Building Raised Beds

A raised bed is a wood frame built with untreated lumber or other enclosure that gardeners can fill with clean topsoil and compost. They can be single, double, or even triple height, which ensures that fruit and vegetable crops have enough space for their roots to grow and can make gardening easier to access for gardeners with limited mobility. Growing in raised beds is critical to keeping your crops safe from contact with the underlying soil, which may contain contaminants.

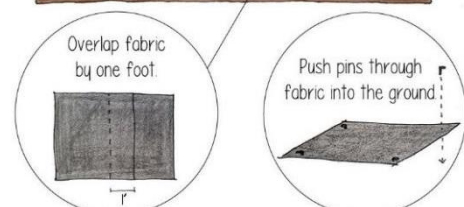
Materials

- **Lumber:** GreenThumb provides garden groups with untreated lumber for building raised beds and other garden projects. If you are sourcing your own lumber for food production, be sure not to use pressure-treated lumber, as it can contain arsenic and other toxins that can leach into soil and be taken up by plants.
- **Landscape fabric:** Lining the raised bed with landscape fabric provides a barrier between the clean topsoil in the raised bed and the potentially contaminated soils below. Landscape fabric can also aid in the durability of the raised bed.
 - If you are using landscape fabric, make sure you have scissors and either a staple gun or landscape fabric staples.
- **Tools:** You will need the following to assemble your raised bed:
 - Saw
 - Hammer and nails, or power drill and screws
 - Level
 - Shovel and/or spade
 - Measuring tape
 - Stakes, string, and a mallet
 - Staple gun
- **Soil:** GreenThumb can provide topsoil, compost, or a mix of both. Your garden group can also fundraise to purchase its own soil from a Parks-approved vendor (see details about purchasing soil in [Appendix A](#)).

Assembly:¹⁹

Mark off the area where the raised bed will go. You can use four stakes at each corner with string tied between them. This is a helpful practice for building multiple raised beds at once, to make sure you are leaving enough space in the pathways for wheelbarrow (24 inches) and wheelchair (36 inches) access, and to make sure you have enough space to carry out your design.

1. Level the soil by smoothing it out with a hard rake and remove any weeds.
2. Lay down your landscape fabric and use landscape fabric staples one foot apart to secure it in place
 - a. For one raised bed, the landscape fabric should exceed the boundaries of the raised bed by a few inches.
 - b. For multiple raised beds side-by-side, you can cover the whole area at once. If you are pursuing this option, make sure the edges of

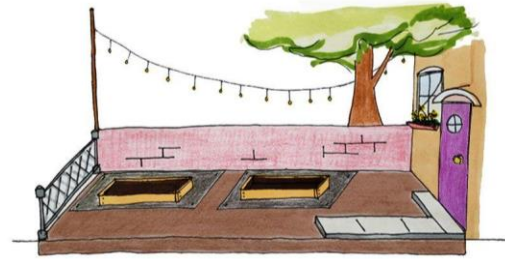


¹⁹ Images by Clarisa Diaz for WNYC:
<https://www.wnyc.org/story/poisoned-gardens>

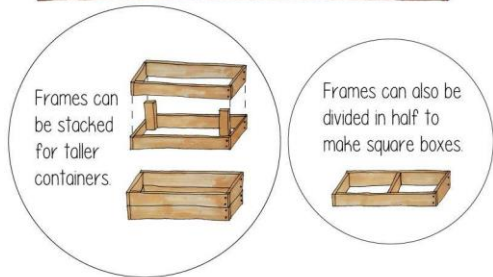
landscape fabric overlap one another by several inches. Another option is to use a staple gun to line the raised bed once it's built.

3. Cut your lumber and build your bed! For one 8-foot by 4-foot raised bed, you will need three boards of 8-foot lumber: two for the long sides, and one to cut in half for the short sides.
 - a. You can remove the stakes/string if you are assembling the bed in place.
 - b. We find that the buddy system works best for bed assembly. One person can hold a corner in place, while the other connects the boards using a hammer and nails or a power drill and screws.
 - i. If using a power drill, pre-drill your holes so that your lumber does not split.
 - c. You should make this a double raised bed if you plan to grow root vegetables or any vegetables with deep roots such as tomatoes, kale, collards, corn, and squash. A single level raised bed is fine for herbs and leafy greens such as arugula.
 - i. Build a second raised bed with the same dimensions as the first one.
 - ii. Place it on top of the first raised bed.
 - iii. Add a 2-inch x 4-inch piece of lumber (or any scrap untreated lumber) to each corner. Make sure the two beds are flush with one another and secure to the corner posts.

Fill containers to the top with clean soil.

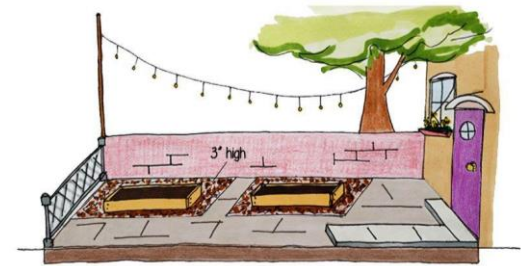


Construct container boxes on top of fabric.



4. Once your raised bed is assembled, place it in its final spot if you have not already done so.
5. Use the level to see if it is even. If it's not even, use stones, bricks, or excess soil to raise up a low corner or edge. If this creates a large gap, you may want to line the raised bed with landscape fabric using a staple gun in order to keep the soil inside.
6. Fill the raised bed with soil. The soil should be flat and level with the top of the raised bed. One cubic yard of soil will fill one 8-foot by 4-foot raised bed.

Surround containers with woodchips, cover any remaining old soil in the yard.



Maintenance

It is a best practice to add a few inches of compost to top off your raised bed at the start or end of each season. It is important to keep the soil level full to the top of your raised bed so that your plant roots have enough space to grow and do not grow into the underlying soil. This practice also helps to replenish

nutrients in the soil after growing delicious vegetables all season long! If the soil levels in your bed gets too low, it may be necessary to fill it with a soil and compost mix, not just compost.

Pathways and Open Spaces

Pathways, seating areas, and other open spaces in the garden should be covered with mulch such as wood chips. This keeps the dust down and helps to avoid your clean raised bed soil from being contaminated when the wind blows. Mulch also helps build organic matter in the underlying soil, binding up contaminants and making them unavailable for the plants to take up.

The first year you add mulch to the bare soil in your garden, you should add a depth of 3 inches for mulch (finely ground, somewhat broken-down wood chips) or 6 inches of fresh wood chips. After that, you can top off the paths each year with 1-2 inches.

You can fill out the request form at any GreenThumb workshop to request mulch or wood chips.

Additional Resources:

To learn more about safe soil practices, check out the following resources:

- NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene - www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/urban-gardening.page
- NYC Compost Project - www1.nyc.gov/assets/dsny/site/our-work/reduce-reuse-recycle/community-composting

Garden Structures

Structures such as casitas, greenhouses, sheds, and gazebos can help a community garden have space for gatherings and relaxation, extend their gardening season, and store supplies.

Structures and Buildings

GreenThumb Policy

The policy in this section is required for community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction.

- GreenThumb garden groups under NYC Parks jurisdiction must submit plans for all new garden structures to their Outreach Coordinator, who will guide proposals through GreenThumb's approvals process.

NYC Law

All structures built in community gardens must meet requirements as issued by the Department of Buildings:

Regardless of zoning district, greenhouses or gazebos constructed by NYC Parks, or other authorized agent, on city-owned land used as "vest pocket" gardens may be treated similar to accessory buildings for open parking lots as outlined in NYCBC S.27-297 (d). Such structures may be constructed with combustible material and work permits shall not be required if such structures are:

- Not more than one story
- Not more than 10 feet in height (greenhouses are limited to one story or 15 feet above the adjoining grade, whichever is less, as per Section 23-44(b) of NYC Zoning Code)
- Not more than 150 square feet in area
- Set back at least 6 feet from the lot line
- Non-occupiable spaces only, such as storage if the structure is enclosed; and occupiable spaces for resting with seating if the structure is open on all sides (similar to bench seating in gazebos)

Sheds must be:

- No more than 120 square feet
- Unobstructive of any required window
- Set back 3 feet from the property line.

If approved by GreenThumb, gardens with structures out of compliance with the above guidelines must obtain building permits from the Department of Buildings or modify their structures as necessary to meet the above guidelines.

Utilities

GreenThumb Policies

The policies in this section are required for community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction.

- Water – GreenThumb does not have resources to install on-site water systems at community gardens, but garden groups can consider requesting funding from an elected official to fund the installation of a water system. Before approaching an elected official, the garden group must:
 - Talk to your Outreach Coordinator about your options, how much it might cost—this can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars—and how long it might take (typically 4-6 years).

- For community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction, if GreenThumb approves your plan and the garden group has secured funding for capital-eligible improvements, installation happens through NYC Parks Capital. Once the system is installed, NYC Parks will turn the water on in the spring and off in the fall. The garden will not be required to pay for ongoing service payments.
- Electricity – It is rare that electricity would be permitted to be installed in a community garden. If the garden wishes to install internal electricity, the garden group should reach out to their Outreach Coordinator to inquire.

Property Management

NYC Parks has a responsibility to ensure that all public open space under its jurisdiction is safe and accessible. Part of this responsibility includes actively managing the properties, the boundaries of the lots, and appropriate access. This section applies only to community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction.

Encroachment and Egress

As part of GreenThumb's property management responsibilities, we are working to prevent and correct encroachment and illegal egress issues at all community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction.

Encroachment

Encroachment occurs when a property owner builds on or extends a structure onto their neighbor's land or property. Encroachment can also describe the unlawful crossing of legal boundaries, such as a building extending on to neighboring private or public land, or beyond the building line of a road or street. For example, a private backyard that extends into the community garden, or vice versa, or a scaffolding built within a community garden's boundaries without a permit for a neighboring building is an encroachment.

Illegal Egress

Illegal egress occurs when a private entrance exists from private property onto public property. For example, a private gate along the fence that separates a community garden from a private backyard is an illegal egress.

Construction Permits

In some cases, Parks may be required to allow a contractor or other entity working on an adjacent property to access a garden in order to perform work on an adjacent property. These permit agreements will be made on a case-by-case basis and require approval from GreenThumb and the Parks Permit Office. GreenThumb will work with the garden group to minimize disruption and correct any damage to the garden.

GreenThumb Policies:

The policies in this section are required for community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction.

- Gardeners may perform basic carpentry without requiring a construction permit, for example: building raised beds, installing pathways, laying gravel, shoring up garden structures, and minor landscaping work, such as building a low brick planting area.
- Under no circumstances should a contractor be allowed to access or perform work in a community garden under NYC Parks jurisdiction before obtaining a Parks Construction Permit.
 - Garden members who interact with a contractor or developer should instruct contractors to contact GreenThumb to discuss potential garden access, and if possible, get their contact info and information about the project and let their Outreach Coordinator know as soon as possible. If a contractor seeks to access a garden after they have been instructed not to do so, gardeners should contact their Outreach Coordinator and Parks Central Communications at (646) 613-1202.

- Take pictures of the garden prior to any potential activity and document any damage that has occurred.
- Any injury in, accidents in, or damage to, a garden under the jurisdiction of NYC Parks during a construction project requires the completion of an incident report. Please contact your Outreach Coordinator to receive additional copies of the incident report.
 - Gardeners should not attempt to correct any damage caused by a contractor without contacting GreenThumb for advice and documenting the damage first, as NYC Parks will require the contractor to correct any damage as a condition of the permit.
- After obtaining a Parks Construction Permit, contractors must contact GreenThumb before accessing or performing work within a GreenThumb garden. GreenThumb will schedule a site visit with the garden group, contractors, and GreenThumb staff to discuss a construction project and develop a plan to minimize disruption and damage to the garden.
- Contractors may not use GreenThumb gardens for staging or dumping. If a contractor breaks this policy:
 - Obtain contractor contact information and Department of Buildings work permit numbers.
 - Make a complete inventory of damaged or destroyed property immediately after any incident.
 - Take pictures to document if anything gets destroyed, including structures, raised bed beds, trees, shrubs, perennial plants, and furniture.
 - Call 311 or use the NYC 311 app to report the dumping. Write down the “request number” that you receive from 311 for your records.
 - Alert your GreenThumb Outreach Coordinator, who will complete an incident report.
- Contractors who damage gardens will be required to:
 - Clean up and remove all fallen debris
 - Immediately remove all construction materials from the garden
 - Refill any excavation with clean fill
 - Replant all damaged plant material
 - Fix and/or replace any damaged structures

NYC Law:

- Contractors may not erect any scaffolding inside, in front of, or attached to the garden without a Parks permit under any circumstances.

Information for Contractors:

This section is for community gardeners operating on NYC Parks property to share with contractors who have questions about the NYC Parks construction permitting process.

In order to perform construction work in or near a community garden under NYC Parks jurisdiction, contractors must:

- **Submit a project scope and design to the NYC Parks Interagency Coordination Office** at Interagency@parks.nyc.gov. Access to NYC Parks property for construction work on adjacent properties or buildings requires a permit(s) from NYC Parks, without exception. The Interagency Coordination Office will work with GreenThumb to seek approval for the project and ensure compliance with GreenThumb protocol for access to and communication with community gardens.

Please email our Interagency Coordination office at the email address above if you have any questions about whether your project would require a construction permit and include electronic copies of your scoping documents and preliminary designs.

- **Apply for an NYC Parks Construction Permit** at nycgovparks.org/permits/construction. If you are with an entity (government agency, utility, public authority, public benefit corporation, private developer/contractor, or otherwise) that seeks to perform work or secure access through property under Parks jurisdiction, you must apply for a Parks Construction Permit. Permits are required for any project that affects community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction. Work includes not only construction, but also staging, storage, surveying, soil boring, and access through community gardens.
- **Apply for a Tree Work Permit** at nycgovparks.org/services/forestry/tree-work-permit. If your project may impact a tree under Parks jurisdiction, you may need a Tree Work Permit in addition to a Construction Permit. In a case where both permits apply, if your project is near a tree, NYC Parks will not issue a Construction Permit until you have first obtained a Tree Work Permit.
- **Additional Permit Requirements**
In addition to the Parks Construction Permit and Tree Work Permit, additional permits, including permits from the NYC Department of Buildings, the NYC Department of Transportation, or the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, may also be needed before your project can begin. You will also be responsible to satisfy any relevant environmental review requirements (e.g. CEQR, SEQRA, or NEPA) before proceeding. Please review all local, state, and federal regulations related to your project.
- **After Construction**
When the project is complete, GreenThumb will conduct a follow-up site visit with the contractors and garden group to assess any damage, and, if necessary, pursue restitution.

Please email our Interagency Coordination office at Interagency@parks.nyc.gov if you have any questions about whether your proposed project area affects assets under Parks jurisdiction or control.

Hydrant Access

Registered GreenThumb gardens in good standing can obtain a hydrant permit from the NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to access water from a nearby fire hydrant to irrigate their plants. It is a good idea to introduce yourself to the local fire department workers in your neighborhood. Explain to them that you will be accessing the hydrant to water a GreenThumb community garden. Let them know when you will begin to access the water (in the spring) and let them know when you plan to be finished for the season (in the fall). If you need your hydrant uncapped or a custodial lock removed, please email DEP at 38thStreetECC@dep.nyc.gov with your request. Please provide your name, phone number, hydrant number, and the name and address of your community garden in your email.

GreenThumb Policies:

Each February or March, GreenThumb mails out a letter to garden contacts with instructions on obtaining a hydrant permit, and a list of DEP offices that will issue you a permit. To obtain a permit, please:

- Email permit applications to QueensPermits@dep.nyc.gov. Please note the name and address of the garden you are requesting the permit for, and if you need a reduced pressure zone device (RPZ) from DEP. If you would like to submit your hydrant permit application in person, call your local DEP borough office to make an appointment. DEP is no longer accepting walk-ins.
- Provide the letter from GreenThumb to the DEP office to obtain your permit and RPZ. This can be done via email or in person if you have made an appointment.
- The RPZ is required when using the hydrant and must be returned to the DEP office annually, by October 31, in order to receive a permit and device again the following year. Vacuum breakers are also available at most hardware stores and can be used instead of an RPZ.
- Send a copy of your permit to GreenThumb and keep a laminated copy at the garden.
- Show your permit to your Outreach Coordinator to receive a hydrant wrench and hydrant adaptor, if available and if your garden does not have these items already.

This process can take time, especially as the season progresses, so we recommend doing this as soon as you receive the letter from GreenThumb. Hydrant permits must be obtained each year and cannot be shared or transferred.

GreenThumb generally hosts educational workshops in the spring related to water use and conservation. Some gardens may be eligible to receive a rainwater harvesting barrel from GreenThumb if we have them in stock. If you are interested in learning more about rainwater harvesting, you can visit GrowNYC's website at gownyc.org/openspace/rainwater-harvesting.

DEP Borough Offices:

Bronx:
(718) 466-8460

Brooklyn:
(718) 923-2647

Manhattan:
(212) 643-2215

Queens:
(718) 595-4619

Staten Island:
(718) 876-6831

Please note: Due to COVID-19, many DEP staff are working from home and not able to answer the office lines. If you are unable to reach someone at the phone numbers to the left, please try these:

- 1) Bronx: 718-466-8460 (has not changed)
- 2) Brooklyn: 718-923-2629
- 3) Manhattan: 212-643-2215 (has not changed)
- 4) Queens: 718-595-3258
- 5) Staten Island: 718-876-6802

To Attach a Hose to your Hydrant:²⁰

1. Obtain a DEP hydrant permit from your local DEP office.
 - a. You or your garden's GreenThumb contacts will receive a letter in the mail from GreenThumb before the growing season. Provide DEP with the letter via email or during your appointment at one of their borough offices.
 - b. You should also pick up an RPZ at the DEP office while you're getting the hydrant permit. You must return the RPZ back to the DEP office by October 31 if you want to keep acquiring hydrant permits each year. Do not lose an RPZ! But if you lose it, you can buy a replacement at most hardware stores: 3/4" Back Siphonage Protection, or online at watts.com (SKU# 0792088). Instead of an RPZ, you can also use a vacuum breaker, available at most hardware stores.
2. With your garden group, decide upon a set location to store the hydrant wrench, RPZ or vacuum breaker, and adaptor. These items should always be returned to the same location, so the group knows where to find them.
3. Attach the hose to the hydrant.
 - a. Attach a hose nozzle to the end of the hose.
 - b. Using the hydrant wrench, attach the hydrant adaptor to the hydrant.
 - c. Attach the RPZ or vacuum breaker to the hydrant adaptor.
 - d. Connect the hose to the RPZ or vacuum breaker.
4. Open the hydrant.
 - a. Step on the hose nozzle while you're turning on the hydrant to hold it down.
 - b. Open the hydrant slowly until you hear the "hiss" of air.
 - c. Turn only a QUARTER of a turn for your water and then stop. That's it. Otherwise the water pressure might be too high for your hose.
5. Return the hydrant wrench back to its storage location for safekeeping.

Tips for attaching the hose:

- Tie plastic bags or a rag around the connections to reduce spraying on to the sidewalks.
- Don't drag the male end of the garden hose on the sidewalk or street. This will degrade the exposed threads and cause leaks.
- Hose washers can help reduce leakages.
- Look both ways before crossing the street!
- Use a hose protector to avoid trip and fall injuries.



Photos are screenshots from the 6BC Botanical Garden's how-to video, used with permission. Learn more on their website: 6bcgarden.org/how-to-water-the-garden

²⁰ Watch a short video on how to properly connect a garden hose to a fire hydrant on the GreenThumb YouTube channel: youtu.be/ulvTTO3IFL0

Tree Care, Pruning, and Removal

GreenThumb gardeners are encouraged to prune small shrubs, bushes, and fruit trees in their gardens. Pruning is important for tree health, but it must be done safely and correctly.

GreenThumb Guidelines:

- The garden group should decide on a plan for tree care and pruning. Designate at least two co-pruners who will oversee the garden's pruning needs.
- Pruning should always happen with at least two people: one to prune, and one to double-check which cuts to make and ensure safe practices.
- GreenThumb encourages garden groups to learn how to prune fruit trees and brambles to ensure healthy and abundant yields. This is the best way for the garden to have a solid ongoing maintenance plan since GreenThumb and Forestry do not generally perform routine tree maintenance work within GreenThumb gardens.

GreenThumb Policies:

The policies in this section are required for community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction.

