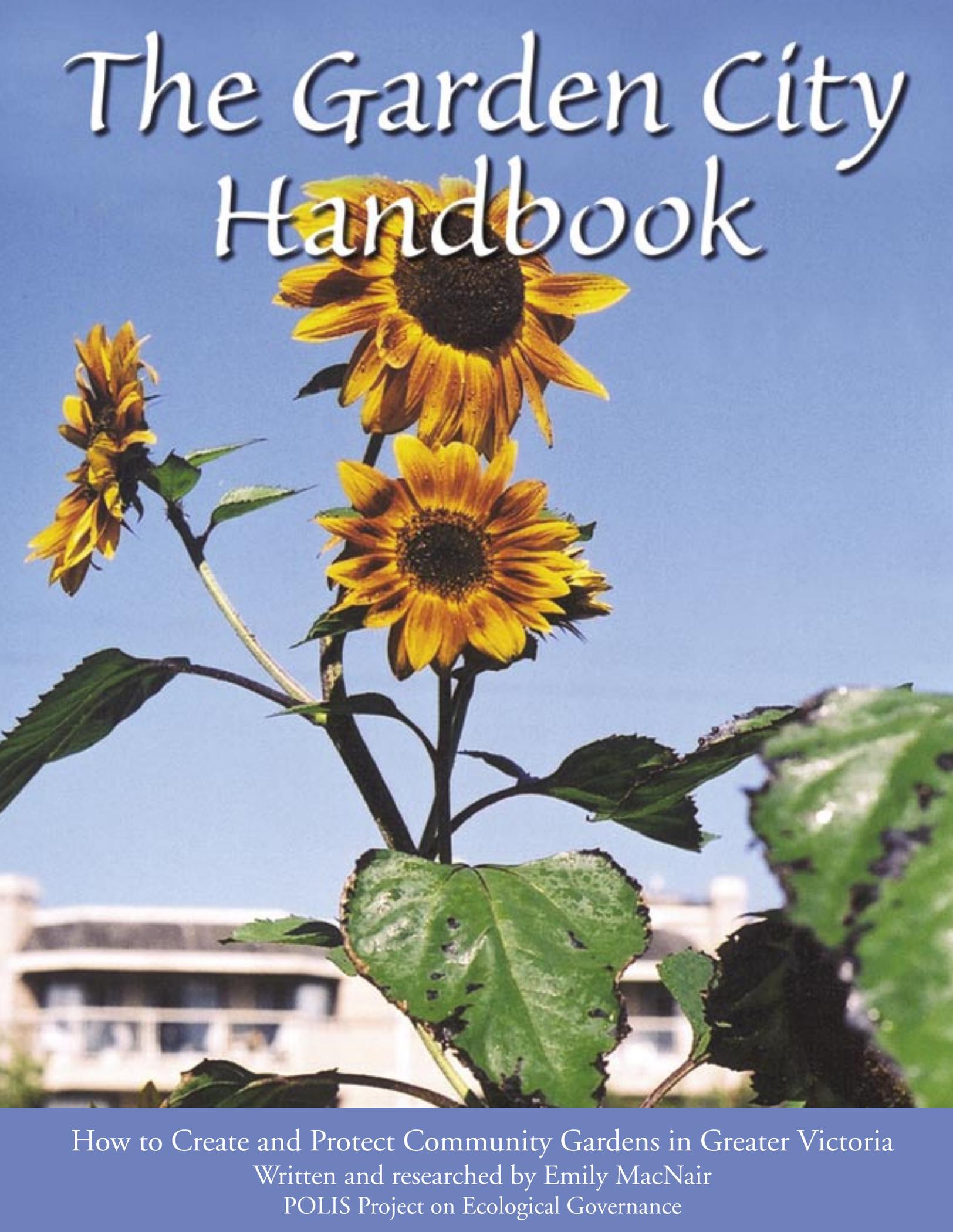


# The Garden City Handbook

A photograph of several sunflowers in a garden. The sunflowers have bright yellow petals and dark brown centers. The leaves are green and show signs of being eaten, with small holes visible. The background is a clear blue sky and a blurred building.

How to Create and Protect Community Gardens in Greater Victoria  
Written and researched by Emily MacNair  
POLIS Project on Ecological Governance

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# The McLean Foundation



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# THE GARDEN CITY HANDBOOK

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## Preface

*“I sense, among everyone who has had a hand in saving Troy Community Gardens, a huge longing to trade despair for hope...I sense a kinship deeper than any superficial difference. And I have faith that if we can learn to grow beans, we can learn to share this green earth together in peace”*

*Marge Pitts, Troy Gardens Journal  
Collection (Madison WI)*

In the spring of 2001, I met with several gardeners from the Gordon Head Allotment Gardens (GHAG) to discuss with them how to protect their garden from development. There was already considerable water under the bridge – the garden was on the verge of being sold, so long as a rezoning application was approved, and the gardeners had been evicted from the land.

While there were over 200 gardeners involved with GHAG, only a handful remained committed to trying to preserve it. This was not for lack of interest – initially many gardeners had worked together, written letters and organized presentations. But the group had divided. Some gardeners wanted to look for an alternative site and some wanted to save what they had. Over time, many people found other places to garden, or simply gave up.

The story of the Gordon Head Allotment Gardens is common. A land owner, for any number of reasons, decides to sell land that has been leased on a temporary basis to community gardeners. A struggle of attrition begins that citizens and volunteers have a minimal chance of winning, particularly because legally, the land owner has no obligation to allow the community garden to continue to exist.

Yet the group of GHAG gardeners who kept visiting the municipal hall and kept believing that their community garden had tremendous value, both personally and for the neighbourhood, did make some headway. They tackled the most important issue – how to protect community gardens *before* they are threatened with development.

It was working with this group, and another group of gardeners that successfully protected their garden, that led to the creation of this publication. It became apparent that land was often the source of great difficulty – not only protecting it, but simply finding space to start a community garden.

It is my hope that this publication will serve multiple purposes. First, it will draw attention to community gardens as important contributors to social and environmental health. Second, it will provide a written resource for community gardeners to assist them in handling the difficult question of land tenure. Finally, it will provide a stepping stone within the Capital Region, to move toward ensuring that community gardens are protected for the long-term.



# Introduction

## **Making Room for Community Gardens**

Victoria has a well-earned reputation as the City of Gardens. The region is home to numerous spectacular public gardens, drawing tourists from around the world. The streets of Victoria are lined with blossoming trees and verdant flowering baskets; carefully tended private gardens are found throughout the region. Gardening culture thrives in Victoria.

Yet in the midst of this abundance, Greater Victoria has lost two horticultural treasures since 2001. Last year, after 27 years, the ten acre Gordon Head Allotment Gardens were rezoned for the development of primarily single family homes.

Also in 2001, Our Backyard, the only community garden in the heart of downtown Victoria was sold for development. Created in 1996, with the assistance of the local nonprofit organization Lifecycles, Our Backyard was a small pocket garden. It was unique because of its highly urban location and its accessibility for low income and homeless gardeners.

Although community gardens may seem like a peripheral issue to those who do not participate in

them, they make an important contribution to resolving the increasingly complex challenges facing Canadian cities and suburbs. Contemporary cities will inevitably continue to grow; the difficulty arises with how to ensure a high quality of life for all urban citizens.

When development booms, green and open spaces shrink and farmland disappears. At the same time, the numbers of people without access to sufficient nutrition are growing, programs serving people in need are disappearing and more people are living in multiple unit housing without access to land.

Community gardens are not just places to garden, they offer a whole host of opportunities to a broad range of people. They assist low income people by providing much needed healthy fresh food. Community gardens are linking with food banks, providing fresh local produce. In some cities, those who use food banks are becoming gardeners themselves, a self-esteem building and self-help alternative to the traditional food bank.

Community gardens are equally popular with medium and high income people who do not have a place to garden. Senior citizens who no longer have yards find recreational and social opportunities through community gardens. Young families living in townhouses, youth looking to develop skills, and people with mobility challenges all benefit from community gardens.

In cities with shrinking green space and ever more distant farmland, community gardens provide opportunities to reconnect with the land, with one another and with the process of growing food. When community gardens are linked into programming for schools and community services, their advantages multiply.

The benefits of community gardens are measurable. They may be measured through the families, friends and strangers they feed, the educational opportunities – formal and informal – they offer, and the health and community building opportunities they create. However, the values that these gardens instill, the knowledge and pleasure that they impart, are intangible and immeasurable but no less significant as contributions.



## What is a Community Garden?

Community gardens are defined in a variety of ways, sometimes for the purposes of a municipality or non-profit organization and sometimes for the sake of clarity in literature. At the broadest level, a community garden is a garden where people share the basic resources of land, water, and sunlight.<sup>1</sup>

This definition includes both allotment gardens, and gardens where land is tended collectively (sometimes referred to as a commons). The majority of community gardens are divided into allotments – plots are assigned to individuals or families to garden and harvest.

Most community gardens charge a nominal fee for access to water, for tools and other expenses. Most also require that gardeners participate in general garden maintenance (paths, shared areas, food bank plots etc.) and that they attend some garden meetings or work parties.

Administration of gardens varies, as does the degree of broader community involvement. Some gardens have a voluntary elected committee that handles finances, leases and other collective decision-making. Other gardens are partially administered through a municipal department. In some cases, these departments also assist gardeners with organizing events and implementing programming.

