



Portland Community Gardens Has Updated Policies

A Guide for Gardeners on What's *NEW*, What's *CHANGED*, and What's *GONE*

The Community Gardens program has provided gardening opportunities for the physical and social benefit of the people of Portland since 1975. There are 51 community gardens located throughout the city, developed and operated by volunteers and Portland Parks & Recreation staff. In order to manage and maintain productive, functional, community garden spaces in partnership with over 2,000 gardeners, Portland Community Gardens upholds a set of policies that help ensure the health and vitality of the program.

WHY THE POLICY UPDATE? The program policies outline the parameters that all registered gardeners must abide by. We determined that our previous policies needed updating to be more inclusive of some practices widely used by the many cultures represented among our gardeners, as well as to further take into account the needs and resources available to gardeners with disabilities and people living on limited incomes. Plus, we wanted to remove the unnecessary stuff and focus on the core things each gardener needs to focus on to be successful.

During the 2015/2016 garden season, the Community Gardens staff:

- **held listening sessions** with gardeners from many of the various ethnic and language groups involved in the program – Native American, Bhutanese, and Somali gardeners; as well as Spanish-speakers, Russian-speakers, and Karen-speakers.
- **collected feedback** from our English-speaking Garden Managers through an online survey.
- **reviewed feedback** received from gardeners over the past few years since the policies were last updated.
- **combined that feedback** and looked for barriers and opportunities for improvement of the policies and the program.
- **reviewed policies** from many other programs across the country.
- **created draft policies**, which were then brought back to stakeholder groups for further feedback.

Our new policies and procedures have been streamlined, clarified, and translated into the languages currently represented in community gardens. Our hope is that clearer policies will promote greater understanding and retention among gardeners, as well as a decrease in staff time issuing violation notices.



The following guide is designed to walk you through our updated policies with helpful examples along the way.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>GENERAL UPDATES:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We now have 7 gardener policies instead of 14 • Language has been simplified and phrased in friendlier tones • Examples have been provided in an easy-to-read format • All information about reminder letters has been moved to the Gardener Accountability and Policy Enforcement section at the end. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Check out our new <u>Frequently Asked Questions</u> about Garden Policies, now online at:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">http://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/article/595215</p> <p>To request a printed copy of the FAQs, please contact our office at by email at pkcomgard@portlandoregon.gov or by phone at 503-823-1612.</p>
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Updated Policy: #1	What's New?	What's Changed?
<p>You are welcome to garden year-round. During the main growing season (April – October) show you are using your plot by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing the soil for planting • Planting and growing crops • Harvesting ripe produce • Removing weeds, especially those in flower or setting seed • Collecting seed you want to save before it drops on the soil 	<p>This policy is an updated version of our former policy #1. This policy clarifies that you are welcome to garden year-round, and all gardeners are specifically expected to actively grow food and use the space during the months of April-October.</p>	<p>Language has been simplified and includes specific examples of how to show us that you are active in your plot. All information about notifications (for weedy or untended plots) has been moved to the Gardener Accountability and Policy Enforcement section at the bottom of the document.</p>



Updated Policy: #2	What's New?	What's Changed?
<p>When you are not actively gardening, continue to care for your garden plot by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Removing weeds, especially those in flower or setting seed• Removing dead and dying plants, especially if they are diseased or covered with pests• Neatly storing seasonal structures like tomato cages, stakes, trellis materials, and wood when not in use	<p>This is an added policy this year, to clarify the importance of maintaining your plot throughout the year, even when you are not actively growing. It was added in place of our former policy #12. Specific examples are included to explain what is required. Following these procedures will keep you from receiving a reminder notice over winter.</p>	<p>We took out the suggested activities, like using mulch or planting a cover crop, in order to focus on the core tasks each gardener should do when they are not actively gardening.</p>

Updated Policy: #3	What's New?	What's Changed?
<p>You are responsible for maintaining the paths and fence lines that touch your plot.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep paths bordering your plot 2.5 to 3 feet wide, and level, so others can safely pass• Remove weeds from the paths and directly outside the fence, if your plot touches a fence• Store things inside your plot• Keep plants within the boundaries of your plot	<p>This policy is similar to our former Policy #4. We have added clarification that maintaining fence lines (in addition to the paths) around your plot is your responsibility as the plot holder.</p> <p>The policy also clarifies that all of your garden supplies must be stored inside your plot.</p>	<p>We removed language related to types of pathway materials (cardboard, paper, burlap) and the requirement to cover these materials with wood chips; as long as paths are level and maintained for safety, there's not a specific requirement on how this should be done.</p>