- Garden groups must get written permission from GreenThumb to plant new trees and remove existing trees, even if damaged, diseased, or dead. Due to excessive tree plantings in past years, many GreenThumb gardens now have significant shade coverage and/or fruit trees that are left unattended to, with fallen fruit that attracts rodents. In addition, improper tree pruning has occurred, causing damage to property and risking injury to gardeners. Also, NYC Parks has very strict and detailed laws governing tree removal on NYC Parks property, and fines can be significant for improper removals. As a result, garden groups are not permitted to plant, damage or remove trees, or perform major pruning such as limb removals, without the prior written approval of NYC Parks.
- No gardener may cut, remove, damage a tree, including by cutting roots, inside the community garden or street tree adjacent to the site without prior authorization from GreenThumb and NYC Parks Forestry.
- Self-seeded ("volunteer") trees under 6" in diameter may be removed by gardeners. GreenThumb encourages gardeners to remove young saplings of invasive trees such as Siberian elm, mulberry, Norway maple, and ailanthus (tree of heaven) as soon as they are spotted.
- If you want to prune your garden's trees yourself, you must first take a tree pruning course. Gardeners who have completed the Citizen Pruner Course offered by [Trees New York](#)²¹ or another recognized pruning training such as [Bronx Green-Up](#) of The New York Botanical Garden's certification²² may handle basic pruning needs in the garden. This includes dead, diseased, or crossing branches.
- All pruning in the garden must be completed on the ground—no climbing trees or ladders in order to prune unless the garden group has brought in a licensed professional arborist. Any arborist or contractor hired by a garden group requires a [Tree Work Permit](#)²³ from NYC Parks Borough Forestry office prior to performing any work in the garden.

²¹ Learn more about Trees New York at treesny.org/

²² Learn more about Bronx Green-Up at The New York Botanical Garden at nybg.org/gardens/bronx-green-up

²³ Tree Work Permit: www.nycgovparks.org/services/forestry/tree-work-permit

NYC Parks Forestry Protocol

All GreenThumb gardeners must follow this protocol for trees within the garden, immediately adjacent to the garden, and any neighboring street trees.

- **[Tree Service Requests](#)**²⁴

NYC Parks performs routine prunings of street trees through the block pruning program. However, if you see an emergency tree condition (i.e. a hanging branch or precariously damaged tree), please submit a request through the [NYC Street Tree Map](#),²⁵ [NYC Parks Forestry](#),²⁶ or call 311.

To request the removal of a dead tree or to report an emergency tree condition within a GreenThumb garden under NYC Parks jurisdiction, gardeners should contact their Outreach Coordinators, who will then work with GreenThumb Operations and NYC Parks Forestry to determine next steps, which may include inspection by Forestry to determine if work is needed.

- **Parks Tree Removal Protocol**

The urban forestry mission of NYC Parks is to preserve, protect, and enhance the park, street, and forest trees under its jurisdiction. It is the policy of NYC Parks to avoid the removal of trees wherever possible. There are only four situations in which a tree under the jurisdiction of Parks may be removed: (1) if the tree is dead, (2) if the tree is irreversibly diseased, (3) if the tree presents a hazard and (4) if there is an unavoidable conflict between the tree and a construction project. NYC Parks has a clear removal policy for trees that are dead or impacted by deadly pests and diseases such as Dutch elm disease, Asian long-horned beetle, emerald ash borer, and oak wilt. These trees will be inspected and managed either through removal or treatment.

Only Parks Forestry can determine the removal of a dead or diseased tree. If your tree matches any of these conditions, you can put in a request for tree removal at nyc.gov/parks/trees or call 311. There are severe financial penalties for improperly or illegally removing or damaging a tree on city property, so please always check with your Outreach Coordinator if you're unsure.

- **Tree Risk Management**

NYC Parks Forestry prioritizes work in accordance with their [Tree Risk Management](#) program.²⁷ For example, they may address a dead branch hanging over a busy sidewalk faster than they will address a low risk dead tree inside of a park. This means some tree requests may take much longer to address than others. The Parks Tree Risk Management program promotes the overall health and safety of our forests, our city, and our residents.

- **Tree Damage and Destruction**

Unauthorized removal, destruction, or damage to trees under Parks jurisdiction is prohibited by law. Tree damage incidents include physical injuries to the tree such as root cutting, inappropriate limb pruning, and trunk or stem injury (including affixing signs to trees). Tree damage may also occur if the environment around the tree is impacted, such as soil compaction caused by stockpiling heavy materials under the tree or by vehicles. Soil compaction prevents water and oxygen filtration and can eventually lead to the death of the tree.

- **Construction-Related Tree Removal Permit Requests**

Trees under NYC Parks jurisdiction, including community gardens, can only be removed with a [Tree Work Permit](#) from NYC Parks. Construction-related tree removal requests are submitted to Parks by

²⁴ Learn more about NYC Parks Forestry tree service requests at www.nycgovparks.org/trees

²⁵ NYC Street Tree Map: nyc.gov/parks/treemap

²⁶ NYC Parks Forestry: nyc.gov/parks/trees

²⁷ For more information about NYC Parks Forestry Tree Risk Management, visit <https://www.nycgovparks.org/services/forestry/risk-management>

contractors, developers, private homeowners, and other public agencies involved in building projects in New York City.²⁸

NYC Law

- NYC Parks Rules and Regulations regarding trees derive from Title 56 of the Rules of the City of New York. The tree removal standard reads:

§ 1-04(b)(1)

- (i) No person shall cut, remove, or destroy any trees under the jurisdiction of the Department without permission of the Commissioner. Violation of this subparagraph constitutes a misdemeanor punishable by not more than six months imprisonment or by a fine of not more than \$15,000, or by both. For purposes of this subparagraph, "destroy" shall include, but not be limited to, kill, carve, prune, or inflict other physical damage to the tree.
- (ii) No person shall deface or write upon any trees under the jurisdiction of the Department.
- (iii) No person shall deface, write upon, sever, mutilate, kill, or remove from the ground any plants, flowers, shrubs, or other vegetation under the jurisdiction of the Department without permission of the Commissioner

In some cases of arboricide, when a tree has been removed either by accident or design before an inspector for Parks has been able to evaluate its condition, the City may calculate restitution payments, to be paid by the responsible party.

GreenThumb Pruning Brigade

GreenThumb launched the [GreenThumb Pruning Brigade](#)²⁹ in 2019 as a network of trained community gardeners who are certified to do their own minor pruning of shrubs and small trees in community gardens. Through this program, GreenThumb will support gardeners in achieving certification through training, supervised volunteer workdays, and starter tools. The GreenThumb Pruning Brigade is a network of volunteers who complete the program and are willing to prune shrubs and small trees in community gardens. With the creation of a GreenThumb Pruning Brigade, community gardens will be able to tap into a network of qualified fellow community gardeners to request minor, small-scale pruning work. Learn more about the GreenThumb Pruning Brigade by reaching out to your Outreach Coordinator.

Additional Resources:

- Submit a Tree Service Request: nycgovparks.org/services/forestry
- Learn more about New York City's Urban Forest: nyc.gov/parks/trees
- Trees New York Citizen Pruner Certification: treesny.org/
- Bronx Green-Up at the New York Botanical Garden: nybg.org/gardens/bronx-green-up/events/
- Community Greening at Brooklyn Botanic Garden: bbg.org/community

²⁸ For more information on construction related permit requests, visit nycgovparks.org/services/forestry/tree-work-permit

²⁹ Learn more about the GreenThumb Pruning Brigade at greenthumb.nycgovparks.org/news.html?news_id=495

Animals in the Garden

Community gardens offer many benefits to our neighborhoods, and these quiet green spaces can be the perfect habitat for local wildlife and other animals. This section lays out citywide policies to maintain a safe and healthy community garden while welcoming desired animals. GreenThumb takes animal welfare very seriously, so pay special attention to the requirements below. References under the “Additional Resources” sections are informational only and do not represent GreenThumb policy. Please seek out help from your Outreach Coordinator who will be able to provide technical support or put you in touch with an expert in the field if your garden group has questions about animals in the garden.

Domesticated Animals

Animals are permitted to be kept in the garden only in compliance with the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), [NYC Parks regulations](#),³⁰ all applicable city, state, and federal law, GreenThumb policies listed in the License Agreement and in this Handbook, and any applicable best practices. Any violation of NYC rules will result in a GreenThumb violation and possibly a fine. No domesticated animal kept in a GreenThumb community garden may cause nuisance conditions, and it is the gardeners’ responsibility to maintain them safely and in accordance with city, state, and federal law.

NYC Health Code Article 161.02 defines animal nuisances as including, but not limited to:

“animal feces, urine, blood, body parts, carcasses, vomitus and pervasive odors; animals that carry or are ill with contagious diseases communicable to persons or other animals; and dangerous dogs. A beekeeping nuisance shall mean conditions that include, but not be limited to, aggressive or objectionable bee behaviors, hive placement or bee movement that interferes with pedestrian traffic or persons residing on or adjacent to the hive premises; and overcrowded, deceased or abandoned hives.”

If the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene receives a complaint, a DOHMH inspector will come to assess the property. Roosters and other illegal animals such as turkeys and geese (other than wild turkeys and geese who might visit your garden on their own) will be taken from the garden and the group may be fined.

Dogs

GreenThumb Policy

The policies in this section are required for community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction.

- If a garden group wants to prohibit garden access to pets in its bylaws, they should contact their GreenThumb Outreach Coordinator and request updated NYC Parks sign for the garden. Gardens may not prohibit service animals under any circumstances as per federal, state, and local law. Please see additional information on service animals in the next section.

New York State Law

- Only properly licensed dogs who have been vaccinated for rabies may enter GreenThumb gardens.
- Dogs must wear collars with valid license tags.
- Dogs must be on a leash that is 6 feet long or less. Dogs must be under the control of their owner. It is a GreenThumb violation and illegal to leave a dog unattended in a garden.
- Dog waste must be cleaned up and disposed of promptly and properly.

Additional Resources

- For more information about dogs in NYC Parks: nycgovparks.org/facilities/dogareas

³⁰ Read more about NYC Parks rules and regulations at nycgovparks.org/rules

Feral Cats

Please recognize that it is a public health issue to have feral cats in the garden. When feral cats defecate in and around vegetable beds it creates a health hazard.³¹ Gardens may prohibit feeding of feral cats at their discretion in their bylaws.

Chickens

Chickens can make a great addition to a community garden. They are great companions, can help your garden with weeding and fertilization, and lay eggs! This section covers the basic rules and regulations for keeping hens in NYC. For more in-depth information about how to raise chickens, see the resources section at the end.

*Guidelines*³²

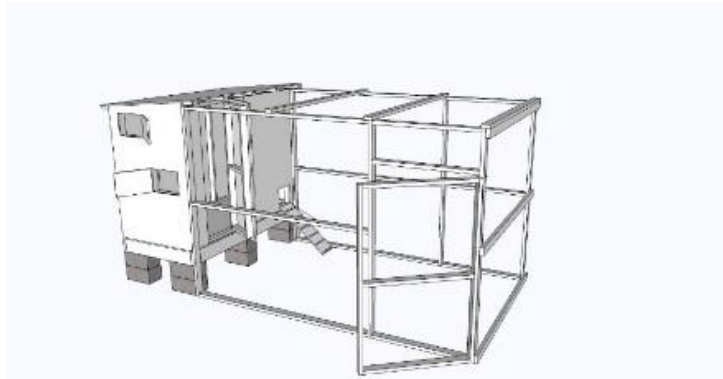
Garden groups should carefully consider whether to raise chickens in the garden—they require a considerable investment of time and money, they can eat members' crops when free roaming, and someone must take care of the chickens every day.

Maintenance responsibilities include:

- Chickens need food and water daily, and a way to keep water from freezing in the winter.
- Eggs must be collected daily.
- The coop needs to be cleaned regularly.
- Sometimes chickens get sick or need extra care. This takes extra time and potentially money.
- While chickens can be inexpensive, chicken feed does cost money. You will need to be able to buy chicken feed, so your chickens get the right nutrients.
- Take extra care during heat waves to make sure your chickens stay cool. Make sure you select breeds of chickens that are winter hardy and that your chickens' water doesn't freeze as temperatures drop.

Space:

- You will need to build a shelter for your chickens, called a coop, with a protected outdoor area attached to the coop, which is called a run. Please see the GreenThumb policies below for size requirements.
- Chickens eat soil and insects when they peck in the ground as part of their diet. Make sure the soil in and around the coop is clean and from a trusted source.



Sample chicken coop design from the Just Food City Chicken Guide. The enclosed area is the coop, and the open area, walled with hardware cloth or wire mesh, is the run. Image courtesy of Just Food.

³¹ Cornell Feline Health Center – Toxoplasmosis in Cats vet.cornell.edu/departments-centers-and-institutes/cornell-feline-health-center/health-information/feline-health-topics/toxoplasmosis-cats

³² Adapted with permission from the *Just Food City Chicken Guide, Fourth Edition*.

GreenThumb Policies

The policies in this section are required for community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction and encouraged for everyone else.

- Everyone in the garden should have a chance to weigh in on a chicken coop. Propose this idea at your garden's membership meetings and be sure the project follows the protocol for new ideas outlined in your garden's bylaws.
- Before adding chickens to your garden, you must submit a written plan to your Outreach Coordinator for approval. Approval is not guaranteed. A proposal template can be found in [Appendix D](#). Your plan must include:
 - Explanation of why the garden wants to keep chickens.
 - Description of how the garden group proposed and decided upon this new project.
 - Coop and run plan or drawing with dimensions, a materials list, and an estimated number of chickens the garden plans to get.
 - Plan for caring for the chickens' health, including what happens if a chicken gets sick. Examples include setting up a quarantine coop or temporary space, contacting a vet, etc.
 - Plan for how the garden will pay for chicken supplies, including the purchase of chickens.
 - List of who will be taking care of the chickens and their background with chicken care. The primary chicken caretaker(s) should have experience keeping chickens or completed a training or apprenticeship in chicken care.
- You must have a coop (hen house) and a run (enclosed, dedicated outdoor space) for your hens.
- Your chicken coop should provide 2-4 square feet for each hen. Your run should have 4 square feet per large hen or 2 square feet per bantam (small) hen.
- You must clean up after your hens regularly. It is illegal to allow your hens, or any other legal animals, to create any nuisance conditions. These include excessive noise, foul odors, or any other condition that constitutes a health or safety hazard.
- You must have a plan for taking care of the chickens daily.
- Like with growing food, if gardeners plan to eat the eggs laid by their chickens, GreenThumb requires chicken runs and grazing areas to be on soil that is free from contaminants. This may mean capping existing garden soil with clean topsoil or PUREsoil from the NYC Office of Environmental Remediation. Please see the [Safe Soil Gardening Requirements](#) Chapter for more information about soil requirements.
- GreenThumb does not allow the raising of chickens for sale or slaughter in community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction.

NYC and New York State Law

- No roosters or turkeys
 - It is illegal and a GreenThumb violation to keep roosters and turkeys. If you do have a rooster or turkey in your garden, you must relocate it. If you are unable to do so on your own, you must notify GreenThumb and we will work with the Department of Health to have the roosters or turkeys removed.
- Nuisance conditions
 - Hens are legal to keep as long as they do not cause nuisance conditions. If your neighbors notice nuisance conditions (i.e., foul smells, flies, vermin, and/or excessive noise) coming from your garden, you could encounter penalties. If your neighbors complain to the City, DOHMH inspectors will be sent out to inspect your chickens, which may result in fines.
- Coop size
 - You may build a structure for your chickens without obtaining a building permit, as long as it is under 150 square feet and you get GreenThumb approval in advance.
- Humane treatment
 - Under New York State law, you may not be cruel to your animals, which means you may not fight your chickens or abandon them, and you must give them food and water. You also may not

sell or give away baby chicks (two months or younger) in any quantity less than six and without providing proper brooding facilities.³³

- Selling eggs
 - Community gardeners can sell surplus produce, including eggs, only if the proceeds go back into the garden. You are permitted to sell the eggs from your hens without a permit³⁴, but not live animals or meat. According to New York State Law, you need to make sure they are labeled with the egg size if you are selling eggs grown by someone else, although GreenThumb recommends sizing and labeling your eggs anyway. For more information on regulations for selling eggs, please visit Section 191.3 of Article 13-A of the Agriculture and Markets Law on the New York State Agriculture and Markets website.³⁵

Additional resources:

- The *Just Food City Chicken Guide*—ask your Outreach Coordinator for a copy
- Books on raising chickens:
 - Damerow, Gail. *Storey's Guide to Raising Chickens*. Pownal, VT: Storey, 2010.
 - Damerow, Gail. *The Chicken Health Handbook, 2nd Edition: A Complete Guide to Maximizing Flock Health and Dealing with Disease*. Pownal, VT: Storey, 2015.
 - Kilarski, Barbara. *Keep Chickens! Tending Small Flocks in Cities, Suburbs, and Other Small Spaces*. Story Publishing, North Adams, MA. 2003.
- Informational website: mypetchicken.com

Parrots, Pigeons, and Other Birds

GreenThumb Policies

- Pigeons and parrots are not allowed to be kept as pets or in coops in GreenThumb community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction.

New York City Policy

- Turkeys, ducks, geese, roosters, quails, and other fowl are illegal to keep as pets in NYC.³⁶ As such, they may not be kept in GreenThumb gardens.

Bees

Beekeeping with European honeybees (*Apis mellifera*) has become a popular activity in all five boroughs—in community gardens, backyards, rooftop farms, schools, and even some restaurants. In light of recent research showing the possible detrimental impacts of the European honeybee (*Apis mellifera*) on native bee populations, however, NYC Parks now prohibits the introduction, placement and/or management of new European colonies, hives, or apiaries within NYC Parks including community gardens under Parks jurisdiction that are within 1.5 miles of [Forever Wild](#) natural areas.³⁷ Existing hives may remain, but no new hives may be introduced. This updated policy is intended to protect and preserve the city's natural ecosystems and ecosystem services. If you are not sure if your garden is within 1.5 miles of a Forever Wild natural area, please contact your Outreach Coordinator to find out.

³³ New York State's Agriculture and Markets laws: agriculture.ny.gov/Al/Laws_and_Regulations.html.

³⁴ Farmers' Market Federation of New York – Market Managers' Checklist: nyfarmersmarket.com/wp-content/uploads/Vendor-Permit-Requirements.pdf

³⁵ New York State regulations for selling eggs: agriculture.ny.gov/FS/general/04circs/Circular854_eggs.html

³⁶ NYC Health Code Articles 161.01b[11] and 161.19

³⁷ View a list of all NYC Parks Forever Wild sites at nycgovparks.org/greening/nature-preserves

Background on the new NYC Parks beekeeping policy:

Pollinators are essential to the reproductive cycles of most flowering plants and thus essential to the entire ecosystem, supporting plant populations that provide food and shelter for other species. Bees have adapted to become the most effective of all pollinators. Losses of wild bees from ecosystems have cascading effects on other trophic levels and their loss intensifies ecosystem collapse. The health and survival of the over 200 species of wild bees found in NYC Parks depends entirely on their ability to successfully forage for nectar and pollen from their coevolved plant associates. These floral resources are the sole food sources for themselves and their offspring.

European honeybees managed in colonies by beekeepers are eusocial, colonial nesters, and can be fiercely territorial, capturing the majority of floral resources within their large foraging ranges. They also produce large surpluses of honey, when managed agriculturally. Native bees are almost exclusively solitary nesters and produce little to no honey, hence are not used for human agricultural purposes. Beyond honey production, domesticated European honeybees are also cultivated for their pollination services. However, domesticated European honeybees are responsible for pollinating only about 15 percent of the approximately 100 crops that make up the world's food supply, while at least 80 percent of the world's food crops are pollinated by wild bees and other wildlife. Many species of wild bees have coevolved to specialize on pollinating individual species or small groups of species. The survival of these coevolved plant species is fully dependent on their associated wild bee pollinator species. Therefore, beyond their own intrinsic value, native wild bees are indispensable both to agriculture and natural ecosystems.

Existing scientific evidence indicates that European honeybees can negatively impact native bee populations through increased competition for floral resources, transmission of diseases and pests to native bee populations, and harm to native plant communities. Furthermore, given our city's highly urban, fragmented ecosystems, where floral resources may be extremely limited and diffuse, this Parks bee policy is based on a precautionary principle, urging against the further introduction of nonnative species whose effects are not fully established.