The majority of community gardens provide some portion of their produce to local food banks and shelters. Some gardens do this informally and others have designated areas of the garden dedicated to this service. Many community gardens host educational workshops or serve as formal demonstration sites. Some gardens organize community events such as seed swaps and harvest parties. All of the gardens in Greater Victoria are open to the public as places for walking, sitting, learning, socializing or reflecting.<sup>2</sup>

## About This Publication

Considering Greater Victoria's gardening culture, there is a surprising paucity of knowledge about community gardens within the region. Based on its "green" optics, there is a misconception that Greater Victoria has no need for community gardens. In Victoria, as in most modern cities, many people do not have access to land or to sufficient nutritious food.

In places as diverse as Regina, Halifax, Inuvik, Toronto and Nelson citizens are digging in to create community gardens. However, in those North American cities with long-lasting, abundant and vibrant community gardens, the gardens are supported by local government or through non-profit organizations.<sup>3</sup> Community gardens are a significant element of efforts to create healthy and livable communities. For minimal expense, community gardens have provided cities with immense payoffs.

As Greater Victoria grows, its communities have the opportunity to ensure that community gardens are a part of our neighbourhoods – particularly in

dense areas. This publication provides information, guidance and suggestions to begin a process of legitimizing community gardens as a valuable land use, and to move toward protecting them in perpetuity.

While there are guides available to assist community gardeners with the daily management of gardens – from organizing meetings to composting – the *Garden City Handbook* addresses the challenge of access to land.<sup>4</sup> The *Handbook* is also intended to provide guidance for community organizations and governments about the status and needs of community gardens in the region.

The *Garden City Handbook* assesses the current circumstances of community gardens, summarizes possible land tenure arrangements and outlines steps for starting and protecting gardens. Finally, a series of recommendations for improving access to land and increasing the security of community gardens are made. The Appendices include a list of local gardens and helpful organizations within and beyond Greater Victoria.





## 1.0 Addressing growth

In 1998, the Capital Regional District published a report intended to reflect collective concerns with future growth. *Framework for Our Future* formed the basis of what is now the Regional Growth Strategy for Greater Victoria.<sup>5</sup> While differing opinions remain about the legitimacy and efficacy of the Growth Strategy, the principles of the report have had broad support.

When their input has been requested, the citizens of the region have been clear about their preferences. In the surveys and public meetings conducted prior to the development of the growth strategy, an overwhelming majority of people supported containment and concentration of growth.<sup>6</sup> Citizens endorsed a vision of a region with nodes of growth concentration, pedestrian friendly communities, with diverse housing options and access to green space.

The challenge now, whether the Regional Growth Strategy becomes bylaw or not, is to implement this vision – to create a region that is as healthy as possible for all of its citizens. Having made a commitment to improve social, economic and environmental health, the region faces the challenge of translating this into practice.

Community gardens, although often overlooked in policy development, are a vital element of efforts to enhance the health and well being of the citizens of this region. Around the globe – in plac-



es as diverse as England, Denmark, Cuba and the United States – community gardens have become a permanent part of the urban landscape.

In June of 2001, Denmark created legislation to permanently protect all gardens located on government land.<sup>7</sup> Seattle, as part of their comprehensive urban sustainability planning efforts, has set a target to create a community garden for every 2,500 households. The City of Toronto has developed food security policy that includes commitments to supporting community gardens.

Community gardens could play a role in meeting many of the Capital Region's goals. As Greater Victoria continues to grow, its citizens must ensure that all aspects of sustainability are incorporated into our planning. Within this context, community gardens are not a marginal issue – they are vital to the health of our communities.

## 1.1 Changing Community Needs

While it may seem that there is an abundance of land in Greater Victoria, an increasing number of people do not have a place to garden or grow food. The City of Victoria and the municipality of Esquimalt both house considerably more of their populations in apartments and townhouses, than in single-family dwellings.

The City of Victoria has about 21,000 people living in single detached housing and almost 42,000 in multiple-unit housing.<sup>8</sup> Overall, the regional core (Esquimalt, Oak Bay, Saanich and Victoria) has 41,898 single detached homes and over 54,000 multiple unit dwellings (duplexes, apartments and townhouses). At 26.6%, the region as a whole has a higher rental rate than the rest of the province.<sup>9</sup> Citizens living in

multiple-unit or rented housing often do not have access to garden space.

In addition, municipalities across the region are committed to urban containment boundaries to concentrate growth. Between 1996 and 2018, the housing supply is forecast to shift from over 50% single detached, to 31% single detached.<sup>10</sup> This means that the bulk of new housing will be apartments, townhouses and duplexes.

Over the next 20 years, the population of Greater Victoria will also shift demographically and with this transition, community needs will change. By 2011, the median age of residents in the region will be 43. The fastest growing segment of the population is the age group of 55-64 years old increasing by 123%, or 36,000 people, between 1996 and 2021. The group between 65 and 69 years of age will double and comprise over 25,000 people.<sup>11</sup>

*When researching which physical activities Canadians engage in, Statistics Canada found that yard work ranked as the second most popular physical activity. When broken down into age categories, gardening was even more popular with older adults.*

The concurrent changes in housing stock and demographics will result in changing community needs. Higher density housing means that increasingly people will not have access to their own yards. Instead they will rely on public green spaces for their recreational activity and it is well documented that gardening is one of the most popular recreational activities in Canada, particularly amongst senior citizens.

These statistics, and the impacts of higher density living and home downsizing, are extremely significant when contemplating the health of the citizens of the region. The demand for easily accessible green space will grow and the demand for community gardens will increase.

## 1.2 Democratic Public Spaces

Urbanists across Canada and the United States have observed that trends in development are increasingly eroding public space and people's "sense of place."<sup>12</sup> The attachment people feel to particular places, based on their unique qualities, is disappearing. These losses have been attributed to a range of factors including the dominance of the private automobile and the growth of suburban "bedroom communities" – ultimately, the development of modern North American cities.<sup>13</sup>

*"Social well-being is strongly related to an individual's sense of connection with, responsibility for and commitment to community and place. The antidote to urban alienation is a strong sense of attachment – feeling at home – to place. Human-scaled, comprehensible communities that have character and feel within our control, help maintain and enhance identity and attachment"*

*Framework for Our Future,  
1998*

The traditional gathering places, places to meet and come together, have been removed from the face of many modern North American cities. The open public market and the street life generated by neighbourhood shops have given way to shopping malls. Public squares and neighbourhood parks have lost their places in many communities.

Increasingly, citizens are striving to reintegrate such places into their lives. Communities with amenities that are walkable – with street life and with vibrant gathering places – have become enviable because they improve the quality of life of their residents.

This kind of neighbourhood has re-entered the language of planners and politicians with a number of terms including "complete community" and "urban village."<sup>14</sup>

*"Every man, woman and child has the inalienable right to be free from hunger and malnutrition in order to develop their physical and mental faculties"*

*1974 World Food Conference*

Community gardens are one of the finest examples of public spaces that build a sense of place and community. They cross boundaries of age, income and culture, bringing people together through shared interests in gardening and food. Community gardens also facilitate the kind of casual public life that is missing from many neighbourhoods.

The barriers that exclude people from many other recreational and social activities do not apply to community gardens. Senior citizens, people with mobility challenges, those with limited income and those facing language barriers – all of these groups are active participants in community gardens.

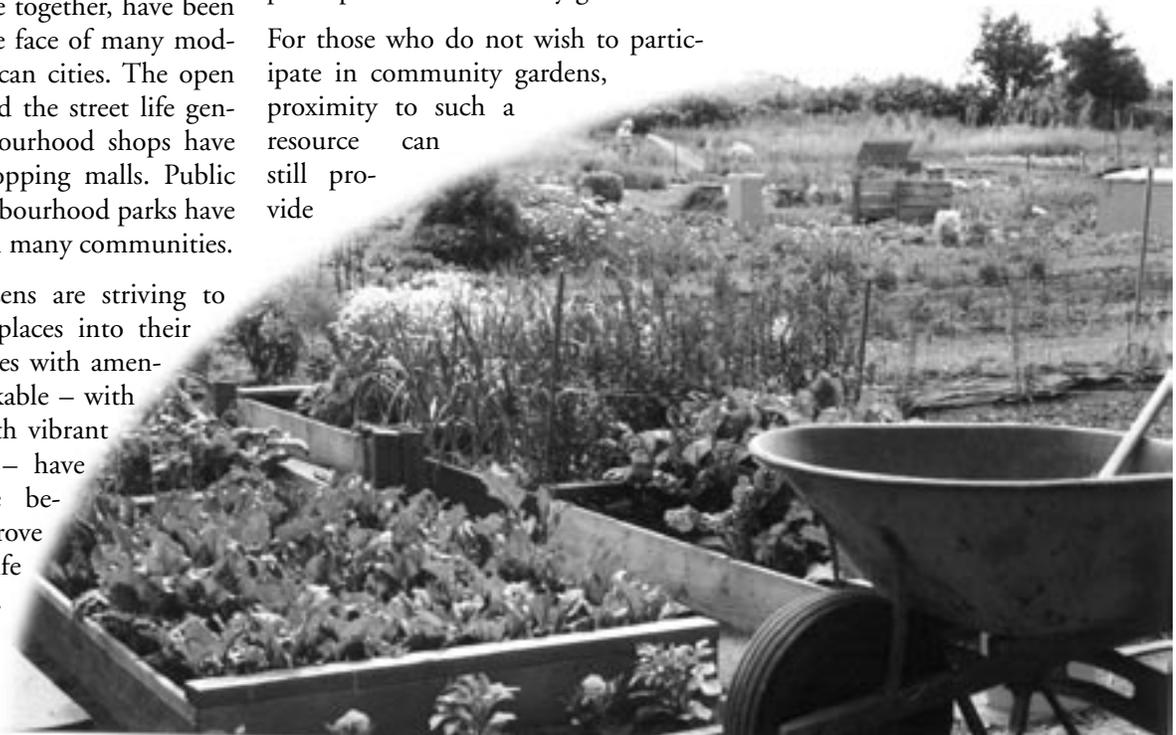
For those who do not wish to participate in community gardens, proximity to such a resource can still provide

benefits. So long as gardens are not fenced off, they serve as interesting places to walk and to learn. Community gardens are greenways, providing pedestrian-friendly areas that serve as paths and as pleasant stimulating diversions.

