



City of Vancouver *Land Use and Development Policies and Guidelines*

Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability Department

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URBAN AGRICULTURE GUIDELINES FOR THE PRIVATE REALM

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1 Application and Intent

At the time of adoption of the guidelines two adopted Official Development Plans (Southeast False Creek and East Fraser Lands) contain provisions encouraging urban agriculture. Subsequent rezonings and development applications are anticipated to include urban agriculture proposals. In future, City policy encouraging urban agriculture may be adopted in other areas. Beyond City policy, many residential development and rezoning proposals are also voluntarily incorporating urban agriculture into their development and landscape plans.

These guidelines are intended to provide guidance to proponents on the design of urban agriculture installations where they are proposed, and to be used by city staff in assessing these proposals. The use of numbered specifications is subject to interpretation and discretion by City staff.

Urban agriculture is a broad term referring to a range of activities for the growing of plants for food and other related uses, within or surrounding cities and towns. The goals for encouraging urban agriculture are to reduce “distance to plate”, encourage social interaction, and allow more locally grown food production.

These guidelines address two components of urban agriculture as they apply to private development sites:

1. shared garden plots, and
2. edible landscaping.

The provision of the features described in these guidelines should be compatible with other objectives for common outdoor amenity space and general landscaping needs.

2 Uses

Shared garden plots and edible landscaping are most appropriate where residential uses are proposed in multiple dwelling developments but could also be used for herb gardens associated with restaurants, and in common outdoor amenity spaces for other uses such as offices, schools or community centres.

3 Design Considerations

3.1 Shared Garden Plots

Shared garden plots can best be provided as part of consolidated common outdoor amenity space. Where this is not generally provided, opportunities for gardening could be considered in private outdoor spaces: patios, balconies and roof decks. The incorporation of garden plots should enhance the overall design of that common outdoor amenity and should be considered as one of the variety of programmed uses of those spaces.

3.1.1 Siting and Access

- (a) Garden plot areas should be located to maximize sunlight access; this may include locating garden plot areas on rooftops, where possible.
- (b) Where garden plots are located on higher rooftops, they should be located in wind screened areas and without negative impact to views and building heights.
- (c) There should be direct access via elevator from loading areas at grade to garden plots located on a roof or podium, in order to provide easy access for wheelbarrows and hauling larger items, such as soil.
- (d) Some garden plots should incorporate enhanced universal accessibility features to accommodate wheelchairs, strollers and senior gardeners who have mobility restrictions.
- (e) Plots should be located as far away from vehicle traffic as possible, when located in a ground level courtyard.

3.1.2 Co-locating with Other Amenities

- (a) The design of garden plot areas should encourage social interaction by balancing a variety of different uses in the common outdoor amenity space.
- (b) Consideration should be given to co-locating with:
 - (i) a covered outdoor space for shelter;
 - (ii) an outdoor children's play area;
 - (iii) an indoor amenity room with kitchen, washroom and an eating area; and,
 - (iv) outdoor seating areas for rest and social interaction.

3.1.3 Number and Size of Garden Plots

- (a) Where a consolidated common outdoor amenity space is provided, garden plots should be provided for 30% of the residential units that do not have access to private outdoor space of more than 100 square feet.
- (b) Garden plots should be a minimum of 24 square feet (ideally 3 feet by 8 feet), not including plot dividers, for maximum growing potential.
- (c) Large, undivided planting areas equal in square footage to individually separated plots may be provided in cases where individual plots are not desired or suitable.

3.1.4 Design of Garden Plots

- (a) There should be a maximum reach of 18 inches from the perimeter to the middle of the plot.
- (b) Garden plots should be integrated into the overall landscape design and could be accommodated in flexible, non-rectilinear forms.
- (c) Soil depth should be a minimum of 18 inches and should be made up of soil appropriate for growing a variety of food plants.
- (d) Soil should be tested for toxins (heavy metals, salinity and hydrocarbons) prior to being used in garden plots.
- (e) The height of garden planters should be a maximum of 2 feet for easy reaching into planter beds. Plots with enhanced universal accessibility features should have a height of - 2.5 feet.
- (f) Toxic materials, such as pressure treated wood, should not be used where they will come into contact with soils that are growing food.
- (g) Protection of the roof membrane and soil drainage issues should be taken into consideration.