Updated Policy: #4	What's New?	What's Changed?
<p>Portland Parks & Recreation does not provide garbage or plant waste pick up. You are responsible for managing the plant material and trash from your plot.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You may compost plant material in your plot, bury it, or dispose of it in home yard waste bins.• Do not dump material anywhere inside or outside of the garden.	<p>This policy is similar to our former Policy #5. Language has been simplified.</p> <p>We have added clarification that PP&R does not provide garbage or plant waste pick up.</p>	<p>We have moved the detail about not bringing food scraps from home to policy #5, to accompany information about managing rodents in the garden.</p>
Updated Policy: #5	What's New?	What's Changed?
<p>Prevent rodents and stinging insects from building homes in your garden.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remove piles of debris and regularly turn your compost pile• Remove food sources by harvesting produce when ripe, and leaving food scraps from your kitchen at home• Dump water that has been standing for more than 3 days to keep mosquitos from laying eggs	<p>This policy has been expanded from our former Policy #5. This policy was added to more strongly address the issue of rodents and stinging insects in the garden.</p> <p>We have added specific examples of how to reduce the likelihood of pests building homes in your garden plot.</p>	



Updated Policy: #6	What's New?	What's Changed?
<p>Organic gardening is required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use only organic fertilizers, weed killers, or bug killers• If you are unsure whether a product you want to use is allowed, search for it on the Organic Materials Review Institute website at www.omri.org, or call the Master Gardener Hotline at 503-655-8631.	<p>This is very similar to our former policy #3.</p>	<p>We have added contact information on where to look up products to determine whether they are organic.</p>

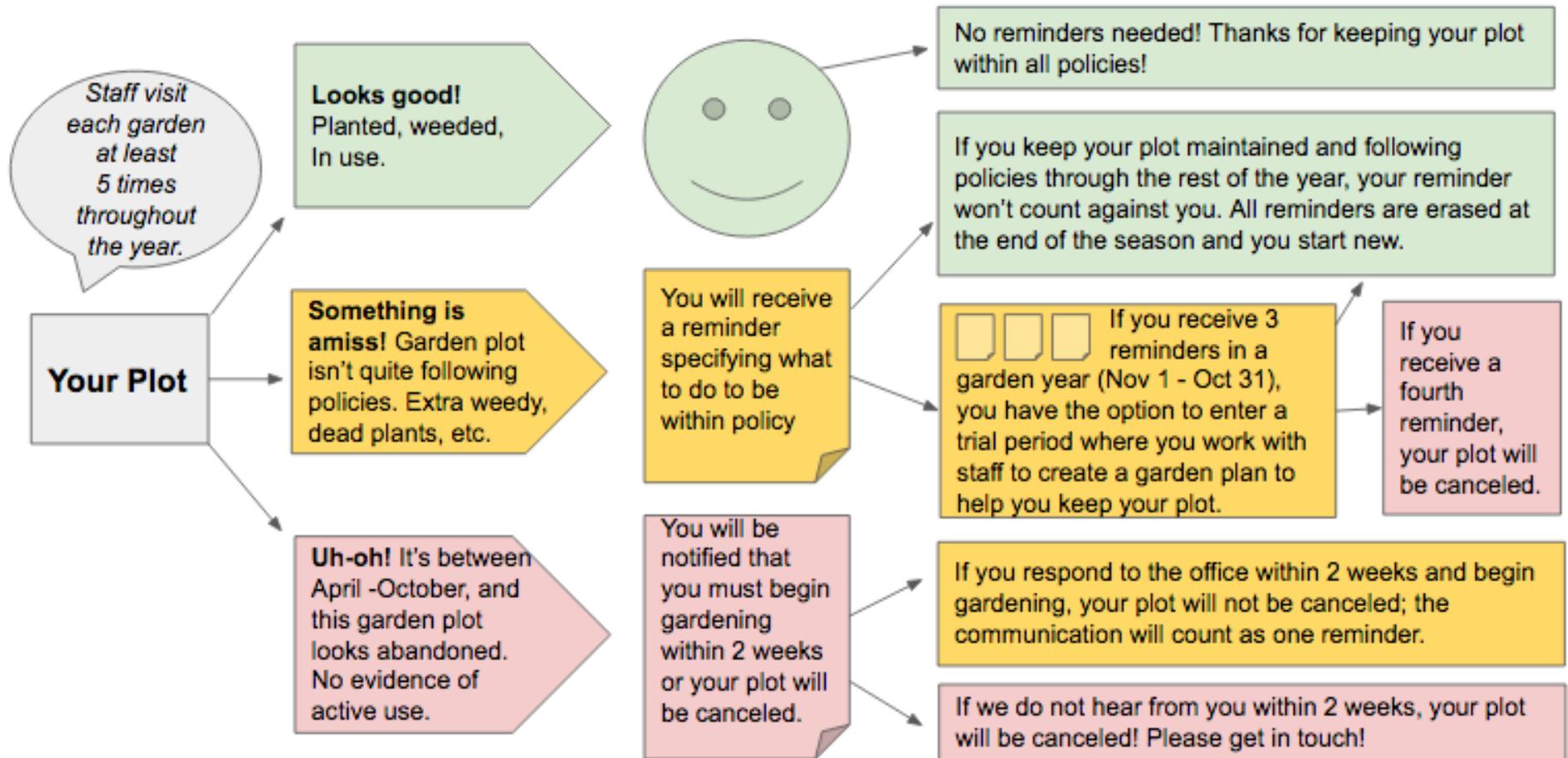
Updated Policy: #7	What's New?	What's Changed?
<p>Contribute and log a minimum of 6 hours per year in service to your community garden. Three hours must be completed by June 30, and a total of 6 hours must be completed by October 31.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contact your garden manager for a list of tasks that will count towards your service hour commitment.• If you are unable to contribute service hours due to disability or personal circumstance, contact staff to request an exception.• Gardeners who do not complete and log service hours, or request an exception for 2 years in a row, will not be allowed to renew their reservation and their plot will be reassigned.	<p>This policy is similar to former policy #13. We have added bullet points to provide more information and clarification about the service hours requirement.</p> <p>Our goal is to make sure everyone understands the service hour requirement and that this requirement does not pose an unnecessary barrier to gardeners who may need accommodation.</p>	<p>The deadline to complete the first 3 service hours was changed from July 1 to June 30 to be consistent with the October deadline.</p> <p>Contributing service hours is critical to the success of the garden and the program. Gardeners who choose not to participate (and do not formally request an exception) for 2 years in a row will no longer be able to continue gardening in their plot. This new component of the policy was strongly supported by garden managers and based on feedback from gardeners.</p>