## 1.3 Food Access

Food security is one of the most important indicators of community health. A community is food secure when all people have access to nutritionally adequate food through local, non-emergency sources.<sup>15</sup> Most places, including Greater Victoria, include citizens who lack access sufficient nutrition.

Every year the Capital Health Region calculates what it calls the Nutritious Food Basket.<sup>16</sup> The basket is a measure of the cost of meeting basic nutritional needs. In the spring of 1999, it cost over \$600 per month for a family of four to meet their nutritional requirements. This cost was prohibitive for families or individuals on income assistance. With recent cuts to income assistance, the cost of basic food exceeds further the support available, leaving many people to rely on emergency food supplies.



While emergency food services are available in Greater Victoria, the key to food security is to move away from a food system that requires such services. Rather than providing food through charitable means, which often leads to inadequate nutrition, community gardens are central to an approach that increases individual and community self-sufficiency.

#### 1.4 Agricultural Land & Expertise

Food access is one element in assessing the food security of a region. Another important indicator is the degree to which a community is able to feed itself. The Capital Region, like communities around the globe, relies heavily on imported food. A primary problem is the lack of support for local farmers, both at the consumer and the policy level. One indication of the devaluation of local farming is development on large tracts of arable land.

The Capital Region, like so many areas in Canada, is rapidly losing its viable agricultural land. The Land Commission's statistics for Vancouver Island show that almost 25,000 hectares of agricultural land was removed from the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) between 1974 and 1999.<sup>17</sup> With 8,000 hectares added to the reserve over this period, almost 17,000 hectares of farmland were lost. At 12.9%, Vancouver Island has had the highest (regional) percentage loss of ALR land in the province.

Of the 19,595 hectares included in the Capital Region's ALR, 1,936 hectares were removed between 1974 and 1999. Of the 3,000 applications for exclusion of private land submitted to the Commission between the same years, 1,200 of these were approved for exclusion and, in an additional 600 cases, subdivision or other land use was allowed.

At the same time, farming knowledge and expertise is shrinking. The 2001 Census of Agriculture, counted 246,923 farms in Canada, down 10.7% from 1996.<sup>18</sup> British Columbia's number of farms declined by 7%

over this period. In the 1996 census, (2001 data is not yet available) the average age of BC farmers was 48. With few young people entering the profession, this translates into a shortage of farming expertise and experience in the near future.

#### 1.5 Community Gardens & Food Security

Solutions are required to address the challenges of retaining agricultural land and creating food security. Both agricultural land and community gardens are threatened by pressures of development. While community gardens cannot provide a solution to the crisis of sustainable agriculture, they can contribute to food security.

Community gardens do three important things with regards to food security. Most obviously, they provide a direct source of food for those who garden in them – ensuring access to locally grown, chemical free food. Secondly, community gardens have the potential to provide high quality food above and beyond the needs of those who garden. This could (and has in many cities) facilitate the donation of tons of fresh food to the broader community or, in some cases, the creation of community economic development initiatives.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, community gardens bring education about food production into the urban / suburban setting. As communities lose their agricultural land and small farms, particularly those in close proximity

to urban areas, they also lose their understanding of where food comes from. Community gardens, by virtue of their visibility and potential as demonstration sites, reconnect urban and suburban dwellers with the processes of growing food. This is not only important for individual health it also creates educated consumers that will support local agriculture.





There are currently 14 community gardens within Greater Victoria. The existing community gardens vary considerably in size from eight plots to almost one hundred and forty. They are located in every municipality with a relatively dense residential area. A complete listing of the gardens and their locations may be found in Appendix A.

The land tenure security of the gardens varies from one municipality to another. Only one municipality (Saanich) has taken steps towards creating supportive policy for community gardens. In all cases, government support for community gardens remains primarily in principle; none of the municipalities in the region provide promotional, administrative or programming assistance to community gardens.

Saanich contains the most plots, meaning its gardens tend to be larger and serve more gardeners, while Victoria has the largest number of gardens, meaning there are more locations to garden. All of the gardens depend upon money raised through the fees charged to gardeners, and most are organized and administered by volunteers.



Agnes Street Allotment Garden

## 2.0 Township of Esquimalt

There is one community garden within Esquimalt, located on land owned by the Department of National Defense. The garden has 18 plots and the military base has expressed no desire to remove it in the near future. A civilian volunteer coordinates the garden and the plots are tended by local residents. Although military employees have priority access to the garden plots, this has not been an issue in the garden's history (no interest has been expressed by military personnel).

## 2.1 District of Saanich

The District of Saanich is currently home to three community gardens: Agnes Street Allotment Garden, Capital City Allotment Garden, and the (University of Victoria)

Campus Community Garden. There is one new community gardening initiative in Saanich, the Koinonia Garden Project associated with the Lamberg Park Church.

Due to its relatively recent agricultural history, Saanich municipality has had the option of maintaining substantial pieces of land for its popular community gardens. Two years ago, Saanich contained a large majority of the garden plots in the region. The rezoning and sale of the Gordon Head Allotment Gardens (with 188 plots) reduced the number of plots in the municipality by half.

In order to prevent the loss of another community garden, the municipality recently purchased the Agnes Street Community Garden, which has since expanded to almost 70 plots. Agnes Street Garden is now officially parkland and has long-term protection through the municipality.

The largest remaining garden in the region, with 157 plots, is Capital City Allotment Gardens located on land owned by the province.

The province is presently willing to continue to lease the land to the gardeners (5 year leases) and has no immediate plans to alter the land use.

### *The Gordon Head Allotment Gardens*

*The Gordon Head Allotment Gardens were a hub a community activity and food production for almost 30 years. The 10 acre site was a rarity in a residential area. The garden's sale was a loss for the entire region. Below are excerpts from letters sent to Saanich Council that express the value of the garden:*

*"My [garden] neighbour... is 86 years old and is up there most days keeping his special patch in immaculate condition. He has an ill wife and the break from nursing her around the clock, mixed with the fresh air and companionship means more to him than you can imagine."*

*- M. Davel*

*"One year we recall that a lady had posted a note on our gardening bulletin board, stating that she was a single mother of four teenagers and wondered if anyone could spare some fresh vegetables for her family. Well, she was so overwhelmed by the generosity of the gardeners that she soon left another note on our bulletin board requesting: 'Please, No More Vegetables and thank you all very much for your help.'"*

*- J. & S. York*



### 2.1 District of Saanich cont.

The University of Victoria's garden is located on campus just north of the athletics facilities. The garden has never been widely publicized on campus but recently expanded to some 26 plots. The University restricts use to staff and students. A new building is currently under construction in close proximity to the garden, resulting in the loss of a small portion of the garden's land.

A new community gardening project has started next to the Lamberg Park Church, off Feltham Road. The Koinonia Garden Project currently has 8 plots with hopes to expand. Gardeners tending the plots will keep a certain portion of produce and the rest of the food will be donated to parishioners in need. The project also links those in the Church without land (often young people) to people willing to share their property for gardening purposes. The project aims to provide food and garden space and to strengthen Church community.

The purchase of the previously mentioned Agnes Street Community Garden is unprecedented in the region, and follows a year of advocating by local community gardeners to legitimize community gardens as a land use within Saanich.

The purchase is intended to be part of a broader move by the municipality to support community gardens. In June of 2001, the Council committed to establishing a policy "to promote and

maintain allotment gardens throughout the Municipality." In addition, Council requested that the Parks and Public Works Department do an investigation of potential sites in the municipality.

Although initial steps have been taken to fulfill these commitments, the

policy approved by Saanich Council adds only one sentence to the Official Plan and lacks any clear trajectory for action. The development of more detailed policy is currently underway and if this policy is backed by Council, the municipality will set a strong precedent in the region for supporting community gardens.

### 2.2 District of Oak Bay

Oak Bay has one community garden tucked away on Monteith Avenue. The garden retains a waiting list of more people than it has plots (20 plots with a consistent wait list of 30). The garden site is owned by the municipality and administered through Parks. It has potential for land tenure security because of its proximity to Bowker Creek.



### 2.3 Town of View Royal

The Craigflower Community Garden, located at the corner of Admirals Road and Old Island Highway is part of a provincially owned heritage site. Although there are only 9 plots, a large area is being cultivated by dedicated gardeners. One part of the garden is plots and the other is gardened collectively. The tenure of this garden is uncertain because the provincial government is no longer administering this site.

### 2.4 City of Victoria

The City of Victoria houses the largest number of community gardens in the region, with five gardens in total. Because the gardens are relatively small, there are still waiting lists for many of the gardens. Although the City does not have formal policy, the Parks department recognizes community gardens in parks as a legitimate activity.

There are two gardens in James Bay – one on Michigan Street near the Lifecycles offices and the other on Montreal Street between Oswego and Niagra. The Michigan Street garden has 20 plots and the Montreal garden has 54 plots. Both gardens are very



*Craigflower Community Garden*

popular and maintain waiting lists of between 20 and 30 people.

Lifecycles initially assisted the Michigan Street garden, helping to build the garden and its shed and split wood fence. Today the garden has a short-term lease

arrangement (with BCBC) and is administered by a committee of gardeners. Lifecycles also played a role in creating Our Backyard on View Street. Our Backyard served primarily low income people living in close proximity to the garden. The garden was closely linked to St. Vincent de Paul next door and was sold last year.

