



# Edible Community Gardens Policy

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<b>Endorsement</b>	Executive, 1 April 2015 Policy Review Panel, 4 May 2015
<b>Authorisation</b>	Council, 26 May 2015
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<b>Responsible officer</b>	Community Planning Manager
<b>Policy owner</b>	Social Planning and Wellbeing Coordinator

## 1. Purpose

To guide Council's decision making in relation to edible landscapes, specifically the establishment of edible community gardens. The policy provides a framework to consider requests for the community led establishment and management of edible community gardens within the municipality. In addition, it provides guidance as to the level of support that Council may consider providing to community groups.

The policy has been developed in the context of Council's commitment to protect, improve and promote public health and wellbeing within the municipality.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to formal requests (including but not limited to request received via the Community Grant Programs, Council's Annual Budget Submission Process and other applications) received by Council in relation to the establishment of edible community gardens on Council owned or managed land within the City of Melton. Council encourages a variety of community gardens however, non edible community gardens, including the Melton Botanic Gardens, are not considered within the scope of this policy.

Edible community gardens may be established on non-Council owned or managed land, and in the circumstance that a planning permit is required for its' establishment, may only be established following the undertaking of the necessary town-planning process. Where such interest is expressed by the community, all relevant planning applications must be made to Council and approval may be required from any relevant public land manager. Applicants are also encouraged to have pre-application discussions with relevant Council Planning Officers prior to lodging a formal application to establish an edible community garden.

Council encourages and acknowledges that edible community gardens can take on many forms including but not limited to: individual and/or shared plots, crate based gardening and fruit orchards. Likewise, governance and management models vary. This policy encourages the establishment of a range of edible community gardens with strong community led governance structures.

For the purpose of this policy, the below categories of edible community gardens are presented as a guide to consider various types of applications. The categories are not intended to be prescriptive but rather offer a framework to consider various forms and models of edible community gardens.

### Category 1

*Larger scale edible community gardens* (for example approximately 30 individual and/or shared plots\*). Complimentary elements such as fruit orchards, shelter, storage, composting etc. may also be considered within this larger scale edible community garden. This type of garden may be more suited to longer term governance and management plans.

### Category 2

*Medium scale edible community gardens* (for example approximately 15-30 individual and/or shared plots\*), suitable to co-location with existing community infrastructure, including but not limited to: Youth Centres, Neighbourhood Houses or Children and Community Centres. This type of garden may be more suitable to a shorter term (including pilot or demonstration projects) or 'pop up' approach and governance and management plans.

### Category 3

*Smaller scale edible community gardens* (for example approximately 5-15 individual and/or shared plots\*) that may be suitable to being located on land including, but not limited to: vacant blocks, local parks and in and around activity centres. This type of garden may be more suitable to shorter term (including pilot or demonstration projects) or 'pop up' approach and governance and management plans.

\*Plots may vary. For the purpose of this policy plot size is considered to be approximately 1m x 2m.

This policy recognises that community led Category 2 (medium scale) and 3 (smaller scale) edible community gardens are easier to establish, maintain and sustain. Edible community gardens for Category 1 require substantial demonstration of capacity on the part of community groups prior to their establishment, followed by extensive resources to drive and maintain them in a sustainable way.

## 3. Definitions

Word/Term	Definition
Edible Community Gardens	<p>Edible community gardens are places of either temporary, semi-permanent or permanent agreements where people come together to grow vegetables, fruit and herbs in a supportive community context - mostly on individual plots within a larger communal area. When carefully designed and managed they can provide a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits.</p> <p>There are a number of different structures of edible community gardens. The most common types are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Edible community gardens with individual plots allocated to individuals.</li> </ul>

Word/Term	Definition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Edible community gardens where the entire garden is run collectively as a shared enterprise.</li> <li>• Edible community gardens that integrate both individual plots and shared gardens.</li> </ul> <p>Edible community gardens can also take the form of 'pop up' gardening which are generally 'do-it-yourself' vegetable plots housed in individual crates or other containers. These are generally located in activity centres, schools and community facilities.</p>
Council Land	Council owned or managed land (with land owner's approval). For example, linear reserves and powerline easements.
Community Group	<p>An organisation that is not-for-profit, a registered incorporated group, or association that is accessible and accountable to members of the community.</p> <p>Generally a community group has a primary objective relating to community benefit and community engagement and participation and may have an elected committee of management or executive group that act on behalf of and for the benefit of the club, organisation and/or the broader community.</p>
Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Principles	Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Principles aim to influence and inform decisions about designing and managing environments, in order to prevent the incidence of crime and enable communities to be safer, more secure and therefore more sustainable.
Edible Landscapes	Landscapes cultivated with vegetation which can be eaten by humans and is nutritious.

