



West Brunswick Community Garden

# Amenity Plan

June 2020



# Table of contents

- BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE ..... 3**
- KEY FOCUS AREAS ..... 3**
  - 1. ENGAGEMENT ..... 4**
  - 2. ACCESS ..... 6**
  - 3. CLIMATE ADAPTATION ..... 8**
  - 4. WEED CONTROL ..... 9**
  - 5. THEFT ..... 11**
- IMPLEMENTATION ..... 13**
- STAY IN TOUCH ..... 13**



# Background and purpose

The West Brunswick Community Garden is a membership-based space in which people can grow food and other plants, compost their food waste, and meet and learn from others in the community. It contains a mix of communally managed garden beds and privately managed plots.

The garden operates successfully under the guidance of its Organising Committee (OC) and the Moreland Community Gardening (MCG) Board, however the value the garden provides to its members and the community could be further enhanced. The need for an Amenity Plan was identified by the MCG Board, and compiled by the Community Gardening Coordinator (funded through a grant from Moreland City Council), with input from the OC, garden members, local residents, and Council staff.

This Amenity Plan aims to identify key areas in which the value of the garden may be improved for its community, suggest actions that help to improve those areas, and identify indicators for measuring the progress of those actions.

Consultation was undertaken with the OC during monthly meetings, with members during discussions at the garden, and via an online survey. During consultation with the OC and members, the format and purpose of the Amenity Plan was intentionally left broad and open-ended, discussed simply as a plan to enhance the enjoyment and/or value of the garden.

Feedback suggests that members are overall very happy with the garden, with their favourite things including growing and sharing produce, being outside in an enjoyable environment, the chance to meet and learn from others in the community, and having access to the compost system. However, there are some areas in which the enjoyment of the garden could be further enhanced.

## Key focus areas

Based on consultation, this plan identifies five key focus areas for enhancement: (1) engagement, (2) access, (3) climate adaptation, (4) weed control, and (5) theft reduction.

Each focus area includes a number of actions to be undertaken, and measures by which to assess the impact of those actions. The actions are listed in order of priority, according to feedback from an online survey distributed as part of the consultation process.



# 1. Engagement

## Background

The garden’s operations are reliant on a fairly small number of members, which may not be sustainable for those individuals or the garden long term. Some members have expressed a desire to increase engagement with both other members and the broader community, in order to encourage higher levels of participation and ensure that the garden is effectively maintained and utilised.

## Actions

The following actions were identified during consultation, and have been prioritised according to feedback from the online survey.

### Priority actions:

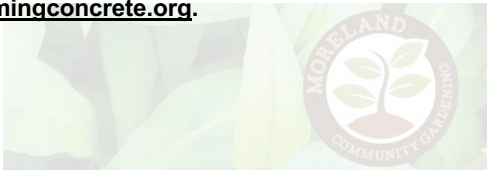
1. Publish tasks that need to be done in the members Facebook group
2. Run workshops on gardening and related topics, e.g. preserving
3. Continue writing tasks that need to be done on the blackboard at the garden (Photo 1)
4. Continue recording data at the garden (e.g. produce harvested and volunteer hours contributed) (Photo 2) and distribute to members
5. Provide excess produce and seedlings to the public (via basket or similar at front gate) for a donation



**Photo 1:** Tasks to be completed are currently written on a blackboard at the garden by leading members of the communal crew.



**Photo 2:** Members are encouraged to record the weight of produce harvested. This data is stored at [www.farmingconcrete.org](http://www.farmingconcrete.org).





**Additional actions for future consideration:**

1. Run specific gardening sessions for children
2. Enhance public garden bed at front of garden (Photo 3)
3. Provide excess produce and seedlings to the public (via basket or similar at front gate) for free
4. Hold annual plant and produce sale
5. Make workshops available to non-members for a small fee
6. Run additional 'open days' or similar to encourage involvement of local community



**Photo 3: Public bed at the front of the garden, maintained by members**

**Progress measures**

1. Membership numbers
2. Attendance at events
3. Online engagement, e.g. Facebook statistics, percentage of people opening newsletter



## 2. Access

---

### Background

Access to the garden can incorporate several elements, such as the garden being welcoming to different community members, the space being easy to find, and the garden being physically accessible to people with varying mobility needs. The garden is clearly visible to those walking past, with clear signage explaining its purpose and operations. It is accessible by bus and tram, and has both bike hoops and free unlimited parking close by. However, signage in the surrounding area is minimal, and its social media pages could be better utilised.

Physical access within the garden has also been identified as a potential barrier to some members of the community. Almost all of the communal garden beds are at ground level (Photo 4), restricting accessibility to those in a wheelchair and/or with mobility restrictions. Currently, most of the raised garden beds (which are more ergonomic) are only available as private plots. During initial consultation the shed was also identified as restricting access to some attendees due to the low doorway and raised lip at its entrance, however the shed and adjacent verandah have since been replaced (Photo 5).



