

## URBAN AGRICULTURE

### Guidelines for Neighbourhood Gardening – Productive Trees

The City of Yarra recognises the importance of urban agriculture in supporting community sustainability, especially in times of changing climate and the myriad of associated issues such as food security due to diminishing oil supplies.

Neighbourhood gardening using productive trees<sup>1</sup> is recognised by Council as a form of Urban Agriculture that can be used by local communities to create sustainable, resilient and liveable neighbourhoods in an effective and meaningful way.

Planting productive trees is considered by Council to be an effective, means of inspiring and enabling community food production in the City of Yarra by generating environmental, social and economic wellbeing from the ground up – created for and by local people.

Planting productive trees can be initiated, operated and maintained by the local community with support from Council.

Council's Guidelines and registration process will assist in making neighbourhood gardening with productive trees effective, enjoyable and safe for all.

**Before you get started planting your productive trees, consider the 3-step process below...**

#### **Step 1 - Securing a Suitable and Safe Site**

Prior to making final decisions on planting productive trees, it is recommended you contact Council's Community Gardens Facilitator. A site meeting with the Facilitator can help you work through your objectives for the site, help identify any site constraints and actively assist you in gaining any necessary approvals from relevant Council departments and/or other government agencies where required e.g. Vic Roads . It should be noted that there may be some instances where approval may not be given to plant a particular site, for example, where street planting or water sensitive urban design treatments exist or are planned for the site or street.

The Community Gardens Facilitator can provide advice and assistance on the following:

- means of gaining local neighbourhood support for your initiative;
- choosing appropriate productive tree specimens for planting under powerlines, regarding maximum heights;
- preferred types of sites and locations for planting productive trees, as well as how you can address potential hazards for pedestrians and other traffic;
- ensuring that appropriate lines of sight for traffic, access for pedestrians and clearance distances for servicing of local infrastructure are maintained;
- getting started with productive tree planting, including sustainable sources of construction materials, soils, fertilisers and pest control products; and,
- any safety issues you need to consider and safety devices you need to use during the establishment and maintenance of your productive trees.

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<sup>1</sup> Productive trees are defined as trees producing edible fruits or nuts.

## **Step 2 - Securing Neighbourhood Support**

An important first step in planning for and getting your idea for establishing productive trees up and running is to consult with your neighbours. As a guide, it is a good idea to consult surrounding neighbours within 25 metres of the proposed planting site, and to include both sides of the street. You should also arrange a neighbourhood gathering to explain your initiative to give local residents an opportunity to have their say. Be prepared to compromise if necessary in order to secure broad support and participation in the project. If some residents/owners cannot attend the group event, it is a good idea to make sure that you attempt to contact them individually to ensure they have been informed.

Applicants are required to provide the Community Gardens Facilitator with evidence of local consultation. The Facilitator, in turn, can provide advice to the applicant on the material required for successful consultation.

## **Step 3 - Permit with Council**

Before you start planting your productive trees, you must present a written proposal to Council using the attached Permit. By entering into the Permit you ensure that you are covered through Council's public liability insurance policy, otherwise you may be personally liable. This Permit should outline the following:

- the proposed location and design of the productive tree planting;
- how you engaged neighbouring residents in planning for your initiative;
- any relevant feedback expressed by neighbouring residents; and,
- name and contact details of the person nominated as the primary contact in relation to the establishment, maintenance and harvest of the productive trees.

Once you have completed and submitted information on your proposal, Council will enter into a simple written Permit with the nominated primary contact person. The Permit will document:

- details of the initiative as discussed with neighbouring residents and property owners
- any specific conditions relating to:
  - the provision of public liability insurance cover related to the productive trees,
  - safety requirements during tree planting; and,
  - removal of the productive tree if it is no longer required or adequately maintained.
- the understanding of the nominated primary contact person to report to Council in the event that a new primary contact person is nominated or substantial changes to the initiative are proposed.

The process for submitting your proposal is simple and straight forward. You can either submit your proposal online at [www.yarracity.vic.gov.au](http://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au) or visit Council offices at Richmond Town Hall (333 Bridge Road, Richmond) or Collingwood Town Hall (140 Hoddle Street, Abbotsford) using the application form attached.

You can expect to receive a recommendation from the Community Gardens Facilitator on your neighbourhood garden proposal within 30 days of the submission date. Larger gardens may take more time.

A register listing the locations of productive tree planting for which Permits have been executed by Council will be available on the Council website.

## Other things to consider...

By taking these basic precautions when planning for, establishing and managing your productive trees, you will ensure your own safety and the safety of the wider community:

### Infrastructure and Soils

- Ensure you know what above and below ground service infrastructure exists near the site (such as sewage pipes, power lines, telecommunication cables etc) to avoid any damage. Council's Community Gardens Facilitator can help you find this information.
- When planting under power lines, you must select a species with a maximum height of 6 metres that will not in any way interfere with power lines or associated infrastructure. Proper planning regarding this manner will ensure your planting does not have to be removed by Council when it reaches full growth, and ensures your investment can reach full maturity. Check with the Community Gardens facilitator if you are uncertain.
- Your productive trees will be in a public place and therefore you should be aware that service authorities may need to remove your planting in order to access or maintain their assets. It will be your responsibility to negotiate the protection and/or reinstatement of your productive trees with the relevant service authorities.
- All soils in the inner city contain some level of contamination. It is best to use fresh, well draining, and preferably composted soil. This ensures you start with the right soil rather than average soil that requires continual addition of nutrients and may not result in good fruit or nut harvests.
- The base level of the planting should be below ground level or level with kerbing to prevent organic materials from spilling out onto the footpath or road.

### Roads and Traffic

- When establishing, maintaining and harvesting your productive trees, be aware that you are on a road and watch out for passing cars, bicycles and pedestrians. The minimum safety devices that you should use will depend on your situation and can be discussed and sourced from Council's Community Gardens Facilitator.
- Make sure the height and mass of your productive trees are not going to obstruct sight lines for pedestrians, cyclists and cars. Council's Community Gardens Facilitator will be available to provide further assistance.

### Design

- As your productive tree will be located in a public place you will need to be aware of the potential hazards of any materials that you may use or incorporate into your garden. For example, inappropriate use of stakes when establishing trees can potentially be of harm to others. Council's Community Gardens Facilitator can provide advice on design and safety issues.
- Ensure precautions are taken during the establishment and maintenance of your productive tree planting to ensure soils and other debris will not leak from the garden into the stormwater drains. The Community Gardens Facilitator can advise on suitable materials.

### **Working on your Garden**

You are encouraged to follow sustainable gardening practices. Consider using organic products rather than standard chemicals. Council Community Gardens Facilitator can advise on a list of suitable alternatives.

You will be responsible for your own safety while establishing and harvesting your productive trees and you should also be mindful of potential risks to passers-by. The use of steel pickets is not allowed as part of tree planting as it poses a risk to passers by.

When maintaining and harvesting produce from your productive tree(s), health & safety precautions are your responsibility. Consider the following basic safety precautions: appropriate clothing, appropriate and safe use of tools, being sun smart, careful handling of materials and soils, careful placement of ladders to reduce risk of injury through falls.

It is important to maintain your productive trees, particularly during fruiting! Planting will be reviewed on a regular basis by the Community Gardens Facilitator. Where gardens are not being maintained, Council may ask that the planting be removed and the site reinstated.