



# Gardens in the Parks

## Operating Procedures and Handbook



DeKalb County Recreation, Parks & Cultural Affairs  
*Managed by the Greenspace Division*

1950 West Exchange Pl. Tucker, GA / (404) 371-2711 / Revised 12/16, **Pending Final Approval**



## The DeKalb County Gardens in the Park Handbook and Operating Procedures

### Executive Summary

The attached guidelines function as a living document representing the most up-to-date version of the department's policies, codes, guidelines, and operational/administrative procedures related to the Gardens in the Parks program. Throughout these points is an urgent need for organically grown, fresh produce to be the vehicle through which the public – you, your family, your neighbors, and your circle of influence – truly learn the importance of a “ground-to-gut” lifestyle. Enclosed is a wealth of information regarding best practices for starting and ending a garden, intra- and inter-group communication, fee schedules, maintenance expectations, water usage, safety, as well as hands-on technical advice for creating compost bins, raised beds, tool sheds, and more! For questions on any of the contents, or otherwise, please contact Victoria Burgos at (404) 371-2188 or [vrburgos@dekalbcountyga.gov](mailto:vrburgos@dekalbcountyga.gov). The office of Greenspace, Acquisition & Planning (within Parks, Recreation & Cultural Affairs) is located at 3681 Chestnut St. in Scottdale, GA 30079.

*Thank you for choosing to be a change agent for your community by dedicating to an activity which is decidedly ecologically, economically, and socially sound. Know that you are making an impact every day, for which we are extremely grateful!*

### Acknowledgements

DeKalb County Government's Gardens in the Parks Committee (Greenspace, Acquisition & Planning Department, DeKalb County Cooperative Extension, DeKalb County Watershed Management Grounds/Facilities) and the DeKalb County Board Health's Strategic Alliance for Health Program for their technical assistance and support in drafting the guidelines.

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## The DeKalb County Gardens in the Park Handbook and Operating Procedures

### 1.0 Purpose

The intent of this document is to serve as a guideline to protect existing gardens, and to establish uniformity for the development of additional community gardens within the park system. Additional garden sites will increase access to healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate foods, which encourage community-building.

### 2.0 Definitions

**County:** DeKalb County, Georgia or its representative (see “Program Manager”).

**Communal plot or gardening area:** Allocated gardening space for cultivating vegetables, fruits and ornamentals available to all gardeners.

**Community garden:** Site operated and maintained by committed volunteers where:

- A publicly owned parcel of land in the park is used to grow produce and/or ornamentals for non-commercial use through individual or shared plots, and
- The growing space inside plots/beds is primarily dedicated to growing food.
- Demonstration gardening or other instructional programming may be offered and
- Shared tools and common expenses are covered through the collection of membership fees and/or donations.

**Gardens in the Parks:** Urban community gardening program operated by THE COUNTY.

**Demonstration plants:** Include ornamentals and edible plants that are primarily educational

**Default:** Gardening group’s failure or refusal to (a) complete the permit application process, (b) comply with the application requirements, and/or (c) comply with the terms of the Gardens in the Parks policy guidelines. Default can lead to termination of garden permit.

**Disability access:** Barrier-free accommodations for persons with a diversity of abilities

**Edible plants:** Plants that can be eaten often referred to as vegetables, fruits, and herbs. This includes all parts of the plant that’s edible including root, seeds, leaves, fruit, flower, and stems.

**Garden Group:** Organized group of individuals from the community who maintain a community garden and are collectively represented by the Garden Coordinator.

**Garden Site Coordinator:** Community gardener who is selected (identified by the garden members to (a) serve as the primary representative of the gardening group and (b) manage the administrative components of the community garden site at the park.

**Garden member:** Regular participant in a community garden who has signed a garden agreement specifying conditions for membership (see “membership”)

**Garden permit:** Registration notice that gives approval and permission to garden at a park site. A garden permit is valid for one year, unless otherwise noted.

**Garden plot:** Gardening spaces for food production (cultivating vegetables, fruits, herbs, edible plants).

**Garden Program Manager:** County’s representative who manages its Gardens in the Parks program

**Hazardous materials:** Any material that, because of its quantity, concentration, or physical or chemical characteristics, poses a significant present or potential hazard to human health and safety or to the environment if released into the environment.

