Answers to frequently asked questions about:
Community Gardens and Edible Plants on Council Land

A. Definitions and Orientation

Q1. What is a community garden?
The Council's Food Resilience Policy defines a community garden as "land gardened collectively by a group of people for the benefit of the community".

A community garden is often a small scale, low cost garden in a neighbourhood setting managed by a group of people who primarily grow fruit or vegetables, for the personal use of the garden volunteers or for the benefit of their community. A community garden may be on private or public land and have often have a charitable trust and management group overseeing the running of the garden.

Q2. What is an edible park?
An Edible Park is Council land, where edible plants are grown, cared for and enjoyed by the community in a way that complements the other uses of the park. Often fruit or nut trees are dotted around the park, along borders, pathways or in clusters to add diversity and amenity for park users. Plants can be harvested by anyone, but the plants must be cared for over time by the surrounding community. This is different to a community garden because the land is not formally occupied by a particular community group. It is simply a park that incorporates edible plants in its landscape.

Q3. Where are the community gardens in Christchurch?
The Canterbury Community Gardens Association has a directory and contact details for all community gardens in the region. Visit: www.ccga.org.nz

Q4. Where are the school gardens in Christchurch?
A map locating school gardens known to Food Resilience Network is provided at the Edible Canterbury website. Visit: www.ediblecanterbury.org.nz

B Creating a new garden

Q1. How can I establish a new community garden?
A Council guide for creating and maintaining community gardens on Council land is available on the Council's Edible Christchurch webpage.

Q2. What Council support is available for new or existing community gardens?
The Council can support community gardens in a variety of ways. This support is outlined in the Council's Community Gardens Guidelines and will be on a case by case basis and subject to available resources. Examples of the types of Council support possible include:
- § Identification of suitable locations for community gardens
- § Peppercorn rentals for the use of Council land or community facilities
- § Advice and support offered through the establishment phase of an new garden
- § Support with securing materials or services to help make a new garden
- § Funding for community gardens through Community Grants
- § Awards that can support edible gardens throughout the city

Q3. Can I plant fruit or nut trees on Council land?
Yes. The Council is encouraging community groups to plant and care for edible plants in suitable Council land throughout the city. Council staff will help identify suitable sites and then work with community groups to manage planting at specific times and locations. These plants are to be enjoyed and cared for by the local community. If you are interested in planting fruit or nut trees on Council land please contact your local Community Advisor by telephoning the Council on 03 941 8999.

Q4. Where on Council-owned land can I plant a fruit or nut tree?
If you are interested in planting fruit or nut trees on Council land please contact your local Community Advisor by telephoning the Council on 03 941 8999.

Q5. How do I identify a suitable site for planting fruit or nut trees on public land?
The Community Garden Guidelines contain criteria that will be used to evaluate suitable locations. Much of the work can be done remotely (such as by checking the availability of water or toilets and surrounding community facilities able to support the garden activities). Once potential sites are identified Council staff will need to make physical assessments and engage with Communities Advisors about the social capacity and potential for community support in the area. Once suitable sites have been identified the Local Community Board will be informed and can support on a case by case basis.

Q6. Can I plant fruit or nut trees in grass berms or along streets and roads?
No. The City Council does not currently allow residents to plant edible trees or plants in berms along roads or streets because of risks to the community and potential damage to underground wires and pipes.

Christchurch has an abundance of green spaces that could be used well in advance of needing to use roadside berms. As an indication the Christchurch has 780 parks and gardens, over 300 schools and early child care centres that could be suitable for productive gardens. The Council's Community Garden Guidelines include criteria for locating new edible planting in the city. The Council's Food Resilience Policy also encourages edible gardens in homes, schools, suitable parks and on business or institutional land.

Q7. Which types or varieties of fruit or nut trees should I plant?
A list of edible plant varieties that are particularly suited to Christchurch conditions, that are disease resistant, nutritious and delicious together with tips on how to plant and care for the trees is available on the Council's Edible Christchurch website.

Q8. Where do I purchase a suitable tree from?
Edible plants are readily available from commercial nurseries and garden centres. Look in the yellow pages under garden centres. The Council encourages the use of disease resistant and hardy varieties. For more information about which edible plants grow well in our Canterbury climate visit the Edible Christchurch website.

Q9. What is the number of trees I am allowed to plant and where exactly should I plant them on the Council land?
The number and location of edible plants will be entirely site specific. When a suitable location for edible planting has been identified and approved, Council staff will map out where best to plant and identify how many plants and what type of plants would be ideal. The Council with the local community groups can then organise the sourcing plants and hold planting days at the best time of year for the plants.