#### 4. Policy

Council will consider community led applications that meet eligibility criteria as outlined in this policy. Council acknowledges edible community gardens are a valuable addition to the municipal landscape and offer many benefits including:

- Contributing to positive public health and wellbeing outcomes through increased social connection and food production and availability
- Supporting community development and capacity building through skill development and sharing
- Developing community pride and enhancing a sense of place
- Fostering environmental education and increasing awareness of sustainability principles.

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Ensure edible community gardens comply with the requirements of the Melton Planning Scheme
- Provide guidance as to Council's role in supporting community led edible community gardens
- Ensure proposals for edible community gardens and the level of support provided is consistent with Council's strategic objectives, strategic planning and land use planning documents and resourcing availability
- Provide guidance for Council decision making in relation to the support it may consider providing for the establishment and management of edible community gardens
- Encourage the development of edible community gardens in existing and new communities
- Encourage equitable distribution and access to edible community gardens throughout the municipality
- Promote community led governance models for the establishment and management of edible community gardens
- Support the development of sustainable community partnerships
- Apply best practice principles to Council's decision making process when assessing community led applications
- Ensure edible community gardens are consistent with existing (and future) Council policies and procedures (e.g. Street Tree Policy), master plans, urban design principles and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.

#### **4.1 Melton Planning Scheme**

The establishment of edible community gardens within the municipality will be in accordance with the Melton Planning Scheme and other strategic land use planning documents. Within the Melton Planning Scheme edible community gardens are identified as 'horticulture', which is '*land used to propagate, cultivate or harvest flowers, fruit, vegetables, vines or the like*'. As such their establishment must not cause conflict with land use planning principles and strategic plans, particularly in relation to proposals for establishment on residential land, or land in close proximity to sensitive land uses.

Even though the use of land for an edible community garden may be a permitted land use in the Melton Planning Scheme, there is still a due planning process that needs to be undertaken. It should not be implied that if an application is made to establish an edible community garden, that a permit should or will be granted.

Council, as the Responsible Authority must decide whether the proposal will produce acceptable outcomes in terms of the relevant State and Local Planning Policy Frameworks of the Melton Planning Scheme, as well as the purpose and decision guidelines of the relevant land use zoning and any other relevant decision guidelines.

## 4.2 Policy Considerations and Decision Making Criteria

Council acknowledges that edible community gardens come in many forms and therefore the establishment, governance and maintenance requirements vary considerably – as does the level of support Council may consider providing.

In assessing each formal request, Council will first consider best practice principles in relation to edible community gardens and the communities' capacity to establish, resource, govern and manage an edible community garden within the categories and criteria as presented in this policy.

## 4.3 Community Capacity and Governance

Council supports the development of edible community gardens with strong community led governance structures.

Community groups must have a capacity to be responsible for the following:

- Nomination of a preferred site(s)
- Pre-application meeting with Council's Planning Department
- If required, a planning permit application related to the preferred site, with minimum application requirements be submitted including:
  - the relevant planning application form
  - recent Certificate of Title for the subject land
  - planning application fee
  - site layout plan
  - layout and elevation plans detailing any structures on the site
  - covering letter and a planning report outlining the scope of the application including:
    - a) method of operation
    - b) hours of operation
    - c) likely impacts of the use on adjoining land and
    - d) how the proposal responds to this policy and the relevant policies, zone objectives and decision guidelines of the Melton Planning Scheme.
- Community engagement with neighbours and potential gardeners (eg. surveys of neighbouring residents to the proposed site)
- Site design and safety
- Implementation of appropriate management frameworks
- Development of a financial plan (including establishment and ongoing costs)
- Public liability and site insurance as deemed appropriate by Council's risk manager
- If a garden is not successful, or not maintained to a high standard, costs for the removal of the garden and infrastructure needs.