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**Irrigation:** Artificial means of supplying water to plants.

**Maintenance:** Practice of keeping the garden safe for public use and in a usable condition.

**Membership:** Privilege conferred upon a garden member to access the community garden for gardening or non-gardening purposes in exchange for certain responsibilities by that member.

**Ornamentals:** Plants grown mainly for beauty/decorative value and pollination.

**Permit application:** Required County application for the Gardens in the Parks program.

**Registration notice:** Written acknowledgement by the County to proceed with the community garden. A registration notice is valid for one year unless otherwise noted (see garden permit).

**Standard amenities:** Necessary infrastructure for the basic function of a garden.

**Termination:** End or revocation of garden policy permit

**Utilities:** Water, electricity, and lighting

**Waste removal:** Removal of excessive vegetation and/or solid-waste (organic, inorganic, or hazardous) accumulation from a garden.

### 3.0 Garden Elements

#### 3.1 Garden Space

##### **Policies:**

- All operations conducted by the Garden Group must remain within the garden space. The permit may be revoked if Garden Group operations expand beyond the boundaries set by THE COUNTY.
- The Garden Group is entirely responsible for the development, construction, upkeep, watering, and overall maintenance of the community garden, subject to the guidelines and standards herein.
- Members of the Garden Group may grow, for non-commercial use only, edible plants and ornamentals. The sale of produce or other garden products, or any other item, on county property is prohibited unless a permit is issued by PARKS DEPARTMENT.
- Natural Gardening practices only
  - No chemical pest control measures, including pesticides and herbicides, may be used without prior written approval from PARKS DEPARTMENT.
- No installation or construction activities may take place without permission from PARKS DEPARTMENT, and where applicable THE COUNTY Government.
- No permanent structures or murals make take place or other permanent works of art may be built in the garden without permission from PARKS DEPARTMENT and, where applicable, THE COUNTY Government.
- Motorized vehicles
  - No automobiles, trucks, or other motorized vehicles may be stored or parked at any time in the garden.
- Non-motorized vehicles.
  - Non-motorized wheeled recreational equipment may not be used or worn inside the garden (ex. roller skates, skateboards, bicycles, non- motorized scooters, and retractable roller sneakers [commonly known by their brand name "Heelys"]).
  - Bike racks are permitted at the garden with prior approval from PARKS DEPARTMENT.

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### 3.2 Garden Plots

#### **Policies:**

- Consider a plot size of roughly 4'x10' in order to reach the center of the plot easily.
- Plots may be level with the ground or in a raised container. Wheelchair accessible plots should be designed according to accessibility codes.
- Develop and sustain edible community gardens plots.
- Consider dedication of row(s) for donations to community partners and food assistance programs, eg. community food pantries and “plant a row”-type campaigns.
- Plots should be visibly defined, such as with concrete blocks or plastic headers.
- Pressure-treated lumber is to be avoided, since the chemical preservative can leach into the soil.

### 3.3 Irrigation

*Irrigation is the artificial means of supplying water to plants. In community gardens, irrigation is typically achieved through hand watering with a hose. Hose bibs should be located to permit a hose to reach all plots. Automatic sprinkler systems are not typically compatible in a community garden environment since the watering needs are not uniform.*

#### **Policies:**

- The Garden Group is required to start an account with THE COUNTY Watershed Management Department for water service. If the Garden Group fails to pay its water bill for two (2) consecutive billing periods, the community garden permit will be revoked.
- Drip irrigation tubing may be installed by the gardeners.
- Wherever practical, rain barrels should be incorporated into the garden design and construction to provide water for plants and promote conservation of resources. The installation of rain barrels will be site-specific and will depend on the availability of a nearby roofed structure to capture rainfall. Garden Groups will work with county staff to determine the feasibility of rain barrel installations.

### 3.4 Tool Shed and Storage Chests

#### **Policies:**

- Limit one shed per community garden.
- Tool sheds should be sturdy and lockable to prevent theft and vandalism.
- Install plywood flooring or gravel to prevent contact with ground moisture.
- Community garden tool and storage sheds may not be used for private storage.

