



The
**GreenThumb
Gardeners'
Handbook**
2023

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1. How to Read the GreenThumb Gardeners' Handbook

The 2023 Edition of the GreenThumb Gardeners' Handbook is a resource for community gardeners and the general public that answers frequently asked questions on a variety of topics, including event planning, construction work, accepting donations, selling garden produce, tree pruning, garden bylaws, and much more. The handbook compiles many, but not all, GreenThumb, New York City, and New York State policies and regulations that govern community gardens as well as best practices that we recommend.

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. Our goal with this document is to help gardeners steward active and safe GreenThumb community gardens that bring neighbors together. Over the past several years, gardeners have helped to inform policies, best practices, and protocols included in this Handbook. To support gardeners in creating and sustaining these thriving public spaces, the Handbook is also available in digital form in multiple languages on [our website](#).¹ A limited number of printed copies, also in multiple languages, are available to registered GreenThumb gardens upon request.

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. However, non-Parks gardens registered with GreenThumb must adhere to certain minimum requirements in operating a publicly accessible open space. 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
- GreenThumb Best Practices
- GreenThumb Policies
- NYC Parks Policies
- NYC and NY State Laws and Regulations
- Additional Resources

This method of organization is meant to differentiate between the required policies and protocols, which are often just for community gardens under NYC Parks, and additional laws that regulate community gardening in New York City.

Translation Requests

You may request to have pieces of or the full GreenThumb Gardeners' Handbook translated into any language through your Community Engagement Coordinator.² For accessibility information, contact GreenThumb at greenthumbinfo@parks.nyc.gov.

¹ Download the GreenThumb Gardeners' Handbook at nycgovparks.org/greenthumb/resources/handbook

² Formerly known as Outreach Coordinator

2. GreenThumb Overview

Established in 1978, NYC Parks GreenThumb is proud to be the nation's largest municipally led urban gardening program, sustaining more than 550 gardens and supporting 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 community 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 sustains community gardeners and urban farmers across the five boroughs, while preserving open space. By providing free access to land, garden materials, technical assistance, educational workshops, and seasonal programs, GreenThumb assists 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. Community Engagement Coordinators³ are assigned to geographic areas and assist groups and gardeners with community organizing, capacity development, and coalition building. They also help garden groups with special projects and connecting gardeners with a variety of available resources needed to flourish.

Operations

Formerly known as the Land Restoration Project (LRP), GreenThumb Operations (GTO) is our boots-on-the-ground team that provides material and operational support to community gardens. In addition, they support garden groups with a wide variety of services, including property and pest management. You may find them delivering clean topsoil, compost, and lumber, building new gardens from the ground up, preparing garden sites for planting, making repairs, caring for trees in gardens, making spaces safe and accessible, taking on large-scale projects or scoping projects in gardens. The Operations team also manages special 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. In addition to leading GreenThumb's effort to expand our reach and impact, this team plans annual signature public programs such as the GreenThumb GrowTogether conference, Harvest Fair, Open Garden NYC, and other large events. They also host 100 workshops and three specialized trainings every year. Among many special projects, the Planning and Programs team administers the GreenThumb Youth Leadership Council, coordinates numerous volunteer projects, implements grants, new garden builds, and capital projects, and oversees all communications and publications.

³ Formerly known as Outreach Coordinators

3. Glossary of Terms and Definitions

Animal Nuisance – As defined in the [NYC Health Code](#),⁴ 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](#)⁵ 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.

Bylaws – These 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.

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. GreenThumb encourages all community gardeners to connect with or join their local community boards.

Community Engagement Coordinator (CEC) – Formerly known as Outreach Coordinator (OC). First point of contact at GreenThumb for community gardeners. Each CEC is responsible for communicating and sharing information with the garden contacts on a geographic basis. CECs work with garden groups to support their long-term capacity building, which can include support with new member recruitment, leadership development, and coalition building with local partners. Each CEC completes Annual Community Engagement Coordinator Site 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](#).⁶

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. GreenThumb Operations uses this measurement when delivering garden materials such as topsoil, compost, mulch, woodchips, and/or clean fill.

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 free of charge every year to registered GreenThumb community gardens.

Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC Parks) – The city agency looking after more than 30,000 acres of land — 14 percent of New York City — including the support of more than 550 community gardens through the GreenThumb program.

⁴ Download the NYC Health Code pertaining to animals at www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/about/healthcode/health-code-article161.pdf

⁵ Find your garden’s BBL number at nyc.gov/bbl

⁶ GreenThumb Staff Contact List: nycgovparks.org/greenthumb/staff

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. The NYC Compost Project, created by DSNY in 1993, works to rebuild NYC's soils by providing New Yorkers with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities they need to produce and use compost locally.

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. Your local community board or City Council Member's office may also have suggestions of potential fiscal sponsors. GreenThumb is a municipal program and is not able to serve as a fiscal sponsor.

Garden Contacts – A garden group's designated liaisons with GreenThumb. Every garden is required 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.

Garden Member – While all garden groups define membership differently, GreenThumb generally understands a "garden member" or "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.

Good Standing – A GreenThumb registered and/or licensed community garden group that operates in compliance with the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) and/or License Agreement and does not have any outstanding violations. Only gardens that are in good standing are 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 care for a community garden that is registered with GreenThumb to receive support.

GrowNYC School Gardens – The citywide school garden initiative for New York City. Established in 2010 under the name of "Grow to Learn", GrowNYC School Gardens is managed today through a partnership between GrowNYC, NYC Parks GreenThumb, and the Department of Education. 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 their gardens with property management as well as technical support and organizing assistance, such as environmental education and public programming. Most land trust gardens in New York City have gardens that are registered with GreenThumb in order to receive and access free support.

License Agreement and Licensed Community Garden Group – The GreenThumb License Agreement ("License") grants a GreenThumb Garden Group ("Licensee") on property under NYC Parks jurisdiction legal permission to garden on NYC Parks property. Licensed garden groups of the renewable 10-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.

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 and accessing free support from GreenThumb.

NYC Parks Rules and Regulations: NYC Parks Rules, unless otherwise specified, refers to the NYC Parks rules found in Title 56 of the Rules of the City of New York. You can find them on the [NYC Parks website](#).⁷

Open Hours – All 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. Posted hours can be changed with reasonable notice to GreenThumb. 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.

Outreach Coordinator (OC) – Please see “Community Engagement Coordinator.”

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 printed 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 and resources. To download a digital version of the latest program guide, please check the [GreenThumb website](#).⁸

Registered Community Garden Group and GreenThumb Annual Registration Form – 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 meet certain criteria and 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 join the GreenThumb network.

School Garden – An educational garden managed by a school. See “GrowNYC School Gardens” for more information.

⁷ Access NYC Parks Rules at nycgovparks.org/rules

⁸ Download a quarterly program guide at <https://www.nycgovparks.org/greenthumb/resources>

4. GreenThumb Resources and Services

Contact Information

- **Phone:** (212) 602-5300
- **Email:** greenthumbinfo@parks.nyc.gov
- **Website:** nyc.gov/parks/greenthumb
- **Facebook:** GreenThumbNYC
- **Instagram:** @GreenThumbNYC
- **Twitter:** @NYCGreenThumb
- **YouTube:** @GreenThumbNYC
- [Subscribe](#) to our email newsletter⁹

Gardening Materials

All registered GreenThumb gardens in good standing are eligible to receive various free gardening supplies and resources throughout the year. Garden groups can request soil, compost, woodchips, mulch, and lumber throughout the year by submitting the [Materials Request Form](#) online.¹⁰ Additional tools and supplies such as hoses and shovels may be distributed at designated spring and fall distributions but are otherwise unavailable. Garden groups should take inventory of the garden to identify materials and tools on hand. Use these opportunities to discuss with all garden members and identify shared priorities and needs for the garden. Groups should only request what is absolutely necessary.

After a garden group completes the Materials Request Form, 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, vehicles, and staff as well as sidewalk regulations. Please note that these deliveries are “bulk deliveries,” meaning the material will be in a pile, not in bags, unless otherwise noted when GreenThumb staff confirm your request.

Soil

GreenThumb sources topsoil that includes a mix of mineral and organic matter, following our requirements listed in [Appendix A](#). 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. Topsoil provided by GreenThumb is tested by the City-approved vendor and meet certain requirements for organic matter, pH, texture, and heavy metals.

Compost

Compost is decomposed organic matter that is high in nutrients and beneficial microbes. Incorporate 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. GreenThumb distributes compost from DSNY and the NYC Compost Project.

Clean Fill PUREsoil NYC

This low-nutrient soil is good for special projects, including capping contaminated soil, filling holes, or leveling the garden. Clean fill 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 Community Engagement Coordinator directly to discuss your plans.

Mulch

Mulch is finely ground woodchips. Keep your perennial plants healthy by adding mulch to the surface of the

⁹ Subscribe to the GreenThumb newsletter at nycgovparks.org/greenthumb/news-and-newsletters-archives

¹⁰ Access the GreenThumb Materials Request Form at bit.ly/GTMaterialsForm and if you cannot use the online form, please contact your Community Engagement Coordinator (formerly known as Outreach Coordinator).

surrounding soil to prevent weed growth and keep the soil moist. NYC Parks provides mulch to GreenThumb for distribution.

Woodchips

Woodchips are large, coarsely ground chips, not fine mulch. Cover your paths with woodchips at least three inches deep to keep dust down and prevent exposure to heavy metals. Also a great bulking agent for compost. One cubic yard will cover 100 square feet when spread three inches deep. NYC Parks provides woodchips to GreenThumb for distribution.

Quantities for woodchip, mulch, soil, and clean fill deliveries

Small Load 3-4 cubic yards *4 cy of woodchips pictured*



Requires

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

For woodchips spread 4" thick:

- 3 cy covers about a 15'x16' space
- 4 cy covers about a 16'x20' space

For soil:

- 3 cy = 1.5 (4'x8'x20") double raised beds
- 4 cy = 2 (4'x8'x20") double raised beds

Medium Load 7 cubic yards *7 cy of woodchips pictured*



Requires:

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

For woodchips spread 4" thick:

- 7 cy covers about a 23'x25' space

For soil:

- 3.5 (4'x8'x20") double raised beds

Large Load 10 cubic yards *10 cy of woodchips pictured*



Requires:

- 10' wide gate
- Sidewalk drop not permitted

For woodchips spread 4" thick:

- 10 cy covers about a 25'x30' space

For soil:

- 5 (4'x8'x20") double raised beds

Illustrations by Babbie Dunnington, NYC Parks GreenThumb

Lumber

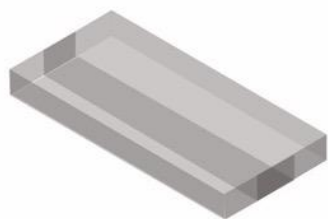
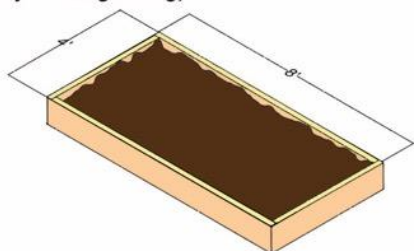
Garden groups can request lumber from GreenThumb to build raised beds or other projects in the garden. The use of untreated lumber reduces the risk of potential toxins moving from the wooden beds into the soil and plants. If you have a larger project that requires more lumber, please speak with your Community Engagement Coordinator to determine availability. GreenThumb's standard size lumber is 2"x10"x8'.

Landscape Fabric

Garden groups can request landscape fabric from GreenThumb. Lining the raised bed with landscape fabric provides a semi-permeable 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. When using landscape fabric, make sure you have scissors and either a staple gun or landscape fabric staples.

Single raised bed:

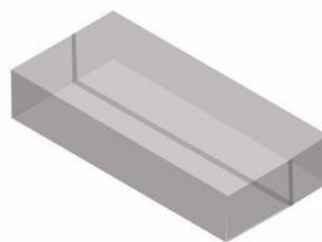
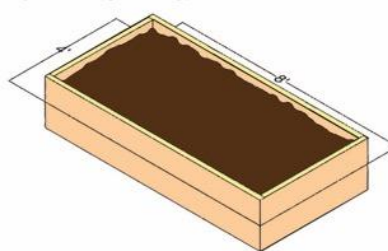
- 3 pieces of 8' x 10" x 2" lumber
 - 1 cubic yard of soil/compost mix
- *(1/3 compost approximately, depending on what you are growing)*



- 2 10' long x 4' wide pieces of landscape fabric

Double raised bed:

- 6 pieces of 8' x 10" x 2" lumber
 - 2 cubic yard of soil/compost mix
- *(1/3 compost approximately, depending on what you are growing)*



- 2 12' long x 4' wide pieces of landscape fabric

Stalite

Stalite (also called permatill or volebloc) is an expanded slate lightweight aggregate that has many uses in a garden but is specifically being used in NYC to aid in rat abatement. Ask your Community Engagement Coordinator for more information about whether this product is the right fit for your community garden.

Supply Distributions

GreenThumb organizes two large, seasonal supply distributions each year—one in the spring and one in the fall. Please note that materials vary each year and are subject to availability. Examples of supplies we have given out to community garden groups in the past include:

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

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

Supplies at GreenThumb Workshops

Some supplies are distributed at our workshops throughout the year. Workshops are listed in the monthly

GreenThumb [newsletter](#),¹¹ GreenThumb [events calendar](#),¹² and quarterly [GreenThumb Program Guide](#).¹³ You can request to receive a printed copy of the guide in the mail through a [form on our website](#).¹⁴ Workshops are also listed in the on the website.

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

Plant Material

GreenThumb offers community gardeners a limited number of free plants and seeds once a year in the spring at our annual GreenThumb Plant Distribution. Each registered community garden group may pick up a variety of seeds and vegetable, herb, and native plant starts to share with their fellow gardeners, subject to availability. Keep an eye out for plant sales and giveaways by other greening partner organizations, including:

- **GrowNYC:** has an [annual plant sale](#) every spring¹⁵
- **Butterfly Project NYC and Bronx Green-Up:** offer free native plants in partnership with GreenThumb
- **New Yorkers for Parks:** offers [free daffodil bulbs](#) every fall¹⁶
- **Brooklyn Botanic Garden:** offers bulbs and other plants to Brooklyn community gardens registered in their [alliance](#)¹⁷
- **New York Restoration Project:** offers [free trees](#) through episodic initiatives¹⁸

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

DSNY Compost Give-Backs

NYC community gardeners can apply to receive free pallets of bagged or bulk DSNY 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.

Additional Materials

Garden groups are welcome to reach out to their Community Engagement Coordinator about any additional needs or supplies so that they can connect groups with available resources or partners, share information about potential opportunities or grants. Common requests may be noted to inform future procurement of distribution materials.

¹¹ Subscribe to the GreenThumb newsletter at <https://www.nycgovparks.org/greenthumb/news-and-newsletters-archives>

¹² View the schedule of GreenThumb workshops and events at [nycgovparks.org/events/greenthumb](#)

¹³ Download the GreenThumb Program Guide at [nycgovparks.org/greenthumb/resources](#)

¹⁴ Sign up to receive a hard copy of the GreenThumb Program Guide in the mail at [bit.ly/GTProgramGuide](#)

¹⁵ Learn more about the GrowNYC Annual Spring Plant Sale at [grownyc.org/gardens/plant-sale](#)

¹⁶ Learn more about the New Yorkers for Parks Daffodil Project at [ny4p.org/the-daffodil-project](#)

¹⁷ Learn more about the Brooklyn Botanic Garden Community Garden Alliance at [bbg.org/community/cga](#)

¹⁸ Learn more about the New York Restoration Project Tree Giveaways at [nyrp.org/en/get-involved/tree-giveaways/](#)

Public Programs

GreenThumb offers in-person and virtual programming year-round—more than 100 educational workshops and webinars, three training programs for garden leadership, pruning, and composting, and three large seasonal [public events](#).¹⁹ All GreenThumb workshops and events are free and open to the public while our specialized trainings are offered to our registered garden groups. With advance notice, GreenThumb may be able to provide language accessibility services at GreenThumb workshops and events.

[GreenThumb GrowTogether Conference](#)²⁰

Since 1984, GreenThumb has kicked off the growing season with our annual GreenThumb GrowTogether conference. This free 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 and greening partners from across the city.

[GreenThumb Open Garden NYC](#)²¹

Each summer since 2018, GreenThumb partners with dozens of community gardens across the city which open their gates to the public on the same weekend day(s) to offer free activities, tours, performances, educational workshops, volunteer days, and more. Open Garden NYC inspires members of the public to learn about and join a community garden in their neighborhood.

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 Fresh Chef contest, gardeners compete to amaze judges and crowds with their kitchen improvisation skills using fresh ingredients, often provided directly by community gardens. Like a block party, the GreenThumb Harvest Fair is a family-friendly event with hands-on workshops, recreation activities, music, and arts and crafts.

GreenThumb Garden Recognition Awards

Since 2016, GreenThumb has honored community garden groups, gardeners, and greening partners for their hard work and dedication. Nominations are submitted every year by dozens of gardeners and members of the public for a variety of award categories that recognize their efforts in beautifying neighborhoods, growing healthy food, protecting the environment, and healing communities.

GreenThumb Workshops

Throughout the year, GreenThumb offers in-person and virtual educational workshops on a variety of topics from introductory to advanced gardening, composting, carpentry, herbalism, community organizing, group structure, fundraising, urban agriculture, and more. All the workshops are free and open to the public, and they are posted to the [events](#)²² page of our website and shared through our [digital newsletter](#).²³ Sign up for our [mailing list](#)²³ to receive the printed version our quarterly program guide or [download a digital copy](#)²⁴ from the GreenThumb website, which includes all of GreenThumb's workshops and special events. GreenThumb webinar recordings are available at bit.ly/GreenThumbWebinars.