Following the satisfactory demonstration of community capacity to undertake the responsibilities (as outlined above), and relevant to the request (as outlined below), Council may consider the provision of support in the following forms:

- Land provision
- Capital and/or programmatic resourcing
- Community development resourcing.

#### **4.4 Recommendations for provision of Council support**

Recommendations for support to establish edible community gardens will vary between requests. Recommendation authorisations are outlined below:

##### **4.4.1 Recommendation for the provision of land**

Recommendations for edible community gardens will be made by Council Officers in line with Council's financial delegation in consultation with relevant Council departments and informed by the Melton Planning Scheme and outcomes of any planning permit requirements.

##### **4.4.2 Recommendation for capital and/or programmatic resourcing**

Recommendations will be made in consultations with relevant departments and in line with Council's financial delegation.

##### **4.4.3 Recommendation for community development resourcing**

Recommendations will be made by Council's General Manager Community Services.

#### **4.5 Category 1 (Larger scale edible community gardens)**

Best practice in relation to Category 1 edible community gardens identifies the following factors to maximise success and sustainability:

- An active group of residents (for example, 50 people to maintain the plots (depending on garden size)) and 10-15 people to support the governance
- A highly organised group of residents with demonstrable skill, commitment and time to manage the edible community garden in the short and long term
- Secure land tenure
- Establishment funds and on-going income streams (or the ability to establish on-going income streams).

##### **4.5.1 Community Capacity and Governance**

In assessing the community capacity to establish and manage a Category 1 edible community garden, the following will be considered.

###### **4.5.1.1 Essential**

- A motivated, active and adequately skilled group of residents, relative to the request, to establish, support and maintain the edible community garden model, for example a sufficient number of people to:
  - To participate in and maintain the garden (dependent on proposed model and size)

- To support the governance and management of the garden (dependent on proposed model and size)
- Commitment to community inclusion and accessibility
- Incorporation
- Evidence of a plan for intended governance and management of the garden, inclusive of the expected garden life-cycle.

#### **4.5.1.2 Desirable**

- Previous experience with edible community gardening/managing community projects.

Dependent on the community interest and/or request and following the satisfactory demonstration of community capacity and governance, Council may consider providing none, one, or a combination of support in the following forms:

- Land provision
- Capital and/or programmatic resourcing
- Community development resourcing.

#### **4.5.2 Land Provision**

Council may consider providing Council owned or managed land in the following circumstances:

- Community capacity to govern and manage the garden has been satisfactory demonstrated
- Suitable land can be identified
- There is no current or short-medium term use for the land that would conflict with the use of that land or part thereof for an edible community garden
- Ability to maintain the garden is demonstrated including allocation of responsibility for mowing, mending fences, pest control etc.

In determining what land may be suitable for a Category 1 edible community garden, the below criteria will be considered:

##### **4.5.2.1 Essential**

- Consideration of whether a planning permit is required
- Location is consistent with land use planning strategic documents including master plans and the Melton Planning Scheme
- Secure land tenure and a long term lease/licence agreement can be established
- Located in close proximity to suitable existing community infrastructure
- Location contributes positively to local amenity including enhancing natural surveillance and activation of public space

- Access to mains water
- Suitable sun: shade ratio
- Disability access
- Soil quality conducive to community gardening/ability for raised garden beds
- Any necessary permits have been obtained.

#### **4.5.2.2 Desirable**

- Located in close proximity to an accessible toilet
- Parking provisions and/or public transport access (including pedestrian and cycling access)
- Ability to be fenced and have a lockable gate.

### **4.5.3 Capital and/or Programmatic Resourcing**

The provision of capital and/or programmatic funds required will vary depending on the size and model of the proposed garden, establishment plan, availability of grants and access to sponsorship. Council may consider providing capital and/or programmatic resourcing in the following circumstances:

#### **4.5.3.1 Essential**

- Community capacity to govern and manage the garden has been satisfactory demonstrated
- A Project Proposal has been developed outlining: community need and demand for a garden, governance/management model, sustainability post funding, proposed garden features and requirements
- Suitable land (including secure tenure) has been confirmed and is on Council owned or managed land.