### 3.5 Compost Bin

*Compost bins are used to decompose organic garden waste. A system of compost bins should be in place to facilitate stages of decomposition. Since compost bins may produce offensive odors, attract flies, and appear unsightly, they should be located appropriately. Compost bins require adequate clearance to load and unload around them.*

#### **Policies:**

- THE COUNTY is not responsible for maintenance of piles. If piles are not maintained properly, they may be removed.
- It is recommended that compost bins have secured lids, particularly if they contain food waste.
- Avoid locating compost bins adjacent to a main pedestrian pathway.
- Recycled plastic is recommended and pressure-treated lumber is to be avoided since chemical preservatives may leach into the decomposing compost.
- Community gardeners may choose to remove organic waste and compost off site.
- Avoid accumulation of garbage or debris (non compost matter) in the garden.

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### 3.6 Pathways

#### **Policies:**

- Bark mulch on pathways suppresses weedy growth, retains moisture and returns nutrients to the soil through decomposition. Bark mulch is not considered a wheelchair accessible surface.
- Bricks, stones, concrete pavers, and other materials are allowed on pathways between plots and through the garden, but must not be permanently installed (i.e. with concrete or other adhesive).
- If grass strips are used between garden plots, the Garden Group is responsible for cutting or trimming the grass. THE COUNTY will not be responsible for any maintenance within the designated Garden Space.
- Wheelchair accessible paths are not required at community gardens constructed by garden groups. However, attempts should be made to accommodate individuals with physical limitations.

### 3.7 Fences, Gates, and Security

*Community gardens are un-staffed public facilities used largely by garden members. As a public facility, the general public is permitted access to community gardens for their enjoyment; however, illicit activities and vandalism may put garden members and plots at risk. For this reason, the installation of fencing and gates is allowed, subject to the standards described below. Special requests for fencing materials will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Provisions may be required for public access per Section 4.5 Public Access.*

#### **Policies:**

- Fences are not to exceed a height of 5 feet.
- All fencing material must be approved by PARKS DEPARTMENT. Acceptable materials include aluminum, galvanized or coated steel, red cedar, and vinyl; other materials will be considered. Shall not be opaque, not solid (ex. red cedar picket fencing)
- THE COUNTY representatives must have access into community gardens at all times.
- Installation of fencing and lockable gates will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and subject to approval by PARKS DEPARTMENT.
- Poor visibility into the garden may endanger gardeners and visitors to an unsafe condition, such as entrapment; therefore, community gardens enclosed with fencing greater than 4 feet in height should have at least *two* points of egress.

### 3.8 Bulletin and Message Boards

*Bulletin and message boards promote the sense of community through the sharing of information between garden members and with the general public.*

#### **Policies:**

- General community announcements are permitted.
- Locate bulletin boards in high traffic areas for increased visibility. The tool shed is an appropriate location for notices.
- Visibly Post garden guidelines and rules.
- Any outdated materials should be removed promptly.
- Any postings that are discriminatory or offensive in nature are not permitted. THE COUNTY reserves the right to remove any posted materials that THE COUNTY deems inappropriate or offensive.
- Commercial advertisements are not permitted on park property. Soliciting is prohibited.

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### 3.9 Construction and Installation of Garden Elements

*Since these gardens are in a public setting, these spaces should be designed and built with the public's safety in mind. Community gardeners may install decorative, non-structural garden elements for non-human use; e.g. birdbath, statuary, bean poles, etc. Infrastructure regulated by municipal codes (such as underground waterlines and electrical wiring) are to be installed by THE COUNTY or a qualified contractor. A qualified contractor may be hired under contract or provide pro bono services, as approved by THE COUNTY. In-depth codes found at: [https://www.municode.com/library/ga/dekalb\\_county/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances](https://www.municode.com/library/ga/dekalb_county/codes/code_of_ordinances)*

#### **Policies:**

- Typical garden elements under County supervision include: gates, fences, compost bins, tool sheds, steps, shade trellis, benches, potting tables, and underground irrigation lines.
- Requests for improvements by THE COUNTY are to be made directly to the Garden Program Manager through the Garden Coordinator.
- No installation or construction activities may take place without permission from PARKS DEPARTMENT and, where applicable, THE COUNTY.
  - A qualified contractor proposing to perform work in a community garden must provide proof of the proper license and liability insurance to THE COUNTY for approval prior to any construction or installation activity.
  - Qualifications for the construction or installation of a garden element will be at THE COUNTY's discretion.
- No permanent structures, murals, or other permanent works of art may be built in the garden without permission from PARKS DEPARTMENT and where applicable THE COUNTY.