GreenThumb Trainings

GreenThumb trainings are free 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, offered in partnership with the Cooperative Economics Alliance for NYC, the GreenThumb Pruning Brigade with our partners at Trees New York, and a Compost and Farming Apprenticeship with Earth Matter NY. When applications are open, trainings are

¹⁹ Learn more about GreenThumb's special events at nycgovparks.org/greenthumb/special-events

²⁰ Learn more about the GreenThumb GrowTogether conference at nycgovparks.org/events/greenthumb-growtogether

²¹ Learn more about Open Garden NYC at nycgovparks.org/events/open-garden-day-nyc

²² All GreenThumb events are listed at: nycgovparks.org/events/greenthumb

²³ Subscribe to receive GreenThumb's email newsletter or request quarterly paper copies of the GreenThumb Program Guide mailed to your home at bit.ly/GTProgramGuide

²⁴ Download a PDF of the quarterly GreenThumb Program Guide at nycgovparks.org/greenthumb/resources

advertised to community gardeners through their Community Engagement Coordinators and our program guide; details are also available on the GreenThumb homepage.

Technical Assistance

GreenThumb offers garden groups specialized support and organizing assistance. Staff can help garden groups organize workdays and volunteer events, develop processes and bylaws for garden governance, connect with information and resources, navigate 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, 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 regarding any issues with service and maintenance. GreenThumb accepts portable toilet requests twice annually, with due dates communicated by Community Engagement Coordinators. Failure to meet the requisition deadlines or to comply with delivery, pick-up, and maintenance protocols will result in disqualification for future requests.

5. License and Registration Requirements for Gardens Under NYC Parks

Garden groups must have several documents in order and up to date to become and remain eligible for support from GreenThumb.

License Agreement

The GreenThumb License Agreement²⁵ grants a GreenThumb Garden Group on property under NYC Parks jurisdiction legal permission to garden on City property. The Licensed Community Garden Group of the renewable ten-year License Agreement (referenced as) must operate in accordance with the Agreement and the garden governance as indicated in the group's bylaws.

GreenThumb Annual Registration Form

The [GreenThumb Annual Registration Form](#)²⁶ is required every year for all community gardens under the jurisdiction of NYC Parks. This form ensures that we have up-to-date information about your community garden. GreenThumb requires annual membership and plot wait list updates as part of this process. This form is only for gardens under the jurisdiction of NYC Parks. Gardeners who prefer to complete a paper form rather than the online form can request it to their Community Engagement Coordinator or download a PDF version at bit.ly/GTRegistrationPDF.

After completing the GreenThumb Registration Form, garden groups must also submit the following to greenthumbregistration@parks.nyc.gov or as part of a mailed package:

1. Garden bylaws
2. Membership list²⁷
3. Plot wait list (if applicable)²⁸

Annual Registration is not complete until the garden group's bylaws, membership list, and plot wait list (if applicable) are received.

To remain in good standing, all GreenThumb garden groups operating on lots under the jurisdiction of NYC Parks must execute and adhere to the GreenThumb License Agreement, complete the GreenThumb Annual Registration Form, and:

Comply with Garden Group Bylaws

These 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 a key component of ensuring the grassroots autonomous nature of NYC community gardens. GreenThumb requires all community garden groups operating on property under NYC Parks jurisdiction to submit copies of their bylaws to their Community Engagement Coordinators²⁹ as a prerequisite to being licensed and receiving resources. For more about bylaws, visit the [Writing and Amending Bylaws](#) chapter of this handbook.

Attend a GreenThumb workshop or event

²⁵ A complete copy of the 2023 GreenThumb License Agreement is available in [Appendix J](#) of this Handbook.

²⁶ Access the GreenThumb Registration Form at bit.ly/GreenThumbRegistration

²⁷ A template membership list is available at bit.ly/MembershipListTemplate.

²⁸ A template plot wait list is available at bit.ly/PlotWaitListTemplate

²⁹ Formerly known as Outreach Coordinators

Garden groups must send a representative to at least one GreenThumb workshop or event every year. Attendance to our events gives us a chance to touch base with community gardeners, to learn about their garden groups, and to help better support them, share information about the amazing work they do, and learn about the resources they need.

Post correct 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 licensed and registered with GreenThumb, as well as rules and/or related information in multiple languages.
- **Open Hours Sign** — A sign with the garden's weekly schedule of open hours for the growing season (April 1 to October 31). Your Community Engagement Coordinator can make one upon request.³⁰ This sign must include garden contact information.
- **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 Community Engagement Coordinator if your signs are damaged, have irremovable graffiti,³¹ or are missing.



NYC Parks Sign

³⁰ Garden groups can request an open hours sign at bit.ly/GTOpenHours.

³¹ Garden groups can use simple graffiti removal wipes from their local hardware stores. Wear disposable gloves while using the wipes.



Assumption of Risk sign



Sample Open Hours Sign

Post and maintain open hours

All GreenThumb community gardens must remain open to the public during the gardening season and gardeners are encouraged to keep gardens accessible as much as possible. Gardens must follow these requirements:

- Gardens must be open to the public at least 20 hours per week from April 1 through October 31.
- At least 10 of the 20 public hours must be clearly posted on the garden's gate.
- 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.
- All open hours should be between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m.
- Public hours must be consistent from week to week.
- If you are unable to make your own sign, GreenThumb can provide a laminated one. Groups can submit requests by using the Open Hours Sign Request Form.³²

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 or ethnic origin, pregnancy, religion, sexual orientation, creed, and military or veteran status.

³² Request an open hours sign at bit.ly/GTOpenHours

Maintain an active garden membership

All GreenThumb gardens must have an active and inclusive membership. Anyone from the public must be able to join the garden as a member, subject to reasonable membership requirements such as participating in a certain number of workdays, meetings, and/or events. There can be no cap on the number of members at the garden, and the group must have a process for accepting new members clearly explained in the garden's bylaws. Eligibility for membership or admission to the garden cannot be restricted on the basis of race, creed, religion, color, national origin, ethnic origin, age, gender, sex, disability, marital status, or sexual orientation.

A complete list of garden members, including contact information, must be given to GreenThumb with garden registration every year. GreenThumb uses this information internally and will never share it. Updates to the garden membership list must be sent to your GreenThumb Community Engagement Coordinator by mail or email every year as part of the Annual Registration Form.

Maintain a fair and equitable waitlist for individual plots

Some groups have been successful in managing communal-style garden plots. But if the garden has individual gardening plots or raised beds, they must be made available to members on a first come, first served basis, through the use of a waitlist. Any waiting lists for plots must be made available to members and GreenThumb upon request. New members should still be allowed to join the garden as members even if no plots are available—they can participate in tasks such as composting, maintaining perennial and ornamental beds, workdays, hosting events, managing the garden's website, facilitating meetings, and more.

Host public events and activities

All GreenThumb gardens must host at least two free public events or activities per year. Examples include hosting a seed planting workshop, a Halloween event, or a musical performance. Garden groups on NYC Parks property are required to obtain prior approval of any public programming in advance by using the [Event Request Form](#).³³ We can help promote your public event(s) and/or activities on GreenThumb's website and/or the NYC Parks Calendar if you'd like. Please see the [Events](#) chapter of this Handbook for more information about this requirement.

Share the License Agreement with garden members upon request

The GreenThumb License Agreement should be made available to any garden member who asks to see it. We recommend also making the GreenThumb Gardeners' Handbook and the garden's own bylaws available as well.

Maintain a safe, clean, 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:

- Nurture the plants in the garden through watering, fertilizing, pruning, weeding, and harvesting as needed.
- Take care of all equipment and structures in the garden, such as fences, planters, sheds, and furniture.
- Keep sidewalks, walkways, and curbs inside and adjacent to the garden clean and free of snow, ice, garbage, and plant debris.

Secure the garden when not in use

Community gardens under the jurisdiction of NYC Parks must have a way of locking the garden, and GreenThumb needs to be able to access the garden in the event of an emergency, for deliveries, and for site visits. In special circumstances, GreenThumb reserves the right to cut locks and/or chains.

There are three options for securing a garden gate:

³³ Find the GreenThumb Event Form at bit.ly/GTEventForm



Daisy chained garden locks

1. Daisy Chain: This system has two separate locks connected by a short chain (see image on left). This allows GreenThumb to maintain one exclusive lock for direct garden access while the garden group manage the other as they see fit. The daisy chain system has two chains (one long and one short) and two locks. When you lock up, make sure your lock is connected to the ends of both the long and short chain.

2. Combo Lock: This option does not require a key and it uses one combination lock. The garden group must share the combo code with GreenThumb. If combo code changes, group must notify their Community Engagement Coordinator.



Combo lock. Image source: grainger.com



Lockbox with combo

3. Lockbox: If the garden gate can only accommodate one lock, and the garden group has chosen a key lock, a combination lockbox must be added to the fence with a key inside for GreenThumb to use.

Additionally:

- All vegetables, herbs, and fruit (other than fruit trees) must be grown in raised beds or containers that are filled with clean soil lined with landscape fabric. Please see the [Safe Soil Gardening Requirements](#) chapter of this Handbook for more information.
- Remove all trash, debris, and personal items from the garden in a prompt manner.
- Ensure that all structures (gazebos, casitas, sheds, etc.) built inside the garden are in compliance with GreenThumb policies and the Department of Building's regulations. Groups must seek approval before planning to build any structure in the garden. For more information, refer to the [Garden Structures](#) chapter of this Handbook.
- Keep all tools tidy and 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.
- Notify GreenThumb about any loss, injury, damage, or violation that happens in the garden within three days of the incident. Call 911 in case of any emergency.

Be mindful of the following:

- No construction can happen in and/or adjacent to the garden without a permit(s).
- No permanent structures, murals, or other large artwork can be built in the garden without written approval from GreenThumb.
- No cars or motorized vehicles can be parked in the garden at any time.
- No one can live in the garden, human or otherwise, unless explicitly allowed in the [Animals in the Garden](#) chapter of this Handbook. Keep all sources of water (barrels, rainwater harvesting systems, etc.) covered. Standing water attracts mosquitoes.
- No drinking, smoking, or using drugs in the garden.
- No growing, storing, selling, or distributing drugs (including marijuana and hemp) or alcohol in the garden.
- No gambling, though casual recreational games are encouraged!
- No abandoning the garden. Abandonment includes but is not limited to failing to maintain the garden, not communicating with GreenThumb or the public, or not holding required public hours and events.
- Garden groups may not rent out the garden for events or film shoots, but may accept unsolicited donations, hold four fundraisers annually, and sell agricultural products grown in the garden. Please see the [Handling Money, Donations, and Sales](#) chapter of this Handbook for more information.

- No fire hazards in the garden. Please see the [Fire Policy](#) chapter of this Handbook for more information.
- No breaking the law or creating a public nuisance.

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 has a partnership with a school, church, non-profit, or other organization. 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 in an external organization may never be a requirement of earning a membership in the garden.

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 on behalf of the garden group, 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 — This clause 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. Twice each year, the garden group must 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 — 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, Community Engagement 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, such as [New York City Bar](#),³⁴ [Brooklyn Volunteer Lawyers Project](#),³⁵ [New York County Lawyers Association](#),³⁶ [Queens County Volunteer Lawyers Project](#),³⁷ [Richmond County Bar Association](#)³⁸ and [Bronx Bar](#).³⁹

A complete copy of the 2023 License Agreement is available in [Appendix J](#) of this handbook.

³⁴ Learn more about the New York City Bar at nycbar.org/for-the-public/free-legal-services

³⁵ Learn more about the Brooklyn Volunteer Lawyers Project at brooklynvlp.org

³⁶ Learn more about the New York County Lawyers Association at nycla.org/

³⁷ Learn more about the Queens County Volunteer Lawyers Project at qcba.org/page-18081

³⁸ Learn more about the volunteer lawyers at the Richmond County Bar Association at thercba.com/committees/volunteer-lawyers

³⁹ Learn more about the Bronx Bar at bronxbar.com/

Annual Community Engagement Coordinator Site Visits

GreenThumb staff visit community gardens throughout the year for a variety of reasons; however, once a year during the growing season, Community Engagement 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. Community Engagement 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 garden groups have a sufficient number of members. These visits ensure that garden groups can 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.

Community Engagement Coordinators also use these visits as an opportunity to engage with the garden group, and we invite and welcome garden representatives to join us. Your Community Engagement Coordinator can provide you with a complete list of what they will be looking for during the Site 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 these Site Visits, your Community Engagement 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

GreenThumb staff will work with garden groups to rectify any issues that may result in not being in good standing. However, if a garden group does not make the necessary changes, they will receive a violation. 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.

6. Registration Requirements for Gardens Under All Other Jurisdictions

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



NYCHA Davidson Houses Garden

Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

Community gardens that are not under the jurisdiction of NYC Parks will be required to sign an MOA ([Appendix K](#)) 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.
- Post sign provided by GreenThumb that explains that the garden is registered.
- 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.



GreenThumb sign for a non-DPR community garden

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 non-Parks gardens must complete the [GreenThumb Registration Form](#) every year and submit a full packet every four years that includes:

- Full membership list with contact information
- Complete GreenThumb Garden Registration Form
- 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

GreenThumb Community Gardens at NYCHA

Since 2019, GreenThumb has partnered with the New York Housing Authority (NYCHA) Garden and Greening Program to make improvements and provide ongoing support to 50 community gardens in 50 developments. Through a collaborative model, GreenThumb has assisted in improving the layout, design and accessibility of gardens, reconstructing gathering places, planting beds and growing food, and engaging the broader community in urban agriculture and healthy living.

GreenThumb conducted a citywide inventory of all NYCHA gardens in 2017 and identified gardens that are eligible to receive assistance from GreenThumb based on their location, size, and public accessibility. Based on NYC Parks' mission of creating and sustaining thriving public spaces, and GreenThumb's community development mandate, public accessibility was the main criteria used to identify sites that are eligible for support through the GreenThumb-NYCHA partnership. For that reason, GreenThumb identified a set of gardens located along the edge of developments to ensure public access and visibility.

Criteria for the 50 Selected Gardens

GreenThumb gardens at NYCHA developments must:

- Be located adjacent to a public right-of-way (i.e., sidewalk)
- Have a defined space for gardening
- Be taken care of by a group of community members
- Perform day-to-day maintenance and upkeep of the space
- Remain open to the public 20 hours per week (April 1-October 31)
- Provide "first come, first served" membership to any member of the public
- Host at least two free community events annually
- Designate two liaisons to GreenThumb

If you are interested in getting involved or have questions about eligibility, please contact GreenThumb at greenthumbinfo@parks.nyc.gov or (212) 602-5300.

7. 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 Community Engagement Coordinator.⁴⁰ 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 paperwork⁴¹ — A garden contact may need to sign a License Agreement and/or fill out the GreenThumb Annual Registration Form 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 Community Engagement Coordinator.

⁴⁰ Formerly known as Outreach Coordinator

⁴¹ Please see the [License and Registration Requirements for Gardens Under NYC Parks](#) chapter for more information

8. 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 should 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 must 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. The bylaws are an important part of the GreenThumb model – while the License Agreement gives groups permission to care for and steward the space, the bylaws describe how the group decides what to do on a day-to-day basis and ensures the grassroots model that makes GreenThumb unique.

Bylaws Requirements:

GreenThumb requires all community garden groups operating on property under NYC Parks jurisdiction to submit copies of their bylaws to their Community Engagement Coordinators⁴² 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](#)),⁴³ 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 Community Engagement 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. Leadership structure
4. Decision-making process
5. Process for changing the bylaws in the future
6. How the garden handles conflicts and disputes
7. Finances

⁴² Formerly known as Outreach Coordinators

⁴³ View video recordings of these workshops at youtube.com/@GreenThumbNYC/playlists

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](#).⁴⁴

Bylaws Requirements Checklist

This checklist covers what GreenThumb *specifically requires* in the bylaws of garden groups under the jurisdiction of NYC Parks through a series of prompts and questions. Garden groups are required to include *all* of the “Required” components, and may include the “Above and Beyond” sections as well, but are not required to. If your garden group needs resources on how to facilitate this conversation, please attend a bylaws workshop or [watch the recorded webinars](#),⁴⁵ check out our [Group Development Toolkit](#),⁴⁶ and/or ask your Community Engagement 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:

- ☐ Restricting membership to a geographic area, age (except minors), race, citizenship status, skin color, disability, gender, gender identity, marital status, national origin, pregnancy, religion, sexual orientation, and military or veteran status.
- ☐ Restricting membership to a community-based organization, non-profit, faith, or commercial partner. Garden names should also not include a community-based organization, non-profit, faith, or commercial partner.

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.)

⁴⁴ Download templates and worksheets for garden bylaws at nycgovparks.org/greenthumb/resources/group-development

⁴⁵ Access the Organizing for Garden Success webinar series at <https://www.youtube.com/@GreenThumbNYC/playlists>

⁴⁶ Access the GreenThumb Group Development Toolkit at nycgovparks.org/greenthumb/resources/group-development

- ☐ 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)
- If an existing plot-holder wants to change plots, can they? If so, how?
- Gardens can have youth as full members.

Watch out for:

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

3. 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 are leaders elected or appointed?
 - i. If elections are held “as-needed”, what circumstances prompt an election?
- ☐ 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?
- 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.

4. **Decision Making**

Required:

- ☐ The garden's specific voting (less than 50 percent, 2/3, etc.) or consensus (100 percent) process is explained.⁴⁷
- ☐ 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."

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 conflict or disputes?⁴⁸
- ☐ 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 in a later season?

