

COMMUNITY GARDEN FACILITIES RULES OF USE

GENERAL GUIDELINES AND CONDITIONS

Cultivation

- Gardeners must keep their plots actively cultivated, well maintained, and free of weeds, debris, and encroachment beyond assigned boundaries.
- All plots must be kept free of debris, weeds, and excessive clutter.
- Produce from the garden is to be used for individual consumption and not as a commercial commodity.
- Only flowers, fruits, vegetables, and herbs may be grown in the plots. Planting trees and animal husbandry is not permitted. Cultivation of cannabis is prohibited in accordance with Saratoga Municipal Code 6-30.040 (a).

Maintenance

- Gardeners are responsible for assuring that the common areas and paths surrounding their plots remain clear at all times. Large piles of clippings, garden waste, etc. are to be removed immediately and are not to be left in garden paths.
- Only organic gardening techniques may be used. Treatment of pests and weeds must be non-toxic to humans and animals. Any deviation must be reviewed and approved by LGS Recreation.
- Gardeners must demonstrate consistent and active cultivation. Plots that are significantly inactive or underutilized may be subject to review and reassignment. A plot that is substantially inactive, fallow, or not being meaningfully used may be deemed neglected or abandoned.
- If a plot is deemed neglected or abandoned, the gardener will be notified and given 15 days to correct the issue before further action is taken. Gardeners absent for more than thirty (30) days must notify LGS Recreation and have an approved maintenance plan in place for their plot.

Water

- Plot holders will supply their own irrigation devices. It is each gardener's responsibility to periodically check hoses and connections for leaks.
- Gardeners using irrigation controllers must install and maintain a pressure-reducing valve
- Water must be used efficiently and only as needed. Gardeners are encouraged to utilize drip irrigation, mulch, and other water-conserving practices. Excessive water use may result in a required watering schedule for an individual gardener or the entire community garden. Excessive use includes, but is not limited to, water leaving the assigned plot or bed, runoff into pathways or adjacent plots, or unattended hoses running for 20 minutes or more. Failure to comply with or continued excessive use may result in removal from the program.

Corn and Sunflower Planting Restrictions

- To ensure equitable use of garden space, protect growing conditions for all gardeners, and prevent excessive shading of adjacent plots, corn and sunflowers may not be planted without prior written authorization from LGS Recreation.
- Any corn or sunflower plants installed without authorization are considered unauthorized plantings and may be removed by LGS Recreation staff without notice and at the gardener's expense, if applicable.
- Failure to comply with this requirement may result in the removal of unauthorized plants and may affect future participation in the Community Garden program.

Community

- Plot holders should donate time for the general upkeep of the Garden. Anyone causing ruts or damage to the common areas or paths is responsible for repairing that damage. Common areas are maintained as a shared responsibility by all plot holders and may not be used as growing areas.
- Two community sheds are available for shared use. Tools and equipment stored in the sheds are provided by the City of Saratoga for use by all gardeners. Personal belongings, private gardening supplies, and personal storage are not permitted in the sheds. The shed access code is the same as the garden gate code. Any personal items found in the sheds may be removed. Items may be held for a limited period or discarded if not claimed. Repeated violations of this policy may result in loss of garden privileges or removal from the program.
- No permanent structures may be erected in the garden. Nothing may be bolted, screwed, or permanently adhered to the garden bed. All items in or on the garden bed must be easily removable. Any growing structure not in use must be broken down and taken off site. All personal property must be contained within each gardener's bed. Storing personal items along the fence lines, pathways, or in common areas is not permitted.
- Trellises, structures, and vegetation may not exceed 6 feet in height above the garden bed and must be removed if they do. Any structure or vegetation over 6 feet in height must be maintained so as not to unreasonably obstruct sunlight to adjacent plots; items causing such obstruction must be trimmed, relocated, or removed. All plants and vines must remain within the boundaries of the assigned plot. Failure to comply with these guidelines may result in corrective action, including removal from the program.
- Fencing around individual plots is not permitted.
- Participation in periodic community workdays or shared maintenance activities may be required.
- Each plot holder will be issued a combination access for the lock on the gate. The combination lock is confidential and should not be shared. The gate must be locked when the garden is unoccupied. If you are the last to leave the garden, please be sure that your water is shut off and that the entrance gate, and storage shed is securely locked.
- Pets, except for ADA service animals, are not permitted in the gardens. **NO EXCEPTIONS!**

- Gardeners must always conduct themselves in a respectful and cooperative manner.

Greenhouse Use

- The community greenhouse is a shared resource intended to support seed starting, plant propagation, and seasonal growing for all gardeners.
- The greenhouse is for temporary use only. Plants, trays, and materials may not be stored long-term or left unattended for extended periods.
- All items placed in the greenhouse must be clearly labeled with the gardener's name and date. Unlabeled items may be removed at the discretion of LGS Recreation.
- Gardeners are responsible for monitoring and maintaining their plants, including watering, ventilation, and overall care. Neglected or dead plant material must be removed promptly.
- Space within the greenhouse is shared and limited. Gardeners must use only a reasonable amount of space and may not monopolize shelves or growing areas.
- The greenhouse must be kept clean and orderly at all times. All tools, soil, trays, and debris must be removed after use. The greenhouse is not a storage area.
- Only approved materials and organic practices may be used within the greenhouse. The use of chemicals or non-organic treatments is prohibited unless reviewed and approved by LGS Recreation.
- Greenhouse doors and vents must be properly secured after use to maintain appropriate growing conditions.
- Personal equipment may not be permanently installed or left in the greenhouse.
- Failure to follow greenhouse guidelines may result in removal of materials, suspension of greenhouse privileges, or further disciplinary action in accordance with garden policies.