What you can do to help native bees:

New Yorkers can play an active role in protecting the city's ecosystems and conserving wild bee populations. Many wild bee species have demonstrated an ability to forage in park-adjointing neighborhood gardens. NYC Parks recommends planting native plants to attract native bees for pollinator services. Many native plants can produce abundant pollen and nectar for wildlife, provide nesting or structural material for native insects, as well as benefit our ecosystem. Please see the Native Species Planting Guide for New York City and other resources in the Pollinator Habitat and Beneficial Insects section of the [GreenThumb Growing Food Toolkit](#)³⁸ for more information and for planting suggestions for different conditions.

Gardens that already keep European honeybees may continue to do so and must follow the guidelines below.

GreenThumb Policies for Community Gardens Proposing New Hives

GreenThumb community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction that fall outside of 1.5 miles of a Forever Wild natural area must adhere to the following protocol:

1. Before adding bees to your garden, you must submit a written plan to your Outreach Coordinator for approval. Approval is not guaranteed. Your plan must include:
 - a. Information on how the garden group proposed and decided upon this new project.
 - b. A hive plan or drawing with dimensions and a materials list.
 - c. A plan for caring for the bees' health and ongoing maintenance.

³⁸ GreenThumb Growing Food Toolkit: bit.ly/GTGrowingFood

- d. A plan for outreach to neighboring buildings.
- e. A list of who will be taking care of the bees and their background with bee care. Make sure the primary bee caretaker(s) have experience keeping bees, have taken beekeeping classes with organizations such as nycbeekeeping.org, bees.nyc, or brooklyngrangefarm.com/honey, or have apprenticed for at least one full year with a beekeeper at another garden.

Additional planning steps that GreenThumb recommends when thinking about adding bees to the garden: ³⁹

1. Everyone in the garden should have a chance to weigh in on a beehive. Propose this idea at your garden's membership meetings and be sure the project follows the protocol for new ideas outlined in your garden's bylaws.
2. Identify a site within the garden that everyone agrees upon.
3. Talk to your garden's neighbors. You are likely to have neighbors who are skeptical or even fearful of your beekeeping plan. A little bit of information can go a long way to ease their worries.
 - a. Honeybees make great neighbors. They are quiet and among the tidiest creatures alive. Honeybees' entire purpose is to be productive and loyal to their hive and queen, so they will not stray except when going out to forage for pollen.
 - b. Honeybees are not yellow jackets, and will only sting if they are about to be crushed.
 - c. An average hive can produce a surplus of 20–50 pounds of honey per season, depending on the maturity of the hive and the season's nectar flow.
 - d. NYC requires that they have a notice on file of the address for the hive, but no permit is needed. There are no other requirements, but the City reserves the right to move the hive if it becomes a nuisance.
 - e. If any problem occurs, the hive can be donated to a local farm or another community garden.
4. Come up with a process for maintaining the hive. Who are the caretakers? How often will the caretakers check the hives, and how will they schedule hive checks so as to not open the hives when other members are in the garden or neighbors are enjoying their yards? How can other members learn how to become caretakers? How will information about how the hives are doing be communicated to the rest of the membership? What happens to the honey once it's harvested?
5. Fundraise! Installing a beehive from scratch can cost over \$1,000.
6. Order materials and bees and install the hive!

GreenThumb Policies for Community Gardens that Already Keep Bees

The policies in this section are required for community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction that already keep bees and are encouraged for everyone else. Again, no new hives within 1.5 miles of a Forever Wild natural area are being approved at this time.

- Locate your beehives appropriately. The hives should get direct sunlight at least in the morning, if not all day, and have a nearby source of water. Avoid locations that are close to main garden pathways or near a neighboring property. The hives should be as far from sidewalks as possible.
- Fence off your beehives with posts and netting, chicken wire, or another barrier, to prevent visitors from accidentally walking into the hive's immediate vicinity. The fence should be at least 3 feet away from the hives on all sides.

³⁹ This section has been adapted with permission from the community beekeeping toolkit by Q Gardens in Brooklyn: <https://qgardenscf.com/2017/12/01/12-steps-to-start-a-community-beekeeping-project/>

- Post signage on the hive fence alerting passersby to the presence of a beehive. We also encourage educational signage about honeybees.
- Develop a plan for educating neighbors and visitors about honeybees and their role in the garden.
- Community gardeners can sell honey if the proceeds go back into the garden.
- Plant a variety of native plants to provide ample floral resources for your bees and the native pollinators that thrive here. For lists of recommended plants and more information about planting and caring for native plants, check out the “Pollinator Habitat and Beneficial Insects” section of the [GreenThumb Growing Food Toolkit](#).⁴⁰

NYC and New York State Law

- Your hive must be registered with the [New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets](#).⁴¹ Submit a copy of this form to your GreenThumb Outreach Coordinator for the garden’s files.
- You must register your hives annually by May 31 each year with the [New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene](#) (DOHMH).⁴² Submit a copy of this form to your GreenThumb Outreach Coordinator for the garden’s files. According to New York City Health Code Article 161.01 sec. 12,

“all persons keeping honeybees (*Apis mellifera*) must file a notice with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene using the form linked to above. Beekeepers must also use appropriate practices to avoid creating a beekeeping nuisance. Article 161.02 describes a nuisance as conditions that include, but not limited to, aggressive or objectionable bee behaviors, hive placement or bee movement that interferes with pedestrian traffic or persons residing on or adjacent to the hive premises; and overcrowded, deceased, or abandoned hives.”
- NYC Beekeeping Operating Requirements:
 1. Beekeepers must maintain bee colonies in movable-frame hives that are kept in sound and usable condition. The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene will inspect beehives upon complaint.
 2. Beekeepers must provide a constant and adequate water source for the bees.
 3. Beekeepers must locate hives on a site so that the movement of the bees does not become a nuisance.
 4. Beekeepers must be able to respond immediately to control bee swarms and to eliminate nuisance conditions. A beekeeping nuisance means conditions including, but not limited to:
 - a. aggressive or objectionable bee behavior,
 - b. hive placement or bee movement that interferes with pedestrian traffic or persons near to the hive premises, or
 - c. overcrowded, deceased or abandoned hives.
 5. Beekeepers must update the registration information the NYC Department of Health has on record for their hive(s) within 10 days of any changes. On the Beekeeper Registration form, select "Revision".
- You do not need a license for selling honey as long as you do not purchase the honey from others for repackaging, and do not combine honey with any other substance such as flavorings.⁴³

Additional Resources:

- [nycbeekeeping.org](#) (New York City Beekeeping): a not-for-profit beekeeping organization in New York - [nycbeekeeping.org](#)
- NYC Beekeepers Association: [bees.nyc](#)
- Cornell University Master Beekeeper Program: [pollinator.cals.cornell.edu/master-beekeeper-program](#)

⁴⁰ The GreenThumb Growing Food Toolkit is available at [greenthumb.nycgovparks.org/news.html?news_id=480](#)

⁴¹ Register your hive at [agriculture.ny.gov/plant-industry/honey-bee-health](#)

⁴² Register your hives annually by May 31 each year with the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) at [www1.nyc.gov/nycbusiness/description/beekeeper-registration](#)

⁴³ For more information, visit [agriculture.ny.gov/FS/general/maple_syrup_honey.html](#)

- Cornell University General Beekeeping Resources: pollinator.cals.cornell.edu/resources/general-beekeeping-resources
- New York Police Department (NYPD) Bee Unit – if you witness a bee swarm in an inconvenient location, you can call 311 to reach the NYPD officers who are trained and equipped to relocate a swarm of honeybees. They are also on Twitter at @NYPDBees!

Turtles

Please see the section of this Handbook on Ponds and Water Features for more information about GreenThumb policy on water features.

NYC and New York State Law:

- You can keep domesticated or store-bought turtles in your garden, but gardeners may not keep native, wild turtles, including snapping turtles. For a list of native wild turtles visit dec.ny.gov/animals/7479.html.
- It is illegal to buy or sell any turtle that is 4 inches or shorter due to risk of salmonella infection.
- Any turtles kept in the garden may not create nuisance conditions.
- Domesticated or store-bought turtles may not be released into the wild outside the garden.
- Red-eared sliders are considered by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to be an invasive species and may not be released into ponds, streams, lakes, or sewers outside the GreenThumb garden.⁴⁴ If you need to relocate a turtle, contact GreenThumb or a local pet store.

Rabbits

Domesticated rabbits are not permitted to be kept in community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction. GreenThumb does not allow the raising of rabbits for pets, recreation, sale, consumption, or any other purpose in community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction.

New York State Law⁴⁵

- You must provide proper food and drink to your rabbits, and not abandon them.

Fish and Aquaponics

Gardens with GreenThumb-approved and well-maintained water features may keep koi and other small fish. Aquaponics is an agricultural practice that combines aquaculture (farming fish, crayfish, etc.) with hydroponics (growing food plants in a nutrient-rich water solution instead of soil) for the mutual benefit of both the fish and the plants; fish waste feeds the plants and the plants filter the water for the fish.

Please see the [Ponds and Water Features](#) chapter of this Handbook for more information on protocol for the installation of ponds and other water features.

Guidelines for Aquaponics⁴⁶

- Everyone in the garden should be in agreement about installing an aquaponics system. Propose this idea at your garden's membership meetings and be sure the project follows the protocol for new ideas outlined in your garden's bylaws.
- Maintain healthy water quality:
 - pH: 6.0 - 8.5
 - Total ammonia nitrogen: 0.5 - 1 mg/l
 - Temperature for growth: 70° - 90° Fahrenheit

⁴⁴ New York State regulations for invasive species: dec.ny.gov/animals/99141.html

⁴⁵ New York State laws around animal care and animal cruelty: <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/AGM/A26>

⁴⁶ Adapted from the Aquaponics Toolkit from Oko Farms. Learn more about aquaponics at grownycdistancelearning.org/post/aquaponics-in-the-teaching-garden

- Temperature for spawning: 77° - 86° Fahrenheit
- Dissolved Oxygen: > 5ppm

GreenThumb Policies

The policies in this section are required for community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction and encouraged for everyone else.

- Before adding fish or aquaponics to your garden, you must submit a written plan to your Outreach Coordinator for approval from GreenThumb. Approval is not guaranteed. Your plan must include:
 - Drawing with dimensions and a materials list.
 - Plan for ongoing maintenance, how gardeners will be trained, and who will have access to the fish. The plan should show that you have researched proper care of the type(s) of fish that you plan to have in the garden.
 - Plan for harvesting and distributing any fish meant for eating.
- Ponds or water features with small fish or other pond wildlife must be at least 3.5 feet deep. Koi need at least 20 square feet in area.
- All ponds or water features must have a pump to aerate the water. Solar panels are a great option for powering your pump.
- All ponds must have a fence or barrier (thick shrubs, stone wall, etc.) with a child-proof gate
- Gardeners must post visible signage around and close to the pond with the following rules:
 - Visitors must supervise any children and dogs they bring to the garden.
 - Dogs (and people) are prohibited from swimming in the pond.
 - Fishing is prohibited.
 - This water is not potable for human consumption.
 - Any additional rules up to the garden's discretion: no throwing coins, no trash, etc.

New York State Law⁴⁷

- Koi (*Cyprinus carpio*) and goldfish (*Carassius auratus*) are considered by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to be an invasive species and may not be released into ponds, streams, lakes, or sewers outside the GreenThumb garden. If you need to relocate fish, please contact GreenThumb or a local pet store.
- Harvesting fish for edible consumption is regulated by state and federal law.

Additional Resources:

- Cornell Cooperative Extension resource list: ccenassau.org/gardening/water-gardens
- Aquaponics with GrowNYC Distance Learning: grownycdistancelearning.org/post/aquaponics-in-the-teaching-garden

⁴⁷ New York State regulations on invasive species: dec.ny.gov/animals/99141.html

Service Animals

The guidance below applies to community gardens operating on NYC Parks property. Garden groups that steward these spaces are responsible for compliance with applicable laws and rules regarding service animals and emotional support animals, which are outlined below. If you have questions, please reach out to your GreenThumb Outreach Coordinator, who will assist the garden group in answering their questions.

Service animals, most commonly dogs but sometimes miniature horses, are trained to aid a person with a disability. These dogs perform an important role for people with disabilities, which may include helping someone with navigating, alerting someone about sounds or allergens, retrieving items like medication, assisting someone during a seizure, or pulling wheelchairs. Service animals are often trained by qualified professionals to perform their duties.

In New York City, the use of service animals in public accommodations like parks and community gardens is governed by federal, state, and local laws, like the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The laws say that in almost all circumstances, service animals should be allowed to enter a public facility or open space with their handlers, even if that facility has a no pet policy. Service animals are not pets; they are specially trained. You should not touch them or otherwise interfere with their work. Federal law specifically protects the use of service dogs and miniature horses. Local law, however, may protect a broader group of trained service animals.

You may not ask the person with a disability many questions about their animal. Your questions should be limited to:

- “Is the animal required because of a disability?”
- “What work or task has the animal been trained to perform?”

Do not ask anything else, such as to see proof or demonstration of a dog’s training or documentation of someone’s disability. If it is apparent from the circumstances or your interaction with the person that an animal is trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability (for example, a dog is guiding a person with a visual impairment or is pulling a person in a wheelchair), do not even ask the above questions.

You may only request that a service animal be removed in limited circumstances:

- If the animal is out of control and the handler cannot manage it.
- If the animal is not housebroken.

A service animal must be under the control of its handler at all times. Please note that a service animal does not necessarily need to be on a leash or harness. The handler may maintain control of the animal using a leash, harness, tether, voice, signal, or any other means that ensures the handler is in control of the animal.

Emotional Support Animals

Animals other than dogs and miniature horses trained to aid a person with a disability are not typically considered service animals and are not covered by the ADA and the State human rights law. Local law is generally broader than those laws, however, and may protect a person’s right to be accompanied by an emotional support animal, or a service animal that is not a dog or a miniature horse. If a patron asks to bring any service animal other than a dog into a facility where pets are prohibited, please alert your GreenThumb Outreach Coordinator, who will seek appropriate guidance from NYC Parks. If a patron asks to bring any emotional support, therapy, comfort, or companion animal (that is not also a service animal as described above) into a community garden where pets are prohibited, please direct them to the [Parks Reasonable Accommodation](#) form.⁴⁸

The Parks Reasonable Accommodation Form is an online form for requests for reasonable accommodations in Parks facilities. The form is available on the Accessibility page of the Parks website. Requests should be submitted through the form and requests will be reviewed by appropriate Parks staff, who will determine if exceptions or adjustments to Parks rules and policies can and should be made as a reasonable accommodation.

⁴⁸ Find the NYC Parks Reasonable Accommodation form at www.nycgovparks.org/accessibility

While awaiting a final determination from Parks, community gardeners operating gardens on NYC Parks property should accommodate the patron and allow the animal into the garden unless it is clear that the animal is out of control, not housebroken, or a risk to safety and operations in the facility.

If you are unsure what to do when asked by a member of the public to change your program or facility, please speak to your GreenThumb Outreach Coordinator.

Wildlife

New York City is full of wildlife. Chances are, throughout the season, many critters will pay your garden a visit. For detailed information about deer, raccoons, coyotes, mallards/ducks, red-tailed hawks, and more, visit nyc.gov/wildlife.

It is a GreenThumb violation to feed any wild or stray animal (except birds). Feeding birds can also draw rats, so it is recommended to keep bird feeding areas tidy and limited to squirrel-proof feeders that hang from trees or structures.

Raccoons

Since 2014, the City of New York has been cooperating with the federal government to vaccinate raccoons in Staten Island, Brooklyn, and Queens against rabies. For more information on dealing with raccoons, visit nyc.gov/wildlife.

Deer

White-tailed deer are herbivores, which means they eat plants. Sometimes, the plants in a garden are more appealing to deer than the plants in nearby natural areas. For more information, visit nyc.gov/wildlife.

Squirrels

One of the most annoying garden pests, squirrels are infamous for taking a bite out of a tomato and then walking away. Here are some tips for dealing with squirrels in the vegetable garden from the University of Massachusetts Amherst Center for Agriculture, Food, and the Environment:⁴⁹

- Small domes or cages made of fine mesh (1/2 inch to exclude chipmunks) wire can protect individual plants or small rows until the plants, or crops, mature.
- Plant extracts such as capsicum (hot pepper or cayenne powder), garlic, mustard oils, and others, which repel based on taste or skin irritation.
- Remove nearby resources that attract wildlife: bird feeders, bird baths, pet food, watering bowls, and unsecured garbage containers.
- Enclose compost that includes fruit and vegetable scraps in pest-proof bins.

⁴⁹ For more information visit the University of Massachusetts Amherst Center for Agriculture, Food, and the Environment at ag.umass.edu

Rats

The bane of every New Yorker, rats sometimes find their way into community gardens. There are many precautions gardeners can take to prevent rats, as well as courses of action for if and when they show up. Information for this section was derived from DOHMH materials. For more information, visit nyc.gov/rats. If the garden has taken every precaution and still has a severe rat issue, please call 311.

Prevent Rats

Rats seek out places to live that provide them with everything they need to survive: food, water, shelter, and safe ways for them to get around. Rats like to build nests or burrows in the earth and prefer traveling along the same paths over and over—often using walls, fences, and bushes to find their way.

- Keep the garden tidy. Debris and garbage piles are perfect hiding and nesting spots.
- Compost bins must be lined with ¼-inch hardware cloth. An enclosed elevated tumbler can also be used for the first step of composting. Most importantly, an actively managed compost bin is disruptive to rats!
- Keep bare soil covered. You can use wood chips, gravel, or mulch.
- Talk to your neighbors! Are they storing their trash properly in hard plastic or metal bins with tight fitting lids?
- Store all garbage in hard plastic rat-resistant containers with lids. Rats eat your garbage.
- Consider removing all trash cans from the garden and instituting a “carry in, carry out” policy for all members and visitors. Otherwise, provide enough trash containers to handle all of the garden’s trash. Any exposed trash will attract rats.
- Keep landscaped areas around your property free of tall weeds and trim shrubs that are close to the ground. Keep a plant-free zone 16 to 24 inches along fence lines, interior structures, and neighboring buildings.
- Check for cracks or holes in the foundation of your shed or gazebo or other garden structure, sidewalk, and under doors and repair them by filling and sealing them.
- Prune low limbs off shrubs and vegetables up to 8 inches off the ground to discourage burrowing.
- Do not encourage bird or cat feeding and post signage for the general public to discourage it.
- Concrete pads are now required under new sheds, gazebos, and other structures to prevent rat harborage. Please contact your Outreach Coordinator if you have questions.

Look for Evidence

- Rats come out at night, so walk around outside with a flashlight after dark. This will help you see where rats are going, so you can check for burrows when it gets light.
- Look for places where rats live. Most rats live in nests or burrows. Burrows are holes in dirt or concrete from 1-4 inches wide, with smooth edges. Burrows can be found under bushes and plants. They will often have an entrance and exit hole.
- Look for droppings. Droppings are often found close to garbage.
- Look for holes and gnaw marks on wood and plastic garbage cans.

Clean Up

Cleaning up and getting rid of clutter is an easy and effective way to prevent rats.

- Wash away droppings and track marks. Rats communicate and attract each other through their urine and droppings. Sweep up droppings and clean up dark greasy track marks. Wash down the area with water and a mild bleach solution (one-part bleach, 10 parts water).
- Get rid of clutter. Clutter gives rats lots of places to hide, sleep, nest, and reproduce. Remove (and recycle) piles of newspapers, paper bags, cardboard, and bottles. Store items away from walls and off the ground.
- Control weeds and shrubs. Rats are often found in burrows under bushes and plants. Keep tall grass, bushes, shrubs, and mulch away from building foundations. Pull out ivy around burrows. Keep ground bare 6 inches from buildings, and trim under shrubs. Make space between plants and avoid dense planting. Keep gardens free of weeds and trash.

Starve Them

Rats only need one ounce of food each day. Don't make your garbage their food.

- Manage your garbage. Bring garbage cans and bags to the curb as close to pick up time as possible. Leaving them out overnight invites rats. Make sure you have enough garbage cans to hold trash between pickups. Use hard plastic or metal cans with tight-fitting lids.
- Keep food away. Don't put food out for stray cats, pigeons, or squirrels.

Shut Them Out

Rats chew holes into buildings and can squeeze through cracks and holes as small as a half-inch. To keep rats out for good, seal all holes and cracks in garden structures. Use ¼-inch hardware cloth for chicken coops and compost bins.