Above and Beyond:

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

Watch out for:

⁴⁷ To learn more about what these terms mean, please visit the GreenThumb Group Development Toolkit: nycgovparks.org/greenthumb/resources/group-development

⁴⁸ For ideas, please visit the [Resolving Conflict in the Community Garden](#) chapter.

- 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.
- 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](#).⁴⁹

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

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.

8. 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/altering bylaws.

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:

⁴⁹ To file a complaint with the NYC Human Rights Commission, visit: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/cchr/enforcement/complaint-process.page>

- 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](#)⁵⁰ 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.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Access the GreenThumb Group Development Toolkit at nycgovparks.org/greenthumb/resources/group-development

⁵¹ American Community Gardening Association Resources communitygarden.org/resources/

9. 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*.⁵² Minimize the likelihood of heavy metals entering your food by adhering to these GreenThumb requirements:

- Grow fruits, vegetables, and herbs in clean soil with a protective barrier underneath to minimize contact with potentially contaminated soil. This includes growing all fruits and vegetables in raised beds or containers, and placing barriers like landscape fabric between these areas and the surrounding soil.
 - Alternative methods such as mounded raised beds unenclosed by a wooden frame may be considered and are subject to approval by GreenThumb. Please contact your Community Engagement Coordinator⁵³ for next steps. These methods would require a barrier such as landscape fabric over the ground topped with at least 12 inches of certified clean fill, topsoil, and/or compost that meets NYC Parks' chemical and nutrient criteria.⁵⁴
- Keep all play areas, seating areas, pathways, and other areas with exposed soil covered in mulch (i.e., woodchips), 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.



Lumber framed raised beds



Metal framed raised beds



Mounded raised beds with soil barrier underneath

For free lumber, soil, compost, woodchips, and mulch, you can fill out the [Materials Request Form](#).⁵⁵ 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.

⁵² Download a copy of this document at epa.gov/sites/production/files/2014-03/documents/urban_gardening_fina_fact_sheet.pdf

⁵³ Formerly known as Outreach Coordinator

⁵⁴ Please see [Appendix A](#) of this Handbook for a complete description of clean soil criteria.

⁵⁵ Access the Materials Request Form at bit.ly/GTMaterialsForm

- 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.

Bringing Soil into the Garden

While it is possible to receive a limited amount of free soil and compost through GreenThumb, garden groups may seek to purchase their own or accept soil donations. The following applies to 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 or donors must be approved by NYC Parks
- Topsoil must be tested, usually by the vendor or donor, and meet certain requirements for organic matter, pH, texture, and heavy metals before it is approved for delivery.
- Delivery:
 - The Contractor or donor 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 or donor 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 donor, vendor, or contractor, please see [Appendix A](#) of this Handbook. 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. Please see the [GreenThumb Resources and Services](#) chapter for more information about the lumber that GreenThumb provides.
- **Linseed oil:** If you treat your lumber with linseed oil all over and let air dry overnight, the lumber will last longer and still be safe for use in food production. Make sure to keep linseed oil away from heat. Balled up rags and other debris soaked with linseed oil should be disposed in a metal can full of water that has lid that seal tightly.
 - **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. 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 or identify an alternative source of free soil (see details about topsoil specifications in [Appendix A](#) of this Handbook).

Assembly:⁵⁶

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.



⁵⁶ Images by Clarisa Diaz for WNYC: wnyc.org/story/poisoned-gardens

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 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 single 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. For a double raised bed of the footprint, you will need six boards. Please see the [GreenThumb Resources and Services](#) chapter for more information on raised bed materials.



- 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 by 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.



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 single raised bed and 2 cubic yard will fill a double raised bed (see page 09 for details).

Fill containers to the top with clean soil.



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 woodchips. 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 woodchips) or 6 inches of fresh woodchips. After that, you can top off the paths each year with 1-2 inches.

You can fill out the [Materials Request Form](#)⁵⁷ at any GreenThumb workshop to request mulch or woodchips.

Additional Resources:

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

- Recordings of GreenThumb soil webinars - bit.ly/GreenThumbSoilVideos
- 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

⁵⁷ Access the GreenThumb Materials Request Form at bit.ly/GTMaterialsForm

10. Waste Management

It can be helpful to make a personal connection with the staff at the [Department of Sanitation](#) (DSNY)⁵⁸ garage in your district. 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 Community Engagement Coordinator⁵⁹ may be able to introduce you to the right contact people.

Organic Waste

If there is debris in your garden that is compostable (leaves, branches, plants), then please compost it on-site or through Curbside Composting (if it is available in your area). You can contact the [NYC Compost Project](#)⁶⁰ to learn how to set up an on-site composting operation.⁶¹ Learn more through GreenThumb's [Growing Food Toolkit](#).⁶²

Weekly Curbside Composting is offered by DSNY in different areas of the city. In Brooklyn Community Boards 1, 2, 6 and 7, Manhattan Community Boards 6 and 7, Bronx Community Board 8, you must [sign up online](#) or call 311 to request service.⁶³ All Queens Community Boards have Curbside Composting offered on the recycling day and no sign-up is required. Find [your collection schedule online](#).⁶⁴

DSNY encourages you to bring your food and yard waste to a [drop-off location](#) near you if Curbside Composting is not currently available in your area.⁶⁵

Woody 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 include it with your regular curbside garbage pickup.⁶⁶

Fall Leaves

Leaves make a great addition to compost! Recent research also suggests that leaving leaves on the ground can be beneficial for native insects that depend on them over the winter.

However, if your garden does not yet have a compost system and would like to dispose of leaves, you can do the following:

If your garden receives Curbside Composting, you can place leaves and yard waste directly in your brown 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," or in a clear plastic bag. DSNY offers free leaf bags at events in the fall 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](#).⁶⁷

Curbside Garbage Collection

⁵⁸ Learn more about DSNY at [nyc.gov/dsny](https://www1.nyc.gov/dsny)

⁵⁹ Formerly known as Outreach Coordinator

⁶⁰ Visit the NYC Compost Project website at [nyc.gov/compostproject](https://www1.nyc.gov/compostproject)

⁶¹ Learn more about the NYC Compost Project at [nyc.gov/compostproject](https://www1.nyc.gov/compostproject)

⁶² Explore the GreenThumb Growing Food Toolkit at: nycgovparks.org/greenthumb/resources/growing-food

⁶³ Learn more about Curbside Composting at [nyc.gov/curbsidecomposting](https://www1.nyc.gov/curbsidecomposting)

⁶⁴ Find your collection day at on.nyc.gov/collectionday

⁶⁵ Search for a location where you can drop off food scraps and yard waste for composting at [nyc.gov/dropfoodscraps](https://www1.nyc.gov/dropfoodscraps)

⁶⁶ Request a woody debris pick-up at nycgovparks.org/services/forestry/wood-debris-removal

⁶⁷ Learn more about DSNY leaf collection at <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dsny/site/services/food-scraps-and-yard-waste-page/leaf-collection>

All GreenThumb gardens receive regular curbside trash collection from DSNY. Find out when collection is scheduled for your community garden using the [DSNY Collection Schedule](#).⁶⁸ Report missed collections on [311](#).⁶⁹ Always record the Service Request Number (it starts with '311-' or Correspondence Number) that they give you for your records. It can be helpful to call your sanitation garage in advance if you have a large workday with a lot to pick up, but it's not necessary.

Dumping

If someone else dumps debris in front of your garden, call 311 immediately to report it and ask for it to be picked up. If you are watching the dumping in progress, you can call 911 for an immediate response. You can also report dumping through the NYC 311 app. Always record the Service Request Number (it starts with '311-' or Correspondence Number) that they give you for your records. Please contact your GreenThumb Community Engagement Coordinator if dumping becomes a recurring issue. If you provide information about illegal dumping that leads to a fine or civil penalty, you may be eligible to receive up to half of the payment. Visit the [DSNY website](#) to learn more.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Find your garden's curbside collection schedule at www1.nyc.gov/assets/dsny/site/collectionSchedule/

⁶⁹ Report missed garbage collection at portal.311.nyc.gov/article/?kanumber=KA-01788

⁷⁰ Learn more about the DSNY Illegal Dumping Award Program at <https://portal.311.nyc.gov/article/?kanumber=KA-02097>

11. 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 and structures, the boundaries of the lots, and appropriate access. This section applies only to community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction.

Structures

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



Pergola at Eden's Community Garden



Shed at St. Nicholas Community Garden

GreenThumb Best Practices

- Take measures to secure your garden's tools against theft. GreenThumb recommends using sheds made from steel, job boxes, shipping containers, and strong, well-made locks.

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 Community Engagement Coordinator,⁷¹ who will guide proposals through GreenThumb's approval processes. Gardens that proceed to build structures without notifying and obtaining permission from GreenThumb run the risk of receiving violation letters and other potential consequences.
- All sheds, compost bins, stages, gazebos, greenhouses, shipping containers, and casitas must be placed on a foundation made from concrete, gravel, or pavers.

⁷¹ Formerly known as Outreach Coordinator

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 according to NYCBC S.27-297 (d). Work permits shall not be required if 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
- Enclosed spaces (e.g., sheds, shipping containers) must not be used for seating or gatherings, even if the door is open.

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. Please let your Community Engagement Coordinator know if you are pursuing this kind of project so they can share best practices with you. For community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction, if the garden group has secured funding for capital-eligible improvements, installation happens through NYC Parks. Once the system is installed, NYC Parks plumbers will turn the water on in the spring and off in the fall. These gardens 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, group should reach out to their Community Engagement Coordinator to inquire. For community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction that wish to install internal electricity, the garden group must know that they will cover all costs of installation, maintenance, and use.

- To get started, provide a brief proposal to your Community Engagement Coordinator that includes a description of the project and information about the garden's need for electricity.
- If approved (and approval is not guaranteed):
 - The garden group will receive written permission from NYC Parks and a rider that will be added to the garden's license agreement.
 - The garden group will be required to hire a contractor who will secure the required permits.
 - Con Edison and the garden group will sign a legal agreement that absolves NYC Parks of responsibility for paying for the electricity bills and any other associated fees. The garden group is responsible for these payments.
 - The garden group will secure funding for the installation of electricity and ongoing payments.

Solar Panels

If the garden wishes to install solar panels in the garden, please contact your Community Engagement Coordinator to review your plan, get tips and best practices, and find out what the approvals process will be.

Property Management

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. 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, maintaining 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 information and details about the project and let their Community Engagement 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 Community Engagement Coordinator and Parks Central Communications at (212) 274-4560. If you cannot reach your Community Engagement Coordinator, please contact the GreenThumb main phone line at (212) 602-5300.
 - 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 Community Engagement Coordinator to complete an 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:
 - Make a complete inventory of damaged or destroyed property immediately after any incident.
 - Take pictures to document if anything gets destroyed, including structures, raised beds, trees, shrubs, perennial plants, and furniture.
 - Call 311 or use the NYC 311 app to report any dumping. Write down the Service Request Number (it starts with '311-' or Correspondence Number) that they give you for your records.
 - Alert your GreenThumb Community Engagement Coordinator, who will complete an incident report. If possible, include contractor contact information and Department of Buildings work permit numbers.
- 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.

12. 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).

GreenThumb Policies

Each February or March, GreenThumb emails and mails out information 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 a permit application and Vacuum Breaker Acknowledgement Form⁷² (only if you are borrowing a vacuum breaker, also known as an RPZ, from DEP) to QueensPermits@dep.nyc.gov. This email address services all boroughs. In your email, please note the name and address of the garden you are requesting the permit for, and if you need a vacuum breaker from DEP. If you would like to submit your hydrant permit application in person, call your local DEP borough office to make an appointment. Please include the hydrant number in your application.
- GreenThumb will give DEP a list of eligible GreenThumb community gardens in good standing to confirm your garden's information. Be sure to provide the accurate garden name, as it is listed in GreenThumb's files.
- All gardens are required to use vacuum breakers when using a hydrant, which protects the City's drinking water supply from contamination. If borrowing one from DEP, it must be returned to the DEP office annually, by October 31, in order to remain in good standing and receive a permit again the following year. GreenThumb may be able to provide your garden with a vacuum breaker, while supplies last. You may also purchase your own vacuum breaker at a local hardware store.
- Keep a laminated copy of the hydrant permit at the garden.
- Show your permit to your Community Engagement Coordinator⁷³ to receive a hydrant wrench, vacuum breaker, 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 information from GreenThumb. Hydrant permits must be obtained each year and cannot be shared or transferred. To follow up on your permit application, email communitygardens@dep.nyc.gov.

GreenThumb 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

Manhattan: (212) 643-2215

Brooklyn: (718) 923-2647

Queens: (718) 595-4619

Staten Island: (718) 876-6831

⁷² Access a copy of the Vacuum Breaker Acknowledgement Form in Appendix I of this Handbook.

⁷³ Formerly known as Outreach Coordinator

To Attach a Hose to your Hydrant⁷⁴

1. Obtain a DEP hydrant permit (and vacuum breaker if you do not have your own) from your local DEP office (see instructions on previous page). Please include the hydrant number on your application (this number can be found on the base of hydrant you are using).
2. With your garden group, decide upon a set location to store the hydrant wrench, 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 vacuum breaker to the hydrant adaptor.
 - d. Connect the hose to the 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.

* If there's no place on top of the hydrant for your hydrant wrench, chances are it's capped. If you need your hydrant uncapped, please email DEP at communitygardens@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. If you see a leaking hydrant or one running at full blast, please report this via 311. Be sure to save the Service Request Number (it starts with '311-' or Correspondence Number) for any needed follow up.

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.

Temperature Limitations

Hydrant use is prohibited when the outside temperature drops below 32 degrees Fahrenheit.



Hydrant 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

⁷⁴ Watch a short video on how to properly connect a garden hose to a fire hydrant on the GreenThumb YouTube channel: youtu.be/ulvTTO3IFL0

13. 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, and it must be done safely and correctly.

GreenThumb Best Practices

- 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 NYC Parks Forestry do not generally perform routine tree maintenance work within GreenThumb gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction.



GreenThumb Gardener Pruning a Tree

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, 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, or damage a tree, including by cutting its 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](https://treesnyc.org/)⁷⁵ or another recognized pruning training such as [Bronx Green-Up](https://nybg.org/gardens/bronx-green-up) of The New York Botanical Garden’s certification⁷⁶ 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](https://www.nycgovparks.org/services/forestry/tree-work-permit)⁷⁷ from NYC Parks Borough Forestry office prior to performing any work in the garden.

⁷⁵ Learn more about Trees New York at treesnyc.org/

⁷⁶ Learn more about Bronx Green-Up at The New York Botanical Garden at nybg.org/gardens/bronx-green-up

⁷⁷ 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](#)**⁷⁸

NYC Parks performs routine pruning 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](#),⁷⁹ [NYC Parks Forestry](#),⁸⁰ 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:

- a. First contact 311 to report the issue. Be sure to obtain the 311 Service Request Number (it starts with '311-' or Correspondence Number) for any needed follow up.
- b. Contact your Community Engagement Coordinator⁸¹ with tree condition and location information, photos, and the 311 Service Reference Number.
- c. Community Engagement Coordinators 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](https://www.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 Community Engagement Coordinator if you're unsure.

- **Tree Risk Management**

NYC Parks Forestry prioritizes work in accordance with their [Tree Risk Management](#) program.⁸² 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.

⁷⁸ Learn more about NYC Parks Forestry tree service requests at www.nycgovparks.org/trees

⁷⁹ NYC Street Tree Map: [nyc.gov/parks/treemap](https://www.nyc.gov/parks/treemap)

⁸⁰ NYC Parks Forestry: [nyc.gov/parks/trees](https://www.nyc.gov/parks/trees)

⁸¹ Formerly known as Outreach Coordinator

⁸² For more information about NYC Parks Forestry Tree Risk Management, visit <https://www.nycgovparks.org/services/forestry/risk-management>

- **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 contractors, developers, private homeowners, and other public agencies involved in building projects in New York City.⁸³

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

Launched in 2019, the GreenThumb Pruning Brigade is a network of trained community gardeners who are certified citizen pruners to do their own minor pruning of shrubs and small trees in community gardens. Through this program, GreenThumb supports gardeners in achieving the pruning certification through training, supervised volunteer workdays, and starter tools. 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 Community Engagement 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

⁸³ For more information on construction related permit requests, visit nycgovparks.org/services/forestry/tree-work-permit

14. 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 Community Engagement Coordinator⁸⁴ 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](#),⁸⁵ 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 Community Engagement Coordinator and request an 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

⁸⁴ Formerly known as Outreach Coordinator

⁸⁵ 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.⁸⁶ 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.

*GreenThumb Best Practices*⁸⁷

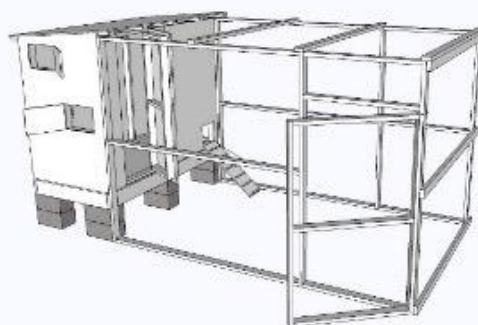
Garden groups should carefully consider whether to raise chickens in the garden—they require a considerable investment of time and money, they can eat members' crops when free roaming, and someone must take care of the chickens every day.

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.

⁸⁶ 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

⁸⁷ 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 Community Engagement Coordinator for approval. Approval is not guaranteed. A proposal template can be found in [Appendix D](#) of this Handbook. 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 not exceed 120 square feet and 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 120 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.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ New York State's Agriculture and Markets laws: agriculture.ny.gov/Al/Laws_and_Regulations.html.