### 3.10 Maintenance and Repair of Garden Elements

*Maintenance will increase the useful life of garden elements. Certain garden features may need repair from time to time due to normal wear and tear.*

#### **Policies:**

- Each garden member is responsible for the maintenance of his/her assigned plot and to participate in the ongoing maintenance of common areas within the garden.
- Typical repair responsibilities by garden members include the replacement of individual wood boards, removal of waste materials, filling in rutted pathways, and pruning of small trees.

### 3.11 Miscellaneous

#### **Policies:**

- To minimize disruption to circulation, do not block sidewalks or pathways with stockpiles of materials, such as manure, woodchips, tools, garden debris, etc.
- Stockpile of materials may appear unsightly; therefore, locate them in consideration of public visibility. Stockpiles should be temporary and appropriate arrangements should be made to remove the stockpile promptly.
- No smoking in the garden.

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### 4.0 Organizational Structure

#### 4.1 Governance Structure

*Gardens are evolving entities. There are a few basic organizational needs that must be met on the part of the participants to ensure the overall success of the garden. As long as there is open communication and documentation to avoid any later confusion, a variety of systems can work.*

#### **Policies:**

- Garden Groups shall not discriminate in any way against any person on the grounds of race, creed, religion, color, sex, age, national origin, disability, marital status, or sexual orientation.
- Garden members must select a Garden Coordinator (the Primary Contact) to oversee the Garden Rules and to be the main contact with THE COUNTY representative.

#### ***Typical Garden Coordinator's responsibilities:***

1. Assign plots on first come, first serve basis.
  2. Collect plot fees as necessary and send financial reports as requested to the Community Garden Program Manager.
  3. Maintain a waiting list of interested gardeners.
  4. Re-assign plots to those on the waiting list.
  5. Orient all new gardeners to the space; i.e., explain water use, communal space use, workday expectations, etc.
  6. Post all documentation in a set location in the garden, such as Garden Rules and a copy of the plot agreement.
  7. Collect signed plot agreements from all gardeners and provide a copy to the signed gardener with the Garden Rules.
  8. Collect signed Release and Indemnification Agreement. Forward agreements with original signatures to the Community Garden Program Manager.
  9. Submit documentation regarding the use, outreach, and impact of the community garden to the Community Garden Program Manager as requested.
  10. Maintain a list of all active gardeners and keep the Community Garden Program Manager updated on any changes.
  11. If a plot appears inactive, notify the gardener with first a verbal warning, then a written notice.
  12. Coordinate garden workdays to maintain the communal spaces or to work on special projects.
  13. Call garden-wide meetings at least twice a year for the purpose of discussing issues, sharing ideas and goals, holding annual elections for the Garden Coordinator position (if applicable with leadership structure), conducting workdays, etc. Any meeting that provides advance notification to all of its members is considered a "garden-wide meeting". If unable to attend, please keep the current Community Garden Program Manager aware of what was discussed in said meeting.
  14. Collect garden dues from members that may be used for tools, events, or special projects decided upon by consensus of the membership.
  15. Communicate with the Community Garden Program Manager for resource information, questions, and extraneous maintenance needs, as well as with other community garden coordinators county-wide.
- The garden members may collectively decide to elect or appoint other positions, such as treasurer, secretary, or an events chair to share some of the responsibilities. Other leadership roles for the garden may include membership & outreach coordination, meeting & workday coordination, and common space coordination. Only the Garden Coordinator position is required by THE COUNTY; other positions are at the discretion of the garden members.

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- Garden members shall, by consensus (general agreement or majority vote):
  - Create rules for fair and safe on-going operation of the garden, as needed.
  - Decide on a means of storing any funds that are collected and disbursing them.
  - Institute a means of keeping common areas, the paths between plots, outside of fences that surround the garden, etc. in a safe and tidy condition.
  - Decide on interim use and upkeep for vacant plots until a new garden member is assigned to that plot. Ideas include weeding and treating with compost, planting a pollinator garden, or seeding cover crops such as clover to keep soil nutritious.
  - Establish a system for informing gardeners when there is information that they need to know or tasks they need to do, making sure that all gardeners have access to this information.
  - Interact with other agencies, maintaining good relations with any pertinent county or private agencies that work with community gardens, with landowners, and with the surrounding community (i.e. Watershed Department, American Community Gardening Association, Park Pride, Foodwell Alliance, neighborhood associations, local urban farms, etc.).