Finding burrows in your garden? Close them up! You can fill them with stalite, a type of gravel made from slate, or collapse burrows in soil by filling with soil and tamping down with a shovel, or by stepping on them. You can also use mortar or cement to fill gaps and holes in cement and paved areas. Cover large holes with metal lathe or screening, then seal with mortar or cement.

Wipe Them Out

Rodent bait is an effective way to wipe out rats, but applying these poisons is a job for professionals. For all GreenThumb community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction, rodent abatement is handled by GreenThumb Operations and/or DOHMH. Visits from these crews will include inspection, instruction on integrated pest management (IPM), steps that you the gardener can do, and baiting as appropriate. Talk to your GreenThumb Outreach Coordinator for more information on this option. If your garden group wishes to hire a professional, you must first get approval from GreenThumb on your vendor.

Winter Maintenance Tips

As the winter months get closer, we encourage all garden groups to develop a winter management plan for any animals, water features, and rainwater harvesting systems, as well as a snow removal plan to ensure that you have a process in place to quickly remove snow and ice when it comes. If your garden group would like assistance in developing a plan, please contact your Outreach Coordinator. Maintenance of our gardens reflects on us all as members of the gardening community.

Sidewalks

Clearing snow and ice from the sidewalks in front of gardens after a winter weather event is definitely not the most fun part of stewarding a community garden, but it is the responsibility of all gardeners under NYC Parks and we appreciate gardeners' commitment to keeping sidewalks in front of gardens safe for their neighbors. Gardens not under NYC should check with their property owner. Keeping pedestrian corridors in front of gardens clear and passable is not only important to keeping members of your community safe, but it's also the law. A failure to clear the sidewalks in front of gardens located on City-owned property is a violation of the GreenThumb License Agreement and of the NYC Administrative Code.

Guidelines:

Best practices for clearing the sidewalk of snow and ice:

- A group of people is recommended, not just one person.
 - If a larger sidewalk length adjoins the garden, it will require a larger group to clear the snow.
 - If a smaller sidewalk length adjoins the garden, it will require a smaller group to clear the snow.
- Take breaks! Lift at the knees, not your back! Know what is too much for you. Pace yourself when shoveling snow and do not do it alone.
- Spread calcium chloride before any snow weather event to facilitate melting and spread again conservatively after the first round of shoveling; a little goes a long way.
 - If there is a layer of ice, let calcium chloride melt ice and then shovel it off the sidewalk.
- If temperatures are below 20°F or the ice gets too thick, calcium chloride will not be as effective. You can use an ice breaker instead.
- The sidewalk should have a path through the snow that is 3 feet wide as per Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) design guidelines.

GreenThumb Policies

The policies in this section are required for community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction.

- Garden groups must have a group plan for keeping sidewalks safe following snowstorms
 - Which individuals will respond to snowstorms? Who will respond when? GreenThumb recommends sharing the load—it should not be the same person every time.
 - Who can be on call to help shovel if there's more snow than usual? Make a back-up plan.
- GreenThumb garden groups under NYC Parks jurisdiction that do not clear sidewalks of snow and ice following DSNY regulations below are subject to a GreenThumb violation.



*Shoveling snow at Jardín de la Roca.
Photo by Salvador Dominguez,
GreenThumb community gardener at
Jardín de la Roca.*

NYC Law

- Follow DSNY regulations for sidewalk maintenance following a snowstorm:
 - Snow must be cleared within four daylight hours after the snow stops. If the snow stops falling between:
 - 7:00 a.m. – 4:49 p.m. You must clear the snow within four hours
 - 5:00 p.m. – 8:59 p.m. You must clear the snow within 14 hours
 - 9:00 p.m. – 6:59 a.m. You must clear the snow by 11:00 a.m.
 - Keep the fire hydrants clear of snow, ice, and other debris.

Garbage

GreenThumb Policy

- Garbage and debris may end up in the garden or on the sidewalk. The garden group is still responsible for maintaining and cleaning the garden throughout the winter.

Open Hours

GreenThumb Policy

- Between November 1 and March 31, your garden is not required to be open to the public, but it can be. Some garden groups host holiday programming and seasonal activities, including Halloween celebrations, Day of the Dead festivities, solstice activities, and holiday parties.

Additional Winter Considerations

- Maintain any domesticated animals that live in the garden, including chickens, in a safe and healthy manner. Continue to feed them daily, spend time with them, change their litter, and ensure that their water does not freeze during periods of low temperatures.
- Maintain proper care of water features, irrigation systems, and rainwater harvesting systems, to make sure pipes don't freeze, and any fish or turtles have a healthy habitat.
- In gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction, Parks staff will turn internal water systems on in the spring and off in the fall.
- Locks and hinges benefit from WD-40 in the winter to prevent sticking.
- Clean up the garden as the season comes to a close each fall. Clean and sharpen tools, organize the tool shed, remove any diseased or pest-infested plant residue so that they don't over-winter, top off your raised beds with compost and your pathways with woodchips, and take down any temporary trellises.

Ponds and Water Features

Ponds can be tranquil, beautiful additions to a community garden when maintained properly and safely. They are also a lot of work, and a potential safety risk if not installed and maintained properly. If your garden group has the capacity and ability to build and maintain a pond or water feature safely, please follow the requirements below.

The policies in this section are required for community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction and encouraged for everyone else.

GreenThumb Policies

- All ponds must have a pump to aerate the water.
 - Solar panels are a great option for powering your pump.
- All ponds must have a fence or barrier (thick shrubs, stone wall, etc.) with a child-proof gate or other appropriate barrier (36 inches tall) to ensure public safety.
- Ponds with small fish or other pond wildlife must be at least 3.5 feet deep.
 - Koi need at least 20 square feet in area.
- Garden groups must post visible signage around and close to the pond with the following rules:
 - Visitors must supervise any children they bring to the garden.
 - Dogs must be leashed and supervised in the garden at all times.
 - Swimming in the pond is prohibited (including dogs).
 - Fishing is prohibited.
 - This water is not potable for human consumption.
 - Any additional rules up to the garden's discretion: no throwing coins, no trash, etc.

GreenThumb Protocol for Pond Installation:

- Everyone in the garden should have a chance to weigh in on a pond. Propose this idea at your garden's membership meetings and be sure the project follows the protocol for new ideas outlined in your garden's bylaws.



Pond at La Plaza Cultural surrounded by a stone border barrier | Photo by Ariana Arancibia, GreenThumb.



Pond with appropriate safety features at Green Oasis Community Garden in Manhattan | Photo by Ariana Arancibia, GreenThumb.

- Submit a plan to your Outreach Coordinator. A template is available in [Appendix E](#). Your plan should include:
 - Description of how the garden group proposed and decided upon this new project
 - Drawings of the planned pond, including any fencing, plantings, and signage
 - A list of building materials
 - Safety considerations
 - Type of pumping system to aerate the water
 - Any plans for wildlife, including fish
 - Plans for avoiding mosquitoes
 - Plans for ongoing maintenance: keeping the water clean, winterizing the pond, monitoring ammonia/nitrate levels, cleaning debris, maintaining the pump, monitoring for mosquitoes and algae, problem solving, etc.
- Your Outreach Coordinator will review your plan with GreenThumb policies and schedule a site visit.
- Your final design and proposal will be reviewed for safety, legal compliance, and borough operations considerations. Please be advised that not all ponds and water features will be approved—different sites have different considerations, and we will do our best to work with you on your idea.

Events

Events are a fun way to involve the community, get to know your neighbors, and increase membership. Past events at community gardens around the city have included art shows, movie nights, live music, children's Halloween celebrations, farmers markets, harvest festivals, volunteer events, poetry readings, and more.

GreenThumb Policies

For GreenThumb community gardens under the jurisdiction of NYC Parks:

The GreenThumb License Agreement requires that all gardens located on property under NYC Parks jurisdiction host at least two free community events each year and that gardens notify GreenThumb in advance. All events must be consistent with GreenThumb's mission and must receive prior written approval from GreenThumb. These events can be anything from small-scale poetry readings in the garden to larger scale block parties.

GreenThumb has a [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\) page](#) on our website for our events policy, which answers many questions that go beyond the Handbook. This FAQ is also available in [Appendix B](#).⁵⁰

Event Request Form

All NYC Parks community gardens must submit their event requests to their Outreach Coordinator in advance using [the GreenThumb Event Request Form](#) by the following dates:⁵¹

- **March 1:** For events proposed between April 1 and June 30
- **June 1:** For events proposed between July and September 30
- **September 1:** For events proposed between October 1 and December 31
- **December 1:** For events proposed between January 1 and March 30

Late additions: For any event that has not yet been scheduled as of the relevant submission date above, gardens must notify their GreenThumb Outreach Coordinator as soon as the event is scheduled. GreenThumb will make best efforts to expedite its review of these submissions and provide a response as soon as possible.

An event that requires the prior approval of GreenThumb through the [GreenThumb Event Request Form](#) is any activity that:

- Requires any of the approvals or permits outlined below, or
- Results in the garden's closure to the public during the garden's scheduled 20 open hours, or
- Invites in members of the public as part of a planned community activities not related to the general operation and maintenance of the garden, or
- Any other event identified by NYC Parks as requiring prior approval

Events that do not require the GreenThumb Event Request Form nor prior approval:

- Any event held by or in partnership with GreenThumb, including Open Garden Day, staff-led workshops, GreenThumb-led volunteer days, Art in the Garden, and similar events.
- Activities typically associated with the routine operation and maintenance of a garden, including garden meetings, garden workdays, internal garden events, and other activities related to the obligations of the license.

Please note that submission does not equal approval, and approval timeframes differ depending on the complexity of the event, so please submit event requests as soon as you are aware of a possible event. Processing times can vary for approvals and events should be submitted as soon as possible in advance of the

⁵⁰ GreenThumb Events FAQ can be accessed at bit.ly/GT_Events_FAQ

⁵¹ Find the GreenThumb Event Form at bit.ly/GTEventForm

proposed date, but no later than the schedule outlined above. The event is not approved until you receive an explicit written approval from GreenThumb, without which you are prohibited from holding the event.

The garden cannot be closed to the public for a private event during posted Open Hours. If the event takes place during the regular Open Hours, the garden must stay open, otherwise, the group will have to post additional public hours within a week of the day of the event to compensate for the disrupted access.

Additional Approvals and Permits:

In addition, gardens must obtain any and all other necessary approvals, permits, or other authorizations required by any federal, New York State or City laws, rules, regulations and orders applicable to any aspect of the operation of the event, including, but not limited to, any required Police Department amplified sound permit; Fire Department permit; Buildings Department permit; City and State Department of Health permit; or New York State Department of Environmental Protection permit. Upon request, GreenThumb will attempt to identify the required approvals, but it is the responsibility of each garden to obtain any and all necessary approvals.

Some instances where events, as defined above, may require additional approvals include:

- **Third-party events:** The garden group may receive requests from non-members and external organizations to host birthday parties and other private events at the garden. The garden group can develop a process for how to handle these, including an application form, decision-making process, event criteria, etc., and may accept or reject such requests at their discretion. For any event hosted or co-hosted at the garden by a third party, you must still obtain prior written approval from GreenThumb through the [Event Request Form](#). Please also see the [Handling Money, Donations, and Sales](#) chapter for information about collecting donations.
- **Open flames or use of generators:** For any event that involves any [open flame](#) or heating element, or the use of certain [generators](#), you must obtain prior written approval from NYC Parks and the appropriate permit(s) from FDNY.^{52,53} Please see the [Fire Policy](#) chapter for more information.
- **Amplified Sound:** For any event with amplified sound, you must obtain an [amplified sound permit](#) from NYPD.⁵⁴ GreenThumb can issue a letter to garden groups in good standing that you can take to your local precinct to obtain a sound permit if needed.
- **Exchange of Funds:** Garden groups are permitted to have two fundraisers per year, with prior approval from GreenThumb.⁵⁵ For any event beyond those two fundraisers where goods or services are proposed to be sold, or revenues are otherwise generated, including but not limited to admission fees and/or ticket sales, you must obtain a Temporary Use Authorization (TUA) from the NYC Parks Revenue Division (See TUA FAQ in the [Handling Money, Donations, and Sales](#) chapter). Please note that the sale of produce grown in the Garden is permitted as per the License and does not require prior approval. A fundraiser might be a one-off fundraising event, or an ongoing ticketed series (such as a yoga class), as long as it falls outside of the garden's Open Hours.
- **Filming and Photography:** For any event involving commercial filming or photography, you must obtain a Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment permit in addition to prior written approval from NYC Parks. Begin by completing the [questionnaire](#) through NYC Parks.⁵⁶ Non-commercial filming does not require a permit and can be approved at the garden's discretion.
- **Street Closure:** The Street Activity Permit Office (SAPO) issue different types of [permits](#) that involves street closures in case the garden wants to host a block party, beautification project, festival, or fair.⁵⁷ To apply for a street closure permit, visit nyc.gov/sapo or call (212) 788-0025. This can take several months—start at least six months before your event.

⁵² FDNY Open Flame Permit: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/fdny/business/all-certifications/per-openflames.page>

⁵³ FDNY Generator Permit: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/cecm/permitting/new-york-city-fire-department.page>

⁵⁴ NYPD Amplified Sound Permit: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/nypd/services/law-enforcement/permits-licenses-permits.page>

⁵⁵ For more information on fundraising policy, visit the [Handling Money, Donations, and Sales](#) chapter of this Handbook.

⁵⁶ Film & Photography Permit: <http://nycgovparks.org/permits/film-shoot-request>

⁵⁷ SAPO Permits: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/cecm/permitting/permit-types.page>

A list of New York City permits related to events can be found on the [Citywide Event Coordination and Management Office](#) website.⁵⁸

Additionally:

- Unless an event is a fundraiser that has been permitted in writing by NYC Parks and/or GreenThumb in advance, as outlined in the license, groups may not refer to expected donations, required donations, recommended donations, ticket fees, security deposits, or similar language. Please see the [Handling Money, Donations, and Sales](#) chapter of this Handbook for additional details.
- Garden groups can accept unsolicited individual cash and in-kind donations.
- GreenThumb encourages garden groups to build relationships with their elected officials. If the garden group would like to host an event related to a political campaign, they are required to get a [Parks Special Events Permit](#).⁵⁹

How GreenThumb can support:

- Attend one of our event planning workshops to learn simple, quick, and easy steps to organize garden events and host smooth, fun-filled activities in your community garden.
- If you're not sure which approvals you need, you can reach out to your Outreach Coordinator for guidance.
- We can post announcements of garden events on GreenThumb's website and social media channels. Submit your event through the [Event Listing Request](#) page⁶⁰ to be listed on the GreenThumb online events calendar, and we'll post it as long as we receive it at least three weeks in advance.
- Tag us in your social media outreach about the event and we will repost on our social media platforms.
 - Facebook: GreenThumbNYC
 - Instagram: @greenthumbgrows
 - Twitter: @greenthumbgrows
 - Hashtag: #greenthumbgrows
- After you've had your event, send us pictures! We can post them on social media or include them in our printed publications.
- If your group is particularly interested in having a GreenThumb workshop or event take place at your garden, or if you have a great idea for a new workshop, talk to your Outreach Coordinator. We are always open to new ideas!

Planning Suggestions:

- Think about the "Who, What, Where, When, Why and How" of your event.
- Make a project plan or timeline.
- Start planning at least four months in advance. This gives you enough time to initiate planning, notify GreenThumb (according to the timeline above), reach out to the community for support and assistance (two months prior), promote the event in person and through social media (three weeks), prep for the day (one or two days prior), carry the event through (day of), and debrief on how it went (one day to one week later). Make flyers for distribution in your neighborhood, post an announcement on your garden gate, and make announcements at local churches, community board, schools, and community garden meetings. Ask if you can post flyers at local cafes, grocery stores, laundromats, and bodegas.
- Reach out to local press and community blogs to see if they would like to cover your work and the impact it is having. Feel free to talk about your relationship with GreenThumb and adapt the following boilerplate language in your press pitch: "Our GreenThumb community garden is one of the 550 gardens part of a citywide network. GreenThumb gardens create hubs of neighborhood pride and

⁵⁸ Citywide Event Coordination and Management: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/cecm/permitting/supporting-permitting-agencies.page>

⁵⁹ Learn more about the Parks Special Events permit at <https://nyceventpermits.nyc.gov/parks/Login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2fParks%2f>

⁶⁰ GreenThumb Event Listing Request information page: https://greenthumb.nycgovparks.org/event_listing_request.html

provide a myriad of environmental, economic, and social benefits to the neighborhoods in which they thrive.”

- Consider creating an email group, website, and Facebook page for the community garden as a way to do outreach.
- Get together a pre-event checklist and make sure all volunteers and event planners have clear roles.
- Reach out to our Outreach Coordinator for additional tools and resources for planning garden events.

Handling Money, Donations, and Sales

If your garden group is seeking to collect dues, apply for grants, raise funds, or accept monetary donations, you will need a secure place to put the funds where they can also be monitored and reported on back to the garden group. Groups raising a lot of funds often register as not-for-profit organizations in order to be able to receive tax-exempt status. However, because of the paperwork and fees involved, groups operating on a smaller scale often use a fiscal sponsor to handle donated money or accept small donations without offering tax-exemption to the donor.

Please note that NYC Parks reserves the right to audit garden financial records for gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction at any point. Please keep your records up to date. All gardens on property under NYC Parks jurisdiction property must regularly share financial reports with the garden membership and show financial records to garden members upon request.

Accounting

Your garden's bylaws should have clear protocols outlining how funds are accepted and disbursed, and how financial records are communicated to the garden's membership. Under the GreenThumb License Agreement, garden groups can accept membership dues of a reasonable amount solely for the support of the garden and its operations and programming, but cannot require them for membership under any circumstances. As an alternative to paying monetary dues, some garden groups offer the options of sliding-scale dues and/or in-kind service in the form of extra volunteer time. Some garden groups have clearly defined rules about petty cash, or when a purchasing decision needs to go to a vote by either the membership or the steering committee. How your garden group chooses to manage funds is up to you and should be clearly documented in the bylaws and followed by everyone in the garden.

Fundraising

Garden groups can raise funds solely to support the operation of the garden. These funds can come from membership dues, grants, farm stands, and more. Fundraisers to support the ongoing operation and maintenance of the garden that occur on-site within the garden can be held twice each year with prior written approval from GreenThumb. Fundraisers that occur outside of the garden or online can be held at any time and do not require GreenThumb notification or approval.

Individual Donations

GreenThumb community garden groups can accept donations in the form of membership dues, online fundraising campaigns, and unsolicited donations at events, but cannot require monetary payment for garden membership, or attendance at garden events unless this is one of the gardens' two permitted fundraisers. Garden groups may accept only unsolicited donations to the garden unless they have approval from NYC Parks in advance. For policies around fundraising events, please see the [Events](#) chapter.

Online fundraising (sometimes called crowdsourcing) is a great idea to raise money for small projects such as a new compost bin or a rainwater harvesting system. There are many platforms out there such as [gofundme.org](#) and [ioby.org](#), which offer varying levels of service at various fees. Research if one is right for your garden group's needs.

ioby offers fundraising tips and webinars on their website [ioby.org](#), and often partners with GreenThumb on workshops at the annual GreenThumb GrowTogether conference and throughout the year.

Grants

Garden groups may apply for grants to support their work. Some grants offered by NYC-based organizations do not require a garden group to have a fiscal sponsor or 501(c)3 status, which makes them great places to start. Many grants have specific purposes, such as for composting, increasing your outreach capacity, or growing

more food. [Partnerships for Parks](#)⁶¹ and [Citizens Committee for NYC](#)⁶² are longtime supporters of NYC community gardens and can help your group craft your grant proposal. Ask your Outreach Coordinator for additional tips about where to get started.

For very large grants, participatory budgeting, capital funding, and discretionary funding for community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction, you must submit a written plan to your Outreach Coordinator for feasibility review before submitting a grant proposal or funding request. We will do our best to work with you to help improve your garden!

Fundraising Events

For information on hosting ticketed and fundraising events in the garden, please see the [Events](#) chapter of this Handbook.

Elected Official Discretionary Funding and Parks Equity

Build a relationship with your elected officials, including your city Council Members and Borough President, so that they know about the garden and can lend their support. Your Council Member may be able to allocate discretionary funding for garden improvements and infrastructure. If you plan to seek discretionary funding for a community garden under NYC Parks jurisdiction, be sure your new project aligns with GreenThumb policy outlined in this handbook and please speak with your Outreach Coordinator to see how GreenThumb can help.