- 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 permit⁸⁹, 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.⁹⁰

Additional resources:

- GreenThumb webinar recording: [Keeping Chickens in Small Urban Spaces](#)⁹¹
- The *Just Food City Chicken Guide*—ask your Community Engagement 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 Law

- Turkeys, ducks, geese, roosters, quails, and other fowl are illegal to keep as pets in NYC.⁹² As such, they may not be kept in GreenThumb gardens.

Rabbits

Domesticated rabbits adopted from rescue shelters are allowed in gardens as long as they are kept in an appropriate pen or hutch and do not cause “nuisance conditions.” Wild rabbits may not be kept as pets, though they may stop by your garden for a visit!

GreenThumb Policies

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

- Rabbits may only be procured from rescue shelters, not commercial storefronts.
- All rabbits must be neutered.
- Before adding rabbits to your garden, you must submit a written plan to your Community Engagement Coordinator for approval. Approval is not guaranteed. Your plan must include:
 - Explanation of why the garden wants to keep rabbits.
 - Information on how the garden group proposed and decided upon this new project

⁸⁹ Farmers’ Market Federation of New York – Market Managers’ Checklist:

nyfarmersmarket.com/wp-content/uploads/Vendor-Permit-Requirements.pdf

⁹⁰ New York State regulations for selling eggs: agriculture.ny.gov/FS/general/04circs/Circular854_eggs.html

⁹¹ Access the Keeping Chickens in Small Urban Spaces video at youtu.be/CBWx1PEJLN0

⁹² NYC Health Code Articles 161.01b[11] and 161.19

- Plan or drawing with dimensions and a materials list for the hutch
- Plan for caring for the rabbits' food, litter, and health, including play and quality time with caretakers, since domesticated rabbits are social creatures
- Plan for moving the rabbits indoors if necessary (if the temperature in the garden gets too cold or too hot, or there is inclement weather)
- List of who will be taking care of the rabbits and their background with rabbit care
- Domesticated rabbits need to be sheltered in a hutch no larger than 120 square feet to protect them from the elements as well as predators. The hutch must be at least 8 feet by 3 feet by 3 feet per rabbit to give your rabbit(s) space to move around. It must be well-ventilated, secure, and roofed with water-proof material.
- Rabbits need food, water, and social attention and/or play time daily.
- The hutch needs to be lined with newspaper, straw, or other bedding, and cleaned regularly.
- Rabbits may need to move indoors during the winter if it gets too cold or during the summer if there is a thunderstorm - have a plan for this.
- GreenThumb does not allow the raising of rabbits for sale or slaughter in community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction.

New York City Law

- It is illegal for pet stores in New York City to sell rabbits.

New York State Law

- You must provide proper food and drink to your rabbits, and not abandon them.
- It is illegal for pet stores in New York State to sell rabbits.

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.⁹³ 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 Community Engagement Coordinator to find out.

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

⁹³ View a list of all NYC Parks Forever Wild sites at nycgovparks.org/greening/nature-preserves

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-adjoint 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](#)⁹⁴ 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 Community Engagement Coordinator for approval. Approval is not guaranteed. Your plan must include:
 - a. Explanation of why the garden wants to keep bees.
 - b. Information on how the garden group proposed and decided upon this new project.
 - c. A hive plan or drawing with dimensions and a materials list.
 - d. A plan for caring for the bees' health and ongoing maintenance.
 - e. A plan for outreach to neighboring buildings.
 - f. 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 or have apprenticed for at least one full year with a beekeeper at another garden (see Additional Resources).

*Best practices and additional planning steps that GreenThumb recommends when thinking about adding bees to the garden:*⁹⁵

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.

⁹⁴ GreenThumb Growing Food Toolkit: nycgovparks.org/greenthumb/resources/growing-food

⁹⁵ 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/>

- 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.
- 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](#).⁹⁶

NYC and New York State Law

- Your hive must be registered and renew registration annually with the [New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets](#).⁹⁷ Submit a copy of this form to your GreenThumb Community Engagement Coordinator for the garden's files.

⁹⁶ The GreenThumb Growing Food Toolkit is available at nycgovparks.org/greenthumb/resources/growing-food

⁹⁷ Register your hive at agriculture.ny.gov/plant-industry/honey-bee-health

- Similarly, you must register your hives annually by May 31 each year with the [New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene](#) (DOHMH).⁹⁸ Submit a copy of this form to your GreenThumb Community Engagement 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. DOHMH 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.⁹⁹

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
- 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:

⁹⁸ 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

⁹⁹ For more information, visit agriculture.ny.gov/FS/general/maple_syrup_honey.html

- 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.¹⁰⁰ If you need to relocate a turtle, some pet stores, animal control agencies, and humane societies will accept 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.

GreenThumb Best Practices for Aquaponics¹⁰¹

- 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
 - Temperature for spawning: 77° - 86° Fahrenheit
 - Dissolved Oxygen: > 5ppm
- Consider installing a fence or barrier (thick shrubs, stone wall, etc.) with a child-proof gate

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 Community Engagement Coordinator for approval from GreenThumb. Approval is not guaranteed. Your plan must include:
 - Explanation of why the garden wants to add aquaponics.
 - 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 fish 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.

- 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.

¹⁰⁰ New York State regulations for invasive species: dec.ny.gov/animals/99141.html

¹⁰¹ Adapted from the Aquaponics Toolkit from Oko Farms. Learn more about aquaponics at grownycdistancelearning.org/post/aquaponics-in-the-teaching-garden

- 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 Law*¹⁰²

- 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, some pet stores, animal control agencies, and humane societies will accept them.
- 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

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 Community Engagement 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.

¹⁰² New York State regulations on invasive species: dec.ny.gov/animals/99141.html

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. They are not covered by the ADA and the State human rights law. However, local law is usually broader than those laws 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 Community Engagement 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 a service animal as described above) into a community garden where pets are prohibited, please direct them to the [Parks Reasonable Accommodation Form](#).¹⁰³ The Parks Reasonable Accommodation Form is an online form requesting reasonable accommodations in Parks facilities. The form is available on the Accessibility page of the [Parks website](#)¹⁰⁴ and in [Appendix L](#). 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.

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 garden area.

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 Community Engagement 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.

GreenThumb discourages feeding any wild or stray animal. Feeding wild or stray animals can attract rats, so it is recommended to keep bird feeding areas tidy and limited to squirrel-proof feeders that hang from trees or structures.

Raccoons

Raccoons are omnivores, consuming a varied diet of fruit, vegetables, insects, small rodents, and fish as well as garbage, compost, and pet food when available. They live in all five boroughs of New York City and can easily adapt to live wherever food and shelter are available. Raccoons can cause damages to the garden and if they have rabies they may scratch or bite you or your animals.

Follow this guidance to keep raccoons away from the community garden:

- Keep your garbage and recycling areas clean, and make sure these containers are tightly sealed.
- Make use of a raccoon-resistant trash container, or place a weight on the lid of your garbage bin.
- Seal all openings to garden structures, including casitas, sheds, and greenhouses.
- Sprinkle cayenne pepper around as raccoons find it irritating. Use cayenne pepper with caution; it can be very irritating to pets.

¹⁰³ Find the NYC Parks Reasonable Accommodation form at nycgovparks.org/accessibility/reasonable-accommodation

¹⁰⁴ Access the NYC Parks Accessibility page at nycgovparks.org/accessibility

- If you are bitten or scratched by a raccoon, wash the wound with lots of soap and water. See your doctor as soon as possible or visit the emergency room. Call 311 to report a sick raccoon or if a raccoon scratches or bites you or your pet.

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. In New York City, white-tailed deer can currently be found in the Bronx and Staten Island. At high population levels, deer can pose significant challenges to human health and safety and can impact the local environment.

There are no plant species that are truly “deer-proof.” If white-tailed deer are hungry enough, they will eat almost anything, even the bark from trees. While plant damage cannot be totally prevented, deer do develop preferences. There are many types of plants available which deer prefer less than other plants¹⁰⁵. The recommended plants are attractive and have the added benefit of being native to the region, so they contribute to the health of beneficial native wildlife, like pollinators, and the ecosystem in general. Planting with a high diversity of native plant species will minimize the impact that any browse will have on your overall garden design.

For more information about coexisting with the white-tail deer, 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:¹⁰⁶

- 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.

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. All garden groups should continuously call 311 or complete the [311 online form for rat complaints](#)¹⁰⁷ to document the garden's condition and flag DOHMH for inspection and rat abatement.

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, overgrown vegetation, and garbage piles are perfect hiding and nesting spots.

¹⁰⁵ Species Least Preferred by Deer. Native Species Planting Guide for New York City:

nycgovparks.org/pagefiles/130/Species-Least-Preferred-by-Deer-Final-2-0-EM__5b7dc9f89cc2e.pdf

¹⁰⁶ For more information visit the University of Massachusetts Amherst Center for Agriculture, Food, and the Environment at ag.umass.edu

¹⁰⁷ Complete the 311 online form for rat complaints at portal.311.nyc.gov/article/?kanumber=KA-01107

- 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 woodchips, 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 steel or 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.

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.

Stalite (also called permatill or volebloc) is an expanded slate lightweight aggregate that has many uses in a garden but is specifically being used in NYC to aid in burrow harassment. If your garden is currently being treated by exterminators, stalite should only be put in burrows that haven't been treated for 7 days.

How to Use Stalite:

1. Find the burrow hole! In the photo, you'll notice this hole has been filled in the past. Stalite is only partially effective. Filling a burrow with stalite makes the act of burrowing extremely difficult for the rat and if you are persistent, they will get tired of it and move on!
2. Fill the hole completely with stalite. Keep filling it until the hole fills to the top! Rat burrows can be many feet deep and it is important to fill it completely.
3. Push down the stalite to ensure the hole is completely filled. Repeat. Repeat. Repeat!



How to use stalite / Photos by Mara Gittleman, NYC Parks GreenThumb

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 Community Engagement Coordinator for more information on this option. If your garden group wishes to hire a professional, you must first get approval from GreenThumb of your vendor.

15. 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 Community Engagement Coordinator.¹⁰⁸ 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 is a violation of the NYC Administrative Code and of the GreenThumb License Agreement for those garden under NYC Parks jurisdiction .

GreenThumb Best Practices

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.
- Not clearing sidewalks of snow and ice following DSNY regulations below are subject to a GreenThumb violation.



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

¹⁰⁸ Formerly known as Outreach Coordinator

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 regular lubrication 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.

16. 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 Best Practices

Consider installing a fence or barrier (thick shrubs, stone wall, etc.) with a child-proof gate for safety.

GreenThumb Policies

- All ponds must have a pump to aerate the water.
 - Solar panels are a great option for powering your pump.
- Ponds with small fish or other pond wildlife must be at least 3.5 feet deep.
 - Koi fish 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 are 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 Community Engagement Coordinator.¹⁰⁹ A template is available in [Appendix E](#) of this Handbook. Your plan should include:
 - Explanation of why the garden wants to install a pond
 - 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 Community Engagement 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 other considerations. Please be advised that not all ponds and water features will be approved—every site has different considerations, and we will do our best to work with you on your idea.

¹⁰⁹ Formerly known as Outreach Coordinator

17. 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 information about holding public events on our [website](#). There is also a Frequently Asked Questions addendum in [Appendix B](#).¹¹⁰



Event at Paradise Community Garden

Event Request Form

All NYC Parks community gardens must submit their event requests to their Community Engagement Coordinator¹¹¹ at least 30 days in advance using the [Event Request Form](#).¹¹² This time frame gives GreenThumb staff enough time to review the request and advise on any permits that might be needed.

An event that requires the prior approval of GreenThumb is any activity that:

- Requires any of the approvals or permits outlined in the following section
- Results in the garden's closure to the public during the garden's scheduled 20 open hours
- Invites in members of the public as part of a planned community activities not related to the general operation and maintenance of the garden
- 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 NYC, 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 proposed date, but no later than the schedule outlined above. Please plan accordingly as there may be a delay in our response depending on the volume of event request submissions received from hundreds of garden groups. The event is not approved until you receive an explicit written approval from GreenThumb, without which you are prohibited from holding the event.

¹¹⁰ Information about hosting a public event can be accessed at nycgovparks.org/greenthumb/resources/events

¹¹¹ Formerly known as Outreach Coordinator

¹¹² Access the Event Request Form at bit.ly/GTEventForm

The garden cannot be closed to the public for a private event during its scheduled 20 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 public access.

Permits and Additional Approvals:

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-garden 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](#).¹¹³ Please also see the [Handling Money, Donations, and Sales](#) chapter of this Handbook for information about accepting unsolicited 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.^{114,115} Please see the [Fire Policy](#) chapter for more information. Fuel cannot be stored in the garden.
- **Amplified Sound:** For any event with amplified sound, you must obtain a [sound permit](#) from NYPD.¹¹⁶ 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 four fundraisers per year, with prior approval from GreenThumb.¹¹⁷ For any event beyond those four 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 weekly classes or monthly tours), as long as it falls outside of the garden's Open Hours.
- **Filming and Photography:** For any event involving commercial filming or photography, you may need to obtain a Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment permit in addition to prior written approval from NYC Parks, GreenThumb, and the garden group. These approvals may take up to several weeks. Begin by completing the [questionnaire](#) through NYC Parks.¹¹⁸ Non-commercial filming does not require a permit and can be approved at the garden's discretion. Garden groups cannot ask directly for a donation; however, they can accept one if offered. The garden group should let their Community Engagement Coordinator know when filming concludes and whether or not a donation was made.

¹¹³ Access the Event Request Form at bit.ly/GTEventForm

¹¹⁴ FDNY Open Flame Permit: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/fdny/business/all-certifications/per-openflames.page>

¹¹⁵ FDNY Generator Permit: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/cecm/support/new-york-city-fire-department.page>

¹¹⁶ NYPD Amplified Sound Permit: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/nypd/services/law-enforcement/permits-licenses-permits.page>

¹¹⁷ For more information on fundraising policy, visit the [Handling Money, Donations, and Sales](#) chapter of this Handbook.

¹¹⁸ Film & Photography Permit: <http://nycgovparks.org/permits/film-shoot-request>

- **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.¹¹⁹ To apply for a street closure permit, visit [nyc.gov/sapo](https://www1.nyc.gov/site/sapo) or call (212) 788-0025. This process can take several months—start at least six months before your event.

A list of New York City permits related to events can be found on the [Citywide Event Coordination and Management Office](#) website.¹²⁰

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 solely to support the ongoing operation and maintenance of the community garden.
- 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](#).¹²¹
 - 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 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](#).¹²² There are no fees or costs associated with registering.

Additional Resources

- 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.
- Watch [recordings of past GreenThumb webinars](#) about event planning.¹²³
- If you're not sure which approvals you need, you can reach out to your Community Engagement 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](#) page¹²⁴ 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 can repost on our social media platforms.
 - Facebook: GreenThumbNYC
 - Instagram: @GreenThumbNYC
 - Twitter: @NYCGreenThumb
 - YouTube: @GreenThumbNYC
 - Hashtag: #greenthumbgrows

¹¹⁹ SAPO Permits: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/cecm/permitting/permit-types.page>

¹²⁰ Citywide Event Coordination and Management: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/cecm/permitting/supporting-permitting-agencies.page>

¹²¹ Learn more about the Temporary Food Establishment Permit at <https://www1.nyc.gov/nycbusiness/description/temporary-food-service-establishment-permit>

¹²² New York State Home Processor Registration: <https://agriculture.ny.gov/food-safety/home-processing>

¹²³ Access event planning webinar recordings at youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZ5tS3Rj9o6rYDoltO8sAyFuulEvQFO_k

¹²⁴ GreenThumb Event Listing Request information page: nycgovparks.org/greenthumb/resources/events

- 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 Community Engagement 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 as early as possible, ideally two to four months in advance, depending on the scale of the event. This gives you enough time to initiate planning, notify GreenThumb, 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 provide a myriad of environmental, economic, and social benefits to the neighborhoods in which they thrive.”
- Consider creating an email group, website, and social media channels 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 your Community Engagement Coordinator for additional tools and resources for planning garden events.

18. Handling Money, Donations, and Sales



Garden finance workshop at Hands & Heart Community Garden

If your garden group is seeking to collect dues from garden members, apply for grants, raise funds from the public, 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.

The below information is provided for your reference. Please keep in mind that GreenThumb is not providing any legal advice and you may want to consult with an attorney to learn more about the below topics.

Accounting

Your garden's bylaws should have clear protocols outlining how funds are accepted and disbursed. They should include how financial records are communicated to the garden's membership. Under the GreenThumb License Agreement, garden groups can accept membership dues of any reasonable amount for the support of the garden, 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 option of sliding-scale dues and/or in-kind service in the form of extra volunteer time. However your garden decides to handle it, a zero-dollar alternative must be offered. 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 and the topics in this chapter, are up to the group members and should be clearly documented in the bylaws and followed by everyone in the garden.

As per the License Agreement, 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.

Unincorporated Association vs. Non-for-Profit Corporation vs. Fiscal Sponsor

Garden groups often create not-for-profit corporations that exclusively support the garden's mission. These garden groups with not-for-profit corporation status are incorporated with New York State and get a determination of tax-exempt status from the federal Internal Revenue Service (IRS). However, to avoid the paperwork and fees involved, groups operating on a smaller scale often do one of two things. They sometimes remain unincorporated without a formal IRS determination. As another option, some groups have another incorporated not-for-profit partner that has been determined to be tax exempt by the IRS to act as a fiscal sponsor to handle donated money or accept small donations without offering tax-exemption to the donor.