### 4.2 Application, Fees, & Membership

*Community gardens are comprised of plot allotments maintained by an individual or group of gardeners, common areas, and perhaps communal gardening areas. THE COUNTY will sign an agreement with an individual or group to manage the overall community garden. The Garden Coordinator will then recruit gardeners who will be assigned a plot.*

#### **Policies:**

##### Application

- An application package including all supporting documents and fees must be submitted to the PARKS DEPARTMENT.
- After receipt of registration notice, within three months/season (depending on the season and sooner if applicable), Garden Group agrees to:
  - Send a representative to at least one education workshop offered by DeKalb Cooperative Extension or other gardening/horticulture workshop
  - Post a sign approved by PARKS DEPARTMENT at the Garden stating that the garden is part of THE COUNTY Gardens in the Parks program, including : (a) the name of the group and (b) a contact name and number.
  - Proceed with the garden (design and install at the assigned park)
- An annual “renewal” application is required and is subject to approval by County if Garden Group complies with the terms and conditions set forth and continues to meet the application criteria.
- Renewal applications must include (a) copies of the most recent registration notice; (b) most recent site visit forms on file with the PARKS DEPARTMENT; and (c) at least two photographs of the existing garden; and (d) documentation of attendance to one education workshop (gardening, horticulture).
- If the group has not complied with the terms or fails to renew the application, or abandons the garden, the PARKS DEPARTMENT will not renew the application. After the Gardening Coordinator and the Gardening Group has been notified, the gardening site will be made available to other eligible Garden Groups.
- Termination may result if a gardening group fails or refuses to (a) complete the permit application process, (b) comply with the application requirements, and/or (c) comply with the terms of the Gardens in the Parks policy guidelines
- If any problem is not addressed within 15 business days, the permit may be deemed revoked and any reinstatement may require a new permit application fee and a new registration fee.
- If the Garden Group decides to no longer maintain its space, it must immediately notify

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- Garden Program Manager in writing and it must cancel its account with the Watershed Management Department.
- Once a community garden permit is terminated, THE COUNTY retains the right to remove all materials from the garden area and require the Garden Group to do so first.
- Ideas for reclamation once terminated: pollinator garden, nutritious ground cover such as clover

### Fees

- All fees are set forth by THE COUNTY and are due with the application package.
- Fees are subject to change (See current application for fee structure, requirements, and deadlines).
- The garden group may not profit from subleasing a plot within the community garden.

### Membership

- Membership to a community garden and the opportunity to garden is open to all County residents.
- Membership and plot assignments should be managed by the Gardening Coordinator.
  - Membership to the garden is not required for access.
  - Access to the community garden for enjoyment by the general public is permitted and must be reasonably facilitated.
- It is up to the Garden Coordinator and garden members within each garden to establish the amount for annual dues for each plot.
- Collected fees can be used for overall maintenance, care of common spaces, and shared garden supplies and materials.
  - Priority for plot space should be given to DeKalb County residents.
- All members of the Garden Group must sign an Acknowledgement of Community Garden Responsibilities and Guidelines and the Release and Indemnification Agreement. The Garden Group and all of its members must abide by all federal, state, and local rules regarding non-discrimination.
- To optimize opportunities for participation, THE COUNTY is limiting each person to one plot only, and two plots per household (i.e., address). More than one person may be assigned the same plot.
- All gardens must maintain an active waiting list. Participation must be made from a waiting list on a first-come, first serve basis. Publicly post an updated wait list annually at the garden. The waiting list may also be posted on the garden's website.
- Membership Roster:
  - Active Gardens: Annually, the Garden Coordinator shall provide a list of the names and contact information for all members of the Gardening Group.
  - New Gardens: Within three months of approval of the initial year, the Garden Site Coordinator shall provide a list of names and contact information for all members of the Gardening Group.