Fernwood is home to two community gardens and one Commons. The three gardens are in close proximity to one another. The Fernwood Community Association currently administers both of the community gardens. Volunteers manage the day-to-day affairs of each garden.

The Fernwood Community Garden, located on Chambers Street, has about 34 plots some of which are divided in half. The garden is located on land owned by the school district and is leased on an annual basis. The Fernwood garden is connected to the Compost Education Centre, which has played a central role in creating the Spring Ridge Commons down the street (see box above).

The second community garden in Fernwood is Earthbound Community Garden, located near Bay Street on Garden Street. This garden has about 20 plots and the land is owned by the City of Victoria. Underground pipes on the site make it unlikely that this site will be developed. Both Fernwood and Earthbound have been under construction and a handful of new plots will be available next year.

Burnside Gorge Community Garden – in Cecelia Ravine Park – has 11 plots and is administered through the Gorge Community Centre staff. The garden has a consistent waiting list and has good prospects for long term security because it is located on Park land.

### 2.5 Western Communities – District of Langford & City of Colwood

Langford's community garden is located in Willing Park, a site that was created in 1998 with assistance from Youth Services Canada. Although the



*Michigan Street Garden*

***The Spring Ridge Commons***  
*Located in Fernwood, The Spring Ridge Commons Comins is an unusual example of a collective gardening effort. The Compost Education Centre, along with local volunteers, has been working hard to improve the soil and to create a community permaculture food garden. The garden could become a model for permaculture food gardening and community management of green space. However, the future of the project hangs in the balance due to lack of funding and support. There is currently no formal coordinator and the site does not have long-term tenure.*

site is two acres and could have up to 100 plots, in 2001 only about four people participated in the garden. The previous year there were about 15 people holding plots. In spring of 2002 the numbers increased again. The site suffers from several problems that are a challenge to sustaining a community garden. It is located a long distance from any residential area and is virtually impossible to access without a car. In addition, water access at the site has proven difficult.

Colwood also has one community garden, but it is located in the relatively inaccessible campus of Royal Roads University. Like the University of Victoria garden, it is primarily utilized by those associated with the campus.

## 2.6 Community Gardens Survey

As part of the research for this report, demographic surveys were distributed to a number of community gardens. Due to the limitations of one researcher and the difficulty of distributing surveys, five gardens were not involved with the survey. As a rule, community gardening committees do not distribute phone lists or addresses of their members meaning that the surveys had to be distributed through volunteers (gardeners) or left in a central location at the gardens.

Nine community gardens participated in the survey, with the highest number of respondents from a single garden at fourteen and the lowest being one. Altogether, 65 surveys were returned. Two of the gardens surveyed are in Saanich, five in Victoria, one in View Royal and one in Colwood (at Royal Roads University).

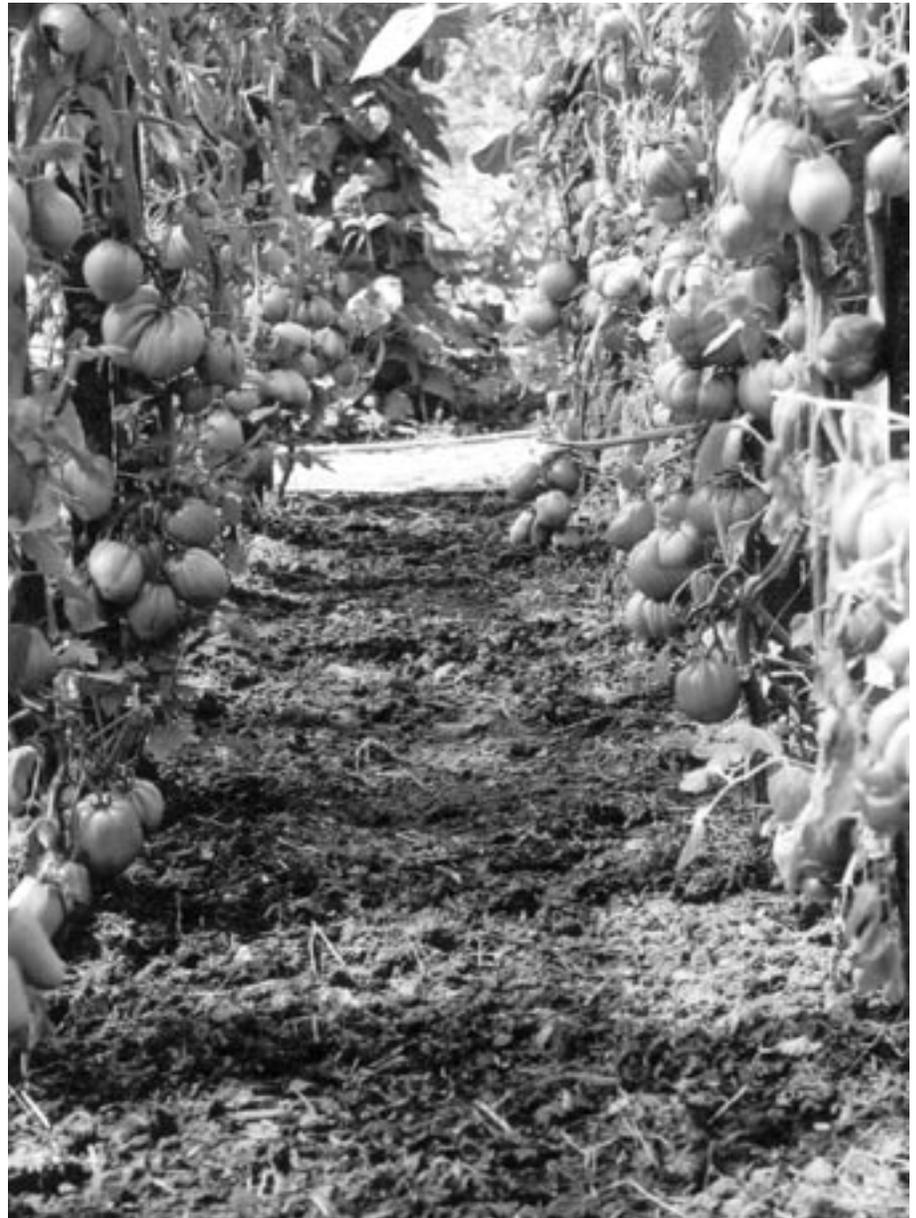
Some of the statistics reveal that demographics differ considerably from one garden to another. For example, in one of the James Bay gardens a quarter of the respondents are over 65 and 58% are between 46 and 64. At the other garden in James Bay, almost 60% of respondents are between 20 and 45. Overall, 50% of the gardeners surveyed are between 46 and 64, 35% are

between 20 and 45 and 15% are 65 or over.

The most significant findings of the survey are that 90% of those surveyed are living in apartments or townhouses without access to land. Of the 10% of gardeners living in single family homes, half of these are unable to garden on their property (either because they are renting, or because of impossible growing conditions). 66% of the community gardeners surveyed are renting their homes. The majority of community gardeners (56%) are living in household with an income of between \$20,000 and \$50,000 a year, with 24% in households earning under \$20,000 per year.

When asked about their reasons for participating in gardens, the most common responses were: for the love of gardening, for access to land, for fresh organic produce, for recreation or social activity and for pure enjoyment.

Overall, the survey suggests that there are differences between gardens, but that it is possible to generalize about several things. The great majority of gardeners do not have access to land and the majority live in medium or low income households. The age range of gardeners tends to reflect the immediate neighbourhood and particular history of the garden. However, 65% of gardeners are over 45 years of age.





## PART III Land Tenure Options



Aside from outright ownership, there are few guarantees for permanent protection of community gardens. The most common land tenure arrangement for community gardens is short-term leases. Greater Victoria's loss of two community gardens in two years is representative of a broader problem

In a 1996 survey published by the American Community Gardening Association, only 5% of the over 6000 community gardens that responded to the survey had permanent protection.<sup>19</sup> Within the 5 years leading up to the study 542 gardens had been lost to development. In the same period, 1,851 gardens had been created.

This survey provides a small sample (of 38 cities) of community gardens, but offers some indication of the pattern that exists in American and Canadian cities. During the writing of this report, Regina's community gardeners were struggling to preserve a garden with 265 plots (out of about 550 plots in the city), and three out of Ottawa's eleven community gardens were threatened with development.

The pressures of development mean that community gardeners and their supporters need to be aware of options for garden ownership. Described below are a variety of possibilities for land

tenure for community gardens. While some of the possibilities may appear speculative – some are not common for community gardens – the range of models is steadily increasing. In some cities (as is discussed in the companion publication to this one, *Seeds of Success*) these options are already being implemented.

Each of the outlined approaches has benefits and drawbacks and different models are appropriate in different circumstances. The descriptions are general and more information about *how* to secure land follows in Part IV.

### 3.0 Private Land & Leases

The majority of community gardens lease land. With the exception of groups that have strong commitments from land owners to retain gardens, most lease situations leave gardens vulnerable to development.

Community gardeners invest significant time and energy in the land on which their garden is located. Therefore, the minimum lease agreement for community gardens should be ten years. Longer term land tenure encourages soil building, permanent plantings and stewardship activities, because gardeners will see the benefits.

Community gardeners that lease their land and are committed to the long

term prospects of the garden should actively pursue either a long term lease, or one of the land tenure arrangements discussed in the following sections.

Long term leases – for 99 years or longer – can be arranged between organizations and private land owners.<sup>20</sup> Community gardens may need to partner with a nonprofit that has some organizational stability (such as a land trust) to arrange a long term lease. Lease agreements can include detailed conditions for use, guaranteeing the land will remain protected (utilized only for the agreed upon use). The idea is to provide a long-term guarantee of specific land uses without a change of ownership.