Remaining Unincorporated Association

Incorporation is not required to open a bank account, collect dues from garden members, or receive funds from the public or grants provided by foundations. As long as no funder requires incorporation or IRS determination of tax-exempt status, remaining unincorporated works for most garden groups.

Incorporating as a Not-for-Profit Corporation

As capacity increases, some community garden groups can choose to file as their own nonprofit

organization with New York State. To do that, you will need to choose three people to act as initial directors who are responsible for the corporation and to pick a name. You will then draft a Certificate of Incorporation and file it with New York State to give the new corporation life. You can read more about the process of incorporating with the New York State [Department of State](#).¹²⁵

GreenThumb recommends engaging a lawyer if you pursue this route. Some organizations that help small community groups with incorporation include:

- [Lawyers Alliance for New York](#)¹²⁶
- [New York Lawyers for the Public Interest](#)¹²⁷
- [TakeRoot Justice](#)¹²⁸

Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Determination of Tax Exemption & Registration with New York State Charities Bureau

After incorporation, any incorporated organization that solicits the general public for funds or seeks grants from foundations is required to be registered with the New York State Attorney General's Office Charities Bureau. Organizations that only solicit from their own members are not required to register. The registration can be done online at charitiesnys.com/charities_new.html. Once registered, you will need to file information annually about your public fundraising activities.

Many incorporated organizations apply to the IRS for a formal determination of their tax exempt 501(c)(3) status. Section 501(c)(3) of the US Internal Revenue Code allows not-for-profit corporations to accept donations that are tax exempt. Many but not all foundations and funders require this status to qualify for their grants and donations.

If your group will likely not bring in more than an average of \$5,000 per year, you can incorporate as a not-for-profit with New York State and you will be presumed to be tax-exempt without having to file with the IRS.

If you think your group will fundraise for more than \$5,000 per year on average, consider a fiscal sponsor or filing for tax-exempt status with the IRS (fees start at \$275). Once you obtain a determination from the IRS, you will need to file an informational tax return in order to keep the status and your EIN active; if the group fails to file for three years, the IRS will revoke both.

For detailed information on how to file for not-for-profit determination, visit the [IRS website](#)¹²⁹ and explore the resources at learning.candid.org/.

As a reminder for groups operating on gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction, incorporated non-profit organizations cannot serve as the licensee on behalf of the garden group. Even if the garden group incorporates in order to receive grant funding, the License Agreement still needs to be signed by individual garden members on behalf of the garden group.

Fiscal Sponsorship

As an alternative to getting determination of tax exemption from the IRS, garden groups may decide to seek out fiscal sponsorship to access grants. Both incorporated and unincorporated groups might choose this option. A fiscal sponsor is a not-for-profit corporation that extends its tax-exempt status to groups and projects related to the fiscal sponsor's mission. They may take on some of the financial and administrative work needed to run the group, and they may take on liability of the group's activities. These services typically come with a fee of a certain percentage of the group's income.

¹²⁵ Read more about the process of incorporating with New York State at dos.ny.gov/certificate-incorporation-domestic-not-profit-corporations-0

¹²⁶ Visit Lawyers Alliance for New York at lawyersalliance.org

¹²⁷ Visit New York Lawyers for the Public Interest at nylpi.org

¹²⁸ Visit TakeRoot Justice at takerootjustice.org/areas/capacity/

¹²⁹ Visit the IRS website at irs.gov/charities-and-nonprofits

There are several nonprofits in NYC who extend fiscal sponsorship to community gardens. Connect with your local community board and council member's office for suggestions, or visit fiscalsponsordirectory.org

Opening a Bank Account

Whether or not a garden group incorporates, files as a 501c3, or has a fiscal sponsor, it's a good idea for the group to have its own bank account for handling dues and other funds. Many credit unions in NYC support small community-based groups with low- to no-fee accounts. Research options in your area to find the best fit for your garden group.

An unincorporated association can open a bank account at some, but not all, banks and credit unions as long as it has gotten an Employer ID Number (EIN) from the IRS. See below for how to do that.

Getting an Employer ID Number (EIN) from the IRS

Whether or not your group creates a corporation or seeks 501c3 determination, it might be helpful for your group to have a distinct tax ID number or EIN (Employer Identification Number). You can apply for one at irs.gov:

1. Go to www.irs.gov
2. Click "Apply for an Employer Identification Number (EIN)"
3. Click "Apply Online Now"
4. Click "Begin Application"
5. Click "View Additional Types, Including Tax-Exempt and Governmental Organizations" and then click "Continue"
6. Choose "Community or Volunteer Group" and then click "Continue"
7. Complete the application

Fundraising

Groups operating on gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction can raise funds solely to support the operation and maintenance of the community garden. These funds can come from membership dues, grants, farm stands, and more.

Fundraising Events

Fundraisers that occur on-site within NYC Parks gardens can be held four times each year with prior written approval from GreenThumb by using the [GreenThumb Event Request Form](#).¹³⁰ A fundraiser might be a one-off fundraising event, or an ongoing ticketed series (such as weekly classes or monthly tours), as long as it falls outside of the garden's Open Hours. Fundraisers that occur outside of the garden or online can be held at any time and do not require GreenThumb notification or approval.

For any event beyond those four 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 this chapter).

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

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

¹³⁰ Access the GreenThumb Event Request Form at bit.ly/GTEventForm

garden membership, or attendance at garden events unless this is one of the gardens' four 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 Exchange of Funds in 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. Watch a recording of a GreenThumb webinar on [crowdfunding](#) to learn more.¹³¹

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](#)¹³² and [Citizens Committee for NYC](#)¹³³ are longtime supporters of NYC community gardens and can help your group craft your grant proposal. Ask your Community Engagement Coordinator¹³⁴ for additional tips about where to get started.

For very large grants for community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction, you must inform your Community Engagement 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!

Funding from Elected Officials

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. Elected officials may be able to provide funding for garden improvements and infrastructure through discretionary and capital allocations or through participatory budgeting processes. If you plan to seek 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 Community Engagement Coordinator to see how GreenThumb can help. Accessing funding can be somewhat complicated; watch GreenThumb's [webinar recording](#) to learn more.¹³⁵

Selling Agricultural Products¹³⁶

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.¹³⁷

The sale of food on public sidewalks is overseen by various City agencies. Please contact your Community Engagement 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) and Food Box programs.

¹³¹ Watch a webinar recording about crowdfunding at [youtu.be/THrM_YY-bU](#)

¹³² Partnerships for Parks: [cityparksfoundation.org/about-partnerships-for-parks](#)

¹³³ Citizens Committee for NYC: [citizensnyc.org](#)

¹³⁴ Formerly known as Outreach Coordinator

¹³⁵ Watch GreenThumb's webinar about discretionary funding at [youtu.be/qn5vny_81x4](#)

¹³⁶ Learn more about farmers' markets in New York State at [https://www.nyfarmersmarket.com/resources](#)

¹³⁷ Learn more about urban agriculture in NYC at [www1.nyc.gov/site/agriculture/index.page](#)

Please note, however, that any financial transactions for CSAs need to take place off-site (such as mail-in check, online, or another physical location), 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.

Agricultural Products that can be Sold by GreenThumb Gardens Groups under NYC Parks Jurisdiction

- **Fresh fruits, vegetables, and herbs:** No license required if raw and uncut
- **Plant starts:** 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 Community Engagement Coordinator for more information.
- **Eggs:** No license required
- **Honey:** No license required if nothing is added to the honey and the honey wasn't purchased elsewhere
- **Homemade herbal skincare for external use (salves, soaps, etc.):** Allowed 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.¹³⁸ 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:** No license required except for a valid NYS Sales Tax Permit. Registered 501(c)3 non-profits are eligible for exemption.
- **Cut Flowers:** No license required except for a valid NYS Sales Tax Permit. Registered 501(c)3 non-profits are eligible for exemption.

The following require written approval from GreenThumb:

- **Fish:** can only be sold whole over ice directly to the consumer.
- **Homemade fruit jam:** requires a Home Processor License¹³⁹
- **Homemade sauces, salsas, pickles (anything that needs refrigeration):** must be produced by someone with a 20-C license in a certified commercial kitchen to be eligible for sale.¹⁴⁰
- **Dried herbs and flowers for cooking, teas, etc.:** must be produced by someone with a 20-C license¹⁴¹

Meat cannot be sold in community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction. In addition, 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 GreenThumb community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction:

NYC Parks Temporary Use Authorization (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 four 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.

¹³⁸ U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) laws and regulations for cosmetics: <https://www.fda.gov/Cosmetics/GuidanceRegulation/default.htm>

¹³⁹ New York State Home Processor Registration information sheet: agriculture.ny.gov/FS/consumer/FSI-898D_Home_Processor.pdf

¹⁴⁰ New York State information and definitions regarding Food Business Licensing: <https://agriculture.ny.gov/food-business-licensing>

¹⁴¹ NY State Ag & Markets is looking to change this policy to allow dried herbs to be sold without a license.

If you want to plan an event that involves revenue generation, let your GreenThumb Community Engagement Coordinator know about your plans. If approved by GreenThumb, you can contact a representative at the Parks Revenue office 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
- 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:¹⁴²
 - 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 \(form CE-200\)](#).¹⁴³
 - 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

¹⁴² There are many places online to get insurance for one-off events, like eventhelper.com and the American Community Gardening Association at communitygarden.org. Do some research to find the right fit for your garden’s event.

¹⁴³ Apply online for Workers Compensation Exemption (form CE-200) at businessexpress.ny.gov/app/answers/cms/a_id/2263/kw/CE

- 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](#).¹⁴⁴
- 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 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](#).¹⁴⁵ There are no fees or costs associated with registering.

NYC Parks Concessions

[Concessions](#)¹⁴⁶ is the office that oversees 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 Community Engagement 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 community 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.

¹⁴⁴ Learn more about the Temporary Food Establishment Permit at <https://www1.nyc.gov/nycbusiness/description/temporary-food-service-establishment-permit>

¹⁴⁵ New York State Home Processor Registration: <https://agriculture.ny.gov/food-safety/home-processing>

¹⁴⁶ NYC Parks Concessions website: nycgovparks.org/opportunities/concessions

19. 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](#),¹⁴⁷ and targeted Requests for Proposals (RFPs), GreenThumb supports the collaboration of garden groups and artists to bring more art and cultural programming 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 Best Practices

- 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 Community Engagement Coordinator.¹⁴⁸
- 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 by using the [GreenThumb Event Request Form](#).¹⁴⁹ Please see the [Events](#) chapter of the Handbook for more information.

¹⁴⁷ Learn more about NYC Parks Arts & Antiquities at nycgovparks.org/art-and-antiquities

¹⁴⁸ Formerly known as Outreach Coordinator

¹⁴⁹ Access the GreenThumb Event Request Form at bit.ly/GTEventForm

- 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 artwork and its suitability to the site. To apply for approval, please submit the following via e-mail to your Community Engagement 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 a sound permit from NYPD¹⁵⁰ 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 mural can remain, but 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

¹⁵⁰ NYPD Amplified Sound Permit: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/nypd/services/law-enforcement/permits-licenses-permits.page>

going to be using the scaffolding or machinery and may need to obtain a [Parks Construction Permit](#)¹⁵¹.

- 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.
- The City cannot accept works of donated sculpture into the collection. There is a lengthy process with the Public Design Commission and new works on parkland must go through a public, competitive process and have a privately raised endowment.¹⁵²
- 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 support¹⁵³ 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 [Handling Money, Donations, and Sales](#) chapter 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 Community Engagement Coordinator for the garden. You can find our Staff Contact List on our website: <https://www.nycgovparks.org/greenthumb/staff>.

¹⁵¹ nycgovparks.org/permits/construction

¹⁵² Read more about this at nycgovparks.org/art-and-antiquities/donation-guidelines

¹⁵³ Find a template letter of support for a mural in Appendix H of this handbook.

20. Food Distribution

GreenThumb Policy:

The following practices must be followed by community gardens on NYC Parks property involved in food distribution:

- Only fresh produce grown on-site at the garden can be sold, and only to support the continued operation and maintenance of the garden
- Community gardens can serve as pick-up locations for Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and Food Box programs, as long as any financial transactions take place off-site (such as online).
- GreenThumb allows distribution of free prepared meals and groceries as long as the garden group is following NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) policy.

NYC Laws and Regulations:

DOHMH handles licenses and permits for operating a food service establishment.

Distributing Free Groceries without a Food Pantry

Anyone can distribute free groceries without a permit. Community fridges, purple pantry boxes, weekly distribution events, and other methods are popular across the five boroughs for helping neighbors access food.

Partnering with a Food Pantry

Most food pantries are regulated by the New York State Dept. of Agriculture and Markets. DOHMH is only involved in food pantry regulation if it is part of a soup kitchen operation.

Partnering with a Soup Kitchen

If the garden partners with an existing, licensed soup kitchen, the soup kitchen should already have the required Food Service Establishment (FSE) permit. The soup kitchen's permit would allow it to provide the food service at the community garden site.

Distributing Free Meals Without a Soup Kitchen

If the garden plans to distribute free meals without partnering with a licensed soup kitchen, at least one person on site will need to take the [DOHMH Food Protection Course](#)¹⁵⁴ and receive certification. The course is free, but there is a small fee in order to take the final exam.

NY State Laws and Regulations:

The New York State Dept. of Agriculture and Markets regulates food pantries, which do not require permits. The agency inspects on a complaint basis only.

Additional Resources:

DOHMH offers lots of resources for emergency food providers, including how to start a nutrition education program. Learn more on their [website](#).¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Access the Food Protection Course at www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/business/health-academy/food-protection-online-free.page

¹⁵⁵ Access resources for emergency food providers at www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/healthy-food-donation.page

21. Smoking and Marijuana Policy

GreenThumb Policy:

The cultivation, use, sale, processing or distribution of the marijuana plant 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. This includes hemp, a type of flowering plant in the *Cannabaceae* family. Section 6.E of the GreenThumb License Agreement 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.”
- Learn more about NY State laws around cannabis at cannabis.ny.gov/

22. Fire Policy

GreenThumb Best Practices

GreenThumb recommends that garden groups connect and build a relationship with the Fire Department of the City of New York (FDNY) and their local fire house.

GreenThumb Policies

These policies apply only to community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction. Please also see [NYC Parks rules](#).¹⁵⁶

- 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 Community Engagement Coordinator¹⁵⁷ 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.¹⁵⁸
 - 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 two 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, trees, or anything flammable. The fire must be at least 12-15 feet from egresses or places where people are walking.

NYC Parks Rules

- No person shall kindle, build, maintain, or use a fire in any place, portable receptacle, or grill except in places provided by the Parks Department and so designated by sign or by special permit. In no event shall open or ground campfires be allowed in any park. Any fire authorized by this subdivision (m) shall be contained in a portable receptacle grill or other similar device, and continuously under the care and direction of a competent person over 18 years of age, from the time it is kindled until it is extinguished. No fire shall be within ten feet of any building, tree, or underbrush or beneath the branches of any tree. Violation of this paragraph constitutes a misdemeanor. (§1-05.m.1 Regulated Uses: Unlawful Fires)
- No person shall leave, throw away, drop, or toss any lighted match, cigar, or cigarette, hot coals, or other flammable material within, on, near, or against any tree, building, structure, boat, vehicle or enclosure, or in any open area. This paragraph shall not apply to extinguishing a cigar or cigarette on a paved surface. Violation of this paragraph constitutes a misdemeanor. (§1-05.m.2 Regulated Uses: Unlawful Fires)

NYC Law

[Fire Department of New York \(FDNY\) Fire Code](#).¹⁵⁹ 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.

¹⁵⁶ For more information and a complete set of rules, please review NYC Parks rules at <https://www.nycgovparks.org/rules/section-1-05>

¹⁵⁷ Formerly known as Outreach Coordinator

¹⁵⁸ FDNY Open Flame Permit: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/fdny/business/all-certifications/per-openflames.page>

¹⁵⁹ Download a PDF of the FDNY Fire Code at <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/fdny/downloads/pdf/business/nyc-fire-code-guide.pdf>

23. Starting a New Community Garden

GreenThumb's New Garden Initiative

Inspired by NYC Parks' [Walk to a Park Initiative](#),¹⁶⁰ 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), Highbridge (Bronx), and Prospect Lefferts Gardens (Brooklyn).

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 follow the steps described below.¹⁶¹

Contact GreenThumb

If you are in a neighborhood that isn't currently served by a community garden, we might already be planning to start one there. Your first step should be to contact GreenThumb using the [Intake Form for Starting a New GreenThumb Community Garden](#).¹⁶² This form helps us determine what efforts might already be underway and best helps us give you guidance on where to begin. If the site is a good candidate, we'll work together toward starting a new garden or farm to help beautify, feed, unify and strengthen your neighborhood and our city.

Identify a Vacant Lot

Finding available space for a new garden can be a challenge, but with a little research and a thorough walk through your neighborhood, you may be able to find a suitable spot. This is also a good chance to meet some of your neighbors to find out who might also be interested in pursuing this project with you. Remember - it takes a community to start a community garden. City-owned lots are best, and you can view available [city-owned lots that are available and potentially suitable for urban agriculture](#).¹⁶³ This list is updated periodically, so be sure to check back from time to time if you don't see a potential lot immediately. Regardless of how you find it, pinpoint the site's location and write it down. Be sure to note the exact location, including the Borough-Block-Lot (BBL) Number(s) and/or the address of the building or house closest to the vacant lot.