### 4.3 County's Waiver of Liability

*By signing the waiver, the participant acknowledges the risks involved by participating in the activity and that the participant is responsible for his/her own actions. However, the participant does not waive any rights to file a claim. The waiver also applies to participants involved in a gardening program on other public property that is managed by PARKS DEPARTMENT or other county departments. This protects both the public's interest and the community gardener.*

#### **Policies:**

- Each garden member must sign the Release and Indemnification Agreement (liability waiver) prior to conducting any gardening activity on public property.
- Due to the constantly changing composition of garden membership, the Garden Site Coordinator shall assist THE COUNTY in collecting signed liability waivers from the community garden members.
- Visitors to community gardens are not required to sign the liability waiver.

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### 4.4 Maintenance

*Day-to-day maintenance is the responsibility of the gardener members. Responsibilities should be clearly defined in membership agreements and posted as a reminder for all members. Maintenance should include ongoing efforts to control weeds, maintain healthy plants and trees, remove dead or diseased growth, keep shared garden resources neat and orderly, preserve natural resources and reduce pests.*

#### **Policies:**

- After receipt of registration notice, within three months the Garden Group shall:
  - Design, develop, and nurture the garden, including watering, fertilizing, pruning, weeding and harvesting as required
  - Open the Garden to the public
  - Make gardening plots available to the public on a first come first serve basis, through the use of a waiting list with the Garden Coordinator, available upon request
- Gardening Group is responsible for performing all necessary work at the garden site
- Membership agreements shall clearly describe the maintenance responsibility expected from each garden member.
- Plot-holding garden members shall be primarily responsible for their individually assigned plots, unless a temporary maintenance arrangement is made in conformance with the community garden's membership agreement (i.e. to accommodate periods of illness, pregnancy, travel, etc. for a maximum of three months).
- Common areas are to be the shared responsibility of all garden members. This may be done individually as the need arises, or as a group effort as a "clean-up activity". The Garden Group shall:
  - Maintain safe garden conditions (for public use) and take care of all plants and structures contained therein, including fences, raised beds, tables, benches, and other ornamental items
  - Keep sidewalks, passageways, and curbs adjacent to and within the garden clean and free from garbage, debris, and other obstructions
- Requests for improvements by THE COUNTY are to be made directly to the Garden Program Manager through the Garden Site Coordinator.
- Ideas for natural pest control:
  - Ants: a mix of soap and water; a dry mix of baking soda and sugar

### 4.5 Neighborhood Involvement and Program Partnerships

*The members of a community garden are strongly encouraged to partner with schools, neighborhood organizations, service providers, or other non-profit organizations to offer increased access to the garden, enrich programming opportunities, and increase resources for maintenance*

Garden Groups are encouraged to:

- Coordinate with neighborhood planning groups to promote community gardens
- Work with and encourage neighboring schools, after school/youth programs and child care facilities to visit the community gardening during the school day, weekends, or after school hours
- Communicate directly with partners, schools, youth program, etc. about policies and protocols for a) participating in community garden and/or b) accepting produce for consumption
- Have a plot(s) specifically for growing food for other individuals/groups

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### 4.6 Conflict Resolution

*Establishing an organizational structure, by-laws, and rules for the garden through a democratic process should support the day-to-day operations of the community garden. Internal or external conflicts may still arise that cannot be addressed readily and that may undermine the function of the garden. Such situations may be preventable or resolved through these recommended policies.*

#### **Policies:**

- Allow the parties involved an opportunity to provide input at a public forum. Establish ground rules at the start of the meeting to promote respect for each participant. Invite a neutral person to conduct the meeting, such as the Garden Program Manager or another garden member.
  - Such norms can include “one mic” (no interrupting) or “keeping stack” (noting who raised their hand first to speak and respecting the order of ideas)
- Establish a committee of garden members to enforce rules. This will alleviate the burden on any one member and support fairness.
- Utilize mediation resources, such as a community arbitration board.

### 4.7 Fundraising

*Proceeds may offset garden fees, fund unique elements for the garden (such as garden furnishings, artwork, etc.) or be donated to THE COUNTY for improvements to the park. In-kind gifts or services may also be donated to a community garden. Fundraising activities on parkland, gifts, or in-kind donations may require approval or acceptance by THE COUNTY.*

#### **Policies:**

- Generally, donated garden supplies (hoses, shovels, plants, etc.) may be accepted by the community garden without THE COUNTY’s formal approval. Permanent fixtures (benches, decorative mosaic tiles, commemorative plaques, etc.) typically do require County acceptance prior to installation.
- No items may be sold in the garden. Prior to any fundraising effort, the Garden Coordinator should review the proposal with County staff for appropriateness, and to understand the standard process for approval. Allow a minimum of 4 weeks for a permit to be issued, if necessary.