Selling Agricultural Products

Garden groups can sell fruits, vegetables, herbs, eggs, honey, and other agricultural products grown exclusively in the garden and solely for the purposes of supporting the operation and maintenance of the garden. Additional items may be sold if the garden group gets a permit from the Revenue Division of NYC Parks. Avoid making health claims on all products—the FDA (U.S. Food and Drug Administration) regulates health claims as part of their regulation of medicine. All sales must be in compliance with all applicable city, state, and federal laws, rules, and regulations.

The NYC Zoning Resolution permits community gardens to sell food they grow inside the garden on the same lot. Please see the [FAQ page](#) at nyc.gov/agriculture for information about how zoning affects the sale of agricultural products.⁶³

The sale of food on public sidewalks is overseen by various City agencies. Please contact your Outreach Coordinator, who can help you research which agency to ask for permitting.

GreenThumb community gardens on NYC Parks property can serve as distribution sites for externally grown produce distributed via Community Supported Agriculture programs (CSAs). Please note, however, that community gardens may not serve as the site of any financial transactions for CSAs unless all of the produce was grown on-site at a GreenThumb community garden or prior written approval has been provided by NYC Parks in the form of a permit from NYC Parks' Revenue Division.

⁶¹ Partnerships for Parks: cityparksfoundation.org/about-partnerships-for-parks

⁶² Citizens Committee for NYC: citizensnyc.org

⁶³ Learn more about urban agriculture in NYC at <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/agriculture/index.page>

Item	Can GreenThumb Garden Groups under NYC Parks jurisdiction sell this item?	New York State ^{64, 65} and Federal Law
Fresh fruits, vegetables, and herbs	Yes	No license required if raw and uncut
Plant starts	Yes	No license required if the plant starts were grown by a licensed nursery. If you are growing the starts yourself, and you are a non-profit, you can register as a licensed nursery, and have your fee waived. Contact your Outreach Coordinator for more information.
Eggs	Yes	No license required
Honey	Yes	No license required if nothing is added to the honey and the honey wasn't purchased elsewhere
Fish	Yes, with written approval from GreenThumb	Fish can only be sold whole over ice directly to the consumer.
Meat	No	Licensing dependent on type of meat. Please see the Farmers' Market Permit/License/Certificate Checklist ¹⁵
Homemade fruit jam	Yes, with written approval from GreenThumb	Only with a Home Processor License ⁶⁶
Homemade sauces, salsas, pickles, and anything that needs refrigeration	Yes, with written approval from GreenThumb	These items must be produced by someone with a 20-C license in a certified commercial kitchen to be eligible for sale. ⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Many of these state laws can be found in the *Farmers' Market Federation of New York Market Managers' Checklist* at <https://mhcm.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Market-Managers-Permits-Checklist-2016.pdf>

⁶⁵ Learn more about farmers' markets in New York State at <https://www.nyfarmersmarket.com/resources>

⁶⁶ New York State Home Processor Registration information sheet: agriculture.ny.gov/FS/consumer/FSI-898D_Home_Processor.pdf

⁶⁷ New York State information and definitions regarding Food Business Licensing: <https://agriculture.ny.gov/food-business-licensing>

Dried herbs and flowers for cooking, teas, etc.	Yes, with written approval from GreenThumb	These items must be produced by someone with a 20-C license ⁶⁸
Homemade herbal skincare for external use – salves, soaps, etc.	Yes, if using herbs grown in clean soil in the garden	No license required if you are not using color additives or any prohibited or harmful chemicals. ⁶⁹ The garden would need a valid NYS Sales Tax Permit. Registered 501(c)3 non-profits are eligible for exemption.
Dried flowers and herbs not for human consumption	Yes	No license required except for a valid NYS Sales Tax Permit. Registered 501(c)3 non-profits are eligible for exemption.
Cut flowers	Yes	No license required except for a valid NYS Sales Tax Permit. Registered 501(c)3 non-profits are eligible for exemption.
Cannabis/Hemp	No	NYC Parks does not allow the growing of cannabis or hemp on Parks property, nor its sale. Please see the Smoking and Marijuana Policy chapter of this handbook for more information.

NYC Parks Temporary Use Authorization (TUA)

The following information applies only to registered GreenThumb community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction:

A TUA is a permit that allows a garden group or vendor to perform revenue generating activities in a community garden under NYC Parks jurisdiction for a restricted time period that does not exceed 29 days in a calendar year (as opposed to the ongoing nature of concessions detailed below). This can include fundraisers, food service events, ticketed events, paid workshops, paid trainings, etc. It is meant to be for one-off events that will involve the sale of tickets, food, or other items.

If the proposed event is one of the two fundraisers allowed in the GreenThumb License Agreement, the garden group will not be required to apply for a TUA permit. Any additional revenue generating events, if approved by NYC Parks and GreenThumb, may require a TUA permit. If no funds are being collected at the event (nor tickets sold in advance), no TUA permit is necessary.

If you want to plan an event that involves revenue generation, let your GreenThumb Outreach Coordinator know about your plans. If approved by GreenThumb, you can send an email to a representative at the Parks Revenue office (or call at (212) 360–1397) with the following information:

- Event date(s)
- Admission charge (amount the public is being charged to attend)
- Average price of food being sold, if applicable
- Average price of merchandise being sold, if applicable

⁶⁸ NY State Ag & Markets is looking to change this policy to allow dried herbs to be sold without a license.

⁶⁹ U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) laws and regulations for cosmetics:
<https://www.fda.gov/Cosmetics/GuidanceRegulation/default.htm>

- List of vendors who will be selling things or catering, including:
 - Types of items for sale
 - Price lists or price ranges for each vendor
 - Amount, if any, that the garden is charging the vendor to participate

If approved, Parks Revenue will discuss insurance requirements, additional permits (e.g. a Temporary Food Establishment Permit from the Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene if you are selling food), and any additional information that they request, to continue the application process. Parks Revenue will calculate a fee based on what they estimate to be 15 percent of the anticipated revenue generated at the event. They will consider the prices of tickets and food being sold, how many attendees you anticipate, how many days the event is occurring, and other factors.

Depending on the type of the revenue generating activity, insurance may be required:

- If this is an event where anything is being sold, including tickets and food, for which you are applying for a TUA permit, you will also need a Certificate of Insurance (COI) for Commercial General Liability insurance:⁷⁰
 - The General Aggregate Limit must apply per Location (“LOC” box checked)
 - At least One Million Dollars (\$1,000,000.00)* per occurrence
 - At least Two Million Dollars (\$2,000,000.00)* aggregate
 - Under Description of Operations, the following language must be included: “The City of New York, together with its officials and employees as Additional Insured with coverage at least as broad as the most recent edition of ISO Form CG 20 26, and the City’s limits shall be no lower than Permittee’s.”
 - Under Description of Operations, the location(s) and date(s) of the event must be included.
 - Certificate Holder Name: "NYC Department of Parks & Recreation, The Arsenal, 830 5th Ave, New York, NY 10065"
 - A corresponding Broker Certification form ([Appendix F](#)) must be attached to the COI. The Broker Certification should be notarized and dated the same date or later than the COI.
- If anyone will be using a car to drive supplies to the event, they/you will need to Provide a Certificate of Insurance (COI) for Commercial Automobile Liability insurance
 - At least One Million Dollars (\$1,000,000) each accident (combined single limit) for liability arising out of the ownership, maintenance or use of any owned, non-owned or hired vehicles.
 - A corresponding Broker Certification form must be attached to the COI. The Broker Certification should be signed/notarized and dated the same date or later than the COI.

If vehicles will NOT be used in connection with event operations, write and sign a No-Vehicles letter ([Appendix G](#)), and submit it with the rest of your insurance documentation.

- Worker’s Compensation Insurance
 - If you are not hiring any caterers or vendors for your event, and your garden group doesn’t have any paid employees, you must apply for a [Workers’ Compensation Exemption \(form CE-200\)](#).⁷¹

⁷⁰ There are many places online to get insurance for one-off events, like eventhelper.com and the American Community Gardening Association. Do some research to find the right fit for your garden’s event.

⁷¹ Apply online for Workers Compensation Exemption (form CE-200) at businessexpress.ny.gov/app/answers/cms/a_id/2263/kw/CE

- If you are hiring caterers or inviting additional vendors provide services (chair rental, amplified sound, etc.) or to sell anything, each vendor must provide one out of the following three documents:
 - C-105.2 Certificate of Worker's Compensation Insurance
 - U-26.3 State Insurance Fund Certificate of Workers' Compensation Insurance
 - Workers' Compensation Exemption (Form CE-200)
- If any of the vendors are providing a C-105.2 or U-26.3 certificate of Workers' Compensation Insurance, they will also need to provide proof of Disability Insurance. If they are doing the exemption form (CE-200), this isn't necessary.

If the garden plans to sell food other than raw, uncut fruits, vegetables, and herbs grown in the garden, you will need to apply for a permit or license from the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) or the NY State Dept. of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM).

- If the garden group is having a ticketed event or fundraiser where food will be served, or is planning to sell food at an event, you will need to apply for a [Temporary Food Establishment Permit](#).⁷²
- If the garden group plans to process food to sell such as pickles, jams, etc., please see the [Handling Money, Donations, and Sales](#) chapter of the GreenThumb Gardeners' Handbook for detailed information on license requirements.
- If the garden group plans to bake items such as cookies or cupcakes at home and sell those items at the garden, everyone who is baking should register with NY State as a [Home Processor](#).⁷³ There are no fees or costs associated with registering.

NYC Parks Concessions

[Concessions](#)⁷⁴ are ongoing revenue generating operations, like a café in a park. An ongoing farm stand or farmers market that seeks to bring in farmers that aren't growing at the garden (i.e. farmers from upstate, Long Island, etc.), fall under concessions regulations. If you're not sure if your program falls under Temporary Use Authorization (TUA) or Concessions, please reach out to your GreenThumb Outreach Coordinator to discuss. Please note that concessions are typically not appropriate for GreenThumb community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction.

Additional Resources

- For more information about starting urban agriculture businesses, visit nyc.gov/agriculture.
- For resources on record keeping, visit farmingconcrete.org.
- For more information on starting farmers' markets in gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction, visit nycgovparks.org/permits/farmers-market
- Partnerships for Parks (cityparksfoundation.org/about-partnerships-for-parks) and Citizens Committee for NYC (citizensnyc.org) are long-time supporters of NYC community gardens and can help your group craft your grant proposal.
- ioby offers fundraising tips and webinars on their website ioby.org, and often partners with GreenThumb on workshops at the annual GreenThumb GrowTogether conference and throughout the year.

⁷² Learn more about the Temporary Food Establishment Permit at <https://www1.nyc.gov/nycbusiness/description/temporary-food-service-establishment-permit>

⁷³ New York State Home Processor Registration: <https://agriculture.ny.gov/food-safety/home-processing>

⁷⁴ NYC Parks Concessions website: nycgovparks.org/opportunities/concessions

Smoking and Marijuana Policy

GreenThumb Policy:

The cultivation, use, sale, processing or distribution of marijuana and tobacco is prohibited inside GreenThumb community gardens operating on property owned by the City of New York and under the jurisdiction of NYC Parks. Section 6.E of the GreenThumb License states: "No drugs or alcohol may be grown, produced, used, consumed, stored, sold, or distributed in the Garden."

NYC Law:

- Smoking—including tobacco, e-cigarettes, and marijuana—is prohibited on NYC Parks properties as per the Smoke Free Air Act, found at Section 17-503 of the New York City Administrative Code.

New York State Law:

- The Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act directs the cannabis control board to promulgate rules to, among other things, "prevent the growing of cannabis on public lands."

Fire Policy

GreenThumb Policies:

These policies apply only to community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction. Please also see [NYC Parks rules](#).⁷⁵

- Portable electric or butane-fueled camp stoves may be approved on a limited basis for workshops, cooking demonstrations, or events. Please submit a written plan to your Outreach Coordinator for approval. Approval is not guaranteed.
- All other fires must receive written approval from GreenThumb and an appropriate permit from FDNY.
 - FDNY has an [open flame permit](#) for one-off occasions like cultural ceremonies.⁷⁶
 - FDNY will often want to see GreenThumb approval first before issuing a permit for a fire at the garden. Then it goes to the explosives team, who come to do an inspection, issue a permit, and are present during the entire event.
 - The garden group must begin the approvals process at least 2 months ahead of the event to ensure adequate time for city agencies to process the request.
 - The fire cannot be close to any pathways or walkways, fences and buildings, or anything flammable. The fire must be at least 12'-15' from egresses or places where people are walking.

NYC Law:

[Fire Department of New York \(FDNY\) Fire Code](#):⁷⁷ Portable outdoor fire pits that burn wood or other solid fuel (such as manufactured fire logs) are regulated by the Fire Code as an open fire. The Fire Code (FC307.1) prohibits open fires, with a few exceptions, because of the fire hazards they present.

⁷⁵ For more information, please review NYC Parks rules at <https://www.nycgovparks.org/rules/section-1-05>

⁷⁶ FDNY Open Flame Permit: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/fdny/business/all-certifications/per-openflames.page>

⁷⁷ Download a PDF Of the FDNY Fire Code at <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/fdny/downloads/pdf/business/nyc-fire-code-guide.pdf>

Art in the Gardens

The GreenThumb Art in the Gardens program works with artists and gardeners who are interested in creating public art in GreenThumb community gardens. Through ongoing reviews of proposals, processed by GreenThumb and [NYC Parks Arts & Antiquities](#),⁷⁸ and targeted Requests for Proposals (RFPs), GreenThumb supports the collaboration of garden groups and artists to bring more art to NYC community gardens.

GreenThumb seeks to cultivate collaborative relationships and partnerships between local artists and community gardeners for the creation of a wide range of temporary art pieces. Murals, sculptures, performances, experimental art, music, and poetry all have a place in community gardens—and we hope to be the glue that brings them together.



Mural by Meg Minkley, entitled "Fiesta Forever," on a shed at Powers Street Garden in Brooklyn | Photo by artist Meg Minkley.

GreenThumb Guidelines

- If your garden group is interested in hosting a temporary public art piece or you are an artist looking to connect with a community garden for a project, and you would like more information about the Art in the Gardens program, please contact your Outreach Coordinator.
- Garden groups can decide how active they want to be in the development of the artwork. Gardeners can actively seek out artists and/or design their own art proposals. Groups can also express their interest in hosting art at the community garden and GreenThumb can connect artists with the garden. In this case, the garden group would help review proposals and select an artist that aligns with the vision of the garden group.
- The artist and garden group should work together to identify or design artwork for the garden, as well as the timeline for installation, exhibition, maintenance, and removal (if applicable).

GreenThumb Policies

The policies in this section are required for community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction.

- Everyone in the garden should have a chance to weigh in on an art installation or performance event. Propose this idea at your garden's membership meetings and be sure the project follows the protocol for new ideas outlined in your garden's bylaws.
- Garden groups under NYC Parks jurisdiction must follow the Parks protocol for art installations outlined below. GreenThumb may issue RFPs for new artwork in community gardens, which will have their own protocol.
- Garden groups may host one-off performances (such as music, theater, and poetry) at the garden. Please inform your Outreach Coordinator about such events so they can help you make sure you're following the right protocol and permits and help with promotion. Please see the Events chapter of this handbook for more information.
- Large art installations in GreenThumb community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction must be pre-approved by GreenThumb. Issues of particular concern for us include safety and durability of the

⁷⁸ Learn more about NYC Parks Arts & Antiquities at nycgovparks.org/art-and-antiquities

artwork and its suitability to the site. To apply for approval, please submit the following via e-mail to your Outreach Coordinator at least 6 months prior to the intended installation date:

- A written description of the proposed artwork, including title, medium, dimensions, weight, and installation timeline.
 - If proposing the installation of existing work, include photographs of artwork, as well as reference to human scale (i.e. include a person in the photo).
 - If proposing a new work, include working drawings or photographs of a maquette to scale.
- A description of the garden group's decision-making process and/or the garden group's approval of the artwork in writing.
- Proposed duration and exhibition period.
- Proposed location in the garden for the temporary installation.
- Artist's statement and resume.
- Installation budget, including a description of the sponsoring organization or other method of financing.
- Include the name, email address, and phone number of the contact people: the artist or the partnering arts organization, as well as the garden contact.
- Up to 10 images of the artist's previous work. All images must be clearly labeled with the name of the artist, title of the work, media, and dimensions.

The proposal can come from the artist and/or the garden group. Upon receiving the submission, GreenThumb will review the application packet and follow up with any further questions and requirements to move forward.

NYC Parks Policies

The policies in this section are required for community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction.

Permits

Performances

- If you plan on having amplified sound at the performance, you are also required to apply for an NYPD Sound Permit at the garden's police precinct.
- Obtain any necessary clearances or permissions for the use of intellectual property, including but not limited to musical or other performance rights for the stage.

Artwork

- All large public artworks and murals are subject to the NYC Parks Arts & Antiquities office's temporary public art guidelines and permitting. Learn more at nyc.gov/parks/art and contact them at artandantiquities@parks.nyc.gov with any questions.
- All murals on Parklands and NYC Parks property (items purchased by GreenThumb like sheds, gazebos, etc.) are only permitted for one year. After the year, the artist waives their rights to the work.
- All proposals for pieces of art that are not murals may be for only up to one year. Any installations that are meant to stay in the garden longer than one year must go through a competitive process with the New York City Public Design Commission.
- If the installation of the art piece requires scaffolding or the use of heavy machinery (like a cherry-picker, excavator, or forklift) the artist must have insurance coverage for all participants that are going to be using the scaffolding or machinery and may need to obtain a Parks Construction Permit.
- Some projects may need to obtain the approval of the local community board. GreenThumb recommends informing the community board about the project either way.
- Following the approval of a proposal, NYC Parks Arts & Antiquities will issue a formal public art License Agreement between NYC Parks and the artist and/or sponsoring organization.
- Exhibitors are responsible for costs associated with the installation and removal of the artwork, and cover fabrication, labor, supervision, insurance, and maintenance of the artwork throughout the exhibition, as well as site remediation to restore the garden back to the condition it was in before the art installation.

- When exhibiting in a community garden under NYC Parks jurisdiction, the artist assumes responsibility for funding the project, as well as for obtaining insurance and site restoration. Other artist responsibilities include:
 - Propose high-quality art that follows any guidelines outlined in the request for proposals, if applicable.
 - Provide funding for fabrication, installation, maintenance, insurance, security deposit, deinstallation, and site restoration.
 - The sponsoring/exhibiting organization for the public art project will be required to provide a certificate of insurance covering general liability for the duration of the exhibition.
 - Obtain necessary insurance policies naming the City of New York as additional insured. Some projects may require technical reports prepared by a licensed engineer.
 - A security deposit, which will be returned to the exhibitor upon restoration of the site.
 - Oversee installation of artwork (tools, materials, and equipment not provided by Parks).
 - Coordinate any press releases or events with NYC Parks Press Office.
 - Monitor and maintain the artwork during the display period.
 - Oversee deinstallation of artwork and site restoration.
 - Grant NYC Parks the right to a royalty-free, perpetual license to use any depictions of the artwork for non-commercial purposes (credit will be given to the exhibitor).
 - For murals on adjacent privately owned buildings, the artist is required to submit a letter of support from the private building owner along with the above-mentioned submission requirements.

Additional Resources:

- Learn more about the NYC Parks permitting process for art installations at nycgovparks.org/art-and-antiquities/temporary-guidelines
- How community gardeners can find artists, funding, and other types of support:
 - Borough Arts Councils - www1.nyc.gov/site/dcla/cultural-funding/artists.page
 - Local university arts programs
 - Nearby museums or cultural organizations
 - Please also see the chapter on Handling Money, Donation and Sales in this handbook
- How artists can find community gardens:
 - Look for community gardens on the GreenThumb website: nyc.gov/parks/greenthumb
 - Connect with the community garden you are interested in performing in by either stopping by during their open hours or by contacting the Outreach Coordinator for the garden. You can find our Staff Contact List on our website: http://greenthumb.nycgovparks.org/staff_list.html.

Community Garden Participatory Visioning and Design

Purpose

GreenThumb's Community Participatory Visioning and Design Program is an inclusive planning tool that enables community gardeners to envision the garden as public space and have a facilitated design through a collaborative placemaking process. The goal of the program is to work with community gardeners to design new gardens on vacant land, redesign existing garden spaces to meet evolving group needs, or to reactivate existing gardens.