### 3.1 Government and Institutional Land

If governments and institutions are educated and supportive, community gardens can come to be considered a legitimate use of their land. Community gardens then become part of the green space or greenways network of a city, as common as playing fields and tennis courts.

The majority of community gardens within the Capital Region are located on land owned by government, crown corporations or school districts. In all cases, dialogue with the current owner about long term plans for the land should be a first step.



Often gardens end up on government or institutional lands as a kind of accident; a group identifies a viable piece of land and the owner grants a short-term lease. While community gardeners do not have the luxury of turning down available land, this scenario involves no commitment to allow the garden to remain over the long term.

*The Seattle Housing Authority (a municipal corporation providing affordable housing) has partnered with the municipality's community gardening program (P-Patch) to develop a program called Cultivating Communities. The program creates community gardens on land owned by the Housing Authority (in proximity to low income housing) in order to provide gardening and economic opportunities for the residents. There are currently 13 Cultivating Communities gardens.*



There are a number of exceptions to the above scenario. If community gardens become of interest to a government department or institution and if they are viewed as fulfilling part of the mandate of the land holder, they may gain informal long-term protection. Rather than simply granting temporary access, an institution may view the garden as an asset – as part of its own educational or philanthropic work.

School ground community gardens are the best example of this, and they are becoming increasingly common in many cities. Hospitals and other health facilities have a great deal to gain by housing community gardens. Religious institutions provide land for community gardens, linking them with their work in the broader community. Similarly, government departments may support community gardens because they fulfill community needs and can be dovetailed with existing departments or programs.

### 3.2 City Parks

Locating community gardens on municipal park land is optimal for community gardeners in many respects. Parks are generally protected from development and when a land use is accepted into parks it often stays within parks. Due to limited space, some municipalities will view integrating community gardens into existing parks as impossible, but they may consider acquiring new lands for this purpose.

There are currently three community gardens within Greater Victoria that are located on parkland. The Langford Community Garden is in Willing Park, the Agnes Street Community Garden was recently purchased as parkland and the Burnside Gorge Community Garden is in Cecelia Ravine Park. The arrangements for managing these gardens vary considerably.

*The City of Vancouver's Parks Board community gardens policy recognizes the positive value of community gardens and commits to collaborating with groups interested in developing community gardens. Currently, nine gardens exist on parkland.*

*The policy commits to assistance with land inventories, with starting community education programs and with preparing the site for the initial planting. The regulations ensure that the Parks Board does not accrue any other costs. User agreements for park sites cannot exceed five years (but can be renewed, some garden sites have existed on parkland for a number of years).*

Regardless of who administers and manages the gardens, of primary concern for community gardeners is whether the location of a park is incidental, or whether it signals a commitment from the local government. A municipality that houses community gardens in parks should be willing, at

*The City of Victoria recently developed the Parks and Greenways Acquisition Fund, a reserve fund that dedicates funds to the purchase of land for parks and greenways. The government is committed to allocating 10% of all future land sales to the Acquisition Fund. This means the City will be able to allocate a portion of this fund toward protecting its community gardens.*

the minimum, to develop policy that indicates its support of this use.

If parks departments are involved with a garden, staff should have time and resources available to ensure that gardens do not become neglected or marginalized. Housing community gardens within parks is generally a very small expense for local governments. It may even save money or trouble if garden-

ers are tending neglected areas or areas that add to the workload of overburdened maintenance staff.

A number of local governments have found that community gardens are worth investing in. When Parks and Recreation Departments recognize the health and recreational potential of community gardens, they can be integrated into the responsibilities of staff. Departments may assist gardeners through physical services such as tilling, providing mulch and clearing pathways or offer administrative assistance and programming.<sup>21</sup>

Another distinction lies in the extent to which parks departments will assist with land acquisition. In some cities, recently in Portland and for some time in Montreal, Parks Departments are charged with locating and purchasing sites for the purpose of community gardens.

### 3.3 Land Trusts

Community gardens can become a permanent land use through land donations, or through land trust purchases. Land trusts are private, nonprofit organizations that have a mandate to protect and restore lands with specific values. Most land trusts focus on a particular geographic region

or community. The type of land protected varies according to the location and focus of the organization.

Land trusts have become an increasingly common tool for the preservation of green space in Canada.<sup>22</sup> Many Canadian land trusts remain focused on “natural areas” which tends to exclude urban lands. However, some land trusts work to preserve agricultural land and others – such as The Land Conservancy of British Columbia – have a diversity of interests including wilderness, agricultural land and heritage properties. The organization Evergreen provides support for citizens wishing to protect urban green spaces.<sup>23</sup>

*When it comes to preserving urban green space, land trusts are considerably more common in the United States than in Canada. Boston, New York City and Philadelphia have a number of land trusts with the specific mandate of protecting community gardens. For example, Philadelphia's Neighborhood Garden Association holds title to 22 community gardens.*



Land trusts can function in several ways to protect community gardens. Land trusts can sign covenants with local governments or land owners, enter into long term lease arrangements, or purchase outright pieces of land at risk of development.

### 3.4 Conservation Covenants <sup>24</sup>

A conservation covenant is a legal agreement between a landowner and a qualifying organization or individual (generally covenants are held by organizations or societies). Covenants allow valuable aspects, or uses, of a piece of land to be protected in perpetuity, entrusting the maintenance of these values to a specific organization.

Covenants limit what changes can or cannot be made to a property's existing natural features. Covenants are deeds registered on the title to the land meaning that they bind not only the current owner, but all future owners of the land, to the terms of the agreement. In exchange, the owner receives a tax break. In some places, particularly the United States, the term conservation easement describes a very similar arrangement.

Restrictions within covenants can be far-reaching or narrowly defined. Some covenants are intended to protect ecological values and to maintain land in its natural state in perpetuity. Alternatively, covenants can provide conditions for use or development such as protecting significant buildings, heritage or cultural values or uses such as community gardening.

Covenants have the potential to be helpful to community gardeners if they hold one jointly with a larger organization such as a land trust. In addition, local governments may be willing to hold a joint covenant with an organization, or to grant a covenant to an organization. In either case, groups holding covenants require the collective resources to ensure that the agreement is maintained.

### 3.5 Utilizing Policy and Planning Tools

A final possibility for long term security for community gardens is for local governments to support them through changes in policy and in by-laws. Local governments can integrate community gardens into their Official Plans. Including community gardens in planning requires the use of formal commitments in policy or through planning tools.

An unusual but effective option is to incorporate community gardens in zoning designations. The City of Boston includes community gardens within its Open Space zoning regulations and now has over 200 community gardens (also due to the very active nongovernmental organizations in Boston).<sup>25</sup>

Another tool that has not yet been utilized is to combine developer incentives with community gardens. Density bonusing, for example, allows variance in zoning requirements in exchange for the provision of community amenities.<sup>26</sup> When developers provide specific (previously identified) amenities, they are allowed to increase the floor area (density) of their development.

Since amenities are intended to improve community livability in higher density areas, community gardens are a logical addition. Utilizing already existing planning tools like zoning and density bonusing allows local governments to commit to creating more community gardens in their municipality as a matter of course – particularly in combination with dense developments.

*Through its Zoning Code Article 33, Boston designates open space (OS) districts to ensure that green space and recreational areas (including community gardens) are protected through regulation. Boston has nine open space subdistricts, each of which restricts the uses of open space areas to specific uses such as urban wilds, waterfront access areas, urban plazas and community gardens.*





**A**lthough the majority of gardens listed in Part III are thriving, few supports and resources are available to them. This is particularly problematic for groups that want to start new gardens. Greater Victoria possesses no common organization for community gardeners – no networks like those in Toronto or Ottawa – nor is there consistent support from government or nonprofit groups.

While community gardeners may “just want to garden”, in some cases, retaining the land for gardens requires a more proactive approach. It is important to consider how to ensure the longevity of community gardens.

This section provides gardeners with suggestions and instructions for tackling the challenges of finding and maintaining land. It includes an outline of what to look for in a site and some basic steps towards land acquisition.

Following this section, is a series of recommendations for how to improve the overall circumstances for community gardens. Appendix B provides a list of organizations that can provide various kinds of support and assistance.

## 4.0 Starting out Right

In any effort to start or protect community gardens, it is necessary to have a core group of people willing to commit time and energy. The core can be quite small, so long as there is a larger group willing to help out with specific tasks and to provide moral support.

Divisions amongst gardeners, and between gardener and neighbours, have the potential to harm the longevity of the garden. Start out with a model of decision-making that is as inclusive as possible because when a truly divisive and difficult issue arises – such as the garden is put up for sale – a fragmented response will erase the possibility of organizing and acting quickly.

Relations with neighbours are also important. If your garden is threatened, broad support will ensure that the whole community will mobilize to protect it. It is important that neighbours understand the benefits of the garden from the beginning. If there are reservations about having a community garden in the area, address these with patience because they are often based on misinformation and misconceptions.

Invite neighbours to take part in planning sessions and work parties and be sure to host well-advertised community events like tours and harvest parties. Involve local schools or any group that will view the garden as an asset or educational opportunity. Integrate the garden into the fabric of the community and share its benefits.

## 4.1 Identifying a Site

As the region continues to grow, it will become increasingly difficult to identify suitable pieces of land for community gardens. Nonetheless, many potential community garden sites exist in the region for those who organize and claim them.

While the first priority may be to just find a piece of land, learn from the experiences of other community gardeners. It is heartbreaking to invest time and energy into a garden, only to have it bulldozed a few years later. Try to find land where a long-term lease can be negotiated or – even better – with the possibility of permanent tenure.