3.1.5 Support Facilities

- (a) Hose bibs should be provided within 20 feet of any garden plot.
- (b) A storage room or shed should be provided for tools; consideration should be given to providing smaller, personal storage for individual gardening tools.
- (c) A composting facility that is rodent-resistant, provides the ability to turn compost, and is of sufficient size to match garden capacity should be provided.
- (d) Consideration should be given to providing:
 - (i) a potting bench,
 - (ii) an electrical outlet,
 - (iii) area lighting,
 - (iv) a greenhouse, of minimum 9 x 12 feet, if provided.

3.2 Edible Landscaping

Edible landscaping, the use of ornamental plants that also produce edible fruits, nuts, etc., is encouraged in areas that are easily accessible for harvesting, and that are protected from potential contamination. Edible landscaping can be incorporated as part of any landscaped areas.

A list of Edible Landscaping Plants is attached in Appendix A.

3.2.1 Stewardship

Edible landscaping that may drop fruits and berries, should be conveniently located in high pedestrian traffic areas fully accessible to residents, and not over public property to ensure that food is harvested without delay and to avoid attracting rodents and pests.

3.2.2 Design Considerations

The chart in Appendix A should be used to guide how and where edible landscaping is used on private development sites.

Edible Landscaping - Quick Reference Summary List

Note: Listed below is a quick reference summary of some recommended edible plants commonly used for landscaping purposes.

SPECIES NAME	COMMON NAME	OTHER LANDSCAPE VALUE
PERENNIALS & HERBS		
<i>Cynara scolymus</i>	Globe artichoke	Dramatic accent plant in perennial borders and containers. Interplant with late-flowering perennials to hide foliage when it dies back
<i>Mentha spicata</i>	Spearmint	Can be invasive, therefore plant large areas where plants can be controlled by mowing in containers or fill in and be controlled by mowing.
<i>Origanum marjorana</i>	Sweet marjoram	In perennial borders, among annual plantings, along edges, and in containers.
<i>Origanum vulgare</i>	Oregano	In borders, among annual plantings, along edges, and in containers
CLIMBERS		
<i>Actinidia arguta</i>	Chinese gooseberry	Climb up trellises, arbours, or fences and cover pergolas or walls
<i>Actinidia chinensis</i>	Common kiwi	Climb up trellises, arbours, or fences and cover pergolas or walls
<i>Vitis labrusca</i>	Grape	Climb up trellises, arbours, or fences, and cover pergolas or walls
EVERGREEN GROUNDCOVERS		
<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>	Kinnikinnick	Along edges and as barriers
<i>Cornus canadensis</i>	Bunchberry	Along edges, as barriers, and as understory
<i>Thymus praecox articus</i>	Creeping thyme	Along edges and banks, in borders, and between cracks in pathways and walls
DECIDUOUS GROUNDCOVERS		
<i>Fragaria chiloensis</i>	Coastal strawberry	Along edges and open sites near ocean
<i>Fragaria vesca</i>	Woodland strawberry	Along edges, in open sites, and as understory
<i>Rubus chamaemorus</i>	Cloudberry	Along edges, trailing over walls, and as understory
<i>Rubus ursinus</i>	Trailing blackberry	In borders, along edges, and in open sites and disturbed areas
EVERGREEN SHRUBS		
<i>Mahonia nervosa</i>	Dull-leaved Oregon grape	In borders and along edges
<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>	Rosemary	In borders, barriers, and container

Appendix A (Continued)

