



GARDEN MAINTENANCE GUIDELINES

This document supplements the “Gardener Authorization and Responsibilities” Form

Garden landowners require **Denver Urban Gardens (DUG)** to ensure participants keep their garden sites clean, attractive and orderly at all times – *especially* during the winter. The garden must have a year-round unified appearance to landowners, city officials, and the general non-gardening public. To this end, DUG established the following requirements of all participants. The benefits of a well-maintained garden are at minimum three-fold:

- 1) the use agreement for the garden remains in good standing with the landowner,**
- 2) owners, neighbors and non-gardeners enjoy and recognize the garden as a community asset,**
- 3) your garden will harbor fewer pests and weeds, and will be healthier from season to season.**

DUG serves as the use agreement holder, water agent, insurer, authorized 501-c-3 corporation and primary representative for garden participants with city officials. Please remember, it is very difficult for a few gardeners to do all the work; everyone must do their share. View participating in a community garden as a privilege. DUG’s staff and volunteers are working very hard to build new gardens in neighborhoods where this privilege is not yet available. In addition, we are always working to install improvements at existing garden sites. It’s difficult to dedicate our limited resources to the “clean-up” of existing gardens. This also runs counter to our goal “to empower” gardens to be self-sufficient. DUG is, however, committed to assisting gardeners with cleanup, when a garden is out of compliance with these guidelines and is in jeopardy of losing its use agreement.

PARTICIPANT REQUIREMENTS

GARDEN PLOT: Each plot must be kept clear of weeds, spent plants, debris and trash. Each fall, turn compost and organic material into the soil and cover it with a layer of mulch to regulate soil temperature and retain moisture throughout the winter. This makes a garden plot look cared for to the passer-by. It’s important to recognize all gardens have a significant role and responsibility regarding the sustainability of the garden. Any perennials in your plot must appear well kept. In addition, you are responsible to maintain the area immediately adjacent to your plot including paths, compost bins, trash collection areas, fences and the garden’s other common spaces.

VERTICAL STRUCTURES: Structures to encourage vertical growing including arbors, trellis, tree branch frames, fence sections, and cages are only allowed during the growing season if they are functional, orderly, safe and attractive. DUG prohibits use of any “white” or light colored materials; “scrap” lumber and pipe. If you desire a seasonal structure, paint it the garden’s “theme” colors, black or dark green. Vertical structures used for growing must appear in good condition and contribute to the garden’s overall visual continuity. Tomato cages, bean poles, stakes or small trellis(s) must be made of thin wood or wire. All growing structures must be disassembled and removed during the off-season. Any permanent structures in the garden will be allowed to remain if they are in good condition and attractive from the street. Based on our use agreements, DUG is required to approve all new (non-seasonal) structures prior to construction.

3. “OFF-SEASON” STORAGE: the following items are not authorized to be left standing during the off-season, and must be disassembled and stored in the garden shed or removed from the site when not in use:

- chairs and individual benches,
- shoes, clothes (shed only),
- sticks, steel “t” posts,
- buckets, plastic containers,
- wire cages, fencing,
- plastic plant pots, tools,
- wheel barrows, wagons
- pipe, hoses and nozzles
- piles of brick and stone,
- water bottles, milk bottles,
- bags of compost or leaves
- non-permanent garden art

4. COMPOST BINS: Individual compost bins are discouraged; they typically distract from the visual continuity of the garden. We do, however, encourage using and maintaining community compost bins. All material used in compost bins must be chopped in one to two inch pieces before being added. Please do not add diseased plant material. Plastic bags of spent plants, grass clippings and leaves are not allowed to be stored in your garden at any time. To “passers-by” they appear as bags of trash. Unopened bags of topsoil, compost or manure are also not to be stored in your garden. Chop and spread these materials in your plot immediately, allowing for decomposition and integration with your existing soil. Consider trench or pit composting techniques.

If there is need for an additional community compost bin or compost training in your garden, please contact DUG. We will also assist with the purchase or construction of new or additional community compost bins as desired.

5. PLOT BOUNDARIES: Interior “boundary fences” around individual plots are discouraged; they are hard to weed and can quickly make the overall garden unsightly. The preferred boundary is a weed-free edge between your plot and the adjacent path or neighbor. With steering committee approval, you may edge your plot with a low-profile (less than 12” high) edging material, which is in good condition and well kept. We discourage the use of “scrap” materials such as broken bricks and concrete, small fragments of sandstone or pavers, scraps of wood, metal or plastic edger, and white wire fencing. We also discourage the use of pressure treated landscape timbers and wood; cedar is a non-toxic alternative. Ideally, the garden steering committee, with input from all gardeners, selects a preferred material, which if everyone uses will contribute to the overall visual continuity of the garden.

If you are unable to afford wood stakes in good condition, please contact DUG and we will do our best to accommodate your need.

6. THE GARDEN IS A “COMMUNITY” RESPONSIBILITY: Everyone must take responsibility for maintaining the common areas of the garden such as:

- compost bins and toolshed
- pathways and courtyards
- street fronts and sidewalks
- trees, flower beds and lawn
- trash containment areas

DUG RESPONSIBILITIES

DUG is available to assist community gardens with irrigation, fences, tree pruning, tool shed or tool boxes, benches, arbors, and pathways. If your garden proposes to install these kind of improvements, it is DUG’s responsibility to approve and oversee their inclusion on behalf of the garden landowner and city agencies such as: Property Inspections, Public Schools, Public Works, City Assets, and Denver Water.

By following the “Garden Maintenance” Guidelines, you also contribute to DUG’s ongoing effort to ensure community gardening continues citywide. Please remember your garden can be either a positive or negative example of a garden project, affecting the ability for DUG to secure garden space in other neighborhoods for new projects.

DUG secures funding for garden improvements, training and site insurance. In turn, DUG is required to report back to funding agencies and foundations as to the status and benefit of their contributions. DUG also must report on your behalf as to the status of your garden to neighbors and city agencies such as: Property Inspection Services, Assets Management, Housing and Neighborhood Development Services, Parks and Recreation and Public Schools. Your efforts to maintain your garden allows DUG to focus our resources on building new gardens and installing capital improvements at existing gardens.