



# Community Gardens

Strategy 2022-2032

Adopted 13 December 2022



## Acknowledgement of Country

Shellharbour City Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land and recognise their continued connection to the land. Council pays it's respect to Elders past present and emerging and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.


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# Project Context

The development of the Community Gardens Strategy supports the following objectives and strategies of the Community Strategic Plan (CSP) the Community's vision for the City, "We are a naturally balanced, vibrant and connected community". The Community Gardens Strategy also supports the following objectives and strategies of the CSP.

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- CSP Objective:** 1.1 We inspire community spirit  
**Strategy:** 1.1.2 Work within our communities to connect people, build resilience and opportunities to participate in community life

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  - CSP Objective:** 1.2 We are a liveable community  
**Strategy:** 1.2.1 Inclusive, accessible and safe spaces for our entire community  
**Strategy:** 1.2.2 Promote healthy living and high-quality public spaces that are well maintained and activated

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  - CSP Objective:** 2.1 We are sustainable  
**Strategy:** 2.1.3 Partner with the community to inspire innovative practices that promote sustainability

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  - CSP Objective:** 4.1 We deliver our future together  
**Strategy:** 4.1.1 The community is meaningfully engaged and active in shaping the future of our city

Throughout this Strategy, there are a number of actions identified that will be implemented over the next 10 years. Actions will be reported on every 1, 4 and 10 years in line with Council's Operational Plan, Delivery Program and Community Strategic Plan.

# Why do we need a Community Gardens Strategy?

The Shellharbour Open Space and Recreation Needs Study and Strategy (2020) identified an ongoing demand within the community for the provision of community gardens, highlighting the importance of continued maintenance and support by Council. The Strategy identifies the following Action 1.10 *Develop a Shellharbour Community Gardens Strategy designed to encourage all-age access and use of specified open spaces.*

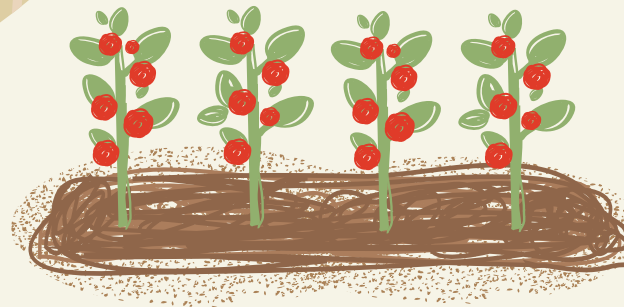
The Community Gardens Strategy provides a strategic focus for establishing and expanding the Community Gardens network across Shellharbour City and has been prepared in consultation with existing community garden groups and the wider community.

Council encourages residents of all ages and abilities to enjoy local open spaces through the provision of space for features such as community gardens.



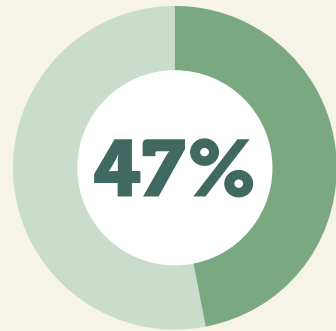
## What is a community garden?

In Shellharbour City, community gardens are areas of allocated space on Council owned community (public) land, which operate for the primary purposes of growing fresh food and promoting food security through educational, social, cultural and environmental activities.



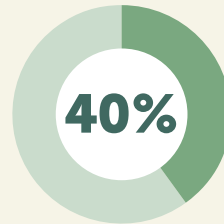
# What does the community of Shellharbour think about Community Gardens?

Council undertook a survey using the Let's Chat engagement portal, the survey captured feedback on various elements of community gardens. The survey results and themes captured have informed the preparation of this Strategy and its actions.

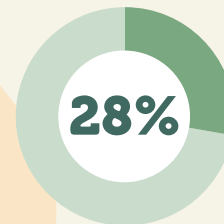


of respondents participated in a Community Garden at the time of the survey.

Community gardens are mostly attended



Several times a week



Once a week



What the community likes about community gardens:

- culture
- knowledge sharing
- connection to community
- growing and gardening
- events



What the community dislikes about community gardens:

- restricted access
- located on temporary sites
- security
- lack of infrastructure and maintenance

Should community gardens always provide public access?

**YES**  
37%

The garden is a community resource

**NO**  
25%

Vandalism concerns

**UNSURE**  
38%

# What does the community of Shellharbour think about community gardens?

## Important features in a community garden:

- Sustainable
- Supporting infrastructure
- Permanent storage
- Easy to find and access
- Open to community and welcoming
- Public transport or footpath access
- Car parking
- Co-located with recreational facilities



## Guidance requested from Council:

- Tools/Templates
- Learning Sponsorship/Partnerships
- Funding Partnerships
- Assurance via licence agreement



## How can community garden experiences be enhanced?

- Mentoring
- Events – workshops, education, open days
- Culture
- Start-up funding and grant opportunities
- Group structure and expectations setting
- Infrastructure – Water, shade, seating, hub
- Open access / Open days for communities
- Amenities



## Council's role in community gardens

Shellharbour City Council is responsible for implementing the actions within this strategy, and assessing and responding to garden requests, in accordance with relevant legislation. Shellharbour City Council will inform groups of relevant opportunities, such as grant funding.

Council at times, has also found itself responsible for the maintenance and removal of community gardens that cease to operate. Council's experience with existing community gardens and community consultation has identified the need for a formal strategy, policy and process to be developed, informing community, developers and Council of processes to establish, maintain and sometimes decommission gardens that cease to operate.