SPECIES NAME	COMMON NAME	OTHER LANDSCAPE VALUE
<i>Salvia officinalis</i>	Sage	In borders, barriers, and container
<i>Vaccinium ovatum</i>	Evergreen huckleberry	In borders and as hedges
DECIDUOUS SHRUBS		
<i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i>	Saskatoon berry	In borders and as hedges
<i>Corylus cornuta</i> var. <i>californica</i>	Hazelnut	In borders and as hedges
<i>Oemlaria cerasiformis</i>	Indian plum	In parks and borders and as hedges
<i>Ribes divaricatum</i>	Coastal black gooseberry	in borders as hedges
<i>Ribes laxiflorum</i>	White-flowered currant	In borders and as hedges
<i>Rubus idaeus</i>	Raspberry	
<i>Rubus leucodermis</i>	Black raspberry	in borders and as hedges
<i>Rubus parviflorus</i>	Thimbleberry	in borders and as barriers
<i>Rubus spectabilis</i>	Salmonberry	in borders and as barriers
<i>Sambucus cerulea</i>	Blue elderberry	in borders and as a screen or barrier
<i>Shepherdia canadensis</i>	Soapberry	In borders and as hedges
<i>Vaccinium corymbosum</i>	Highbush blueberry	in borders and as a screen or hedge
<i>Vaccinium membranaceum</i>	Black huckleberry	in borders and as hedges
<i>Vaccinium ovalifolium</i>	Oval-leaved blueberry	in borders and as hedges
<i>Vaccinium parvifolium</i>	Red huckleberry	in borders and as understory
<i>Viburnum edule</i>	High-bush cranberry	in borders and as barriers
EVERGREEN TREES		
<i>Arbutus unido</i>	Strawberry tree	Accent plant along edges and near entries, in borders, and as barrier or screen
<i>Laurus nobilis</i>	Sweet bay	Street tree, barrier or in containers
DECIDUOUS TREES		
<i>Castanea sativa</i>	Sweet Chestnut	
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	European filbert	Accent plant along edges and near entries, in borders, and as barrier or screen
<i>Cydonia oblonga</i>	Quince	Accent plant along edges and near entries, in borders, and espaliered as barrier or screen
<i>Ficus carica</i>	Fig	Shade trees in parks and espaliered as barrier or screen; dwarf varieties in containers
<i>Juglans regia</i>	Persian walnut	Shade trees in parks

SPECIES NAME	COMMON NAME	OTHER LANDSCAPE VALUE
<i>Malus fusca</i>	Wild crab-apple	Accent plant along edges and near entries, in borders, and espaliered as barrier or screen
<i>Malus species</i>	Apples	In parks and borders and espaliered as screens and hedges
<i>Morus nigra</i>	Mulberry	Background tree in borders, as a screen, and weeping varieties as accent trees
<i>Prunus dulcis var. dulcis</i>	Almond	Small shade trees and along streets; dwarf varieties in containers
<i>Prunus cerasus</i>	Sour cherry	Beautiful accent tree in park, yard, or border; dwarf varieties in containers
<i>Prunus salicina</i>	Japanese plum	Accent trees in borders; dwarf varieties in containers
<i>Pyrus communis</i>	Pear	Shade trees in parks and espaliered as barrier or screen; dwarf varieties in containers

Suggested Starter Plant List for Urban Agriculture Plots

The following plants were chosen based on meeting the following criteria:

- establish quickly and thus control potential weeds from sprouting
- drought tolerant
- not self seeding
- not considerable root mats to remove when plots are adopted
- non toxic
- take full sun
- do not display invasive characteristics

SPECIES	COMMON NAME	OTHER LANDSCAPE VALUE
PERENNIALS & HERBS		
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow	Drought tolerant. Does best in poor soil. Now grown for its yellow flowers. Believed to have cured Achilles famous heel.
<i>Agapanthus</i>	Lily of the Nile	Herbaceous perennial with blue or white flowers held high above the leaves in umbels. Protect crowns in winter or mulch.
<i>Agastache</i>	Agastache	Summer flowering, aromatic leaves. Needs full sun and fertile well drained soil.
<i>Alyssum</i>	Sweet Alyssum	Annual. Rounded heads of tiny scented white flowers. Needs sun and good drainage.
<i>Anacyclus</i>	Anacyclus or Pellitory	Prostrate perennial. Sun
<i>Anaphalis</i>	Pearly Everlasting	Flowers are often dried. Can be grown in part-shade.
<i>Arabis</i>	Rock Cress	Excellent ground cover for a rock garden
<i>Armeria maritima</i>	Sea Pink, Thrift	Narrow grassy leaves & small pink flowers. Good edging plant.
<i>Artemisia</i>	Wormwood	Semi-evergreen perennial. Silvery foliage. Low water use plant.
<i>Campanula carpatica</i>	Carpathian Harebell	Bell shaped blue or white flowers.
<i>Caryopteris</i>	Bluebeard	Deciduous small shrubs, Full sun and good drainage. Small numerous blue flowers. Frost hardy.
<i>Catananche</i>	Cupid's Dart	Perennial with bright cornflower blue flowers. Used in love potions!
<i>Centranthus ruber</i>	Red Valerian or Jupiter's Beard	Perennial, often seen by roadsides. Both roots and leaves are edible.
<i>Coreopsis verticilata</i>	Tickseed	Daisy like yellow flowers. Liked by some butterflies.