## 5.0 **Monitoring and Enforcement of Policies and Codes**

### 5.1 County Ordinances and Municipal Codes

*The following are guided by adopted County ordinances and municipal codes. Relevant excerpts are provided for convenience, but are not intended to be all-inclusive. Additional policies specific to community gardens are listed below.*

#### 5.2.1 Pets and Animals

#### **Policies:**

- Dogs must be on leash [Code Section 5-4, 5-5]; however, by consensus, the garden members may adopt a rule to prohibit dogs from entering into the community garden.
- No animals may reside in the garden.
- No hoofed animals [Code Section 19-31].
- Beekeeping and live-stock must have county approval.

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### 5.2.2 Chemicals and Pesticides

#### **Policies:**

- No chemical pest control measures, including pesticides and herbicides, may be used without prior written approval from PARKS DEPARTMENT.
- Certain plants are not responsive to herbicides, such as poison oak and blackberry. Contact the Extension Service at (404) 298-4080 or Community Garden Program Manager for recommended removal techniques.

### 5.2.3 Resource Conservation

*Community Gardens in the Parks should exercise best practices for water conservation, erosion prevention, and energy efficiency. The Garden Group is responsible for paying the water bill. As a resource of value, all current and future usage shall strive for efficiency to minimize waste.*

#### **Policies:**

- Gardens shall be managed for best practices in water conservation (e.g., drip irrigation, time of watering, clustering like-plants in zones).
- While gardens may include and even encourage food crops that are water-intensive, the management of water to support these crops should minimize any water waste.
- Ornamental plantings should be targeted to drought-resistant species or to attract pollinators.
- Hand-water or irrigate plants early in the day or late evening to minimize water loss due to evaporation.
- Apply a minimum 2” depth of mulch (bark, straw, compost, etc.) to prevent soil erosion, minimize evaporation, and reduce soil compaction and moderate temperatures for plant roots.
- Rain barrels are highly recommended where practical (facilities with roofed structures) to conserve county water and capture rain water.

## 6.0 **County-Wide Support and Interdepartmental Coordination**

### 6.1 Utilities and Infrastructure

*The Garden Group must set up an account with Watershed Management in order to use the water spigot. The Garden Group pays the water bill. Gardening activities should avoid damage to underground infrastructure and tree root systems.*

#### **Policies:**

- Parks and street rights-of-way may contain underground utilities, including water, electrical, gas, phone/cable, and sewer lines. Gardeners must take special care when digging particularly at depths exceeding 18” into the ground. Contact PARKS DEPARTMENT to locate underground utilities.

### 6.2 Waste Removal

*Community gardens may generate a surplus of organic waste beyond the capacity of its compost bins. Visitors to the community gardens may carry in trash, or illegal dumping may occur nearby. The removal of excess materials from community gardens ensures the safety and enjoyment for both the gardener and the general public.*

## The DeKalb County Gardens in the Park Handbook and Operating Procedures

### Policies:

- Excess Organic Waste:
  - Community gardeners may choose to remove excess organic waste off site at their own expense.
- Non-Organic Waste
  - Use trash receptacles in the park.
  - For any recyclable materials (paper, plastic, metal, and glass), please bring home to dispose of properly or consider bringing Keep DeKalb Beautiful equipment to do so with you (for work days, especially). More information on this program can be found by contacting 404-294-2774 / [kdb@dekalbcountyga.gov](mailto:kdb@dekalbcountyga.gov), or your Community Garden Program Manager.
  - Promote a rule by which individuals are responsible for removal of their own garbage (i.e. “pack it in, pack it out”).
- Illegal Dumping
  - If on park property (excluding sidewalks), contact the police and notify the Community Garden Program Manager.

## 7.0 Miscellaneous

### 7.1 Complaints

Any complaints or concerns may be forwarded to the Garden Program Manager; however, attempts should be made to resolve disputes or concerns within the Garden Group as much as possible.

### 7.2 Public Information

Information on the community gardens program may be accessed on the Greenspace, Acquisition & Planning Department’s website.