Eligibility

Only GreenThumb community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction are eligible to participate in the Community Visioning and Design Program. Established garden groups may request community planning support and space redesign, however, this program is primarily intended for the development of new community gardens and the reactivation of existing garden spaces. New garden groups with a strong membership and decision-making processes will be given priority. Your Outreach Coordinator can help your garden group access tools to do collective visioning on your own as well.

Process

If your garden group is interested in participating in the Community Visioning and Design Program, please contact your Outreach Coordinator. Subject to available resources, if the garden group meets the eligibility criteria, a selected group of gardeners will commit to three meetings to discuss the goals and priorities of the community garden group. The meetings will consist of activities that will engage members in a facilitated but inclusive design process.

Results

At the end of the three community planning sessions, GreenThumb will create schematic drawings that reflect important concepts and ideas pulled from each meeting. The drawings can be used by the garden group as a guide for how to move forward with building out the garden. They may also use this schematic when applying to various opportunities to get additional funds or support needed to build out the garden, including discretionary funding from elected officials, in-kind and monetary grants, and material and technical assistance from greening partners.

Subject to the availability of resources, GreenThumb may be able to do one of the following:

- Connect the garden group with a greening organization who can help build out sections of the garden according to the design.
- Coordinate with our Operations team to help build out sections of the garden, depending on capacity.
- Coordinate a volunteer day around specific projects related to the design.

Starting a New Community Garden

For those interested in starting a new community garden or farm, please keep in mind that there are already more than 550 community gardens and farms registered with NYC Parks GreenThumb across New York City. If you are not able to locate an existing garden in your neighborhood, please visit the GreenThumb [website](#) for the steps that we can take together to establish one.⁷⁹

Your first step should always be to contact GreenThumb. If you are in a neighborhood that isn't currently served by a community garden, we might already be thinking about how to start one there. You can contact us to determine what efforts might be underway, or to get some guidance on where to begin. We're always excited to work with New Yorkers who are interested in starting a new community garden, and together we can take the steps to help beautify, feed, unify and strengthen your neighborhood and our city.

GreenThumb's New Garden Initiative

Inspired by NYC Parks' [Walk to a Park Initiative](#),⁸⁰ GreenThumb's New Garden Initiative strives to establish a community garden within a 10-minute walk of every residence in NYC. Under this premise, GreenThumb prioritizes support to community groups turning vacant lots into community gardens in underserved areas that align with NYC Parks mission of equitable access to quality public green space. Since 2016, GreenThumb has worked with community members to establish several new community gardens, including in previously underserved neighborhoods including Stapleton (Staten Island), Woodside (Queens), and Prospect Lefferts Gardens (Brooklyn).

⁷⁹ Learn more about starting a community garden in NYC at greenthumb.nycgovparks.org/start_a_garden.html

⁸⁰ Learn more about the Walk to a Park Initiative at nycgovparks.org/planning-and-building/planning/walk-to-a-park

Hosting Volunteer Groups in the Garden

GreenThumb Volunteer Program

Purpose

GreenThumb's Help a Garden Grow Volunteer Program matches a range of corporate, school, and other groups with gardens in need of volunteers in the form of one-time projects or recurring workdays. Volunteer groups can help strengthen community groups by weeding, planting flowers, bulbs, or shrubs, garden cleanups, building raised beds, providing general maintenance within the gardens, and other special projects. By working with gardens, volunteers can participate in sustainability, valuable place-making projects, and enriching the cultural fabric of NYC.

Eligibility

Any GreenThumb community garden under NYC Parks jurisdiction is eligible for support with a volunteer day, subject to availability of staff and resources.

Process

The Help a Garden Grow Volunteer Program brings tools, materials, and volunteer groups to community gardens all over the city for one-time and recurring workdays. Volunteer days usually last from two to three hours and can bring up to several dozen people at a time. GreenThumb coordinates with volunteers and garden groups to provide any necessary tools and materials.

If your garden group is seeking to host volunteers or you would like more information on available projects, please reach out to your Outreach Coordinator. If you represent a group looking to volunteer in a community garden, please contact GreenThumb at (212) 602-5300 or greenthumbinfo@parks.nyc.gov. You will be asked to complete a short application.

Hosting Volunteer Groups at the Garden

GreenThumb encourages garden groups to build their own connections and relationships with volunteer groups in their neighborhoods. Other organizations are often also willing to lend a hand. Reach out to your Outreach Coordinator for tips and resources.

GreenThumb Volunteer Waiver Form

NYC Parks has developed a waiver that garden groups can use for volunteer days that include non-members. If your garden is hosting a workday or event during which non-members will be participating in gardening work, site maintenance, carpentry, or other hands-on activities, you can ask participants to fill out the [GreenThumb Volunteer Release and Waiver in Appendix C](#).

Sustainable Pest and Disease Management

Pests and plant diseases are inevitable when gardening. Planting flowers for beneficial insects, avoiding the use of synthetic pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers, and giving each plant the space and attention it needs to thrive are just a few of the ways you can prevent and mitigate these issues when they arise.

GreenThumb Policies:

The policies in this section are required for community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction and encouraged for everyone else.

- GreenThumb does not use any pesticides—organic, inorganic, or otherwise—while operating and maintaining its community gardens, except for targeted rat baiting in problem areas. All GreenThumb pest control practices follow [Integrated Pest Management](#)⁸¹ (IPM) guidelines.
- GreenThumb discourages pesticide and herbicide use by GreenThumb gardeners. IPM best practices support preventing pest and disease issues as much as possible through the use of row cover, intercropping, and other methods, as well as the use of low-impact, organic materials such as neem oil, soap spray, and diatomaceous earth.
- GreenThumb encourages the use of compost and other organic soil amendments rather than chemical-based fertilizers. Many non-organic commercial fertilizers are harmful to humans, animals, and the beneficial organisms that live in soil.

Additional Resources:

- GreenThumb Growing Food Toolkit: bit.ly/GTGrowingFood
- EPA, “Introduction to Integrated Pest Management”: epa.gov/managing-pests-schools/introduction-integrated-pest-management
- Cornell Cooperative Extension Organic Production Guides: nysipm.cornell.edu/organic_guide/
- New York State Integrated Pest Management: nysipm.cornell.edu/
- Brooklyn Botanic Garden Educational Resources: bbg.org/gardening
- Cornell Cooperative Extension – Garden Based Learning: Troubleshooting: gardening.cals.cornell.edu/garden-guidance/troubleshooting/

⁸¹ EPA, “Introduction to Integrated Pest Management.” epa.gov/managing-pests-schools/introduction-integrated-pest-management

Role of Garden Contacts

Because there are so many volunteer gardeners (we estimate currently more than 20,000), GreenThumb requires each registered garden designate two people to serve as contacts for the garden. Garden members should appoint garden contacts that are trustworthy, reliable, and comfortable with using digital communications. It is very important that designated contacts are attentive and committed to this important role so that garden groups receive timely updates from GreenThumb and do not miss out on important deadlines for requesting materials and support. Garden contacts also ensure that garden groups have a reliable way to communicate with GreenThumb.

The garden contact positions (Primary Contact and Secondary Contact) do not grant the appointed garden members any position of leadership or authority within the garden; garden leadership is decided by the garden group as outlined in their bylaws. Garden Contacts simply serve as liaisons and communicate between GreenThumb and the garden group. If GreenThumb needs to contact your garden group for any reason, including emergencies, we will call or email the designated contact people first. It is their responsibility to pass information along to the rest of the garden group, as well as their responsibility to pass information from the garden group to GreenThumb.

When garden contacts change, be sure to have both the previous contact people and the new contact people speak with your GreenThumb Outreach Coordinator. We need to keep our contact information as accurate and up to date as possible. We ask that both garden contacts reside in NYC to ensure that GreenThumb has reliable access.

The process for designating contact people should be outlined in your garden bylaws (see the Writing and Amending Bylaws chapter).

Responsibilities of garden contacts include:

Fill out required paperwork — A garden contact may need to sign a License Agreement and/or fill out a registration packet on behalf of the garden group and to engage and notify the group when doing so ensure that they are representing the group appropriately.

Serve as first point of contact for members of the public who contact GreenThumb about the garden — If someone is interested in joining the garden, bringing their students to the garden, having a birthday party or event in the garden, etc., GreenThumb will direct that person to the garden's contacts to share the inquiry and discuss the suitability with the whole garden group. A garden contact should be able to explain the garden's membership procedure and any additional relevant rules that the garden has to govern the use of the space.

Receive and share information from GreenThumb — GreenThumb sends all information about supply distributions, forms, surveys to help inform how GreenThumb provides support, information requests, special events, workshops, policy changes, and more to the two garden contacts. It is the responsibility of the garden contacts to share this information with the rest of the garden members.

Communicate concerns of the garden group to GreenThumb – Communication goes both ways. If the garden group has any issues or concerns, the garden contacts should reach out to their Outreach Coordinator.

Writing and Amending Bylaws

Bylaws are mutually agreed upon rules and procedures that a garden group creates to regulate its current and future practices for the day-to-day operations and governance of the garden. A garden's bylaws are where the group establishes, in writing, various garden responsibilities among group members, protocol for bringing in new members, changing garden leadership, handling finances and disputes, planning events, and any other activities the group takes on.

Bylaws are decided on democratically as a garden group and may change and evolve over time. As the group changes in size, membership, and purpose, take a pragmatic approach in assessing your bylaws, recognizing that the group's needs and wishes will evolve over time.

Your group may want to re-examine its bylaws every year or so, for example at an annual meeting at the start of each spring. Decide if the current group is in agreement with the bylaws as currently written or if they would like to propose any specific amendments. There should be a process written into the bylaws that states how they may be amended by the garden group.

Each member of the garden group should receive a copy of the bylaws when they join. We recommend asking each new member to read the bylaws carefully to ensure that they understand them, and then sign off on them, indicating that they are willing to adhere to the stated rules of the garden. Common problems that arise within the garden group can often be prevented with carefully considered and written garden bylaws. GreenThumb has observed that bylaws have supported garden groups with decision-making, dispute resolution, and continuing to evolve in a predictable and participatory way. Please see the [Resolving Conflict in the Community Garden](#) chapter of this handbook for more tips on maintaining a cohesive garden group. All bylaws must align with the applicable laws and regulations, including the GreenThumb License Agreement for NYC Parks gardens.

Bylaws Requirements:

GreenThumb now requires all community garden groups operating on property under NYC Parks jurisdiction to submit copies of their bylaws to their Outreach Coordinators as a prerequisite to being licensed and receiving resources. We also strongly recommend bylaws for garden groups that receive GreenThumb support but do not operate on NYC Parks property. We offer workshops on group structure and bylaws multiple times per year (Organizing for Garden Success workshop series), and we encourage you and members of your garden group to attend these workshops in order to help the group prepare its bylaws. This is a great opportunity to bolster the strength of your group through a shared understanding of membership rights and responsibilities, rules and procedures, governance structure, and how the group makes decisions. Please connect with your GreenThumb Outreach Coordinator for more details.

At a minimum, your bylaws must include information about the following topics (but are not limited to):

1. The garden's mission statement
2. Membership
3. Decision-making process
4. Leadership structure
5. Process for changing the bylaws in the future
6. How the garden handles conflicts and disputes
7. Finances

The Bylaws Requirements Checklist below goes into more detail about what we require to see for each section. We have also developed a Bylaws Template, which offers a checklist of predetermined language for each of these sections that gardeners may choose from. We expect that garden groups who choose to use this easy-to-use template will complete it collectively as a group. To download these materials, please visit our [website](#).⁸²

⁸² Download templates and worksheets for garden bylaws at greenthumb.nycgovparks.org/news.html?news_id=469

Bylaws Requirements Checklist

This checklist covers what GreenThumb *specifically requires* in the bylaws of garden groups through a series of prompts and questions. In other words, we expect garden bylaws to include *all* of the prompts below. Once complete, this will form a foundation for the group's bylaws that will satisfy GreenThumb's minimum requirements; you can always add more to the bylaws than what is included in this outline. Please complete the checklist with your garden group. If your group needs resources on how to facilitate this conversation, please attend a GreenThumb bylaws workshop and/or ask your Outreach Coordinator for materials.

1. Mission Statement

Required:

- A statement describing the garden's mission, vision, and/or purpose. A mission statement can be as broad or focused as the group would like.

Above and Beyond:

- Why is the garden important?
- What value does it bring to the community?
- What does the group hope to achieve?
- What is the history of the garden?

Watch out for:

- While we welcome a focus on assisting the local neighborhood and encouraging local partnership, a garden group cannot legally restrict membership to only a geographic area. Specific community-based organizations, non-profits, faith, or commercial partners also should not be included in the mission statement as gardens are stewarded independently by community groups.

2. Membership Procedures

Required:

- How to join the garden. How does one become a member of the garden? What are the steps? Who should be contacted?
- Rights of members (e.g. garden access, keys, shared tools)
- Responsibilities of members (e.g. open hours, meeting attendance, plot maintenance, common areas, snow removal, sidewalk clean-up)
 - If one becomes a member, what are the requirements for maintaining membership?
 - Is there a fee to become a member, and what is the alternative to monetary payment if a member cannot afford the dues? GreenThumb gardens are required to have a zero-dollar option for membership and for garden beds. Sample language may include "no one will be turned away for lack of funds," or "we waive all fees for anyone in financial difficulty."
 - Protocol if a member is unable to pay monetary dues (e.g. additional volunteer hours, etc.)
- Procedures for what happens if a garden member does not comply with the rules of membership (i.e. processes for member accountability and revoking membership)
 - Are there any specific circumstances that result in immediate expulsion from the garden membership?
- If the garden has plots or individual raised beds, how are they assigned? How do plot waitlists work? How can someone become a garden member without a plot?
- If the garden has communal plots or raised beds, how do they work? Who can participate, and how?

Above and Beyond:

- Rules for garden members, visitors, and anyone from the public (if the group has any additional rules beyond the ones listed on the Parks sign)

Watch out for:

- Even if membership has been revoked, a garden cannot deny someone access during public open hours.
- Sliding scale dues must still have a \$0 option.
- There can be a waitlist for garden plots and raised beds, but membership cannot be limited to plot availability.
- Membership procedures may not include required participation in a local organization, church, school, block association, etc. as a requirement for membership.
- GreenThumb does not have a policy against youth members and gardens can have youth as full members.
- Bylaws may not prohibit non-dues-paying members from having voting rights.
- Bylaws may not contain anything exclusionary regarding membership. Bylaws may not exclude potential new members by geography, age, etc.

3. Decision Making

Required:

- The garden's specific voting (less than 50 percent, 2/3, etc.) or consensus (100 percent) process is explained.⁸³
- Who decides what? Does everything go to the general membership? Can committees, chairs, and/or the core leadership make decisions on their own?
- Does decision-making and/or voting happen in person, can it happen over email, absentee ballots, proxy voting?
- Is there a minimum number of members required to vote and pass proposals? In other words, what constitutes a quorum?
- How are decisions communicated to the rest of the group?
- How do leaders make decisions? What decisions can they make themselves, and which must be made by the whole garden membership?

Above and Beyond:

- How often does the group meet?

Watch out for:

- Bylaws cannot name specific people in decision-making roles. For example, bylaws cannot instruct potential members to "contact John," as opposed to "contact the Membership Chair."

4. Garden Leadership

Required:

- The garden leadership structure is clearly explained.
 - Is there a steering committee or other elected leadership group of the garden?
 - Do the leadership roles have term limits? If there are no term limits, the bylaws should state explicitly that positions are open-ended with no term limits to avoid ambiguity.
- Roles of leaders (titles, responsibilities)
 - What are the positions or titles that make this up?
 - What are the requirements/responsibilities of steering committee members?
- How leaders are elected or appointed?
- If the garden has committees, they're listed and described here.

Above and Beyond:

- Are there special requirements for qualifying as a potential member of the garden leadership?
- How often do the garden leaders meet?
- Are garden leadership meetings open to the general garden membership? How are these meetings communicated to the group? How are minutes/notes from meetings communicated to the membership?

⁸³ To learn more about what these terms mean, please visit the GreenThumb Group Development Toolkit: bit.ly/GTGroupDevelopment

- If a garden leadership member does not meet the requirements/responsibilities required of them, how are they reviewed? Are they removed if necessary?

Watch out for:

- Bylaws cannot reserve leadership seats in perpetuity or for specific partner organizations.
- Bylaws cannot prohibit non-dues-paying members from joining the garden leadership.
- Bylaws should not name the specific people in each role, since this may change.

5. Bylaws Amendments

Required:

- How does the group amend the bylaws?
- Is there a quorum that must vote on proposed changes?
- Once amendments to bylaws are proposed and voted upon, how is this communicated to the group?

Above and Beyond:

- For amended bylaws to be valid and incorporated, how far in advance must they be communicated to the group before a vote takes place?

Watch out for:

- There should be no prohibition on amending bylaws.

6. Conflict and Disputes

Required:

- How does the garden handle conflicts or disputes?⁸⁴
- Are there designated people within the garden (a committee?) who help resolve disputes?
- Can a dispute lead to a loss of membership or other privileges?
- What is the process for alerting a member that they are in violation of the garden's rules or bylaws?
- If a member is removed one season, under what conditions can they return as a member the following season?
- Garden groups are ultimately responsible for resolving conflicts in the garden. GreenThumb can provide recommendations for free outside mediation services, if needed, however garden bylaws cannot simply refer conflicts to GreenThumb. If there are claims of discrimination, they can be reported via 311 to the [NYC Human Rights Commission](https://www1.nyc.gov/site/cchr/enforcement/complaint-process.page).⁸⁵

Above and Beyond:

- What happens if one garden member accuses another garden member of breaking the rules?

Watch out for:

- Bylaws should not simply rely on referring internal conflicts and disputes to GreenThumb. For ideas on managing garden conflict, please see the [Resolving Conflict in the Community](#) Garden chapter.

7. Finances

Required:

- Where the garden's money is stored (e.g. a garden bank account, with a fiscal sponsor)
- Who has access to the garden's account?
- How financial and purchasing decisions are made

⁸⁴ For ideas, please visit the [Resolving Conflict in the Community Garden](#) chapter.

⁸⁵ To file a complaint with the NYC Human Rights Commission, visit: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/cchr/enforcement/complaint-process.page>

- How fundraising decisions are made
- How are the garden's financial records maintained?

Above and Beyond:

- How are these records communicated to the rest of the group?
- How much can be spent without some type of approval?
- Purchasing protocol once a new purchase has been approved
- How are reimbursements made to members?

Watch out for:

- Any reference to renting out the garden or otherwise commercializing space is inconsistent with the GreenThumb License and is prohibited.

Optional additional section:

Member and Visitor Rules

Rules describe what gardeners and visitors are allowed and not allowed to do in the garden, and can be included within a garden groups' bylaws. Rules may include things like "no smoking" or "do not harvest from a neighbor's plot without asking first."

- What are gardeners and visitors not allowed to do?
- What is the recourse if a garden visitor or member is not complying with the garden's rules?
- Some reminders:
 - i. During your garden's 20 or more open hours each week, the garden is public open space and should be open to all, regardless of age. This means minors cannot be restricted.
 - ii. If the garden would like to restrict pet owners from bringing dogs into the entire or a portion of the garden, this must be stated in the bylaws. Service animals cannot be restricted.
 - iii. The garden *can* close for inclement weather, even during open hours.

Additional Resources:

- The [GreenThumb Group Development Toolkit](#)⁸⁶ has lots of resources for garden groups to learn about group structure, garden finances, and more.
- Citizens Committee for NYC offers trainings and workshops on group structure and community organizing as part of their Neighborhood Leadership Institute series - citizensnyc.org
- The American Community Gardening Association offers many free resources on its [website](#) for managing community gardens, including a list of Sample Garden Rules.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Access the GreenThumb Group Development Toolkit at bit.ly/GTGroupDevelopment

⁸⁷ American Community Gardening Association Resources communitygarden.org/resources/

Problem Solving 101

Below are just a few of the more common problems that occur in community gardens, with suggestions for resolving them.

There's a car, truck, trailer, motorcycle, or other motorized vehicle in the garden.

Cars, trucks, trailers, motorcycles, and other motorized vehicles may not be parked or stored in a community garden at any time. Ask the vehicle's owner to remove the vehicle immediately. If the vehicle appears to be abandoned, call 311 to report the abandoned vehicle and alert your Outreach Coordinator. You must also call the police to file a police report about the incident.

Someone is using or selling illegal drugs in the garden.