**Photo 4: The majority of the garden beds are at ground level**



**Photo 5: The shed and adjacent verandah were upgraded in March 2020**

### Actions

The following actions were identified during consultation, and have been prioritised according to feedback from the online survey.

#### Priority actions:

1. Increase promotion of activities at the garden that are less physically demanding than working on garden beds, e.g. seed sowing, sensory experiences, photography, social media contributions



2. Increase digital access through creation of blog/gardening guides
3. Increase signage in Dunstan Reserve if possible
4. Create more wheelchair accessible paths and garden beds

**Additional actions for future consideration:**

1. Increase number of raised beds that are more easily accessible to those with mobility issues

**Progress measures**

1. Attendance at events
2. Feedback from members, possibly via a survey
3. Formal assessments of garden's physical accessibility



## 3. Climate adaptation

---

### Background

The ability of the garden to adapt to a changing climate was raised by members of the OC, particularly with regards to helping plants to survive extreme weather conditions.

Climate adaptation initiatives can include immediate actions that can be taken to protect plants as required, long term methods to make the garden more climate resilient, and education surrounding climate change.

### Actions

The following actions were identified during consultation, and have been prioritised according to feedback from the online survey.

#### **Priority actions:**

1. Select species that are more heat and drought tolerant
2. Use shade cloth to protect plants during extreme heat
3. Increase habitat for wildlife, e.g. create bee hotels, provide lizard habitat, plant species that provide shelter for small birds

#### **Additional actions for future consideration:**

1. Automate irrigation system
2. Run workshops focused on climate adaptation
3. Investigate water harvesting, e.g. installation of swales or water tanks
4. Publish materials about sustainable diets
5. Encourage greater use of indigenous plants

### Progress measures

1. Water used in the garden (if it is possible to obtain this data from Council)
2. Wildlife in the garden, e.g. anecdotal evidence, use of bee hotels/bird baths
3. Health of crops after extreme weather events (e.g. look at crops before and after extreme heat) and anecdotal evidence





## 4. Weed control

---

### Background

The garden has a large number of weeds throughout, and the members currently struggle to keep them under control. The severity of the weeds is compounded by the fact that the garden is surrounded by Kikuyu and Couch Grass, which continually creeps under the fence into the garden (Photo 6). The majority of the beds are at ground level, which makes it easy for the Couch and Kikuyu to penetrate the beds. The garden also contains a multitude of other weed species, including Oxalis, Chickweed, and Dandelion, all of which can be difficult to control. The weeds are problematic both within the garden beds, and on the paths between the beds (Photos 7 & 8).

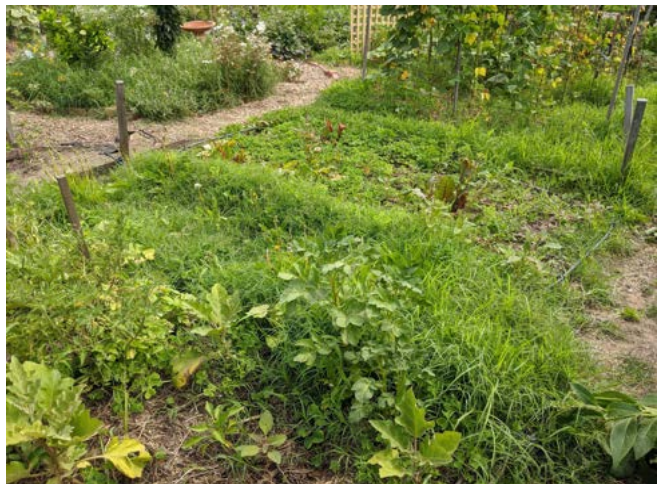


**Photo 6: Kikuyu Grass continually creeps under the fence surrounding the garden.**



**Photo 7: Weeds growing between the garden beds**

The current weed control methods include hand removal, disposal of weeds that are likely to spread in Council provided green bins, wooden barriers around some garden beds, and smothering with plastic weed matting and mulch. Members identified the infiltration of weeds around the edge of the garden, and too few people attending regular garden events, as the main reasons for the overgrowth of weeds. With most weeds growing at ground level, it is not ergonomic to remove them and extremely difficult or impossible for some people with mobility issues. There also appears to be a general feeling of exasperation and frustration with the problem, which can leave people lacking in motivation.



**Photo 8: Weeds growing in and between the garden beds**



While having some weeds growing in a garden is to be expected, and in fact provides a learning opportunity for members in how to identify and manage them, the amount growing at present is overwhelming and detracting from people's experience of the garden.

## Actions

The following actions were identified during consultation, and have been prioritised according to feedback from the online survey.