Appendix B (Continued)

SPECIES	COMMON NAME	OTHER LANDSCAPE VALUE
<i>Delosperma</i>	Iceplant	Low trailing perennial with succulent leaves. Bright pink and white flowers.
<i>Dianthus (not barbatus)</i>	Pinks	Perennial herb, sometimes an annual. Scented pink, white or purple flowers.
<i>Echinacea</i>	Purple Cone Flower	Summer flowering. Native to North America. Used historically as medicine by aboriginal people.
<i>Fragaria</i>	Strawberry	Both a cultivated fruit and a low growing native ground cover.
<i>Gaillardia hybrids</i>	Blanket Flower	Bright daisy-like annuals or perennials. Very drought tolerant. Early summer to early autumn bloom. Butterflies like them.
<i>Geraniums (not perargoniums)</i>	Cranesbills	Low herbaceous perennials. Aromatic leaves with small pink white or purple flowers. Long-lived and versatile.
<i>Helianthemum</i>	Rock Rose	Five-petaled brightly coloured flowers with small grey green leaves. Ideal for sunny rock gardens. Semi-evergreen sub-shrubs. Needs well-drained, fertile soil.
<i>Heuchera</i>	Coral Bells	Excellent foliage plants with multi-hued ruffled leaves. Tiny flowers on tall stems. Leaves are edible but astringent.
<i>Iberis</i>	Candytuft	Much used rock garden plant. Needs well drained soil. Fragrant white or purple flowers.
<i>Kniphofia</i>	Red Hot Poker	Native to streams sides and wet habitats in South Africa. Striking bi-colour flower spikes. Needs deep, fertile, moist soil and full sun.
<i>Liatris</i>	Gayfeather	Numerous small purple flowers clustered on tall spikes. Attractive to bees, Native to open prairies and woodlands.
<i>Liriope</i>	Lilyturf	Tufted grass-like evergreen perennials, native to acidic woodlands. Short spikes are followed by black berries. Good in partial shade.
<i>Oenothera</i>	Evening Primrose	Annuals or biennials. Fragrant yellow, pink or white flowers open at dusk or dawn and fade quickly. Excellent for a sunny rock garden.
<i>Penstemon</i>	Beardtongue	Free flowering. Native to a variety of habitats. Tubular flowers in white pink red and purple. Drought tolerant.