#### **4.5.3.2 Desirable**

- Strong community partnerships based on in-kind and financial or pro-bono support.

Council may consider providing funding through the Community Grants Program to support the establishment of edible community gardens. Decision making will be guided by the grant program criteria and the criteria outlined in this policy.

### **4.5.4 Community Development Resourcing**

The level of community development support required will depend on the community group - their level of mobilisation, ability to incorporate, conflict resolution skills etc. Council may consider providing community development resourcing in the following circumstances:



#### **4.5.4.1 Essential**

- Community capacity to govern and manage the garden has been satisfactory demonstrated.

### **4.6 Category 2 (Medium scale edible community gardens)**

Best practice in relation to Category 2 edible community gardens identifies the following factors to maximise success and sustainability:

- An active group of residents (for example, 15 people to maintain the plots (depending on garden size)) and 5-8 people to support the governance and management of the garden
- A highly organised group of residents with demonstrable commitment, skills and time to manage the garden
- Ability to source establishment and on-going income streams.

#### **4.6.1 Community Capacity and Governance**

In assessing the community capacity to establish and manage a Category 2 edible community garden, the following criteria will be considered:

##### **4.6.1.1 Essential**

- A motivated, active and adequately skilled group of residents, relative to the request, to establish, support and maintain the edible community garden model, for example a sufficient number of people to:
  - To participate in and maintain the garden (dependent on proposed model and size)
  - To support the governance and management of the garden (dependent on proposed model and size)
- Commitment to community inclusion and accessibility
- Suitable connection to the community infrastructure where the garden will be established, for e.g. program delivery or participation.

##### **4.6.1.2 Desirable**

- Previous experience with community gardening/managing community projects.

Dependent on the community interest and/or request and following the satisfactory demonstration of community capacity and governance, Council may consider providing none, one, or a combination of support in the following forms:

- Land provision
- Capital and/or programmatic resourcing
- Community development resourcing

#### **4.6.2 Land Provision**

Council may consider providing Council owned or managed land that is co-located with existing community infrastructure, including but not limited to: Youth Centres, Neighbourhood Houses or Children and Community Centres, in the following circumstances:

- Community capacity to govern and manage the garden has been satisfactory demonstrated
- Suitable land, within or adjacent to existing community infrastructure can be identified
- Appropriate joint use agreements and/or management plans are agreed to including roles and responsibilities
- There is no current or short-medium term use for the land that would conflict with the use of that land or part thereof for an edible community garden.

In determining what land may be suitable, the below criteria will be considered:

##### **4.6.2.1 Essential**

- Consideration of whether a planning permit is required
- Location is consistent with land use planning strategic documents including master plans and the Melton Planning Scheme
- Availability and suitability of existing community facilities to facilitate a garden
- Location contributes positively to local amenity including enhancing natural surveillance and activation of public space
- Access to mains water
- Suitable sun: shade ratio.

#### **4.6.3 Capital and/or Programmatic Resourcing**

The provision of capital and/or programmatic funds required will vary depending on the size and model of the proposed garden, establishment plan, availability of grants and access to sponsorship. Council may consider providing capital and/or programming resourcing in the following circumstances:

##### **4.6.3.1 Essential**

- Community capacity to govern and manage the garden has been satisfactory demonstrated
- A Project Proposal has been developed outlining: community need and demand for a garden, governance/management model, sustainability post funding, proposed garden features and requirements
- Suitable land (including secure tenure) has been confirmed and is on Council owned or managed land

- Any necessary permits have been obtained.

#### **4.6.3.2 Desirable**

- Strong community partnerships based on in-kind and financial or pro-bono support.

Council may consider providing funding through the Community Grants Program to support the establishment of edible community gardens. Decision making will be guided by the grant program criteria and the criteria outlined in this policy.

#### **4.6.4 Community Development Resourcing**

The level of community development support required will depend on the community group's level of mobilisation and vision of the garden, site of co-location and partnership establishment.