Determine the Ownership of the Site

If you can determine the address or BBL numbers of the lot(s) that you are interested in, then you can determine their ownership by visiting the [Department of Finance's Digital Tax Map](#).¹⁶⁴ You can also visit [New York City's Zoning & Land Use Map \(ZoLa\)](#)¹⁶⁵ and use the "BBL Lookup" to choose a borough from the dropdown, and enter the block and lot as separate numbers.

Get Permission

Before you start planning a garden, we need to make sure that you will have permission to use the space to build a community garden. If the lots that you've identified are on publicly-owned property, GreenThumb will facilitate the process with the City agency that has jurisdiction to determine if they are willing to allow it to be used as a community garden. This process can take some time, so speaking with GreenThumb first will help

¹⁶⁰ Learn more about the Walk to a Park Initiative at nycgovparks.org/planning-and-building/planning/walk-to-a-park

¹⁶¹ Find a map of NYC community gardens at nyc.gov/parks/greenthumb

¹⁶² Access the intake form to start a new GreenThumb community garden at bit.ly/StartAGreenThumbGarden

¹⁶³ View a list of city-owned vacant lots that are available and potentially suitable for urban agriculture at data.cityofnewyork.us/Environment/City-owned-sites-that-are-available-and-potential/qchy-end3

¹⁶⁴ Visit the Department of Finance's Digital Tax Map at gis.nyc.gov/taxmap/map.htm

¹⁶⁵ Visit ZoLa at <http://nyc.gov/zola>

get things moving more quickly. If you're pursuing a private lot, make sure you have the consent of the owner first. GreenThumb will only register community gardens that have written permission to be there.

Build a Community Around the Garden

If it looks like the space you've located might be available and suitable for a community garden, then it's time to start building a group. Community gardens need more than one person to care for them and ensure that they thrive. The more neighbors you are able to get involved, the better chance you'll have of succeeding. If you don't already have members, you can reach out to neighbors and local organizations to find others who might be interested in starting a community garden. One of [GreenThumb Community Engagement Coordinators](#)¹⁶⁶ can support you in that effort - that's what they do every day!

Draft a Proposal

Now that there is a group, it's time to begin translating the group's vision into a reality. A written proposal demonstrates that the group is organized and ready to take the next step. The group's proposal should include specifics such as how the group will be structured, how the garden will be planted and used, how decisions will be made, how resources will be obtained, and much more. GreenThumb has experienced staff ready to support the group with this effort.

Seek Support for your Project

Gaining local support is essential for the success and sustainability of the project. Community Boards have Parks, Open Space, or Land Use Committees that directly address their area's public space issues, and a letter of support from the community board shows that the group has local support, which is instrumental in gaining support from other agencies and organizations. By attending community board meetings, especially those of the Parks Committee, the group will be able to understand community needs and learn about potential resources for your community garden. Visit the Mayor's Community Affairs Unit to [find your community board](#).¹⁶⁷ GreenThumb will meet with the community board with you to make the request for support and answer any related questions.

Prepare the Site to Build a Garden

Once you have secured a space and your community is behind you, now it's time to prepare the site for a garden and get resources. To receive resources from the City and GreenThumb, the group must meet certain requirements. Please visit the [License and Registration Requirements for Gardens Under NYC Parks](#) chapter of this Handbook for any new garden under NYC Parks jurisdiction or the [Registration Requirements for Gardens Under All Other Jurisdictions](#) chapter for any new garden under any other agency or land owner.

Gain Access to Water

Plants need water. GreenThumb can help the group to secure a Hydrant Permit from the NYC Department of Environmental Protection to request. Please see the [Hydrant Access](#) chapter for more information. The group can develop its own rainwater harvesting system or request support from [GrowNYC](#)¹⁶⁸ to learn more about rainwater harvesting systems for community gardens.

Make Healthy Soil

Healthy plants grow from healthy soil. All edible plants must be grown in a raised bed. Please see the [Safe Soil Gardening Requirements](#) chapter for more information. The group can work with the [NYC Compost Project](#) for opportunities to produce and use compost. And, now that your group is working with GreenThumb, we can deliver free lumber and topsoil to the site for raised beds and provide additional support and resources. Please see the [GreenThumb Resources and Services](#) chapter for a full description of materials and services that we provide, as staff capacity allows.

¹⁶⁶ Find the GreenThumb staff directory at nycgovparks.org/greenthumb/staff

¹⁶⁷ Find your community board at nyc.gov/communityboards

¹⁶⁸ Learn more about rainwater harvesting at grownyc.org/gardens/rainwater-harvesting

Find Plants to Grow

Brush up on plant knowledge by finding out what's in bloom and get the seeds to start growing. GreenThumb provides free plant starts and lots of educational workshops each spring for its network of registered community gardens, so check our [events page](#)¹⁶⁹ and mark your calendars. You can also reach out to other organizations such as [local botanical gardens](#) and greening partners to inquire about other opportunities.

Locate Funding

Sweat equity is the universal currency of community gardening, but from time-to-time garden groups need funding to continue improving the garden and expanding the public programming. GreenThumb hosts numerous workshops on fundraising each year, and we can introduce you to a number of partners and resource providers who have a long history of supporting gardeners and farmers. Your GreenThumb Community Engagement Coordinator can connect you with a variety of available resources.

Learn More and Grow More

Knowledge is power. Start by regularly attending GreenThumb's free educational workshops and trainings, and [signing up for our newsletter](#). Check our events calendar to [find free workshops all across NYC](#).

Engage your Community

Just as with plants, the garden group needs to develop and deepen its roots in the neighborhood in order to grow. Reach out to neighbors, schools, tenant groups, community-based organizations, other gardens, and others to get started. Contact your local elected officials to share the work of the garden group and join the [New York City Community Garden Coalition](#),¹⁷⁰ which promotes the preservation, creation, and empowerment of community gardens.

Cut the Ribbon

After all that work, the garden group deserves to celebrate. GreenThumb can help the garden group with planning a ribbon cutting, organizing programming, and inviting community members and elected officials to celebrate the garden's opening.

¹⁶⁹ Access the GreenThumb events page at nycgovparks.org/events/greenthumb

¹⁷⁰ Find the New York City Community Garden Coalition at nycgcg.org/

24. Hosting Volunteer Groups in the Garden

GreenThumb Volunteer Program

GreenThumb's Help a Garden Grow Volunteer Program matches a range of corporate, school, and other groups with community 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 placemaking 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 Community Engagement Coordinator.¹⁷¹ If you represent a group looking to volunteer in a community garden, please contact GreenThumb at greenthumbinfo@parks.nyc.gov or (212) 602-5300.

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 Community Engagement 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](#).

¹⁷¹ Formerly known as Outreach Coordinator

25. 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](#).¹⁷²

GreenThumb Best Practices

- 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 so much curricula out there, and a lot of it is free online or through local greening organizations. [New York Agriculture in the Classroom](#)¹⁷³ and the [Edible Schoolyard Project](#)¹⁷⁴ 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

In partnership with NYC Service since 2015, GreenThumb [Youth Leadership Council](#) (YLC) is an intergenerational, service-learning program for youth ages 14-21 to volunteer in a community garden during the growing season.¹⁷⁵ GreenThumb YLC aims to engage young people in service projects, promote

¹⁷² Learn more about the Outdoor Learning Initiative at infohub.nyced.org/working-with-the-doe/covid-19-resources/outdoor-learning-initiative

¹⁷³ New York Agriculture in the Classroom curriculum: newyork.agclassroom.org/

¹⁷⁴ Edible Schoolyard Project curriculum: edibleschoolyard.org

¹⁷⁵ To learn more about GreenThumb Youth Leadership Council, visit greenthumb.nycgovparks.org/youth_gardener.html

intergenerational learning, and cultivate the next generation of NYC community gardeners. In close collaboration with GreenThumb community garden groups, YLC participants will learn firsthand how to grow and maintain a healthy garden. They will also work on projects in the garden, gaining skills such as carpentry, composting, environmental stewardship, community organizing, and event management. Joining YLC is a great way for youth to make a positive impact in their neighborhood, earn community service hours, make new friends, learn important skills, and have fun!

If you know any young people interested in volunteering, they can register to participate by filling out the [form](#)¹⁷⁶ on our website.

Additional Resources

- GrowNYC School Gardens¹⁷⁷ is the citywide school gardens initiative and managed through a partnership between GrowNYC, NYC Parks GreenThumb, 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 gownyc.org. For more information, email schoolgardens@gownyc.org.
- Your local [community board](#)¹⁷⁸ 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/dycd¹⁷⁹ for more information or call (800) 246-4646 or (646) 343-6800.

¹⁷⁶ Complete the interest form for joining YLC at bit.ly/GreenThumbYLCsignup

¹⁷⁷ Learn more about GrowNYC Education at gownyc.org/education and school gardening in NYC at gownyc.org/school-gardens

¹⁷⁸ To find your local community board, visit nyc.gov/communityboards

¹⁷⁹ Learn more about the NYC Dept. of Youth and Community Development at nyc.gov/dycd

26. 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 should 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.

When 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 Best Practices

NYC Parks GreenThumb has built a partnership with the [Center for Creative Conflict Resolution](#) (CCCR) at the Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings (OATH).¹⁸⁰ CCCR is the city's conflict resource for Alternative Dispute Resolution and Restorative Practices. Through this partnership, community gardeners can now access the Center's mediation and restorative circle services. These are voluntary services that may be appropriate when there is conflict between two or more individuals in your garden, which your garden bylaws are not able to address. If you're interested in learning more about GreenThumb's partnership with CCCR, please reach out to your Community Engagement Coordinator.¹⁸¹

If your garden group has garden bylaws, sought mediation, and still cannot resolve a conflict, please reach out to your GreenThumb Community Engagement 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](#).¹⁸²

Additional Resources:

¹⁸⁰ Learn more about CCCR at nyc.gov/site/oath/conflict-resolution/conflict-resolution.page

¹⁸¹ Formerly known as Outreach Coordinator

¹⁸² To file a discrimination complaint, visit <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/cchr/enforcement/complaint-process.page>

- Get trained in conflict mediation. GreenThumb periodically offers introductory workshops, or you can check out the training at the [New York Peace Institute](#).¹⁸³
- [TransformHarm.org](#)¹⁸⁴ 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 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](#)¹⁸⁵ 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](#)¹⁸⁶ 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.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ New York Peace Institute Training: nypeace.org/become-a-mediator/

¹⁸⁴ TransformHarm.org: transformharm.org/

¹⁸⁵ Support New York Accountability Process Curriculum: supportny.org/transformative-justice/curriculum/

¹⁸⁶ Creative Interventions Toolkit: creative-interventions.org/tools/toolkit/

¹⁸⁷ Turning Towards Each Other: A Conflict Workbook: turningtowardseachother.medium.com/turning-towards-each-other-embracing-the-gifts-of-conflict-for-social-change-ea28502016b7

27. Community Garden Participatory Visioning and Design

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

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 Community Engagement Coordinator¹⁸⁸ 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 Community Engagement 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 and 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 GreenThumb Operations team to help build out sections of the garden, depending on capacity.
- Coordinate a volunteer day around specific projects related to the design.

¹⁸⁸ Formerly known as Outreach Coordinator

28. 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 Best Practices

GreenThumb community gardens are an important resource for the local ecosystem. Please be mindful of wildlife when considering the garden's strategies for managing unwanted pests.

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](#)¹⁸⁹ (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: nycgovparks.org/greenthumb/resources/growing-food
- EPA, “Introduction to Integrated Pest Management”: epa.gov/managing-pests-schools/introduction-integrated-pest-management
- New York State Integrated Pest Management: nysipm.cornell.edu/
- Cornell Cooperative Extension – Garden Based Learning: Troubleshooting: gardening.cals.cornell.edu/garden-guidance/troubleshooting/

¹⁸⁹ EPA, “Introduction to Integrated Pest Management.” epa.gov/managing-pests-schools/introduction-integrated-pest-management

29. 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 Community Engagement Coordinator¹⁹⁰ of an emergency or unexpected situation after contacting the appropriate parties listed below. Community Engagement 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 garden¹⁹¹

Gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction can call 311, use the [311 smartphone app](#)¹⁹² or [web portal](#)¹⁹³ to request that Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) respond to situations where urgent mitigation is necessary. 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 (212) 274-4560 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](#)¹⁹⁴

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.

¹⁹⁰ Formerly known as Outreach Coordinator

¹⁹¹ Visit the [Resources for People Experiencing Homeless](#) chapter in this handbook for more information.

¹⁹² Download the 311 app for smartphones at <https://portal.311.nyc.gov/article/?kanumber=KA-01025>

¹⁹³ Access the 311 web portal at <https://portal.311.nyc.gov/>

¹⁹⁴ Visit the [Mental Health Resources](#) chapter in this handbook for more information.

30. 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](#),¹⁹⁵ 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](#).¹⁹⁶

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/mentalhealth](#).¹⁹⁷

Mental Health Resources for People with Disabilities

Resources for people with disabilities are available from the [NYC Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities](#).¹⁹⁸ 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.

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](#).¹⁹⁹

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](#).²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁵ To access all of NYC Well's services, visit [nyc.gov/nycwell](#)

¹⁹⁶ NYC Well online chat service: [nycwell.cityofnewyork.us/en/](#)

¹⁹⁷ Learn more about ThriveNYC at [nyc.gov/thrivenyc](#)

¹⁹⁸ Access resources for New Yorkers with Disabilities at [nyc.gov/disability](#)

¹⁹⁹ Safe Horizon's SafeChat service: [safehorizon.org/safechat/](#)

²⁰⁰ Learn more about NYC's mental health support for veterans at [http://nyc.gov/veterans](#)

31. 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, use the [311 smartphone app](#),²⁰¹ or visit the [web portal](#).²⁰² Every 311 entry gets sent to [NYC Street Outreach](#)²⁰³ and directed to the right city agency for support.

When an individual submit a 311 report about a homeless New Yorker in need of assistance:

- 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 Community Engagement Coordinator²⁰⁴ know as soon as possible. Gardeners can forward the email confirmation or Service Request Number you receive from your 311 entry to your GreenThumb Community Engagement 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 (212) 274-4560. 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.

²⁰¹ Download the 311 app for smartphones at <https://portal.311.nyc.gov/article/?kanumber=KA-01025>

²⁰² Access the 311 web portal at <https://portal.311.nyc.gov/>

²⁰³ NYC Street Outreach: www1.nyc.gov/site/dhs/outreach/street-outreach.page

²⁰⁴ Formerly known as Outreach Coordinator

32. 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, contact 311 to report the abandoned vehicle and alert your Community Engagement Coordinator.²⁰⁵ 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](#)²⁰⁶ 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 terminate that person's membership.

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 (contact 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 Community Engagement 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, your Community Engagement Coordinator can make one upon request. Please submit your sign request using [this form](#).²⁰⁷ The garden group is 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. The garden group cannot have a maximum number of members. There can be a waitlist for garden plots and raised beds, but membership cannot be limited to plot availability. 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.

²⁰⁵ Formerly known as Outreach Coordinator

²⁰⁶ Find your local precinct at <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/nypd/bureaus/patrol/find-your-precinct.page>

²⁰⁷ Garden groups can request an open hours sign at bit.ly/GTOpenHours.

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

A successful event involves thoughtful planning, creative advertising, and (to be honest) delicious food. Posters, flyers, newsletters, and social media are all good ways to let people in your community 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 [Event Request Form](#).²⁰⁸ We also recommend reaching out to local elected officials, your community board, 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, damaged, or has inaccurate information.

Please contact your Community Engagement Coordinator if your sign is missing and we will arrange for a new one to be posted. Garden groups can use simple graffiti removal wipes from their local hardware stores to address minor vandalism. Please wear disposable gloves while using the wipes.

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.

There is poison ivy in a neighboring lot.

Report any poison ivy in lots neighboring the garden to DOHMH through 311. Keep track of your 311 service request number for any follow-up you may need to do. For more information, visit the [DOHMH website](#).²⁰⁹

There is poison ivy in the garden.

Report any poison ivy growing inside the garden to your Community Engagement Coordinator.

The garden group wants to install security cameras

If the garden group wishes to procure and install security cameras, please email your Community Engagement Coordinator details about any recent incidents, the type of equipment you're hoping to install, how the equipment will be installed, where in the garden it will be situated, and any other pertinent details.

²⁰⁸ Find the GreenThumb Event Form at bit.ly/GTEventForm

²⁰⁹ Learn more about poison ivy at www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/poison-ivy.page

Appendix A: Topsoil Specifications 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 NYCParks 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 NYSDEC CP-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, semi-volatile 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 ~~directed~~ 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. Examples of events include movie nights in the garden, music events, art workshops, and more.

Internal garden meetings, open hours, or workdays are not considered public events and there's no need to notify GreenThumb (although please feel free to invite your Community Engagement Coordinator²¹⁰ 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 Request Form](#)²¹¹ 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 you and your group are aware of any of the more common permits that might be required by New York City.

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.

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 Request Form](#)²¹² 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 four fundraisers and proceeds must go toward the garden)

²¹⁰ Formerly known as Outreach Coordinator

²¹¹ Access the Event Request Form at bit.ly/GTEventForm

²¹² Access the Event Request Form at bit.ly/GTEventForm

- Whether or not there will be any commercial film or photography

GreenThumb does not provide any of these permits directly, but we can assist, including the NYC Parks Temporary Use Authorization (TUA) if a group is pursuing another fundraiser beyond their first four.

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

GreenThumb staff will 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 doesn't follow GreenThumb's policies around fundraising, open hours, etc.) 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](#)²¹³ 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](#)).²¹⁴ GreenThumb is now making it easier for garden groups under Parks jurisdiction, who have always been responsible to obtain necessary permits, to learn about some of the more common permits through our [Event Submission Form](#).²¹⁵

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 number of events to submit?