If you see someone selling or using drugs in or near your garden, call the New York Police Department (dial 911 in an emergency, your [local precinct](#)⁸⁸ in a non-emergency) to file a police report. They'll take it from there. Do not ever place yourself in a dangerous position. Please let GreenThumb know if you witness this continuous behavior in or around the garden. If there are used syringes in the garden, please do not touch them. Report improper syringe disposal by calling 311.

Someone is drinking alcohol and/or smoking in the garden.

Inform the individual that public drinking is prohibited in gardens by New York City and New York State law, and that smoking in public spaces under the jurisdiction of any city agency is prohibited by city law. Point to the rules on the garden sign from NYC Parks, or make a "Garden Rules" sign if your garden is not under NYC Parks jurisdiction. If the offending individual is a garden member, consult your group's bylaws as to the proper course of action. If a garden member repeatedly breaks the law, it is appropriate to expel that member.

Someone is storing personal items in the garden.

Personal items (items not used to maintain the garden) may not be stored in a GreenThumb garden. If someone is storing personal items in the garden, please ask that person to remove them. If the items are known to be abandoned, recycle them, or throw them away. If the items are large, call the Department of Sanitation (dial 311 and ask for the Department of Sanitation) or call GreenThumb to arrange for a pickup.

Someone stole something from the garden, someone was hurt in the garden, a car crashed into the garden, or someone vandalized the garden.

Report the incident to your local police precinct and request a police report. Then inform your Outreach Coordinator, who will ask you to complete an Incident Report. Please take photos to document any damage to the garden.

Garden members are not allowing public access to the garden.

GreenThumb gardens must be open to the public. If a garden group is not allowing public access to the garden (in the form of a minimum of 20 open hours per week from April 1 through October 31), a garden risks losing your garden privileges and termination of the garden license and/or registered status. If you are unable to create a waterproof "Open Hours" sign, you can call GreenThumb and we will create a laminated sign for you. You are responsible for ensuring that the garden is open when you say it will be open.

Garden members are not allowing new members to join the garden.

GreenThumb gardens must have a system in place for accepting new members. Even if there are no plots available for new members to enjoy individual growing space, you may place interested members on a waiting list for plots, and have new members help with taking care of communal areas, event planning, communications, carpentry projects, meeting facilitation, grant writing, social media, and much more. There is a lot of work to be done in a community garden outside of individual plots. As garden beds become available, you can then offer them to individuals on the waiting list.

The people in your community are not attending the garden's events.

A successful event involves thoughtful planning, creative advertising, and (to be honest) more often than not delicious food. Posters, flyers, newsletters, and social media are all good ways to let people in your community

⁸⁸ Find your local precinct at <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/nypd/bureaus/patrol/find-your-precinct.page>

know what's going on. GreenThumb is more than happy to help spread the word about your event on our website and social media platforms. Submit a request through our [website](#).⁸⁹ We also recommend reaching out to local news, blogs, and organizations that are active in your neighborhood. Remember that New York City is filled with people from many different backgrounds. It is part of a community garden's responsibility to make everyone in that community feel welcome, regardless of age, race, citizenship status, skin color, disability, gender, gender identity, marital status, national origin, pregnancy, religion, sexual orientation, and military or veteran status.

Your GreenThumb sign is missing or has been damaged.

Please contact your Outreach Coordinator and we will arrange for a new one to be posted.

There are rats in the garden.

Rats seek out places to live that provide them with everything they need to survive: food, water, shelter, and safe ways for them to get around. Keep the garden tidy—debris and garbage piles are perfect hiding and nesting spots. Close any burrows that you find with stalite, a type of gravel made from slate, or collapse burrows with a shovel or hoe. For more information, please check out the Rats section in the [Animals in the Garden](#) chapter of this Handbook.

⁸⁹ Find the GreenThumb Event Form at bit.ly/GTEventForm

Emergency and Unexpected Situations

Emergencies and unexpected situations can arise in community gardens and it is important to follow appropriate protocol for each situation. The section below highlights who should be contacted in different emergency situations. Always notify your Outreach Coordinator of an emergency or unexpected situation after contacting the appropriate parties listed below. Outreach Coordinators are not available outside of standard business hours, so please keep in mind the contacts below.

Contact 311 if:

- Contractor/developer accesses or tries to access property without proper permits
- There is a tree, electrical, sidewalk, or other environmental hazard present
- Someone in the garden is experiencing [homelessness](#) and in need of support, or is living in the garden⁹⁰

Gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction can call 311 or use the 311 smartphone app to request that Parks Enforcement Patrol respond to situations where urgent mitigation is necessary. The Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP), is a team of dedicated officers who preserve and protect parks and public facilities. PEP officers are New York Certified Peace Officers who are trained to enforce Parks rules and regulations and ensure that Parks' public spaces are safe and welcoming to all visitors. Gardeners may request PEP respond to contractor/developer conflicts and to scenarios where at-risk individuals are in need of social services.

Contact NYC Parks Central Communications at (646) 613-1202 if:

- There is a non-emergency situation in progress that needs urgent mitigation at a garden under Parks jurisdiction
- There is a situation in progress such as drugs or alcohol

This phone number is staffed 24 hours/day and is managed by Parks personnel who can dispatch Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP).

Contact 911 if:

- There is a fire, physical altercation, medical emergency (see additional information below for mental health emergencies), major theft, or car accident
- Someone is using or selling drugs in the garden
- Someone is at risk to themselves or others in the garden

Contact NYC Well at (888) 692-9355 if:

- There is a [mental health situation](#)⁹¹

NYC Well is a 24/7 hotline for free confidential mental health support. NYC Well counselors can advise if a situation warrants an emergency crisis team and can direct people to the appropriate resources and course of action depending on the situation.

You can also contact NYC Well by text (text "WELL" to 65173) or online chat at nyc.gov/nycwell.

⁹⁰ Visit the chapter on people experiencing homelessness later in this handbook for more information.

⁹¹ Visit the chapter on mental health resources later in this handbook for more information.

Mental Health Resources

Gardening can be a wonderful way to disengage from everyday stressors by connecting with the natural world. It also can be helpful seeing subtle reminders of growth and connection as plants blossom. Setting aside some time to be around nature can be a great way to practice self-care and reflect. In fact, studies have linked being around nature and greenery with easing anxiety, depression, and stress.

New York City offers many free services to ensure that all New Yorkers can access mental health support. Please see below for some resources that are available to you and your community—all of which are available by phone or online, in multiple languages, and regardless of insurance coverage or immigration status.

NYC Well

If symptoms of stress become overwhelming for you, or if someone in your garden needs mental health support and is not in a state of emergency, you can connect with trained counselors at [NYC Well](#),⁹² a free and confidential mental health support service that can help New Yorkers cope. NYC Well staff are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and can provide brief counseling and referrals to care in over 200 languages.

For support, call 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355), text “WELL” to 65173 or [chat online](#).⁹³

You can also visit [nyc.gov/nycwell](#) and click on their App Library to find apps and online tools to help you manage your health and emotional well-being from home.

Mental Health Resources for Aging New Yorkers

Call the Aging Connect hotline at (212) AGING-NYC or (212) 244-6469.

Mental Health Resources for Children, Youth, and Young Adults

Free mental health information and services for youth and their parents and caregivers, provided by an array of non-profit organizations and City agencies, for COVID-19 and beyond, is available at [nyc.gov/thrivenyc](#).⁹⁴ Download [this PDF](#) for a full overview of mental health services available to children, youth, and young adults.⁹⁵

Mental Health Resources for People with Disabilities

Resources for people with disabilities, including mental health support [during the COVID-19 crisis](#)⁹⁶ and [beyond](#),⁹⁷ are available from the NYC Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities. For help with disability-specific concerns, contact the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities directly by calling (212) 788-2830 or via videophone (ASL) at (646) 396-5830.

⁹² To access all of NYC Well’s services, visit [nyc.gov/nycwell](#)

⁹³ NYC Well online chat service: [nycwell.cityofnewyork.us/en/](#)

⁹⁴ Learn more about ThriveNYC at [nyc.gov/thrivenyc](#)

⁹⁵ Download this PDF for a full overview of mental health services available to children, youth, and young adults: [thrivenyc.cityofnewyork.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/082620-YouthServicesGuide-Mobile.pdf](#)

⁹⁶ For COVID-19 resources for people with disabilities, visit [www1.nyc.gov/site/mopd/resources/covid-19-resources-for-people-with-disabilities.page](#)

⁹⁷ To access all NYC resources for people with disabilities, visit [nyc.gov/disability](#)

Mental Health Resources for People Harmed by Violence, Crime or Abuse

Safe Horizon operates NYC's 24-hour hotline: 1-800-621-4673. You can also chat with a Safe Horizon advocate, who can offer information, advocacy, and support through [SafeChat](#).⁹⁸

Mental Health Resources for Veterans

If you are a veteran, you can get trauma counseling and crisis intervention support. Veterans can also access mental health support by calling the Veterans Crisis Line at 800-273-8255 or visiting nyc.gov/veterans.⁹⁹

For more resources, please visit ThriveNYC's [website](#).¹⁰⁰ For the latest updates, follow @MentalHealthNYC on Twitter and email thrive@thrive.nyc.gov to join their email distribution list.

⁹⁸ Safe Horizon's SafeChat service: safehorizon.org/safechat/

⁹⁹ Learn more about NYC's mental health support for veterans at <http://nyc.gov/veterans>

¹⁰⁰ ThriveNYC's Guide to Mental Health Support New Yorkers Can Access While Staying Home: thrivenyc.cityofnewyork.us/mental_health_support_while_home

Resources for People Experiencing Homelessness

Community gardens are safe, inclusive, and welcoming public spaces. People experiencing homelessness cannot be excluded from this experience. NYC offers resources and support for New Yorkers experiencing homelessness. Helping someone off the streets can take hundreds of contacts by NYC Department of Homeless Services outreach teams. With persistence and compassion, outreach teams engage homeless New Yorkers 24/7 offering services, support, and safe housing.

311

If someone in or visiting the garden is in need, experiencing homelessness, or attempting to live in the garden, and the situation is not an active emergency, call 311 or use the 311 app on your phone. Every 311 entry gets sent to [NYC Street Outreach](#)¹⁰¹ and directed to the right city agency for support.

What happens when I call 311 to report a homeless New Yorker in need of assistance?

- Individual calls 311 and a Service Request (SR) is created.
- SR is evaluated and assigned to a service provider or a partner Agency, like NYC Parks, as needed.
- If assigned to a service provider, outreach team is dispatched within an hour of receiving the request
- Service provider outreach teams attempt to locate that individual and if found directly engage the individual, assess for safety, and encourage them to accept services and transition off the streets.

If there is an encampment, unwanted behavior—like public urination, sleeping on benches and illegal access outside the open hours—or need for cleanup at a garden under Parks jurisdiction due to someone experiencing homelessness, gardeners should let their Outreach Coordinator know as soon as possible. Gardeners can forward the email confirmation you receive from your 311 entry to your GreenThumb Outreach Coordinator and Edwin Falcon, Director of Parks Enforcement Patrol Special Operations, at edwin.falcon@parks.nyc.gov.

NYC Parks Central Communications

For gardens under Parks jurisdiction, if there is an emergency situation in progress, especially evenings and weekends when GreenThumb staff are not usually in the office, gardeners can call NYC Parks Central Communications at (646) 613-1202. This phone number is staffed 24 hours/day and is managed by Parks personnel who can dispatch Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP). You can use this phone number if there is a situation in progress such as drugs or alcohol.

911

If there is an emergency, a public safety situation, or a person visiting the garden is a threat to themselves or others, please call 911. If you feel unsafe, do not try to get involved. Trained professionals will address the situation.

¹⁰¹ NYC Street Outreach: www1.nyc.gov/site/dhs/outreach/street-outreach.page

Resolving Conflict in the Community Garden

Conflict happens, even in the most cohesive garden groups or with the best of friends. Take the time to build an inclusive culture in your community garden and establish a policy within your garden group for how you handle conflicts. Garden protocol for conflict can be written into the garden's bylaws (see the Writing and Amending Bylaws chapter for detailed information).

Your garden group is its own entity, which gives you flexibility in how your group governs itself. This also means your group is ultimately responsible for resolving conflicts in the garden. GreenThumb can provide recommendations for free outside mediation services, if needed. Many conflicts arise out of misunderstandings, miscommunication, and a lack of comprehensive and written garden policies. GreenThumb community gardens are inclusive spaces regardless of age, race, citizenship status, skin color, disability, gender, gender identity, marital status, national origin, pregnancy, religion, sexual orientation, and military or veteran status, and must be maintained as open public spaces.

The best thing your garden group can do to prevent conflict altogether is to take the time to collectively write cohesive bylaws. The garden bylaws are a set of rules and guidelines that the group must follow. Your bylaws should include garden rules, protocol for what happens when someone breaks the rules, and everything from member rules and responsibilities to your garden's leadership structure. Bylaws can also hold your garden's mission statement, vision for your community, and shared values such as diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and sustainability.

If everyone in the garden signs on to the bylaws, then you have a built-in structure for handling conflict when it comes up and can refer to the bylaws when conflicts arise. For more about bylaws, visit the [Writing and Amending Bylaws](#) chapter of this handbook.

Sometimes resolving a conflict can go beyond the capacity of the garden group. If this is the case, we encourage you to seek mediation from trained professional and organizations that specialize in conflict resolution. There are free mediation centers across the city, including but not limited to:

- Brooklyn and Manhattan: New York Peace Institute: nypeace.org/mediation/
- Bronx: Institute for Mediation and Conflict Resolution: imcr.org
- Queens: Community Mediation Services: mediatenyc.org
- Staten Island: NYC Center for Interpersonal Development: nycid.org

Most mediation centers allow and even encourage parties of a conflict to attend alone first for a one-on-one meeting. This can be very helpful if all parties are not yet on board with seeking mediation.

GreenThumb Policy

If your garden group has garden bylaws, sought mediation, and still cannot resolve a conflict, please reach out to your GreenThumb Outreach Coordinator, who may be able to offer additional suggestions and resources. Claims of discrimination should be reported to GreenThumb and via 311 to the [NYC Human Rights Commission](#).¹⁰²

Additional Resources:

- Get trained in conflict mediation. GreenThumb periodically offers introductory workshops, or you can check out the training at the [New York Peace Institute](#).¹⁰³
- [TransformHarm.org](#)¹⁰⁴ is a resource hub about ending violence. This site offers an introduction to transformative justice. Created by Mariame Kaba and designed by Lu Design Studio, the site includes

¹⁰² To file a discrimination complaint, visit <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/cchr/enforcement/complaint-process.page>

¹⁰³ New York Peace Institute Training: <https://nypeace.org/become-a-mediator/>

selected articles, audio-visual resources, curricula, and more. Explore the site for guides around community accountability processes, transformative justice, and more.

- The [Support New York Accountability Process Curriculum](#)¹⁰⁵ is a basic template of the curriculum Support New York uses when doing an accountability process with someone who perpetuated harm.
- The [Creative Interventions Toolkit](#)¹⁰⁶ promotes community-based interventions to violence and conflict.
- [Turning Towards Each Other: A Conflict Workbook](#) by Jovida Ross & Weyam Ghadbian is a workbook full of exercises for individual and group exploration and process around conflict.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ TransformHarm.org: <https://transformharm.org/>

¹⁰⁵ Support New York Accountability Process Curriculum: <https://supportny.org/transformative-justice/curriculum/>

¹⁰⁶ Creative Interventions Toolkit: <https://www.creative-interventions.org/tools/toolkit/>

¹⁰⁷ Turning Towards Each Other: A Conflict Workbook: <https://turningtowardseachother.medium.com/turning-towards-each-other-embracing-the-gifts-of-conflict-for-social-change-ea28502016b7>

Working with Youth in the Garden

Community gardens present wonderful opportunities to engage people of all ages and backgrounds. Community gardens are open to everyone, but sometimes it takes extra planning and coordination to engage young people in the garden. Community gardens can be spaces to connect with nearby daycares, pre-k classrooms, and K-12 schools as well as engaging youth in skill and job development projects. As of this writing, the COVID-19 pandemic is still very real. If you're interested in gardens as outdoor classrooms, visit the NYC Department of Education's [Outdoor Learning Initiative](#).¹⁰⁸

Guidelines:

- To foster greater youth presence in the garden, the garden group should first discuss its intentions and strategies. Put "increasing youth presence" on the agenda of your next garden meeting and brainstorm ideas on how and why you want to do this.
- Prioritize undertakings that allow young people to lead discussions and activities. Called "student-centered learning," this practice allows young people to step into leadership and take ownership over their learning process.
- Young people are still learning about themselves and their communities. Urban agriculture may be new to them. Prioritize self-exploration in garden activities. What can students and young people learn about themselves in the process? Can they earn credit for school?
- Reach out to another community garden that is already working with youth and observe their programs in action for ideas and guidance.
- Please keep in mind that the garden cannot be closed to the public during the garden's posted open hours.

Tips for Working with Schools (K-12):

- Invite teachers, parents, and administration to the garden. Organize a tour and meeting to discuss a collaborative use of the garden with the decision makers at the school. Some community gardens have specific beds designated for classes while others set aside specific tasks for students to accomplish. Having discussions with teachers to create common goals or agreements in advance is very important.
- Invite teachers to bring their class for a tour or to hold their class in the garden.
- Work with school staff to create a schedule of days and times that the school group will visit the garden and where they will be working.
- Meet with participating teachers to find out what students are learning in the classroom to better align garden work to those subjects or lessons. There is a huge amount of curricula out there, and a lot of it is free online or through local greening organizations. [New York Agriculture in the Classroom](#)¹⁰⁹ and the [Edible Schoolyard Project](#)¹¹⁰ both have curricula matrices with tons of garden-aligned lesson plans. It is best to match up the curricula with the New York City Department of Education standards.

GreenThumb Youth Leadership Council

GreenThumb's [Youth Leadership Council](#) (YLC) is an intergenerational, service-learning program that offers community gardens the opportunity to host youth between the ages of 14 and 21 to volunteer during the growing season.¹¹¹ With a triple bottom line of engaging young people in service projects, promoting intergenerational learning, and fostering the next generation of NYC community gardeners, the YLC connects youth with GreenThumb garden groups near them. If your garden is interested in hosting a group of youth volunteers, look

¹⁰⁸ Learn more about the Outdoor Learning Initiative at infohub.nyced.org/working-with-the-doe/covid-19-resources/outdoor-learning-initiative

¹⁰⁹ New York Agriculture in the Classroom curriculum: agclassroom.org

¹¹⁰ Edible Schoolyard Project curriculum: edibleschoolyard.org

¹¹¹ To learn more about the Youth Leadership Council, visit greenthumb.nycgovparks.org/youth_gardener.html

out for an announcement each summer from your Outreach Coordinator. If you know any young people who might be interested in volunteering, you can share the application with them, which is reviewed on a rolling basis.

Additional Resources:

- [GrowNYC Education](#)¹¹² is New York City's school garden program and a partnership between GrowNYC and the NYC Department of Education. Find out about how to start a school garden, find a local school garden you can partner with, download toolkits, and explore curriculum by visiting [grownyc.org](#).
- Your local [community board](#)¹¹³ has a youth committee, and you can get on the agenda of their next meeting to let them know the garden is a resource for youth in the community.
- Sign up to serve as a Summer Youth Employment program host site. The Summer Youth Employment Program provides youth between the ages of 14 and 24 with paid summer employment for up to six weeks. Visit [nyc.gov/dycd](#)¹¹⁴ for more information or call (800) 246-4646 or (646) 343-6800.

For a more complete list of resources available to schools or community gardeners working with schools, please visit [grownyc.org](#) or email GrowNYC School Gardens at growtolearn@grownyc.org.

¹¹² Learn more about GrowNYC Education and school gardening in NYC at [grownyc.org/education](#)

¹¹³ To find your local community board, visit [nyc.gov/html/cau/html/cb/cb.shtml](#)

¹¹⁴ Learn more about the NYC Dept. of Youth and Community Development at [nyc.gov/dycd](#)

Appendix A: Topsoil Specs for Community Gardens

WORK: Under this Item, the Contractor shall furnish and deliver **TOPSOIL FOR COMMUNITY GARDENS** in accordance with the plans, specifications, and directions of NYC Parks GreenThumb. The Contractor shall be liable for any damage to property caused by delivery of topsoil, and all areas disturbed or damaged shall be restored to their original condition, to the satisfaction of GreenThumb.