All regular gardening communication will be sent to the Garden Coordinator through either e-mail (preferred) or postal mail. It is the responsibility of the Garden Coordinator to have filed a correct e-mail address and other contact information.

Any legal or county notices to garden groups will be in writing and will be delivered by regular mail, certified mail, registered mail, or personal delivery, and will also be posted at or near the garden entrance. Any such notice will be deemed delivered when deposited in an official United States Postal Service receptacle. THE COUNTY will make reasonable efforts to provide translations for notices into the predominant language of the group as identified by the Garden Coordinator.

### 7.3 Community Gardens on County-Owned Property

THE COUNTY owns the parks land and the garden group will not have any leasehold or other interest in the land comprising such gardening activities, any improvement thereon, or any equipment provided by THE COUNTY.

For a list of current community gardens:

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1HDwyJxWKUm9a8gogAUCmrtnQoQU&ll=33.76831551441133%2C-84.25137204999999&z=12>

## The DeKalb County Gardens in the Park Handbook and Operating Procedures

### 7.4 Suggested Guidelines/Garden Rules

It is highly recommended that the Garden Group develop rules for their garden so that all garden members can work together and maintain an efficient and enjoyable garden. Garden rules should be visibly posted for all garden members and visitors. Groups should make reasonable efforts to provide translations for rules and notices into the predominant language of the group as identified by the Garden Coordinator.

1. Gardeners are responsible for keeping their plot and the paths surrounding their plot clean and free of weeds. Gardeners shall at no time plant or weed in any other person's plot, except as directed by the Garden Coordinator on garden work days or by prior agreement with that plot holder.
2. Maintain plot within its confines without plants encroaching into common areas/other plots.
3. No altering of the dimensions of a plot or of the surrounding area.
4. Keep common areas clear.
5. Be civil and cooperative in regard to other gardeners, neighbors, and the public.
6. 'Organic Gardening' practiced here. Abide by rules regarding best organic practices. No herbicides or pesticides may be used, except for organic-based materials, such as iron phosphate for snail and slug bait.
7. Be mindful of water usage. Gardens shall be managed for best practices in water conservation (e.g., drip irrigation, time of watering, clustering like-plantings in zones). Minimize water waste. Ornamental plantings should be targeted to drought-resistant species.
8. Sign the Waiver, Release, and Hold Harmless Agreement and return to the Garden Coordinator or the Community Garden Program Manager.
9. Plots cannot be given away by you to anyone else. Plots are assigned by the Garden Coordinator.
10. In case of illness, pregnancies, travel, etc., inform your Garden Coordinator about your situation. Either party may find a temporary person in your stead; this person will sign a liability waiver.
11. Gardeners agree to respect the peace and quiet of the surrounding neighborhood. Children and guests should also be instructed to refrain from walking on garden plots, or damaging/taking plants, or fruits thereof, that do not belong to them.
12. Follow security guidelines as outlined at <https://www.dekalbcountyga.gov/parks/rules-ordinances>. Trust your instincts and know your gardening partners and neighbors.
13. **REASSIGNMENT:** The Garden Coordinator shall notify non-active gardeners with a verbal, telephone or email warning. If active gardening does not resume within 15 days, or the gardener has not responded to messages from the Garden Coordinator, or the garden member is not reachable, then a written 30-day notice to resume activity shall be issued.

### 7.6 Tips for Safety and Awareness

- Trust your instincts. If something doesn't feel right, do not hesitate to leave the garden.
- Be visible:
  - Don't let plants and shrubs block your view into the garden.
  - Don't have "hidden gardens" where you cannot be seen.
- Know your gardening members and neighbors.
- Maintain adequate natural and artificial lighting. Avoid staying in garden past sunset.
- Avoid keeping a public trash receptacle in the garden.
- Where appropriate, secure the community garden with a gate and lock.
- Keep supplies locked.
- Block or eliminate areas where people can sleep or camp.
- Work with the Police Department on how to clean the area of needles and unsafe materials.
- In an emergency, call 911.
- Maintain communications with the Park Security Officer, Travis Balkcom, at (770) 652-8579.
- Maintain a log for gardeners to complete when unsafe conditions occur, and submit to Program Manager.



For more information visit:

DeKalb County Government, Georgia  
<https://www.dekalbcountyga.gov/>

Recreation, Parks & Cultural Affairs  
<https://www.dekalbcountyga.gov/parks>

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