## Community gardens and sustainability

Supporting community gardens and the growing of plants that are adapted to our changing local climate, and encouraging local fruit and vegetable production, can support Council in achieving its environment and sustainability goals.

As our community and built environment change, it is anticipated that interest in, and demand for, community gardens will also change. Expansion of our community gardens network should be strategic and sustainable.





# Open Space Network

The Shellharbour City Local Government Area has approximately 200 parks and reserves as part of a broad open space network. Council is committed to ensuring that our open spaces provide variety and opportunities for the wider community; this means providing different open space experiences, such as community gardens.

It is important that when planning for community gardens that the following elements are considered:

- Accessibility
- Provide variety
- Inclusivity
- Suitable soil and landscape
- Proximity to other open space uses
- Proposals are consistent with relevant legislation and guidelines

As community gardens in the Shellharbour City LGA are located on public land, the keeping of animals is not considered appropriate.



# Public access to community gardens

Community land is by nature, for the community. The land is owned by Council and governed by the Local Government Act 1993 (the Act). Community gardens located on community land are to adhere to the requirements of the Act and therefore, Council has an obligation to ensure public access to parks and community gardens.

Community gardens should be welcoming and inclusive places. Inclusive practices can be deliberately planned, through physical garden design, diverse opportunities for participation, a welcoming group culture, regular promotion, clear communication and connecting with the broader community.

To promote public access to a garden, Shellharbour City Council has a preference for no fencing or low-level fencing. The need for fencing and locking of gates will be assessed on an individual basis. If you plan a fence for your garden, the garden should be open to the public when a community garden member is present.

Community gardens must demonstrate how access to the land by the public will be facilitated and managed including how relevant details such as contacts, will be displayed.

# Liability and Risk Management

It is the responsibility of a community garden group to be aware of their duty of care for members and community, ensure safe access into and within the garden site is maintained and that potential risks are managed.



# Getting started: How to establish a community garden

Council recognises that many members of the community are interested in the idea of joining or establishing a community garden, however, are not sure where to start. The development of a Community Garden Guide will assist community in site selection, organisation and planning for community gardens. It will provide instruction to community members and assist in structuring their community garden application to Council.

## Funding and resourcing

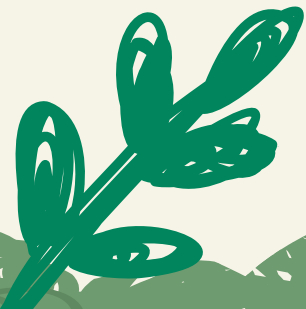
Each community garden will have varied financial goals, depending on the focus of the community garden. When planning to establish a community garden the garden group must consider income sources for necessary financial expenditure and develop a budget. Community garden groups may request associated structures such as a tool shed, fencing and seating. Such structures will be assessed on a case by case basis and may require approval from Council.

## What does a community garden group look like?

- Must be an incorporated association
- Is made up of interested local residents willing to participate
- Provides support to the existing and new garden group members
- Has a Garden Management Group
- Has the skills to organise, manage and maintain a community garden group, or have a mentor to assist in garden management
- Demonstrates the capacity to fund the garden and the ongoing maintenance requirements of the garden
- Complies with Council's policies and this Strategy
- Pays for all fees and charges prevailing at the time
- Responsible for removal if garden ceases to operate

### Why an Incorporated Association?

A private or commercial organisation will not be permitted to operate on a community land, hence the requirement to be a registered not for profit/an incorporated association. This requires a management committee, annually elected office bearers and commitment to holding regular meetings. This arrangement promotes responsibility to be shared among members, and maintains transparency within the group, as all documents (including minutes and budgets) can be shared if required. Becoming an incorporated association can impact the longevity of the garden by enabling the group to open a bank account and apply for government grants.



## Reporting on the community garden

Reflecting on community garden operations provides an opportunity for feedback and assessment of what has occurred over time. This can help to inform the ongoing development of the community garden.

# Community Garden Strategy | Actions

This Strategy has informed a number of Actions that will be implemented by Council over the next 10 years. These actions will be reported on every 1, 4 and 10 years in line with Council's Operational Plan, Delivery Program and Community Strategic Plan.

## Actions

1. Develop a Community Gardens Policy
2. Develop a Community Gardens Guide to assist in the planning and development of community gardens. The Guide will address:
  - Roles and responsibilities
  - Funding and resourcing considerations
  - Mitigation and management of potential impacts
  - Application to Council
  - Site selection criteria
  - Reporting on the community garden.
3. Establish a community garden webpage on Council's website, to:
  - Provide a register of community gardens
  - Inform community gardens of opportunities such as grant funding
  - Facilitate partnerships
4. Develop a business process to improve the assessment of community garden applications



# Periodic Review

This Strategy should be reviewed 12 months after adoption and every 5 years afterward, or as required.

## References

- Shellharbour City Dog Friendly Spaces Strategy, 2019
- City of Fremantle Community Gardening Guide
- Shellharbour Open Space and Recreation Strategy, 2020
- City of Sydney Community Garden Guidelines, 2016
- Kiama Municipal Council, Community Gardens Policy
- Community Gardens Australia - <https://communitygarden.org.au/>
- Eurobodalla Shire Council Community Garden Guidelines
- City of Melbourne, Guide to Community Gardening in the City of Melbourne.
- Ground Rules: A Legal Toolkit for Community Gardens. National Policy and Legal Analysis Network and ChangeLab Solutions





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