Although there are many practical considerations in identifying a garden site (discussed below in section 4.2) don't allow challenges to discourage you from pursuing all the possibilities. Examine vacant and underused publicly owned land in your vicinity. You may be able to enlist the maps of municipal planners to identify potential sites. On the other hand, you can also rely on the knowledge of local people about where gardens might be located. In either case, mapping is a useful approach.<sup>27</sup>

Explore road rights-of-way and portions of local parks. Look for sites that are vacant, have run-down buildings or under-used parking lots. Land owned by local or provincial government, crown corporations, or local institutions may have potential. Religious institutions, school districts and health facilities may have appropriate land holdings.

### *Government Support*

*Whether or not a municipality administers gardens, they can still provide assistance with site identification. It is a relatively simple task for a planner to inventory public, vacant and underutilized land.*

*However, before they undertake this task, a demand must be evident. In struggling alone to locate a site, community groups do not make their needs heard. Approach your local government and let them know that your group is looking for a site.*

*Although a letter will suffice, approaching your Council and the staff of relevant departments (planning and parks) is more effective. Always make an appointment, come prepared with information and keep meetings brief and to the point.*

## 4.2 Criteria for a Community Garden Site<sup>28</sup>

A number of factors should be taken into account when selecting a garden site. The physical properties of the garden matter a great deal to the success of the garden itself.

### A Soil

If the site was previously developed, have the soil tested for toxins. Contaminated sites need not be ruled out, but there are more challenges involved. Contamination or poor soil will require importing soil and/or building raised beds. Gardeners will always want to improve the quality of soil on new sites through mulching and composting. A minimum of 10 inches of soil is needed for vegetables and more depth is needed for perennials.

### B Sun

An open south facing space is best because vegetables need at least 6-8 hours of sunlight per day. Ensure that the site is not shaded by nearby buildings or trees. Shade in a small area can be beneficial for creating a shade garden and a comfortable seating area.

### C Slope

While flat lots are preferable, sites that slope can be a source of creative inspiration for gardeners. Terracing can be built to create flat plots, but keep in mind that sloping sites are an extra challenge and can be difficult for people with mobility challenges.

### D Water

Wise water management should be (and generally is) a basic tenet of community gardening. However, access to piped water on the site is essential. Paying to have a water meter installed is expensive so sites with water or where the costs of water installation are covered (for example by the municipality) are preferable.

### E Size

Groups have different feelings about the minimum and maximum size for gardens. P-Patch (Seattle's municipally supported community gardens program) recommends a 2,200 square foot minimum for ensuring that gardens can accommodate several gardeners, a common area, a tool shed and compost bins. Small lots can make lovely gardens but larger areas have the potential to gather more revenue through plot fees, an important consideration in keeping the garden afloat financially.

### F Location, Location, Location

Aside from all of the physical requirements for plants, community gardens also require one other thing – gardeners. A central location is an important element of success. Although land may be more abundant in peripheral areas, without a surrounding community, gardens cannot be a community resource and become yet another place to drive to. A substantial portion of gardeners should be able to walk or cycle to the garden.

### G Access & Parking

The requirements for access to the garden vary. Some gardens within Victoria have very limited vehicular access (such as the Fernwood Community Garden). This is preferable for ensuring that people are not tempted to drive if they could walk or cycle. Community gardens that are well located should not attract large numbers of vehicles. Nonetheless, all gardens require space for delivery of garden materials and some parking.



### 4.3 Steps toward Land Acquisition

Below are a series of steps toward gaining support for a community garden and securing land. Most of these steps are equally applicable to those starting a garden, or those struggling to keep one. Some of these suggestions require funds (hosting a community planning session or planting a perennial buffer) so be sure to investigate community funding options in your municipality. The steps are not necessarily sequential and each group will want to adapt their strategies to fit the circumstances.

#### A Generate Neighbourhood Support

If you are starting a new community garden, working with neighbours is important and beneficial. Reactions to community gardens tend to vary depending upon people's preconceived ideas. Once situated, community gardens are generally popular places amongst neighbours – particularly if they are inclusive and provide educational opportunities. Here are some suggestions to generate or strengthen community support:

- ✿ Hold an information session about community gardens *before* you make specific plans for the garden. Show slides (pictures are worth many words) and explain the benefits of community gardens.
- ✿ Be flexible with regard to the design of the garden – consider a community planning session.
- ✿ Welcome neighbourhood input about things the community would like to include (community gardens can include anything from playgrounds and picket fences to picnic tables and ponds).
- ✿ Address concerns that are reasonable (a home-owner adjacent to the garden might not want to face compost containers but might be happy to look at a perennial buffer).
- ✿ Be prepared to address the big “community gardening myths” – a few common myths about community gardens that tend to emerge are that they smell, attract rats and invite vandals. These fears are largely unfounded and, although possible, are definitely the exception and not the rule. Make sure that you come equipped to debunk the myths (for example, provide information about rat-proof compost bins).
- ✿ Always look for ways to invite the neighbourhood into the garden such as assigning a plot to a local grade-school class or hosting workshops.

If your group is interested in land that is publicly owned keep in mind that the (vocal) support of the neighbourhood will greatly increase the strength of your case with government.

If your garden has already existed for some time, you can still improve community relations. Particularly those community gardens on public land should hold annual garden events to include neighbours such as seed swaps and harvest parties. Invite the local media to events. A garden that is widely loved and well known is much more difficult to destroy.



Finally, if your garden is directly threatened with development find ways to tap into neighbourhood support.

- ✿ Before seeking external assistance, gardeners must develop a collective strategy – act together and support one another.
- ✿ Host a meeting or community event with neighbours and request that they make their support visible – in writing or in person (at meetings etc).
- ✿ Have local media tell the story of your garden or write an editorial.
- ✿ Draw on regional resources and groups that will assist to preserve the garden.

### **B Build a Network**

Community gardens that exist in isolation not only miss out on the opportunity to exchange everything from gardening tips to garden tours – they also lack the support and energy of others when they face challenges.

Networks can be built amongst gardens and between community gardens and other groups such as food security organizations and urban greening groups. There are local, national and international

organizations that may be of interest or assistance to community gardens. Some of the relevant groups are listed in Appendix B.

A network can be built at any time in the life of a community garden. Connecting your garden to other gardens and organizations can be a “virtual” (and low maintenance) relationship, or it can mean the occasional meeting or social event. Just remaining in touch with other gardens and groups will strengthen your garden’s chances of remaining over the long term.

### **C Approach the Landowner(s)**

If your group has a site in mind but you aren’t sure who owns it, check with your municipality. If the land is privately owned they will have a listing. If it is publicly owned land you will need to check with the municipal Buildings or Planning Department to get more information. After you have identified the owner, you are ready to proceed with a meeting.

How you approach the landowner will partly depend upon who it is. A private owner will likely be most concerned with how your use might affect their land and with questions about insurance and the length of the lease.



### ***Private Ownership***

If the land in question is privately owned, the most likely arrangement will be a lease. You will want to be organized when you approach the owner. Write up a brief description of your plans including:

- ✿ How you intend to use the land – plots, common areas, seating and so forth
- ✿ Your objectives for the garden (to provide food, community activity etc)
- ✿ A maintenance plan for the garden (year round)
- ✿ Names and contact information for at least two gardeners
- ✿ Liability information
- ✿ Evidence of support from neighbours and community groups

So long as the owner is willing to lease you the land, the next primary consideration will be the terms of the lease. Find out up-front if the owner will consider long-term leases – if not then decide whether you are willing to risk short-term arrangements. If an owner is serious about long-term arrangements, they may consider a covenant or involving a land trust. It is important to have someone with a legal or real estate background to assist you with the lease and with the question of insurance.

### ***Local Government Ownership***

As was discussed in Part III, local governments may become strong supporters of community gardens. Whether you are starting a garden or proposing to protect it, government will want to know the community benefits of your garden.

If you have identified (or are currently located on) a site that is in a local park or on land owned by local government the next logical step – after building support for your proposal – is to approach your Council. Approaching Council will also be a necessary step if you are attempting to protect your community garden from development. Some things to consider when approaching your local government:

- ✿ Present a written proposal (see the list above under Private Ownership and add an explanation of community benefits)
- ✿ It can be difficult to meet with Council as a whole. Often it is easiest to coordinate individual meetings. You can divide the meetings amongst members of your group; just be sure your message is consistent.
- ✿ If the land you are considering, or are currently located on, is in a park meet with parks staff as well. The support of municipal staff is invaluable.
- ✿ Many municipalities have advisory committees on topics such as environment and planning. Presentations for relevant committees can result in recommendations to Council on your behalf.
- ✿ Provide evidence of community support for the garden – letters or signatures.



Remember that leasing is only one of a range of possibilities for situating community gardens on government lands. Try to negotiate a situation where the garden can remain over the long term. Local government may also play a role in other ownership scenarios for community gardens. Although the land may be not be owned by them, they may be able to assist your group in other ways. For a list of possibilities, please see section (d) following

### ***Other Owners***

Aside from local government other common land owners are provincial government departments, Crown corporations, school districts and religious or health facilities. In all cases, be prepared with a clear written plan.

When approaching provincial government or Crown Corporations, the support of your local government can be helpful. Depending on future plans for the land, these groups may be willing to consider a land swap, long term leasing or purchase options.

If you are interested in starting a garden on school, hospital, or church lands, consider and articulate how the community garden fits with the objectives of the institution. Community gardens offer educational, recreational, social and healing opportunities and can provide food donations to the kitchens of these facilities. Be aware that union labour can be a major concern with some types of land and that it is important to include union leaders early on in the process. Try to make a specific agreement with unions to smooth the way for your garden.