Council may consider providing community development resourcing in the following circumstances:

##### **4.6.4.1 Essential**

- Community capacity to govern and manage the garden has been satisfactory demonstrated
- Appropriate joint use agreements and/or management plans are agreed to including roles and responsibilities.

#### **4.7 Category 3 (Smaller scale edible community gardens)**

Best practice in relation to Category 3 edible community gardens identifies the following factors to maximise success and suitability:

- An active group of residents, relative to the size of the request, to establish, support and maintain the edible community garden model.

##### **4.7.1 Community Capacity and Governance**

In assessing the community capacity to establish and manage a Category 3 edible community garden, the following criteria will be considered:

###### **4.7.1.1 Essential**

- A motivated and active group of residents, relative to the size of the request, to establish, support and maintain the edible community garden model.

Dependent on the community interest and/or request and following the satisfactory demonstration of community capacity, Council may consider providing none, one, or a combination of support in the following forms:

- Land provision
- Capital and/or programmatic resourcing
- Community development resourcing

#### **4.7.2 Land Provision**

Council may consider providing Council owned or managed land for the establishment of a Category 3 edible community garden in the following circumstances:

- Community capacity to govern and manage the edible community garden model has been satisfactory demonstrated
- There is no current or short-medium term use for the land that would conflict with the use of that land or part thereof for an edible community garden
- Land is suitable for use as an edible community garden.

In determining what land may be suitable, the below criteria will be considered:

##### **4.7.2.1 Essential**

- Consideration of whether a planning permit is required
- Location is consistent with land use planning strategic documents including master plans and the Melton Planning Scheme
- Location contributes positively to local amenity including enhancing natural surveillance and activation of public space
- Access to mains water
- Suitable sun: shade ratio
- There is no current or short-medium term use for the land that would conflict with the use of that land or part thereof for an edible community garden.

#### **4.7.3 Capital and/or Programmatic Resourcing**

The provision of capital and/or programmatic funds required will vary depending on the size and model of the proposed edible community garden, establishment plan, availability of grants and access to sponsorship. Council may consider providing capital and/or programming resourcing in the following circumstances:

##### **4.7.3.1 Essential**

- Community capacity to govern and manage the garden has been satisfactory demonstrated
- A Project Proposal has been developed outlining: community need and demand for a garden, governance/management model, sustainability post funding, proposed garden features and requirements
- Suitable land (including secure tenure) has been confirmed and is on Council owned or managed land
- Any necessary permits have been obtained.

#### 4.7.3.2 Desirable

- Strong community partnerships based on in-kind and financial or pro-bono support.

Council may consider providing funding through the Community Grants Program to support the establishment edible community gardens. Decision making will be guided by the grant program criteria and the criteria outlined in this policy.

#### 4.7.4 Community Development Resourcing

The level of community development support required will depend on the community group's level of mobilisation and vision for the proposed model. Council may consider providing community development resourcing in the following circumstances:

##### 4.7.4.1 Essential

- Community capacity to govern and manage the garden has been satisfactory demonstrated.

#### 4.8 Non-Council Owned or Managed Land

Edible community gardens could be located on non-Council owned or managed land, including, but not limited to residential blocks, privately owned land and Government owned or managed land. The size, tenure and management will vary depending on the private use agreements.

Edible community gardens on non-Council owned and managed land may require planning permits under the Melton Planning Scheme. All planning permit applications will be assessed against the requirements of the Scheme.

Council's role in supporting edible community gardens on private land is limited.

#### 5. Responsibility /Accountability

<b>5.1</b>	<b>Managers, Coordinators, Team Leaders and Supervisors</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure all employees are made aware of the policy.</li></ul>
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#### 6. References and links to legislation and other documents

Name	Location
Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan	<a href="http://www.melton.vic.gov.au/health">www.melton.vic.gov.au/health</a>
Melton Planning Scheme	<a href="http://www.melton.vic.gov.au">www.melton.vic.gov.au</a>
The Good Practice Guide for Community Gardens	<a href="http://www.cultivatingcommunity.org.au">www.cultivatingcommunity.org.au</a>