MATERIALS:

Topsoil: Shall be a sandy/ loam, friable soil that has been removed to a depth of one foot (1') or less, if subsoil is encountered. Topsoil shall be of uniform quality, free from hard clods, stiff clay, hardpan, sods, partially disintegrated stone, lime, cement, ashes, slag, concrete, tar residues, tarred paper, boards, chips, sticks, or any other undesirable material. No topsoil shall be delivered in a frozen or muddy condition.

Topsoil shall be provided by vendors that are approved by NYC Parks.

1. Organic Content: Topsoil shall contain forty percent (40%) to fifty percent (50%) organic matter determined by loss on ignition, of moisture-free samples dried in accordance with the current method of the Association of Official Agricultural Chemists. The organic matter shall not exceed fifty percent (50%).
2. The acidity range shall be pH 6.0 to pH 7.4 inclusive.
3. Soil Textural Analysis: Topsoil shall consist of the following percentages of sand, silt and clay. Any topsoil that does not meet the requirements below will be rejected. When directed by NYC Parks GreenThumb, the vendor may be granted permission to screen delivered topsoil in order to achieve particle size compliance. Additional testing at the vendor's expense will be required to confirm compliance after completion of on-site screening.

Sand (0.05 to 2 mm)	40% to 75%
Silt (0.002 to 0.05 mm)	15% to 65%
Clay (<0.002 mm)	20% maximum

4. Electrical Conductivity shall be a maximum of 1.50 mmhos/cm. The testing method shall be the saturated paste method. A higher level would indicate excessive salt content and material will be rejected.
5. Nutrients: Topsoil test results shall show recommendations for soil amendments to correct nutrient deficiencies as necessary. Organic soil additives and fertilizers shall be incorporated as necessary at the Contractor's expense, only after written approval has been granted by NYC Parks GreenThumb.

6. Contaminant Concentrations: Topsoil must meet the imported clean soil cover criteria requirements of 6 NYCRR 375-6.7(d), the substantive requirements of NYSDEC Technical Guidance for Site Investigation and Remediation (DER-10) 5.4(e), and the most current (at the time of initiating construction) EPA Region 2 soil lead guidance. The Restricted Residential Use category applies to this project since it applies to sites to be used for active recreational uses, including public uses with a reasonable potential for soil contact. For Restricted Residential Use, to be considered clean the topsoil must meet the lower of the Protection of Groundwater or the Protection of Public Health for Restricted Residential Use. The topsoil must meet the Restricted Residential Use values shown in DER-10 Appendix 5 Allowable Constituent Levels for Imported Fill (incorporates Protection of Groundwater), DER-10 Soil Subdivision 5.4(e), and the NYSDECCP-51 Table 1 Soil Cleanup Guidance Restricted Residential Use and Protection of Groundwater Supplemental Soil Cleanup Objectives. Each sample shall be analyzed for all volatile organic compounds, semivolatile organic compounds, pesticides, polychlorinated biphenyls, and metals listed in DER-10 Appendix 5 and CP-51 Table 1 according to current USEPA methods by a New York State NYSDOH Environmental Laboratory Approval Program (ELAP) certified laboratory.

7. Laboratory Testing: The Contractor shall furnish a certified report of an approved Analytical Laboratory/Chemist showing the analysis of representative samples of the topsoil which they propose to use. At a minimum, the Contractor shall collect and analyze one representative sample of proposed topsoil for each delivery of material proposed for delivery. All samples are to be received by NYC Parks GreenThumb and delivered to the laboratory, and the price bid shall include inspection and laboratory charges. Samples shall be representative of the topsoil currently at the source location and proposed for use on this project and submitted to the laboratory for testing and receipt of the test results by NYC Parks at least ten (10) business days prior to the proposed delivery of topsoil.

No topsoil shall be delivered until the approval of samples by NYC Parks, but such approval shall not constitute final acceptance. NYC Parks GreenThumb reserves the right to reject on or after delivery any material that does not, in their opinion, meet these specifications.

METHOD:

Deliveries shall be made to NYC Parks GreenThumb's distribution center in Long Island City, Queens.

SUBMITTALS:

Clean Topsoil Chemical Sampling and Test Data: The Contractor shall provide NYC PARKS with current laboratory chemical test data for the proposed topsoil for delivery. The sample data should be representative of the topsoil currently at the source location and proposed for use on this project. The name and address of the proposed topsoil source along with the actual original source of the soil (e.g., quarry, borrow pit) shall be provided. At a minimum, the Contractor shall collect and analyze one representative sample of proposed topsoil from the source's stockpile for every 250 cubic yards of materials delivered, consistent with NYSDEC protocols. Additional testing may be required if the Contractor is sourcing from multiple vendors. Each sample shall be analyzed according to current USEPA methods by a New York State NYSDOH Environmental Laboratory Approval Program (ELAP) certified laboratory for the complete list of 6 NYCRR 375-6.7(d) parameters using acceptable laboratory reporting limits (below the specified regulatory comparison criteria) to demonstrate that the soil complies with the above-specified requirements for imported clean fill. All soil sampling and analyses shall be conducted in accordance with NYSDEC soil investigation sampling, analysis and quality assurance requirements specified in DER-10. The laboratory and Contractor shall provide in electronic form the laboratory sample data report with standard laboratory quality control data deliverables and a Microsoft Excel electronic data deliverable with sample data comparisons to the above indicated site-specific clean soil criteria.

Physical and Agricultural Samples and Test Results: The Contractor shall submit two (2) five pound(5 lb.) bags of the proposed topsoil to NYC Parks GreenThumb, with the testing report attached, for approval prior to delivering material to the Site. The sample data shall be representative of the topsoil currently at the source location and proposed for delivery. The Contractor shall at the direction and discretion of NYC Parks GreenThumb furnish a certified report showing the analysis of representative samples of the topsoil which they propose to use. Testing shall be performed by Rutgers Cooperative Research & Extension Testing laboratories or equivalent laboratory as approved in writing by NYC Parks' Specifications and Estimating department. Laboratory testing performed more than six months prior to the Contractor's submittal date will be rejected. The testing shall include: pH, phosphorus, potassium, magnesium, organic matter content (loss on ignition method), soluble salt level and soil textural analysis. Price bid shall include all inspection and laboratory fees.

No topsoil shall be delivered to the site until the approval of samples by NYC Parks, but such approval shall not constitute final acceptance.

DELIVERY AND APPROVAL: The Contractor shall notify NYC Parks GreenThumb a minimum of five (5) business days prior to the intended topsoil delivery date. All imported topsoil shall be delivered in trucks and will be subject to visual inspection and additional testing. The topsoil shall NOT be dumped at the delivery site until the specified soil sampling and testing is completed, unless otherwise directed. NYC Parks GreenThumb reserves the right to reject any topsoil which does not fall within acceptable limitations of this specification and the initial submittal to design including the approved sample and the approved test report. Where the topsoil is rejected, it shall be immediately removed from the site. Additional testing after amending shall also be at the Contractor's expense.

NYC Parks GreenThumb's determination based on test results of delivered material: Should NYC Parks' test results show organic content between 35% and 40%, and where allowed by NYC Parks, organic matter may be added and thoroughly incorporated in the stockpile to bring the soil to the required minimum of 40% organic content. The Contractor will be required to re-test after incorporation of additional organic matter to assure a minimum organic content of 40%. Under no circumstances shall the organic content exceed fifty (50%). Should NYC Parks test results of delivered material show organic content greater than fifty (50%), the soil shall be rejected and removed from the Site. Should NYC Parks' test results show pH between pH 5.0 and 6.0, and where directed by NYC Parks GreenThumb, limestone may be added at the Contractor's expense to bring the soil to the required minimum pH 6.0. The Contractor will be required to re-test after incorporation of limestone to assure a minimum pH 6.0. Should NYC Parks GreenThumb's test results of delivered material show a pH greater than 7.4 the soil shall be rejected and removed from the site.

The NYC Parks GreenThumb reserves the right to reject on or after delivery any material that doesn't, in their opinion, meet these specifications.

APPEAL PROCESS: NYC Parks GreenThumb shall visually check for discrepancies between the delivered soil and the approved submittal and sample. If NYC Parks GreenThumb suspects that the topsoil delivered to the site has excessively high levels of organic matter, clay, etc. that would not be within the allowable levels listed in this specification, the soil will be rejected until additional testing proves otherwise. Should the Contractor contest the NYC Parks GreenThumb's determination, NYC Parks GreenThumb will take samples so additional tests may be performed at Contractor's expense. Testing shall be performed by Rutgers Cooperative Research & Extension Testing laboratories or equivalent laboratory as approved in writing by NYC Parks Specifications and Estimating department. These results shall be considered final.

MEASUREMENT AND PAYMENT: The quantity of **TOPSOIL FOR COMMUNITY GARDENS**, to be paid for under this Item shall be the number of **CUBIC YARDS** of topsoil delivered, measured in trucks prior to dumping, in accordance with the plans, specifications and

directions of the Engineer. No topsoil shall be furnished until ordered by NYC Parks GreenThumb.

The price bid shall be a unit price per **CUBIC YARD** of Topsoil for Community Gardens, and shall include the cost of all labor, materials, and equipment necessary, including delivery, testing, and all other work incidental thereto, in accordance with the plans and specifications, to the satisfaction of NYC Parks GreenThumb.

Appendix B: GreenThumb Events FAQ

What is an event that requires GreenThumb notification?

Events are any planned occasions where the garden group or its partners open the garden gates and invite in members of the public. And these policies only apply to gardens on NYC Parks property. Gardens located entirely on a land trust, other city agency, or private property are not required to complete the event form, but we welcome your event submissions and can potentially help promote your event.

Examples of events include movie nights in the garden, music events, art workshops, and more. For tips on event planning, check out our [Event Planning on a Shoestring](#)¹¹⁵ and our [Run of Show Template](#)¹¹⁶ located below.

Internal garden meetings or workdays are not considered public events and there's no need to notify GreenThumb (although please feel free to invite your Outreach Coordinator and they may join you).

What about a workday that's also a recruitment drive?

We're huge fans—it's a great way to bring in the public, let interested members build some sweat equity, and help accomplish those essential garden tasks. If your garden group plans to promote a workday as a public event and wants to encourage public participation, then yes, it qualifies as an event that would require GreenThumb notification. Please do let us know about these public events and, if you'd like, we can try to help promote this event and assist you in recruiting new members.

Also, a number of garden groups have asked about waivers for volunteer workdays. NYC Parks has provided the following optional waiver that groups can use and which can be found in [Appendix C](#). Reminder: Your group is not required to use this waiver and it only applies to visiting members of the public. Garden members fall under the assumption of risk sign and section detailed in the "[License and Registration Requirements for Gardens Under NYC Parks](#)" chapter.

What about a spontaneous event that happens during open hours?

In cases where a group might wander in during open hours to use the space, that's just the nature of stewarding public open space in a city of 8.6 million. There's no need to tell us about a random gathering of friends coming in to use the space, although we do encourage groups to have guest books to keep track of this sort of foot traffic (it can be a great number to mention when applying for a grant!).

How long is the Event Submission Form and what information will we need?

It shouldn't take more than 10 minutes (and likely less time than that). You'll need to provide us some simple basic details first: date and time, a short description, a contact person if we need to follow up or if there are questions the day of, any information needed to promote the event if desired, and whether the event is being held directly by the garden group itself or in cooperation with a third party. After that, the questionnaire will prompt you to answer a few questions so that

¹¹⁵ Event Planning on a Shoestring PDF:

<https://greenthumb.nycgovparks.org/newspdf/Events%20on%20a%20Shoestring.pdf>

¹¹⁶ Run of Show Template PDF:

https://greenthumb.nycgovparks.org/newspdf/Event%20Planning%20Handout_Run%20of%20show%20template.pdf

you and your group are aware of any of the more common permits that might be required by New York City.

What sort of permits might NYC require for our event?

Amplified sound is the most common permit (including speakers for music and microphones). The Event Submission Form will prompt you with permit-related questions such as:

- Will you have an open flame or generator (which might require permitting from FDNY)
- Estimate how many people you expect inside the garden at any one given moment (if you think you'll have 200 or more people in the garden at the same time, you'll need a permit from the Department of Buildings)
- Whether or not you will have a microphone or other amplified sound (permitting is done through your local NYPD precinct)
- Whether or not this event is a fundraiser (each garden is allowed two fundraisers and proceeds must go toward the garden)
- Whether or not there will be any commercial film or photography

GreenThumb does not provide these permits directly, but we can assist with the Temporary Use Authorization if a group is another fundraiser beyond their first two.

What happens after we fill out the form and submit an event?

You will also receive an automatic response from the form that lets you know that your event has been submitted. Please check your spam folder if you feel that you've successfully submitted the form, but haven't received this receipt message. GreenThumb staff will then review the provided details and follow up shortly. However, it is the responsibility of the garden group to obtain the required permits for the event.

How long will GreenThumb take to approve an event?

We can't give a specific timeframe and it will depend on the number of events submitted by almost 400 garden groups on NYC Parks property, the particular details of the event, the time of year, and other factors, but we will follow up with you as soon as possible.

What if our event is not approved?

We'll do our best to provide an explanation on why the event was rejected (for example, perceived as unsafe or overly commercial) and provide suggestions as to how the event can be modified.

Do we need to provide permits to GreenThumb?

No, you do not need to share required permits with GreenThumb. It is the responsibility of the garden group to obtain needed permits.

Why is this process now required?

Garden groups on NYC Parks property have always been required to notify us of public events. We're simply working to streamline and centralize the process now. This will allow us to better highlight the amazing engagement work accomplished by community gardens and spotlight the invaluable work that volunteers do in maintaining public open space.

Additionally, we have found that groups have sometimes struggled to understand the permits required for different events and activities in our city. New York policies are regularly changing

and we hope that this online form will help guide groups through the more commonly required City permits. Note that permits are the responsibility of the garden group to obtain.

Why do we now need all these permits?

New York City has always required different permits for different kinds of events and activities (more details are available [here](#)).¹¹⁷ NYC Parks GreenThumb is now making it easier for garden groups, who have always been responsible to obtain necessary permits, to learn about some of the more common permits through our Event Submission Form.

Can we have alcohol at our events?

No, alcohol is not permitted at GreenThumb gardens on NYC Parks property. Obtaining a temporary or special event permit to serve alcohol from the New York State Liquor Authority does not remove or negate this prohibition.

What about groups that don't have internet access for this form?

We can provide paper forms, and groups can also contact GreenThumb at (212) 602-5300 to fill out the form over the phone.

What if our group has a large amount of events to submit?

Please contact your Outreach Coordinator and we can work to make this process go more smoothly, especially if there's a digital copy of the events and details.

¹¹⁷ For more information on permits, please see: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/cecm/permitting/supporting-permitting-agencies.page>

Appendix C: Volunteer Release and Waiver



City of New York
Parks & Recreation
www.nyc.gov/parks

VOLUNTEER RELEASE AND WAIVER

I, _____, am volunteering with the City of New York (“City”) acting by and through, the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation (“NYC Parks”) and _____ (the “Garden”). When I am participating in this volunteer project, I agree to:

- Cooperate promptly and fully with all directions of NYC Parks’ personnel and Garden project leaders.
- Follow all of NYC Parks’ Rules and Regulations, and all applicable City, State, and Federal laws, rules, and regulations.

I understand:

- That my failure to behave appropriately may result in being prohibited from further participating in this or other NYC Parks or Garden volunteer programs.
- The nature of the activities that I will be involved in, including, but not limited to:
 - **Gardening:** activities typically associated with gardening and caring for open space, including but not limited to spreading materials (soil, woodchips, mulch, etc.), planting and removing vegetation, digging holes, watering vegetation, and carrying and lifting materials;
 - **Site maintenance:** activities typically associated with maintaining open space, including but not limited to creation and maintenance of paths and walkways, weeding, painting and removing paint, sanding, sweeping and raking debris, and picking up litter and other materials;
 - **Event planning:** activities typically associated with preparing for and hosting events, including but not limited to moving tables and chairs, setting up supplies, participating in group activities, walking around gardens;
 - **Construction activities:** building and/or assembling basic structures, including but not limited to picnic tables, benches, rainwater harvesting systems, gazebos, garden beds, and shade structures; and
 - **Use of tools and equipment:** use of tools and equipment including but not limited to shovels, rakes, hoes, power drills, pruners, hammers and other hand tools, carts, wheelbarrows, and other tools and equipment typically used to maintain gardens and open spaces.

I represent that I am physically fit and do not have a medical condition that would restrict me from participating in these types of strenuous physical activities. I acknowledge that there are risks associated with physical activities of this nature, including the risks of serious bodily injury and death, and I hereby assume all dangers and risks associated therewith.

I understand that:

I am responsible for my own behavior and agree that I will only perform tasks that I feel comfortable and safe doing, and that I am medically and physically capable of doing.

It is my responsibility to safely travel to and from the volunteer site. I shall not hold NYC Parks or the Garden responsible for any injury I might sustain because of my travel to and from the volunteer site. In the event that a NYC Parks’ vehicle transports me to or through the volunteer site, I agree to wear my seatbelt and follow all recommended safety precautions.

The City and the Garden will not cover any medical expenses due to injury received through my participation in this volunteer project. In partial consideration of my acceptance as a participant in this volunteer project, I hereby agree to waive all claims I have or may have against the City and/or the Garden in relation to volunteer projects. I agree to release and hold harmless the City and the Garden, along with their respective employees, agents, affiliates, sponsors or other representatives, from any and all claims for any and all expenses, personal injury, loss, or damages incurred during or in connection to my participating in this volunteer project.

I represent that I am at least 18 years of age and understand the terms of this waiver.

Volunteer Signature: _____ Date: _____

Volunteer Name (print): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Emergency Contact: _____ Phone: _____

Appendix D: Proposal Template for Adding Chickens to the Garden

Garden Name: _____

Garden Address: _____

Explain why the garden wants to keep chickens:

How did your group decide upon this new project (by vote, etc.)?

What is your plan for caring for the chickens' health, including what happens if a chicken gets sick? Examples include setting up a quarantine coop or temporary space, contacting a vet, etc.

How will the garden group pay for chicken supplies, including the purchase of the chickens?

Which garden members will be taking care of the chickens? Please list their name(s) and their experience with chicken care. The primary chicken caretaker(s) should have experience keeping chickens or completed a training or apprenticeship in chicken care.

Please attach a drawing or image of the proposed chicken coop, including dimensions and an estimated number of chickens the garden plans to acquire.

Please attach a drawing, map, or image of where in the garden you plan to place the chicken coop.

Appendix E: Proposal Template for Adding a Pond to the Garden

Garden Name: _____

Garden Address: _____

How did your group decide upon this new project (by vote, etc.)?

What are your plans and goals for this pond? Will it contain plants or any wildlife, such as fish?

How will the garden group pay for pond supplies?

Which garden members will be taking care of the pond?

What is your plan for ongoing maintenance, including keeping the water clean, monitoring ammonia/nitrate levels, cleaning debris, maintaining the pump, monitoring for mosquitoes and algae, problem solving, etc.?

Please attach:

1. A drawing or image of the proposed pond, including dimensions and any fencing, plantings, and signage.
2. A list of materials you plan to acquire to build the pond (liner, pumping system, etc.)
3. A drawing, map, or image of where in the garden you plan to place the pond.

Appendix F: Broker's Certification Form

CITY OF NEW YORK

CERTIFICATION BY INSURANCE BROKER OR AGENT

The undersigned insurance Broker or Agent represents to the City of New York that the attached Certificate of Insurance concerning the policy number(s) listed below is accurate in all material respects.

Policy Number(s):

[Name of Broker or Agent (typewritten)]

[Address of Broker or Agent (typewritten)]

[Email address of Broker or Agent (typewritten)]

[Phone number/Fax number of Broker or Agent (typewritten)]

[Signature of Authorized Official, Broker, or Agent]

[Name & title of Authorized Official, Broker, or Agent (typewritten)]

State of)

) ss.:

County of)

Sworn to before me this _____ day of _____ 20____

NOTARY PUBLIC FOR THE STATE OF _____

Appendix G: Template No-Vehicle Letter

[Date]

[Name]

[Address]

I, [Individual Name], am [Title] of [Garden/Company/Organization]. No vehicles will be operated by [Garden/Company/Organization] or its vendors, if any, in connection with the event, [Event Name] at [Event Location] on [Event Date(s)]. I understand that, if [Garden/Company/Organization] intends to use a vehicle owned by [Garden/Company/Organization] in connection with the operation of this event, [Garden/Company/Organization] will first notify Parks in writing and provide Parks with proof of business automobile liability coverage for the vehicle, in accordance with the requirements of the TUA agreement.

[Signature]

[Name]

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