If your group is currently gardening on land owned by any of these groups, consider increasing the involvement of users and staff of the facility. When the community garden is tied into the concerns of an institution or facility, this greatly improves the chances of longevity for the garden.

### **D Explore possibilities for covenants or purchase**

If you are a group of gardeners faced with the prospect of losing your garden to development, or if you wish to ensure that this never happens, there steps you can take.

Meet with and lobby (through letters, presentations, petitions and media coverage) local Council and request their assistance with one (or several) of the following:

- ✿ Arranging long term leases with other levels of government or land owners
- ✿ Negotiating land swaps with other levels of government or land owners
- ✿ Purchasing land to preserve a community garden (or designating it as parkland)
- ✿ Providing support for your efforts to make long term land tenure arrangements
- ✿ Developing policies to improve the status of community gardens in your municipality
- ✿ Entering into covenant agreements to protect community gardens – possibly in partnership with nonprofit organizations

Meet with local nonprofits and land trusts to find out if any of them would assist your garden. They may provide guidance and advice or they might become directly involved in your cause. Also be sure to meet with your local community associations to enlist their support and to talk to local media – make sure the public knows about your garden.



For community gardens to grow as community assets, they require the support of local organizations and governments. This support may take a variety of forms from policy to programming with many variations in between.

Looking to cities with successful and expanding community gardening efforts, the majority have significant support from local governments and/or local nonprofit organizations. Cities such as Seattle and Montreal have brought community gardens into the mandate of city departments, with the understanding that they provide a vital service for communities. Other cities have strong, generally membership-based, non-profit groups that support community gardens, frequently in partnership with local government.

When one considers the current context for community gardens in Greater Victoria – possessing tiny budgets and run almost exclusively by volunteers – it is a wonder that they continue to exist at all. The garden plots are filled by word of mouth and waiting lists are common. Even so, the majority of people in this region, particularly those who would benefit most, continue to be unaware of community gardens.

With the kind of active and funded promotion of community gardens that has occurred in other cities, the demand for community gardens would burgeon. The latter task cannot fall exclusively on the shoulders of volunteer community gardeners. The momentum community gardens have gathered in other places is not exclusively due to community initiative. It is also attributable to

vision at the government, community and nonprofit levels. Governments and community groups have developed policy and supported gardens by making resources available in the form of staff and funding. The present level of success of community gardens in the region is primarily attributable to the efforts of community gardeners themselves. If community gardens are to flourish and multiply in the future, more assistance and resources must be made available. What follows is a list of recommendations for each of the groups that will participate in the future of community gardens in the region.



## Recommendations for Community Gardeners

- ✿ Build bridges with the broader community – start by hosting one or two annual events, inviting neighbours, schools, community groups and municipal Council
- ✿ Network with other community gardens in the region – invite gardeners to your events or host joint events (a number of places organize community garden tours)
- ✿ Lobby your local government to put policy in place, either within the Official Community Plan or Parks Department policy (or both) to support and promote community gardens
- ✿ Access local government funds for community gardening efforts (to improve your garden, host events, or for start-up)
- ✿ Participate in food security and broader sustainability initiatives to ensure community gardens are included

## Recommendations for Local Government

- ✿ Develop policy to support and promote community gardens (see companion publication *Seeds of Success* for detailed information on other city's policies)
- ✿ Publicize this support and raise awareness about community gardens
- ✿ Assist community groups to start community gardens by helping to identify suitable land and to negotiate tenure arrangements
- ✿ Assist current community gardens to arrange long-term land tenure
- ✿ Make small grants / matching funds available to community gardeners and publicize the availability of these grants
- ✿ Link community gardens into the mandates of existing departments such as Parks and Recreation
- ✿ Support community gardens through staff time and expertise

## Recommendations for Community & Nonprofit Organizations

- ✿ Contribute to public education about the value of community gardens – promote the benefits of participating in and maintaining community gardens
- ✿ Facilitate the creation of community gardens networks
- ✿ Provide assistance – through small grants or expertise – to citizen groups wishing to start community gardens
- ✿ Invite community garden committees to participate in food security and sustainability initiatives
- ✿ Promote community gardens as a self-help option to improve food access and food security
- ✿ Integrate community gardens into your mandate, services and programming
- ✿ Assist community gardeners in lobbying local government for policy and formal support

These recommendations require that community gardens be viewed as important contributors to the urban social fabric and quality of life. If the citizens of the Capital region wish to address urban environmental concerns and food security while enabling communities to help themselves, community gardens will have a significant role in the region's future. Working together, municipal governments and community groups can ensure that the City of Gardens has gardens for all of its citizens.



# APPENDIX A

## Community Gardens of Greater Victoria

**C=Contact**

**L=Location**

**P=Plot number**

### **Agnes Street Community Garden**

C: Cathy Wetton, Treasurer  
(384-2956)

L: Agnes Street off Glanford Rd.  
P: 69

### **Burnside Gorge Community Garden**

C: Dean Fortin (388-5251)  
L: Cecelia Ravine Park near Gorge Community Centre  
P: 11 (waitlist)

### **Capital City Community Garden**

C: Clarence (380-3549)  
L: 621 Kent Rd. – Near the Pat Bay Hwy.  
P: 137 (waitlist)

### **Craigflower Community Garden**

C: Richard (479-9280)  
L: Corner of Admirals Rd. & Old Isld Hwy.  
P: 9 & shared area

### **Earthbound Community Garden**

C: Fernwood Community Association, Alex Kozak (384-7441)  
L: Garden St., just north of Bay St.  
P: 20 (seasonal waitlist)

### **Esquimalt Community Garden**

C: Max Rogers (384-4661)  
L: Corner of Munro St. & Anson St. (on military base)  
P: 18

### **Fernwood Allotment Garden**

C: Fernwood Community Association, Alex Kozak (384-7441)  
L: Chambers and North Park  
P: 34 (Seasonal waitlist)

### **James Bay Allotment Garden**

C: Sylvia Austin (388-7550)  
L: Montreal St., Btwn. Oswego & Niagra  
P: 54 (Waitlist, restricted to neighbourhood apartments)

### **Langford Community Garden**

C: David Stott (478-1122)  
L: Wiling Park  
P: 15-20

### **Michigan Street Community Garden**

C: Rob Wipond (361-4169)  
L: Corner Michigan St. & Menzies St.  
P: 20 (waitlist)

### **Oak Bay Community Garden**

C: Linda Plasterer (598-3311)  
L: Monteith St.  
P: 12 (waitlist)

### **Royal Bay Community Garden**

C: Michael Bodman (391-2600 ext. 4070)  
L: Royal Roads, near community education centre  
P: 8

### **Sidney Community Garden**

C: Unavailable  
L: 1805 Glamorgan Rd, N. Saanich (across from the Sandown Racetrack)  
P: Unavailable

### **Spring Ridge Commons**

C: Geoff Johnson, Compost Education Centre (386-9678)  
L: Fernwood, Corner of Chambers & Gladstone  
P: None, permaculture food garden

### **(UVic) Campus Community Garden**

C: Trina Allinotte (biotic@uvic.ca)  
L: University of Victoria, West of the Saunders Complex  
P: 26



# APPENDIX B

## Helpful Organizations within Greater Victoria

### **Lifecycles Project Society**

572 Michigan St.  
(250) 383-5800  
[www.lifecyclesproject.ca](http://www.lifecyclesproject.ca)

Lifecycles Project Society, a nonprofit organization located in James Bay, organizes around food security and urban agriculture issues. Lifecycles promotes and creates personal, shared and community gardens, research and educational activities and youth skills development programs.

Lifecycles was instrumental in forming two community gardens in the City of Victoria, Our Backyard and the Michigan Street Garden. Lifecycles offers entrepreneurial training for youth to start small agri-food businesses, classroom workshops for school children, a fruit tree harvesting project and hands-on training in growing food for low-income people.

Lifecycles also runs The Hive – an organic urban agriculture demonstration site located off Helmcken Road, on Blue Ridge Road. The Hive provides information about organic gardening including composting, greenhouses and the use of raised beds. Food that is produced at the Hive is shared amongst project participants, volunteers and Street Link emergency shelter.

### **The Compost Education Centre**

1216 North Park St.  
(250) 386-9676  
Hours: 10-4, Wed – Sat  
[www.compost.bc.ca](http://www.compost.bc.ca)

Next door to the Fernwood Community Gardens, the Compost Education Centre provides a number of services that are of interest to community gardeners. The Centre includes demonstration gardens for composting, growing food and water wise gardening.

Dropping by the Compost Education Centre, gardeners can access resource materials and gardening / composting expertise. The Centre offers a variety

of excellent workshops on topics such as permaculture, master composting, winter gardening and garden planning.

### **Farm Folk City Folk**

Vancouver Island Office  
(250) 743-4267  
[ffcfisle@island.net](mailto:ffcfisle@island.net)

Farm Folk City Folk is a nonprofit organization that works for food security, promoting local, seasonal and sustainable farming. FFCF has a resource library (located at their Vancouver office) and they produce a newsletter and reports and host workshops. The majority of FFCF's efforts are focused on the Lower Mainland, but they do host the annual event Feast of Fields both on the mainland and Southern Vancouver Island every autumn.

### **Common Ground / Groundworks**

521 Superior Street  
(250)-360-0799  
[groundworks@telus.net](mailto:groundworks@telus.net)

Common Ground is a community mapping and planning project that assists communities, schools and neighbourhoods to undertake planning and community visioning by providing mapping and learning resources. Common Ground is currently working with the City of Victoria to develop a Greenways map for the City (community gardens should definitely be included!)