### Priority actions:

1. Create signs showing which weeds can go in the compost, and which should be disposed of in the green bins instead
2. Increase the use of mulch on garden beds and paths
3. Lay weed mat on the paths and mulch over the top
4. Install a root barrier around the garden

### Additional actions for future consideration:

1. Regularly brush cut weeds
2. Require plot holders to maintain weed free areas around their plots
3. Top up granitic sand along the perimeter paths and in other key areas (e.g. under the pergola and around the compost bays)
4. Use specific plants (e.g. Comfrey) as barriers to help control weeds
5. Purchase weed steaming machine for use at the garden

## Progress measures

1. Photographs of garden
2. Anecdotal evidence



## 5. Theft

---

### Background

Members identified theft of crops as an issue that detracts from their enjoyment of the garden. While this theft has not been witnessed, it is generally believed to be carried out by members of the public rather than by garden members. While there is a general acceptance of a certain level of crop loss, and this focus area was seen as the least important to survey respondents, many members do still find this theft discouraging.

Methods already utilised in an attempt to prevent crop theft include keeping the front gate locked when no members are present at the garden, and installing signs discouraging people from harvesting crops if they are not members. However, as the surrounding fence is low enough to be climbed over quite easily, and its height cannot feasibly be increased, it is impossible to prevent all theft.



**Photo 9: A chair used by a thief to exit the garden, and reo mesh subsequently installed by members to deter future theft attempts**

### Actions

The following actions were identified during consultation, and have been prioritised according to feedback from the online survey.

#### **Priority actions:**

1. Encourage attendance at the garden across a broader time range to increase passive surveillance
2. Encourage members to harvest crops as soon as they are ready
3. Provide regular updates to members about levels of theft and actions being taken to deter it

#### **Additional actions for future consideration:**

1. Install motion activated solar lights
2. Install real security cameras
3. Install fake security cameras
4. Install warning signs advising potential thieves that they are being filmed

### Progress measures

1. Number of theft incidents per month according to member reports





## Summary table

Focus area	Priority actions	Progress measures
Engagement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Publish tasks that need to be done in members Facebook group</li> <li>2. Run workshops on gardening and related topics, e.g. preserving</li> <li>3. Continue recording data at the garden (e.g. produce harvested and volunteer hours contributed) and distribute to members</li> <li>4. Continue writing tasks that need to be done on blackboard at garden</li> <li>5. Provide excess produce and seedlings to the public (via basket or similar at front gate) for a donation</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Membership numbers</li> <li>2. Attendance at events</li> <li>3. Online engagement, e.g. Facebook statistics, percentage of people opening newsletter</li> </ol>
Access	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase promotion of activities at the garden that are less physically demanding than working on garden beds, e.g. seed sowing, sensory experiences, photography, social media contributions</li> <li>2. Increase digital access through creation of blog/gardening guides</li> <li>3. Increase signage in Dunstan Reserve if possible</li> <li>4. Create more wheelchair accessible paths and garden beds</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Attendance at events</li> <li>2. Feedback from members, possibly via a survey</li> <li>3. Formal assessments of garden's physical accessibility</li> </ol>
Climate adaptation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Select species that are more heat and drought tolerant</li> <li>2. Use shade cloth to protect plants during extreme heat</li> <li>3. Increase habitat for wildlife, e.g. create bee hotels, provide lizard habitat, plant species that provide shelter for small birds</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Water used in the garden (if it is possible to obtain this data from Council)</li> <li>2. Wildlife in the garden, e.g. anecdotal evidence, use of bee hotels/bird baths</li> <li>3. Health of crops after extreme weather events (e.g. look at crops before and after extreme heat) and anecdotal evidence</li> </ol>





Weed management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create signs showing which weeds can go in the compost, and which should be disposed of in the green bins instead</li> <li>2. Increase the use of mulch on garden beds and paths</li> <li>3. Lay weed mat on the paths and mulch over the top</li> <li>4. Install a root barrier around the garden</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Photographs of garden</li> <li>2. Anecdotal evidence</li> </ol>
Theft	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encourage attendance at the garden across a broader time range to increase passive surveillance</li> <li>2. Encourage members to harvest crops as soon as they are ready</li> <li>3. Provide regular updates to members about levels of theft and actions being taken to deter it</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Number of theft incidents per month according to member reports</li> </ol>

## Implementation

Implementation of the actions will be coordinated by the OC members and MCG Community Gardening Coordinator, with assistance from general garden members, and guidance from the MCG Board where required.

Progress will be discussed at monthly OC meetings, and tracked via this spreadsheet: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1gMaEL8rLy1i-5iGQ1WF9MfLIQsCBpRb4R7857NoOyQQ/edit#gid=0>

A follow up report detailing progress and any adjustments to the actions or focus areas will be published by the Community Gardening Coordinator in late 2020.

## Stay in touch

**Website:** [www.morelandcommunitygardening.org/west-brunswick-community-garden/](http://www.morelandcommunitygardening.org/west-brunswick-community-garden/)

**Email:** [hello.wbcg@morelandcommunitygardening.org](mailto:hello.wbcg@morelandcommunitygardening.org)

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/WestBrunswickCG](https://www.facebook.com/WestBrunswickCG)

**Instagram:** @westbrunswickcommunitygarden