Encouraged Conduct

- Sharing of tools, equipment, produce, or plants
- Friendly, cooperative activities
- Pleasant conversation with other gardeners

Discouraged Conduct

- Rudeness
- Hostile language or tone
- Failure to respond in a timely manner to communications from LGS Recreation regarding the care, maintenance, or compliance of assigned garden plots

Prohibited Conduct

- Theft of tools, equipment, produce, or plant
- Vandalism of tools, equipment, and City property
- Hostile language or tone
- The use of foul language and offensive behavior including but not limited to threats, intimidation, violence, racial /ethnic slurs and sexual harassment
- Damaging the plot or plants of another gardener
- The use of tobacco, alcoholic beverages, or illegal drugs of any kind, in any area of the City's community garden

- Storing gardening supplies outside of the assigned plots
- Repeated violations may result in termination of garden privileges, reassignment of the plot, or removal from the program.
- Failure to pay registration fees by the deadline
- Neglecting or abandoning plot as defined under Maintenance

In the event of non-compliance with any of the Terms & Conditions, the following procedure will be followed:

- Violations may result in a written warning and a 15-day correction period, unless the violation is severe enough to warrant immediate removal. Repeated violations may result in termination of garden privileges and reassignment of the plot. LGS Recreation reserves the right to revoke privileges immediately for egregious violations, safety concerns, theft, threats, harassment, or intentional damage.

Rentals/Renewals

- The new occupants are taking over responsibility for the garden as it is. They will be responsible for maintaining it and making any adjustments needed to bring it to a reasonable condition.
- A community gardener or gardener helper may not garden more than one garden plot. No more than one plot per household shall be allowed. (See Appendix A for “legacy gardener” exception.)
- Garden access is granted to the “primary” and “helper” gardener listed on the approved rental application. Any other persons in the garden must be accompanied by a “primary” or “helper” plot holder. Gate combinations may not be shared with anyone else.
- The “primary” gardener on the approved rental application must actively garden the plot. There shall be no allowance for a “helper” gardener from another household to be the primary gardener.
- Effective January 1, 2026, garden plots will be assigned for an initial term of up to three years. During that term, gardeners must renew annually by submitting registration, proof of residency if applicable, and payment by the stated deadline. Annual renewal is contingent upon the gardener remaining in good standing and in compliance with all garden rules. Plots are issued on a first-come, first-served basis, with priority given to Saratoga residents. A resident is defined as someone who resides within the City of Saratoga, either owning or renting their primary residence.
- Existing non-resident gardeners may retain their plots for up to three years, after which plots may be reassigned to Saratoga residents if demand exists.
- Gardeners who want to transfer plots within the garden may request a transfer by contacting LGS Recreation. When a plot becomes available, current gardeners may request transfer before the plot is made available to those on the wait list. Relocation of garden plots will be by seniority in the garden. Seniority status will be skipped if a gardener has any written warnings in the previous 12 months.
- Priority among applicants on the waiting list will be based on the length of time on the official waiting list. Residents with the greatest amount of time on the wait list will be given priority. Applicants at the top of the waitlist have five (5) business days to respond once a plot becomes available. If a plot becomes available and a response is not received within five (5) business days, the plot will be offered to the next person on the wait list.

- Prospective gardeners at the top of a wait list must accept the next plot to become available. Remaining at the top of the wait list to obtain a plot in a more ideal location is not allowed. Prospective gardeners may request to be added to the bottom of the wait list if they do not accept the next plot available.
- An annual plot rental fee is determined by LGS Recreation annually beginning July 1, 2026 and will be assessed to all gardeners. Garden plots are issued on a year-to-year basis. At registration and during renewal periods, gardeners are required to provide proof of residency, signed garden application, and payment of annual garden fees. The person whose signature appears as the primary gardener on the application form is ultimately responsible for the garden plot and for payment of all fees and charges.
- The annual plot rental period is from January 1st through December 31st. Gardeners may not begin gardening until their annual fee has been paid in full. The rental fee is not transferable. Plot holders do not have any ownership interest in the plots and may not transfer a plot to anyone else, including family and friends. Garden plots that become available will be re-assigned to new gardeners by LGS Recreation.

Appendix A: Legacy Gardeners

- “Legacy gardeners” are plot renters previously identified by City staff who were actively gardening at the El Quito Park Community Garden in 2024. Prior to the garden renovation in winter 2024/2025, legacy gardeners-maintained plots ranging from approximately 600 to 1,000 square feet. To provide comparable growing space, the following provisions apply:
- Legacy gardeners may rent up to four (4) 6’ x 18’ raised garden beds in 2025. Standard Garden fees apply per bed and will be multiplied by the total number of beds rented.
- Legacy gardeners must meet residency requirements and comply with all garden rules and standards each year to maintain their rental(s).
- Legacy gardeners may reduce the number of beds rented in subsequent years but may not increase the number of beds from the previous year. Legacy gardener status will expire in January 2029, at which time all households will be limited to one (1) garden bed.