Common Ground also co-manages the GroundWorks Learning Centre with the LifeCycles Project Society. Groundworks is mapping centre, meeting place and a public library that specializes in such topics as sustainable development, sustainable agriculture and community economic development.

### **The Horticulture Centre of the Pacific**

505 Quayle Road  
(250) 479-6162  
[www.hcp.bc.ca](http://www.hcp.bc.ca)

Located in Saanich, The Horticulture Centre of the Pacific is a not-for-profit

organization that maintains 103 acres of land with 5 acres of demonstration and teaching gardens. These gardens demonstrate suitable plantings for the Pacific West Coast including: a vegetable and fruit garden, a winter garden, a Takata Japanese garden, a drought tolerant garden and a native plant garden. The centre offers workshops, plant sales, evening courses and horticultural and master gardener training.

### **The Land Conservancy of British Columbia**

5793 Old West Saanich Road  
(250) 479-8053  
[www.conservancy.bc.ca](http://www.conservancy.bc.ca)

The Land Conservancy of BC is a charity independent of government that works to protect valuable plant and animal habitats. Much of the Conservancy's focus is on green space on Vancouver Island. The Conservancy also protects other kinds of land including areas with agricultural, scientific, historical, cultural, scenic or compatible recreational values.

### **West Shore Community Services (Western Communities)**

Seeds of Progress Program  
Contact David Stott at  
(250) 478-1122

West Shore Community Services offers *Seeds of Progress*, a course for low-income people to learn to grow their own food. The *Seeds of Progress*, a pre-employment training program that builds the capacity of participants, has been operating in Colwood and Sooke for five years. From May until September, *Seeds of Progress* teaches participants organic gardening skills and builds life skills such as communication and cooperation. Participants plant, maintain and harvest a garden plot and also work together on community plots, growing food for the local food bank.

# Helpful Organizations Outside of Greater Victoria

## American Community Gardening Association

(215) 988-8785

[www.communitygarden.org](http://www.communitygarden.org)

The American Community Gardening Association (ACGA) is a nonprofit organization, based in Philadelphia with Board representatives and membership from across Canada and the United States. ACGA membership consists of professionals, volunteers and supporters of community greening in urban and rural communities.

Since the 1970s ACGA has been promoting and supporting community food and ornamental gardening, preservation and management of open space and integrated planning and management of developing urban and rural lands. ACGA facilitates educational and networking opportunities for community gardeners. They offer a regular newsletters and journal for members, a good website and excellent published resources are available (for a fee). The ACGA's annual conferences, generally held in American cities, are excellent places for Canadians to learn from, and connect with, others involved with community gardens.

## Canadian Community Gardening Group

A virtual networking opportunity – helpful for those in a coordinating role or for anyone looking for information about what is happening with community gardens in other parts of Canada. To join this group, send a blank email to: [cancommgarden-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:cancommgarden-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). When your subscription has been confirmed (an email will be sent to you) please introduce yourself to the group by telling them who you are, where you live and what your involvement is in community gardens.

## Evergreen Foundation

The Land Trust Specialist at Evergreen is Barb Heidenreich (416) 596-1495 (ext. 24).

[www.evergreen.ca/home.html](http://www.evergreen.ca/home.html)

The Evergreen Foundation is a national nonprofit that supports a number of urban greening projects across Canada. Currently much of its work is geographically focused within Vancouver and Toronto, where its offices are located. However, it is within the mandate of Evergreen to act as a national Land Trust for urban green spaces.

As part of its Common Grounds program, Evergreen provides information and assistance with land acquisition, strategies for financing, and information about restrictive covenants and conservation easements.

In addition, Evergreen provides resources, both for community gardens and for groups working to green school yards. Evergreen has a number of published resources available for purchase – this information, and helpful funding information, can be accessed through their website.



# Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Boston Urban Gardeners. *A Handbook of Community Gardening*. Ed. Susan Naimark. 1982. Charles Scribner's Sons: New York.

<sup>2</sup> While this publication was being developed, two gardens were considering fencing and locking their gardens. Virtually all gardens, in every city, consider taking this action at some point. Problems with theft and vandalism are common. This is a large topic that is difficult to address within the scope of this publication. Ultimately, locking gardens removes much of their public aspect (although there is a middle ground where they are only locked at night). However, for gardeners to lose their produce, after their investment of time and energy, is very discouraging. Currently there are only a couple of gardens that are fenced

<sup>3</sup> The companion publication to this one, *Seeds of Success*, provides in depth descriptions of some of the outstanding community gardening efforts taking place in cities in the United States and Canada.

<sup>4</sup> One of the best guides available can be purchased through FoodShare Metro Toronto. Berman, Laura. *How Does Our Garden Grow? A Guide to Community Garden Success*. 1997. Lifecycles has a guide for local gardeners, *The Lifecycles Community Garden Resource* that includes some handy information for groups starting gardens.

<sup>5</sup> September 1998. *Framework for Our Future: An Agreement Between the Capital Regional District and Member Municipalities on a Framework for the Preparation of the Capital Region's Growth Management Strategy*. Prepared by Regional Planning Services Capital Regional District.

<sup>6</sup> For detailed information on the surveys and public meetings see the Capital Regional District website: [www.crd.bc.ca/regplan/RGS/](http://www.crd.bc.ca/regplan/RGS/)

<sup>7</sup> For more information about Denmark's community gardens see: <http://www.cityfarmer.org/denmark.html>

<sup>8</sup> May 2000. *Housing, Dwelling Type By Population and Age, Capital Region*. From: Regional Information Services, Capital Regional District. [www.crd.bc.ca/regplan/RIS/Facts/Housing/du\\_age.htm](http://www.crd.bc.ca/regplan/RIS/Facts/Housing/du_age.htm)

<sup>9</sup> 1996. BC stats for Regional District.

<sup>10</sup> September 1998. *Framework for Our Future: An Agreement Between the Capital Regional District and Member Municipalities on a Framework for the Preparation of the Capital Region's Growth Management Strategy*. Prepared by Regional Planning Services Capital Regional District. P 24.

<sup>11</sup> OCP Background Report. Population, Employment and Housing Projections 1996-2021. Regional Growth Strategy. [www.crd.bc.ca/regplan/RGS/OthRprts/OCP/ocpbckgd.htm](http://www.crd.bc.ca/regplan/RGS/OthRprts/OCP/ocpbckgd.htm)

<sup>12</sup> Tall, Deborah. "dwelling: making peace with space and place." *Rooted in the Land*. Eds. William Vitek & Wes Jackson. 1996. Yale University Press.

<sup>13</sup> For a full critique of the growth of American cities see: Kunstler, James Howard. *The Geography of Nowhere*. 1993. Touchstone: New York. .



## Endnotes.

- <sup>14</sup> Beatley, Timothy and Kristy Manning. *The Ecology of Place: Planning for Environment, Economy and Community*. 1997. Island Press: Washington, DC.
- <sup>15</sup> There are a number of definitions of food security. One of the earliest was developed at the 1996 World Food Summit. The definition used in this report is the one that local organizations (CRFAIR, Lifecycles) use.
- <sup>16</sup> *Quality of Life in BC's Capital Region*. 1999. Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria.
- <sup>17</sup> All of these statistics were gathered through the archives section of the Land Commission's website.
- <sup>18</sup> <http://www.statcan.ca/english/agcensus2001/index.htm>
- <sup>19</sup> American Community Gardening Association. 1996. *National Community Gardening Survey: 1996*. American Community Gardening Association. The Survey is available on-line at: [www.communitygarden.org](http://www.communitygarden.org) under Publications.
- <sup>20</sup> Loukidelis, David. *Using Conservation Covenants to Preserve Private Land in British Columbia*. Anne Hillyer (Ed.) 1992. West Coast Environmental Law. Available on-line: [http://www.wcel.org/wcelpub/2986\\_1.html](http://www.wcel.org/wcelpub/2986_1.html)
- <sup>21</sup> For detailed information about model community gardening programs offered through Parks and Recreation Departments please see the companion publication to this one: *Seeds of Success*
- <sup>22</sup> Watkins, Melissa. *The Emergence of Land Trusts as a New Conservation Force in Canada*. 2001. Centre for Land and Water Stewardship, University of Guelph. Available on-line at: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/~claws/conference/LandTrustPaper.htm>
- <sup>23</sup> For more information on Evergreen please see Appendix B.
- <sup>24</sup> For excellent detailed information about conservation covenants see the West Coast Environmental Law report, available on-line at: <http://www.wcel.org/wcelpub/10362/10362.html> Andrews, William J. & David Loukidelis. *Leaving A Living Legacy: Using Conservation Covenants in B.C.* January 1996. West Coast Environmental Law Foundation.
- <sup>25</sup> For a draft of the zoning regulations in Boston as well as information on policy in other cities see the compiled document: *Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Regulations, Open Space Policies and Goals Concerning Community Gardens and Open Green Space from the Cities of Seattle, Berkeley, Boston and Chicago*. Compiled by Lenny Librizzi, 1999. Available through the ACGA website: [www.communitygardens.org/links/#studies](http://www.communitygardens.org/links/#studies)
- <sup>26</sup> *Density Bonusing: A Guide and Bylaw*. Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 1997. Available at: [www.mcaaws.gov.bc.ca/housing/bonusdn/index.htm](http://www.mcaaws.gov.bc.ca/housing/bonusdn/index.htm)
- <sup>27</sup> The local nonprofit group Common Ground has both maps and mapping expertise. The Groundworks resource centre may also be very helpful. See Appendix B for contact information.
- <sup>28</sup> For more detail on evaluating community garden sites see: Boston Urban Gardeners. 1982. *A Handbook of Community Gardening*. Susan Naimark (Ed.) Charles Scribner's Sons: New York.