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

²¹³ Access the Event Request Form at bit.ly/GTEventForm

²¹⁴ For more information on permits, please see: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/cecm/permitting/supporting-permitting-agencies.page>

²¹⁵ Access the Event Request Form at bit.ly/GTEventForm

Appendix C: Volunteer Release and Waiver



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

NYC 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 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]

Appendix H: Template Mural Approval Letter

[Date]

[Name]

[Address]

I/We, [Landlord or Management Company Name], agree to work with the members of [Garden Name] for the production of a mural on our wall that borders [Garden Name] in [Neighborhood, Borough]. We have reviewed the mural design that was provided by the artist [Artist's Name] and approve it for our wall. We encourage NYC Parks to approve this mural design as quickly as possible

If you have any questions, please feel free to call me/us at [Phone Number].

[Signature]

[Name]

Appendix I: DEP Vacuum Breaker Acknowledgement Form



The City of New York
Department of Environmental Protection
Bureau of Customer Services

Acknowledgement Form: Backflow Prevention Device For Community Garden Groups

The backflow prevention device ("device") is being provided by the City of New York to the Community Garden group ("the applicant"). By signing this form, the applicant agrees to utilize the device throughout the duration of the permit. Failure to do so may result in the applicant's permit being revoked. Upon expiration of the applicant's permit, the backflow prevention device must be returned to the Department of Environmental Protection Bureau of Customer Service local office.

Part 1: Contact Information

Applicant's Full Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City/State/Zip Code: _____

Telephone #: _____

Contact Person: _____

Signature: _____

For Office Use Only

Permit Number: _____ **Account Number:** _____

Permit Start Date: _____ **Permit End Date:** _____

Date Device Distributed: _____ **Date Device Returned:** _____

Appendix J: 2023 GreenThumb License Agreement

This License Agreement (“License”), dated _____, 2023, by and between the City of New York (“City”), acting by and through its Department of Parks & Recreation (“Parks”), and

(“Licensee”),

for the operation of a GreenThumb community garden located at (“Address”)

on Block _____ and Lot(s) _____

in the Borough of _____ (“the Garden” or “Site”).

This License shall be administered by Parks through the GreenThumb Program Office (“GreenThumb”), which is currently located at 100 Gold Street, Suite 3100, New York, NY 10038.

WHEREAS, the New York City Charter charges Parks with managing and caring for properties under its jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, Parks’ GreenThumb program supports a network of community gardens and volunteer gardeners by providing access to property under Parks’ jurisdiction, materials, and support for community engagement and operations; and

WHEREAS, over 300 community garden volunteer groups operate on Parks property, creating vital community green spaces for recreation, enjoyment, learning, and a connection to nature across the City during the life of each community garden; and

WHEREAS, the dedicated community gardeners who have stewarded community gardens in New York City for almost fifty years continue to strengthen their communities by bringing neighbors together to create welcoming open public spaces that contribute to the environmental sustainability, public health, and community resilience of the city; and

WHEREAS, to ensure the continued operations of the above-mentioned community garden on property under Parks jurisdiction, Parks and the Garden agree to the below terms.

1. Term. This License is issued to Licensee for a term (the “Term”) beginning on the date written above and ending December 31, 2032, unless earlier terminated. The License may be renewed by the Commissioner of Parks (“Commissioner”) at the discretion of the

Commissioner if Licensee successfully fulfills the obligations set forth in this License.

The Commissioner shall renew such license if the Licensee complies with all applicable laws and regulations including those at Chapter 6 of Title 56 of the Rules of the City of New York ("Parks Rules") and complies with the registration criteria set forth by Parks in order to demonstrate eligibility for License in a writing acknowledged by GreenThumb ("Registration").

2. Notices and Contact Persons. All correspondence, including notices of non-compliance, shall be sent to the person designated by Licensee as its "Primary Contact Person" and to the person designated by Licensee as its "Secondary Contact Person." Primary and Secondary Contact Persons shall be designated by Licensee as representatives who serve as liaisons to Parks and the general public. Primary and Secondary Contact Persons shall be designated by Licensee as the sole representatives who serve as liaisons to Parks regardless of Licensee's internal governance structure. As such, Licensee's Primary and Secondary Contacts must respond in writing to all written inquiries from Parks no more than five (5) business days after correspondence is sent to them by Parks. The contact information for the current Primary Contact Person and Secondary Contact Person for Licensee is listed as follows:

Primary Contact

Full Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____
(Street Address)

(Apt., Ste, Unit Number)

(City, State, Zip Code)

Daytime Telephone Number: _____

Evening Telephone Number: _____

Weekend Telephone Number: _____

Cell Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Secondary Contact

Full Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____
(Street Address)

(Apt., Ste, Unit Number)

(City, State, Zip Code)

Daytime Telephone Number: _____

Evening Telephone Number: _____

Weekend Telephone Number: _____

Cell Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Licensee shall promptly notify Parks of any change in the Garden's Primary or Secondary Contact Person or of the address, email or telephone number(s) provided above for those two individuals. Notice to the Garden Primary Contact Person and Secondary Contact Person listed in Parks records shall be deemed notice to the Licensee.

All Notices to Parks shall be in writing and sent to the following address:

City of New York Department of Parks and Recreation
The Arsenal
830 Fifth Avenue
Attention: GreenThumb Director
New York, NY 10065

Attention: Carlos Martinez, GreenThumb
Director Tel: 212.602.5300
Fax: 212.602.5334
Email: carlos.martinez@parks.nyc.gov

3. No Lease. It is expressly understood that the City has title to the Site and that no land, building, space, or equipment is leased to the

Licensee, but that during the term of this License, the Licensee shall be allowed the use of the Site as volunteer site stewards only as herein provided.

4. Garden Accepted As Is. Licensee accepts the Garden “as is,” in whatever condition it may be on the date this License is fully executed. Parks makes no representations or warranty of fitness for gardening purposes.

5. Obligations of Licensee/Use of Premises.

A. This License is specifically entered into for the purpose of Licensee’s designing and installing a plant garden and thereafter maintaining such garden and all plants, structures, installations, and equipment contained therein (including, but not limited to, all raised plant beds, planters, tables, benches, sheds, solar panels, rain capture systems, and other Parks-approved structures and ornamental items) in a safe and orderly condition. Licensee shall not be responsible for the structural repair of public sidewalks, retaining walls and exterior fencing at the Garden that has not been installed or caused to be installed by Licensee.

B. Licensee agrees to perform the following activities to the reasonable satisfaction of the Commissioner:

(i) As directed by GreenThumb, Licensee shall annually send a representative to at least one educational workshop or another event offered by GreenThumb.

(ii) Licensee shall post a sign provided by GreenThumb on the Garden’s exterior fence explaining that the Garden is under the jurisdiction of the City of New York Department of Parks & Recreation and is participating in the GreenThumb community gardening program. The Garden shall also post signage indicating an up-to-date contact name with current contact information, the days, and hours during which the Garden is open to the public in compliance with Section 8 of this License, and that membership is open to any interested party. On the interior of the Garden, Licensee shall post the “Assumption of Risk” sign detailed in Section 10 of this License.

(iii) Licensee shall design and install a plant garden in conformance with Parks and GreenThumb rules, regulations, and guidelines, including the GreenThumb Gardeners’ Handbook. The Parks Rules, as of the date of this License, may be found at <https://www.nycgovparks.org/rules>. The GreenThumb Gardeners’ Handbook, as of the date of this License, may be found at https://greenthumb.nycgovparks.org/pdf/gardeners_handbook.pdf. Licensee acknowledges that it is responsible for remaining apprised of the most recent Parks Rules and Gardeners’ Handbook, and that it shall inform its members of changes in the Parks Rules or the Gardeners’ Handbook.

(iv) Licensee shall nurture and develop the plants in the Garden, including watering, fertilizing, pruning, weeding, and harvesting as required.

(v) Licensee shall open the Garden to the public by unlocking the gates and keeping them open, as required by Section 8 below.

(vi) Licensee shall make membership of the Garden available to the public. Reasonable membership requirements, as determined by GreenThumb, shall be defined by each Licensee. Membership shall not be denied to any resident of the City of New York based on any reason set forth in Section 6.H. herein or based on where a prospective member may reside in relation to the Garden.

Licensee shall make gardening plots of the Garden available to members on a first come, first serve basis, through the use of a waiting list if warranted, and such waiting list will be maintained by the Garden with prior written approval of GreenThumb. If no individual gardening plots are available at the time of a request, Licensee shall allow members participate in the stewardship of the Garden in other ways. The waiting list for garden plots must be made available to any member and to GreenThumb upon request.

(vii) Licensee shall host at least two community events, activities, or programs per year that are open to the public at no cost. Licensee shall inform GreenThumb of the nature and the time of these events in conformance with GreenThumb policy as outlined in the GreenThumb Gardeners' Handbook, as well as the ways in which Licensee will publicize it. Licensee is responsible for obtaining all required permits and approvals in advance of the event.

(viii) Licensee shall prominently post a copy of this License within the Garden and shall provide all members of the Garden with a paper or electronic copy upon request.

C. Upon execution of the License, the Licensee agrees to the following:

(i) Licensee shall maintain the Garden in a safe, clean, and orderly condition and take care of all plants, equipment and structures contained therein, including, but not limited to, all fences, raised plant beds, planters, tables, benches, sheds, solar panels, rain capture systems, and other Parks-approved structures and ornamental items.

(ii) Licensee shall keep sidewalks, passageways, and curbs adjacent to and within the Garden clean and free from snow, ice, garbage, debris, and other obstructions.

(iii) Licensee shall comply with all applicable laws, rules and regulations of the United States, New York State, and the City of New York and Parks, and with such other rules, regulations, orders, terms, and conditions as may be set or required by Parks to the extent that they relate to the gardening activities under this License or are otherwise applicable to the license.

(iv) Licensee shall arrange for the provision of, and pay for, any utilities necessary for the performance of the activities described herein; provided however that Licensee shall neither cause nor permit the installation of any such utilities without the prior written approval of Parks. Licensee shall not be responsible for the cost of water accessed from hydrants or from on-site water installation.

(v) Licensee shall secure the garden when not in use through use of a daisy chain interlocking lock system 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 Licensee, 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.

(vi) Licensee shall grow any vegetables or fruits that are available for human consumption in such a manner as to minimize the likelihood of contact with potentially contaminated soil. This shall be done by growing all such vegetable, herb or fruit bearing plants or trees in raised beds and placing semi-permeable barriers between these areas and surrounding soil. Alternative methods for meeting this requirement are subject to prior written approval by GreenThumb. GreenThumb shall use reasonable efforts to assist Licensee in complying with this requirement, subject to available resources. Fruits, vegetables, or herbs that are grown in a manner inconsistent with the requirements of this provision may not be distributed, gifted, sold, or otherwise provided to any person or entity for the purpose of consumption.

D. Licensee shall promptly notify GreenThumb of any administrative or operational matters constituting any loss, injury, damage, or violation within the garden. Licensee shall also notify GreenThumb no later than three days after receipt of notice of any loss, injury, damage, or violation within the garden, and in addition to the notice provisions mandated herein, notify Parks in writing as set forth in Section 2 above.

E. In case of emergency, Licensee shall first call 911 and, as soon thereafter as possible but in no event more than 24 hours after the

emergency has occurred, contact Parks Central Communications at (212) 274-4560. The Licensee must also contact GreenThumb and assist in the preparation of a Parks Department Incident Report.

F. Licensee shall (i) comply with the GreenThumb Registration requirements, (ii) complete the Registration process as directed by GreenThumb, (iii) comply with the terms of registration, and applicable terms of the GreenThumb Gardeners' Handbook, and (iv) comply with its own bylaws.

6. Restrictions on Licensee. Licensee agrees to the following restrictions on the use of the Garden:

A. No construction activities, including but not limited to excavation, paving, or erecting of any permanent or temporary structures, including sheds, storage facilities, greenhouses, rainwater capture systems, and other similar structures, or the removal of soil from the site, may take place without prior written permission from GreenThumb and, where applicable, a valid Construction permit from Parks and/or the New York City Department of Buildings and, where applicable, the posting of a payment bond in accordance with Section 5 of the Lien Law. Licensee shall not affix any structure to adjacent properties or buildings without a valid permit and prior written permission of GreenThumb and the adjacent landowner.

B. No permanent structures or murals or other permanent works of art may be built in the Garden without prior written permission from GreenThumb and, where applicable, the New York City Department of Buildings and/or the New York City Public Design Commission.

C. No automobiles, trucks, trailers, or other motorized vehicles may be stored, stopped, or parked at any time in the Garden.

D. No persons shall be allowed to reside in the Garden. Animals, other than dogs, are allowed to reside in the Garden only when in accordance with all applicable rules, regulations, and guidelines, including those promulgated by the New York City Department of Health. Dogs may never reside in the Garden.

E. No drugs or alcohol may be grown, produced, used, consumed, stored, sold, or distributed in the Garden.

F. Licensee shall not cause nor permit accumulation of garbage or debris in the Garden, nor overgrowth of vegetation or plant material. Licensee shall not commit or cause any waste of or to the Garden. The orderly creation or use of compost shall not be considered garbage or

wasting of the Garden.

G. Licensee shall not license the Garden or otherwise assign or impede this agreement.

H. Licensee shall not unlawfully discriminate against any person because of race, creed, religion, color, national origin, ethnic origin, age, gender, sex, disability, marital status, or sexual orientation. Licensee shall not restrict eligibility for membership or admission to the Garden or participation in any activity on the basis of race, creed, religion, color, national origin, ethnic origin, age, gender, sex, disability, marital status, or sexual orientation. Licensee shall comply with all applicable federal, state, and local civil rights and human rights laws and regulations pertaining thereto as applicable.

I. Licensee may not cause or permit gambling, or any activities related to gambling in the Garden, or the use of the Garden for any illegal purpose.

J. Licensee shall not abandon the Garden. Abandoning of the Garden shall result in termination of License.

K. Licensee shall neither cause nor permit the use of the Garden for any commercial purpose (including, but not limited to, the sale or advertisement of any goods or services or paid use or rental of the Site by third parties); provided, however, that

(i) Licensee may sell agricultural produce, including plant material (e.g., ornamental plants, seeds, compost, etc.) at the Garden solely for the purposes of supporting the maintenance and operation of the Garden, in accordance with all applicable laws, rules, regulations, and GreenThumb Gardeners' Handbook.

(ii) Licensee may hold no more than four (4) fundraising events, activities, or series inside the Garden per calendar year, solely for the purposes of supporting the maintenance and operation of the Garden, with prior written approval of GreenThumb and Parks. Requests for approval must be submitted no less than thirty (30) days in advance of the date of the planned fundraiser.

(iii) Licensee may allow the sale of other items or paid events pursuant to a permit issued by the Revenue Division of Parks, and in accordance with all other applicable laws, rules and regulations, and GreenThumb Gardeners' Handbook.

(iv) Parks reserves the right to audit the financial records of Licensee at any time to confirm compliance with this License.

L. Licensee shall not permit any fire hazard on the Garden's premises, which includes, but is not limited to gasoline, kerosene, lighter fluid or other flammable liquids, using or permitting the storage of any illuminating oils, oil lamps, turpentine, benzene, naphtha, or similar substances or explosives of any kind.

M. Licensee shall not create or permit creation of danger to the neighborhood, whether through inadequate sanitation (including accumulation of garbage), existence of a fire hazard, or any other condition that may cause harm to the Garden or other persons or property in its vicinity.

N. Licensee shall not permit any conduct, activity, or condition occurring on or immediately adjacent to the licensed premises and caused by the Licensee or circumstances under its control that: (i) is contrary to law, (ii) constitutes a public nuisance, or (iii) affects, or poses a threat to, the health or safety of the community in which the Garden is located.

O. Licensee shall not plant new trees, damage, or remove existing trees, or prune large limbs from existing trees without the prior written approval of Parks.

7. Failure to Comply with Restrictions and Termination.

A. Parks reserves its right to conduct garden visits to ensure that Licensee operating in accordance with the terms of this License. Except as otherwise set forth herein, GreenThumb shall use reasonable efforts to assist Licensee in rectifying violations, subject to available resources.

B. Failure to comply with the restrictions listed in Section 6 or any other term or condition in this License constitutes a breach of this License, constituting default. Parks will issue a default notice to Licensee. Parks shall allow Licensee six (6) months from date of notice to rectify a Default.

C. Should the Licensee fail to comply with the restrictions listed in Paragraph 6(N), Parks will issue an Accelerated Default notice to the Licensee. Parks shall allow Licensee thirty (30) days from the date of the Accelerated Default notice to be rectified to Parks' satisfaction.

D. Failure to remedy a breach as set forth above constitutes an uncured default that is grounds for termination of this License. Parks may issue a Notice of Termination to Licensee. Termination will be effective three (3) days after the Notice of Termination is mailed.

E. Notwithstanding the above, this License is terminable at will by the Commissioner in his or her discretion at any time, upon sixty (60)

days written notice, and Licensee shall have no recourse of any nature whatsoever by reason of such termination.

8. Public Access.

A. Licensee is required to keep the Site open to the public a minimum of twenty (20) hours per week from the first day of April through and including the thirty-first day of October (the "Garden Season") between the hours of 8a.m. to 9p.m., subject to weather. Ten (10) of these hours must be posted on the exterior of the Garden fence. Garden must remain open to the public a minimum of five

(5) total hours on weekends (Saturday and Sunday) during the Garden Season, subject to weather. This can be achieved through posted open hours, community events, public workdays, workshops, and all activities that keep gardens open and accessible to the public. Gardens are required to post and properly maintain signage listing scheduled open hours, a schedule of planned activities, and information on how to join the garden, along with the name and current contact information of a designated member of Licensee and GreenThumb. Upon request, GreenThumb may work with Licensee to create appropriate signage, provide a sandwich board to place on the sidewalk welcoming visitors and guests, and suggest links to neighborhood organizations, schools, and community groups to assist with these open hour requirements.