<u>Gardener Accountability and Policy Enforcement</u>	What's New?	What's Changed?
<p>Gardeners are responsible for following the garden policies. Staff and volunteer garden managers will regularly monitor plots throughout the year. If a gardener is not following the garden policies, staff will send them a reminder.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If a garden plot looks abandoned during the main garden season (April – October), garden staff will check in with the plot holder. The plot holder has 2 weeks to respond and start gardening. If there is no action after 2 weeks, the plot will be reassigned.• When a gardener receives their third reminder during the garden season, they have the option to enter a trial period where they work with staff to create a garden plan to help them keep their plot.• Gardeners who receive a fourth reminder in a year will have their reservation cancelled and the plot will be reassigned.• Gardeners may request an appeal of a garden reminder or plot cancellation by submitting that request to the Community Gardens Program Coordinator. The appeal request will be reviewed by the Community Gardens Program Coordinator, the Garden Manager of the site where the appealing person gardens, and one other Garden Manager who is a member of the same racial/ethnic group and/or speaks the same language as the gardener (if possible).	<p>This section is based on our former policy #14 and more fully outlines the system of reminders that are sent to gardeners whose plots are not following policies 1-7.</p> <p>There are now TWO tracks that reminders will take.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. If your plot appears abandoned, you will receive communication from us; you must respond within two weeks and begin to work your plot, or else your plot will be reassigned to someone else.2. All other instances of plots out of policy will get a reminder. Your plot won't be at risk of getting canceled or reassigned unless you receive four reminders.	<p>Language has been changed from “notice” to “reminder”.</p> <p>In the previous policy, gardeners who received three notices would have their plots canceled. With the new reminders policy, if you receive three reminders, you are able to go into a trial period to work with staff to create a plan for keeping your plot. If you get a fourth reminder, however, your plot will be reassigned.</p> <p>There is now a clear option to appeal any reminder or cancellation that a gardener believes was unfairly given or should be rescinded due to special circumstances.</p>



How Garden Plot Reminders work:





What has been **MOVED** within the official Policies document?

- All language around notifications if plots are not maintained has been moved to the Gardener Accountability and Policy Enforcement section at the bottom of the Policies and Procedures document.
- We now have a separate section at the end of the Policies document that outlines our Holds Harmless, ADA, and Non-Discrimination policy, as well as the Portland Parks & Recreation Photo Policy.
- There is a separate Code of Conduct that describes how everyone involved in the community gardens - gardeners, visitors, passers-by - can help make the programs and facilities places where you and your family feel welcome, comfortable, and safe. The Code of Conduct also includes things that are prohibited in a park or city space as described in the [Portland City Code](#).

What is **GONE** from our official Policies document?

The following policies no longer appear in the updated Policies document, but many of them still appear in our updated Code of Conduct.

Specifications that appear in the Code of Conduct instead of the policies document:

- Ask permission before you harvest, weed, water, or otherwise help another gardener with their plot.
- Children should be supervised at all times.
- Refrain from allowing dogs off leash or leaving them unattended outside the garden; gardeners must pick up their dog's poop.
- Discussion about improper use of irrigation water including making no modifications to irrigation systems or attaching timers
- Restriction that crops must be for home use, not commercial purposes

Specifications no longer included in the policies document:

- Specific limitations around the orientation of structures or tall plants
- Information around watering and access to water at the garden (e.g. gardeners must be in the garden while watering, do not let water seep into others' plots, conserve water by using mulch and hand watering plants, notify garden manager if there are any leaks, note when water will be turned off in the garden)
- Details around gate and shed locks
- Details around what not to grow (do not plant trees, invasives, fast-spreading plants)