SPECIES	COMMON NAME	OTHER LANDSCAPE VALUE
<i>Perovskia</i>	Russian Sage	Silvery grey green leaves with spikes of lavender blue flowers. Closely related to Sage. Tall, deciduous shrubs to four feet high. Full sun.
<i>Persicaria affinis Dimity</i>	Fleece Flower	Mat-forming low perennial with dense spikes of light pink flowers. Flowers are long lasting and turn red in autumn. Vigorous.
<i>Phlomis</i>	Jerusalem Sage	Sage-like. Grown for the showy tubular flowers arranged in whorls with square stems. Can grow to 2 M high. Full sun.
<i>Phlox douglasii subulata</i>	Moss Phlox	Low mound forming evergreen perennial with narrow dark green leaves and five petaled white pink or lavender flowers.
<i>Pulsatilla</i>	Pasque Flower	Finely dissected fern-like leaves and silky bell shaped flowers. Full sun and well drained soil. Sap may irritate skin.
<i>Ratibida</i>	Prairie Coneflower	Cultivated for unusual daisy like flowers with tall central cones and backward curving petals. Full sun. Drought tolerant.
<i>Rudbeckia x hirta</i>	Cone flower	Yellow petaled flowers with brown, black or green disks on tall stems. Often grown as an annual. Moist, well drained soil.
<i>Salvia</i>	Flowering Sage	900 species, including Common Sage. Aromatic, often hairy leaves. Blue, white and red flowers born on whorls around square stems. Bees love this plant!
<i>Scabiosa</i>	Pincushion Flower	Native to sunny dry meadows and rocky slopes. Good cut flower. Must be protected from winter moisture.
<i>Sedum</i>	Stonecrop	Succulent perennial. Low water use. Panicles of small flowers blooming in late summer. Sap may irritate skin. Full sun.
<i>Teucrium</i>	Germander	Valued as an ornamental plant, a source of pollen and essential oils. Aromatic foliage.
<i>Verbascum hybrids</i>	Mullein	Short lived perennials. Rosette forming. Grey green leaves with large showy flowers. Hairy leaves and stems

Appendix B (Continued)

SPECIES	COMMON NAME	OTHER LANDSCAPE VALUE
<i>Verbena</i>	Vervain	Long flowering. The numerous small flowers are brightly coloured and are born on stiff upright stems. Ideal for containers or hanging baskets.
GRASSES		
<i>Andropogon scoparium</i>	Little Bluestem	Full sun. Low water use. 3-4' high. Fine foliage undulates in a breeze. Remains showy in winter.
<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>	Blue Grama	Small size (12" high) means it can be used in front of a border, in a rock garden or as a low maintenance lawn. Low water use.
<i>Briza media</i>	Quaking Grass	Native grass. Easy to grow. Large seed heads erupt over the foliage in late summer. Almost animated when touched by a gentle breeze.
<i>Carex commons</i>	Red Grass	Grows to 16". Flowering reddish foliage. Tolerates coastal conditions
<i>Carex flacca</i>	Blue Sedge	Tough sedge growing in diverse conditions from full sun to deep shade. Grows to 12". Good in rock gardens or as ground cover
<i>Carex oshimensis Evergold</i>	Oshima Sedge	Graceful weeping habit. Lush golden foliage. Full sun to dappled shade. Requires moist well drained soil.
<i>Elymus magellanicus</i>	Wheat Grass	Bluest of all grasses. Does best on part shade with moist soil.
<i>Festuca</i>	Fescue	Small tufted grasses. Fine thread like leaves. Drought tolerant.
<i>Helictotricon</i>	Oatgrass	Full sun, light shade and moist soil. Stunning display of tufted flower heads above grassy foliage.
<i>Leymus arenarius</i>	Lyme Grass	Large robust grass. Bluish leaves. Native grass often growing in sand dunes.
<i>Sesleria caerulea</i>	Moor Grass	Tiny mounds of spiky evergreen foliage. Competes well with tree roots. Moderate water
<i>Stipa tenuissima</i>		Neat compact grass. Stiff thread-like stems. In summer, covered with feathery seed heads, held high above the foliage. Well drained soil.

SPECIES	COMMON NAME	OTHER LANDSCAPE VALUE
HERBS		
<i>Hyssopus officinalis</i>	Hyssop	Full sun. Aromatic leaves and small blue flowers. Good companion plant. An ingredient in Eau de Cologne and the liqueur Chartreuse.
<i>Origanum vulgare</i>	Oregano	Full sun. Aromatic leaves Indispensable in cooking. Dried herb more flavourful than the fresh leaves. High in antioxidants.
<i>Salvia officinalis</i>	Sage	Full Sun. Woody stems, greyish leaves, purple flowers. Slight peppery taste. Widely used for cooking and for medicinal purposes
<i>Thymus vulgaris</i>	Thyme	Hot sunny location. Strongly flavoured leaves retain their taste when dried. Ancient Greeks believed Thyme inspired courage when burnt as incense.