Q10. How can we check for land contamination when selecting a suitable site?
Council officers will check for potential contamination and any previous uses of the land that could affect the suitability of the site for edible planting, through the records held by the Council and Environment Canterbury. Environment Canterbury has a register of potentially contaminated land. For more information visit:
www.ecan.govt.nz/advice/your-land/contaminated-land/potentially-contaminated-land/pages/default.aspx

C Plant Care and Maintenance

Q1. Who should water, prune or care for the edible trees planted on public land?
The community group that planted the tree is responsible for its care and maintenance - this will include watering and pruning. The Council will not water or prune edible trees planted by the community.

Ideally edible plants should be located near a readily available supply of water. Depending on the particular location the following options could be explored by the community that are caring for the trees:

Please gain permission to:
§   Use water from a nearby Council facility such as a community building, toilet bock or drinking fountain.
§   Use water from a neighbouring property, such as a garden hose or tap from a house, school, early child care centre, sports club, or business nearby.
§   Bucket water from a nearby spring, stream or waterway.

Q2. How often and how much do I have to water the newly planted fruit or nut tree?
In the first two years over the warmer months a newly planted fruit tree will require approximately 20-40 litres of water each week (2 - 4 buckets full each week). More water may be required for plants in sandy soils or in very dry seasons.

A mulch of bark or wood chips to a depth of 10 centimetres can help retain moisture and manage weeds around the tree. Mulch should be replenished every three years.

Q3. Should I mulch around the tree, which type of mulch is best and how much should I use?
A mulch of bark or wood chips (do not use treated timber) to a depth of 10 centimetres can help retain moisture and manage weeds around the tree. You should replenished the mulch approximately every three years. Placing a thick layer of newspaper or woollen carpet beneath the mulch can help to prevent weeds emerging through the mulch.

Q4. Who is responsible for weeding around trees planted by the community?
The community group that planted the tree is responsible for its care and maintenance - this would include weeding. Regular weeding will be needed especially over the growing season every few months. A mulch of bark or wood chips to a depth of 10 centimetres can help manage weeds.

Q5. Can I apply sprays to the trees planted on public land?
The Council does not encourage the use of pesticides in public places. Ideally disease resistant varieties will be selected for planting. Talk with your local community garden for more information about how to grow using organic and permaculture approaches.

Q6. Who's responsibility is it to prune the tree?
The community group that planted the tree is responsible for its care and maintenance - this would include pruning. Talk with your local community garden or garden centre for more information about how to prune trees.

Q7. What happens if a tree dies or is damaged?
The community group that planted the tree is responsible for its care and maintenance - this would include pruning any dead braches or replacing dead or damaged trees. If the tree poses a risk to the community the Council will take action to remedy any risks.

Q8. Who do I contact if I have a complaint about the way the edible planting is managed?
Reporting a problem can be made online or by calling the Council on 03 941 8999. Please make sure you know the specific name of the garden, park or the location of planting that is causing you some concern. The Council will endeavour to contact the community group who agreed to manage the particular site. In general, it is not up to the Council to resolve the matters raised.

Photograph a problem with your mobile phone, then send it to the Council see:
http://www.ccc.govt.nz/report/snap-send-solve/

Report a problem online:
www.ccc.govt.nz/homeliving/makeaqueryorreportaproblem/index.aspx

D Harvest Etiquette

Q1. Where are the fruit or nut trees I can harvest from on Council land?
The Council is currently developing a map that will show where the edible plants are on Council land. Until this is complete visit the following websites.

The Canterbury Community Gardens Association has a directory for all the community gardens in the region. Visit: www.ccga.org.nz

Urban Food Foraging Map of Christchurch www.ecofind.co.nz/food-drink/otautahi-urban-foraging

Food foraging map of the Avon River Residential Red Zone http://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/food-wine/food-news/67690529/fruit-foraging-in-christchurchs-red-zone

Otahtahi Urban Food Foragers www.facebook.com/Otautahi.Urban.Foraging

Q2. Does the fruit or nuts on the tree I planted belong to me or must I share them with the community?
Residents are encouraged to make use of the fruit or nuts they grow. However, because the tree is grown on public land a culture of sharing is encouraged. Fairness is also encouraged when harvesting. The produce collected must not be used for commercial sale or profit. It you wish to own the fruit grown then plant in your own private garden.

Q3. Can I help myself to other people's fruit or nuts grown in public places?
Yes. The plants grown in public places are free to be enjoyed by everyone, however a culture of sharing and fairness is encouraged. The fruit or nuts should be used for personal consumption and not for commercial sale or profit. Over-harvesting is discouraged and can spoil the community's enjoyment of these edible plantings. Please take care of yourself and the tree when harvesting.

Q4. What happens to uneaten fruit or nuts left on the tree or dropped on the ground?
The community group that planted the tree is responsible for its care and maintenance - this would include managing surplus fruit or fruit drop.