B. The Commissioner, their representatives, the City Police and Fire Departments, and other City agency representatives shall have access to the Site at all times for any purpose.

C. The Garden may be temporarily closed to Licensee and disturbed during the period of construction of any development project approved by the City that abuts the Garden, or for reasons of public health and safety. Prior to entering the Garden to perform work, the agency in charge of the construction project will make reasonable efforts to provide no less than thirty (30) days written notice to the Garden Contact Persons. Upon completion of any such construction, all practicable efforts will be made to return the Garden to the condition that existed prior to the commencement of any construction work thereon, including the replacement of vegetation.

9. Return of GreenThumb Property and Surrender of the Garden.

Upon termination of this License, Licensee shall surrender the Garden to Parks in a condition satisfactory to Parks. Licensee shall also return all tools and other unused items provided by GreenThumb to the GreenThumb warehouse within thirty (30) days of receipt of a notice of termination or expiration of this License. Licensee shall be responsible for any costs incurred by Parks in cleaning up the Garden or in removing any items that Licensee failed to remove as required by this section of the License. Parks retains the right to keep for its own use any items left in the Garden after

this License expires or is terminated.

10. Assumption of Risk. Twice each year during the Term, Licensee shall instruct 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.

Licensee shall post a sign provided by GreenThumb at the Garden explaining these risks and that members understand and assume them whenever they are in the Garden.

11. Risk Upon Licensee. The expenditures for gardening activities to be undertaken at the Garden are to be made solely and exclusively at the risk and sole cost and expense of Licensee, and no part thereof is, or shall be, reimbursable by Parks for any reason whatsoever. The gardening activities to be performed pursuant to this License were not and are not directed by Parks or GreenThumb, and Parks and GreenThumb assume no obligation or responsibility nor shall have any liability, for any expenditure made hereunder.

12. Merger and Use.

A. This License is the only agreement between Licensee and Parks with respect to the Garden, and all prior oral or written agreements or understandings between Licensee and Parks with respect to the Garden are hereby expressly revoked. In consideration of this agreement, Licensee hereby surrenders any other right or interest in the Garden (including, but not limited to possessory interest) which Licensee has or may have had.

B. This License does not, and shall not be deemed to, indicate any intention to dedicate the Garden for park use or any other use.

13. Conflict of Interest. Licensee warrants that no officer, agent, employee, or representative of the City of New York has received any payment or other consideration for the making of this License and that no officer, agent, employee, or representative of Parks (including GreenThumb) has any interest, directly or indirectly, in this License.

14. Choice of Law, Consent to Jurisdiction, and Venue. This License shall be deemed to be executed in the City of New York, State of New York, regardless of the domicile of Licensee and shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of New York. Any and all claims asserted by or against the City arising under this license or related thereto shall be heard and determined either in the federal courts of the United States located in the City of New York or in the courts of the State of New York located in the City of New York.

15. Investigations

A. Cooperation. The parties to this License shall cooperate fully and faithfully with any investigation, audit or inquiry conducted by a State of New York ("State") or City governmental agency or authority that is empowered directly or by designation to compel the attendance of witnesses and to examine witnesses under oath or conducted by the Inspector General of a governmental agency that is a party in interest to the transaction, submitted bid, submitted proposal, contract, lease, permit, or license that is the subject of the investigation, audit or inquiry.

B. Refusal to Testify

(i) If any person who has been advised that his or her statement and any information from such statement will not be used against him or her in any subsequent criminal proceeding refuses to testify before a grand jury or other governmental agency or authority empowered directly or by designation to compel the attendance of witnesses and to examine witnesses under oath concerning the award of or performance under any transaction, agreement, lease, permit, contract or license entered into with the City, the State or any political subdivision or public authority thereof, or the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, or any local development corporation with the City, or any public benefit corporation organized under the laws of the State of New York, or;

(ii) If any person refuses to testify for a reason other than the assertion of his or her privilege against self-incrimination in an investigation, audit or inquiry conducted by a City or State governmental agency or authority empowered directly or by designation to compel the attendance of witnesses and to take testimony under oath, or by the Inspector General of the governmental agency that is a party in interest and is seeking testimony concerning the award of or performance under any transaction, agreement, lease, permit, contract or license entered into with the City, the State or any political subdivision thereof or any local development corporation within the City, then;

C. Hearings and Adjournments

(i) The Commissioner or agency head whose agency is a party in interest to the transaction, submitted bid, submitted proposal, contract, lease, permit or license shall convene a hearing, upon not less than five days written notice to the parties involved to determine if any penalties should attach for the failure of a person to testify.

(ii) If any non-governmental party to the hearing requests an adjournment, the Commissioner or agency head who convened the hearing may, upon granting the adjournment, suspend any contract, lease, permit, or license pending the final determination pursuant to paragraph (e) below without the City incurring any penalty or damages for delay or

otherwise.

D. Penalties. The penalties which may attach after a final determination by the Commissioner or agency head may include but shall not exceed:

(i) The disqualification for a period not to exceed five years from the date of an adverse determination for any person or entity of which such person was a member at the time the testimony was sought from submitting bids for, transacting business with, or entering into or obtaining any contract, lease, permit or license with or from the City; and/or

(ii) The cancellation or termination of any and all such existing City contracts, leases, permits or licenses that the refusal to testify concerns and that have not been assigned as permitted under this License, nor the proceeds of which pledged, to an unaffiliated and unrelated institutional lender for fair value prior to the issuance of the notice scheduling the hearing, without the City incurring any penalty or damages on account of such cancellation or termination; monies lawfully due for goods delivered, work done, rentals, or fees accrued prior to the cancellation of termination shall be paid by the City.

E. Factors

The Commissioner or agency head shall consider and address in reaching his or her determination and in assessing an appropriate penalty the factors in paragraphs (i) and (ii) below. He or she may also consider, if relevant and appropriate, the criteria established in paragraphs (iii) and (iv) below in addition to any other information which may be relevant and appropriate:

(i) The party's good faith endeavors or lack thereof to cooperate fully and faithfully with any governmental investigation or audit including, but not limited to, the discipline, discharge or disassociation of any person failing to testify, the production of accurate and complete books and records and the forthcoming testimony of all other members, agents, assignees, or fiduciaries whose testimony is sought.

(ii) The relationship of the person who refused to testify to any entity that is a party to the hearing, including, but not limited to, whether the person whose testimony is sought has an ownership interest in the entity and/or the degree of authority and responsibility the person has within the entity.

(iii) The nexus of the testimony sought to subject entity and its contracts, leases, permits, or licenses with the City.

(iv) The effect a penalty may have on an unaffiliated and unrelated party or entity that has a significant interest in an entity subject to penalties under (d) above, provided that the party or entity has given actual notice to the Commissioner or agency head upon the acquisition of the interest, or at the hearing called for in (c)(i) above gives notice and proves that such interest was previously acquired. Under either circumstance the party or entity must present evidence at the hearing demonstrating the potential adverse impact a penalty will have on such person or entity.

F. Definitions

(i) The term “license” or “permit” as used herein shall be defined as a license, permit not granted as a matter of right.

(ii) The term “person” as used herein shall be defined as a natural person doing business alone or associated with another person or entity as a partner, director, officer, principal, or employee.

(iii) The term “entity” as used herein shall be defined as any firm, partnership, corporation, association, or person that receives monies, benefits, licenses, leases, or permits from or through the City or otherwise transacts business with the City.

(iv) The term “member” as used herein shall be defined as any person associated with another person or entity as a partner, director, officer, principal, or employee.

(v) The term “licensee” as used herein shall be defined as the community garden volunteer group operating the garden named above.

G. In addition to and notwithstanding any other provision of this License, the Commissioner or agency head may in his or her sole discretion terminate this License upon not less than three days written notice in the event Licensee fails to promptly report in writing to the Commissioner of Investigation of the City of New York any solicitation of money, goods, requests for future employment or other benefit or thing of value, by or on behalf of any employee of the City or other person, firm, corporation or entity for any purpose which may be related to the procurement or obtaining of this License by the Licensee, or affecting the performance of this license.

16. Modification. This License may not be modified or extended except in writing and when signed by both Licensee and Parks.

17. No Waiver of Rights. No waiver by Commissioner of any default on the

part of Licensee in performance of any of the terms and conditions herein shall be construed to be a waiver of any other or subsequent default in the performance of any of the said terms and conditions.

18. No Assignment. Licensee shall not sell, assign, mortgage or otherwise transfer, or sublicense any interest or right provided for herein, nor shall this License be transferred by operation of law, it being the purpose and spirit of this agreement to grant this License and privilege solely to the Licensee named herein.

19. Employees. All experts, consultants, volunteers, or employees of Licensee who are employed by or volunteer their services to Licensee to perform work under this License are neither employees of the City nor under contract to the City and Licensee alone is responsible for their work, direction, compensation, and personal conduct while engaged under this License. Nothing in this License shall impose any liability or duty on the City for acts, omissions, liabilities or obligations of Licensee or any person, firm, company, agency, association, corporation, or organization engaged by Licensee as expert, consultant, independent contractor, specialist, trainee, employee, or agent or for taxes of any nature including but not limited to unemployment insurance, workers' compensation, disability benefits and social security.

20. No Claim Against Officers, Agents, or Employees. No claim whatsoever shall be made by Licensee against any officer, agent, or employee of the City for, or on account of, anything done or omitted in connection with this agreement.

21. All Legal Provisions Deemed Included. It is the intent and understanding of the parties to this License that each and every provision of law required to be inserted in the License shall be and is inserted herein. Furthermore, it is hereby stipulated that every such provision is to be deemed to be inserted herein, and if, through mistake or otherwise, any such provision is not inserted, or is not inserted in correct form, then this License shall forthwith upon the application of either party be amended by such insertion so as to comply strictly with the law and without prejudice to the rights of either party hereunder.

22. Severability. If any provision(s) of this License is held unenforceable for any reason, each and all other provision(s) shall nevertheless remain in full force and effect.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have cause this to be signed and sealed.

Licensee (Group or Garden name)

By: _____
Primary Contact Person, Name and Signature Date

By: _____
Secondary Contact Person, Name and Signature Date

Carlos Martinez Date
Director, NYC Parks GreenThumb

Appendix K: Memorandum of Agreement for Non-DPR Community Gardens

This Memorandum of Agreement (“Agreement”), made this _____ day of _____, _____, by and between the City of New York (“City”), a municipal corporation of the State of New York (“State”), acting by and through its Department of Parks & Recreation (“Parks”) which has an office at The Arsenal, Central Park, 830 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10065; and (“Garden”), having an address _____ at _____ (“Site”).

WHEREAS, Parks, through its GreenThumb program (“GreenThumb”), provides programming, technical, and material support to approximately 550 community gardens throughout New York City; and

WHEREAS, the Garden wishes to provide a community garden at the Site, a parcel located at Block(s) __, Lot(s) _____ in the Borough of ____; and

WHEREAS, recognizing that the community surrounding the Site would benefit from a community garden, the Garden has requested material support and expertise from GreenThumb, and GreenThumb wishes to provide material support and expertise to the Garden on a limited basis.

NOW, THEREFORE, in exchange for the consideration described in this Agreement, the parties agree as follows:

1. **Term.** This four- year Agreement shall commence on _____ and expire on December 31, 2024, unless terminated earlier as provided in Section 4 of this Agreement. The period between the commencement date and any expiration or termination date shall be the “Term.”

2. **Scope of Agreement.** Parks agrees to reasonably provide the Garden with the following materials and services during the course of each calendar year of the Term as long as the Garden agrees to the terms outlined below, and subject to availability of materials and staff, and conditioned on the understanding that GreenThumb’s mission to support City-owned community gardens takes precedence over any obligations contained in this Agreement.

- a. Parks will provide the Garden with certain basic gardening materials and supplies, including soil, lumber, and gardening tools.
- b. Parks will provide to the Garden with programming and technical assistance, including networking events, resource fairs, and educational workshops.
- c. Parks may host GreenThumb workshops at the Garden from time to time, with advance agreement of the Garden.

In exchange for provision of the materials and services above, the Garden agrees that it will:

- a. Design and install a garden for the benefit of the surrounding community;
- b. Remain open and accessible to the public at least 20 hours per week from the period of April 1st to October 31st annually, and make best efforts to maintain five (5) total hours of public access during weekends (Saturday and Sunday);
- c. Host at least two free community events each season;
- d. Send a representative to at least one GreenThumb-sponsored event per year;
- e. Post a sign provided by GreenThumb on the fence of the Garden explaining that the Garden is a registered member garden with GreenThumb;
- f. 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; and
- g. Make gardening plots and/or membership at the Garden available to the public on a first come, first serve basis, through the use of a waiting list if necessary, and will make every efforts to include members of the public who wish to join and participate in the stewardship of the space even when plots are not currently available.

3. Use of materials and services. The parties agree that the materials and services provided by Parks to the Garden shall not be used for any purposes except those described in this Agreement. The City and its officials and employees make no representations as to the quality or fitness of the materials or services provided, and the Garden agrees to accept the materials and services provided in accordance with this Agreement on an “as is” basis.

4. Termination. Either party may terminate this Agreement at any time during the Term and for any reason, upon thirty (30) days' written notice to the other party.

5. Notices. Any notices required to be sent to either party shall be in writing and sent via first class mail and electronic mail to the following contact persons:

6. If to Parks: Carlos Martinez
Director, GreenThumb
The Arsenal, Central Park
830 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10065
carlos.martinez@parks.nyc.gov

If to Garden: _____ (Name)

_____ (Title)

_____ (Address)

_____ (Email)

7. No third-party beneficiary. The parties agree that this Agreement is intended for the sole benefit of Parks and the Garden, and that nothing in this Agreement shall be deemed to have been intended to confer a benefit of any kind onto any third parties.

8. Entire Agreement. This Agreement represents the full and entire understanding and agreement between the parties with regard to the subject matter hereof and supersedes all prior agreements (whether written or oral) of the parties relating to the subject matter of this Agreement.

9. Counterparts. This Agreement may be executed in one or more counterparts and as so executed shall constitute one and the same agreement. This Agreement may be executed and exchanged by facsimile or by electronic transmission, which shall be deemed an original for all purposes.

10. Severability. If any provision(s) of this Agreement is held unenforceable for any reason, each and all other provision(s) shall nevertheless remain in full force and effect.

11. Waiver of Jury Trial. The parties expressly waive all rights to trial by jury in any summary proceeding hereafter instituted by City against the Garden or any counterclaim or cause of action directly or indirectly arising out of the terms, covenants, or conditions of this Agreement or any matter whatsoever in any way connected with this Agreement. The provision relating to waiver of jury trial shall survive the expiration or termination of this Agreement or any renewals thereof.

12. Choice of Law, Consent to Jurisdiction and Venue. This Agreement shall be deemed to be executed in the City of New York, State of New York, and shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of New York. Any and all claims asserted by or against the City arising under this Agreement or related thereto shall be heard and determined either in the courts of the United States located in New York City ("Federal Courts") or in the courts of the State of New York ("New York State Courts") located in the City and County of New York.

13. Personnel. Members of the Garden are not employees of Parks or the City pursuant to this Agreement. The Garden agrees that neither the Garden nor its members or agents including but not limited to experts and consultants will hold themselves out as, or claim to be, officers or employees of the City, or of any department, agency, or unit thereof, and that they will not, by reason hereof, make any claim, demand, or application for any rights or privileges applicable to a City officer or employee, including but not limited to worker's compensation coverage, unemployment insurance benefits, social security coverage, or employee retirement membership or credit for operations undertaken pursuant to this Agreement.

14. No Claim Against Officials or Employees. No claim whatsoever shall be made by the Garden against any officer, director, member, agent, employee, or volunteer of the City, nor shall any such officer, director, member, employee or volunteer have any personal liability for, or on account of, anything done or omitted in connection with this Agreement.

15. Indemnification and Related Obligations. To the fullest extent permitted by law, the Garden shall indemnify, defend, and hold the City and its officials and employees harmless

against any and all claims, liens, demands, judgments, penalties, fines, liabilities, settlements, damages, costs, and expenses of any kind or nature (including, without limitation, attorneys' fees and disbursements) arising out of or related to any of the operations under this Agreement (regardless of whether or not the Garden itself has been negligent) and/or the Garden's failure to comply with the law or any of the requirements of this Agreement. Insofar as the facts or law relating to any of the foregoing would preclude the City or its officials and employees from being completely indemnified by the Garden, the City, and its officials and employees shall be partially indemnified by the Garden to the fullest extent permitted by law.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have caused this Agreement to be signed and sealed on the day and year first above written.

CITY OF NEW YORK
PARKS & RECREATION

(Garden Name)

(Signature)

(Signature)

Name: _____

Name: _____

Title: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

Appendix L: NYC Parks Reasonable Accommodation Form



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

PATRON ADA REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION REQUEST FORM

To request a reasonable accommodation at a Parks facility, please mail or email this form to:

ADA Accessibility Coordinator/Disability Service Facilitator
The Olmsted Center
117-02 Roosevelt Avenue
Corona, NY 11368
accessibility@parks.nyc.gov

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: _____

Telephone #: (____) _____

E-Mail: _____

Mailing Address: _____

REQUESTED ACTION

Please describe the feature, policy, or rule that interferes with your enjoyment of a Parks facility, program, or service and the accommodation that would provide you with greater access to New York City Parks.

Signature

Date

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