



The Corporation of the City of Cornwall
Regular Meeting of Council
Report

Department: Planning, Development and Recreation
Division: Planning
Report Number: 2020-314-Planning, Development and Recreation
Prepared By: Kathleen Rendek, Administrative Assistant
Meeting Date: June 22, 2020
Subject: Outdoor Gardening – COVID-19

Purpose

To provide Council with information regarding By-laws related to outdoor gardening, community gardens, backyard farming, and urban food production resulting from a New Business Motion of Council approved May 11, 2020.

Recommendations

- a. That Council continue to endorse and support residential food gardens for personal use, and for City Administration to further promote permitted gardening activities and Eastern Ontario Health Unit guidelines for safe food handling.
- b. That Council continue to endorse community gardening and support the establishment of new garden spaces, and for City Administration to define and consider community gardens during the Comprehensive Zoning By-Law review and the Recreation Master Plan review.
- c. That City Administration prepare a more comprehensive report on urban agriculture for Regular Council Meeting on November 23, 2020.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications based on the recommendations of this report.

Strategic Priority Implications

Content provided in this report supports three of Council's Strategic Priorities, namely

1. Being leaders in sustainability and climate change,
2. Developing waterfront through recreational activities, and
3. New Businesses and Economic Development.

Background / Discussion

At the Regular Council Meeting of May 11, 2020, Council requested for Administration to prepare a report on By-laws related to outdoor gardening, community gardening, and urban food production. The report was to offer a series of suggestions on how Council can further support and promote local food production in Cornwall. See Attachment 1 for complete motion.

Growing Interest, Community Benefits, and Existing Efforts

The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted a renaissance of interest and investment towards home vegetable gardening, community gardens, planting fruiting trees, backyard chickens, and buying locally grown foods. This trend is happening on a global scale, but we are seeing considerable activity and enthusiasm in Cornwall.

While not universal, much of the interest and activity stems from concerns over household food security and resiliency should there be an issue with the agri-food supply chain, lack of food literacy and skills, prioritizing healthy living and outdoor activities while social distancing at home, or a desire to offer hands-on experiences for youth finishing their school year from home.

Research, reports published by other municipalities, and anecdotal evidence from Cornwall residents highlight the many benefits home gardening, community gardens, and urban agriculture. Key benefits include:

- improved food security in communities and can assist individuals who have limited access to fresh, healthy, and whole foods,
- increased outdoor and recreational activity,
- reduced nutrient and yard waste through composting,
- enhanced community engagement, inclusion, and mental health,

- increased food literacy and life-skills development,
- new opportunities for new local food businesses,
- further support for local food businesses, and
- improvement of green infrastructure which benefits water systems, reduces urban carbon dioxide levels, and supports urban biodiversity.

The City of Cornwall, institutions, and community organizations have supported the food-growing efforts of Cornwall residents for personal use or donation, long before the COVID-19 pandemic. These efforts include, but are not limited to:

- By-Laws to allowing for the cultivation of fruits, vegetables, trees, and shrubs on private property,
- Permitting community gardening activity on public and private lands,
- Seasonal yard waste collection, free compost and wood chips, and water treatment services,
- In-kind support for food and gardening events and activities,
- On-going support of the Edible Cities Project (2018), community gleaning, tiny forests, and pollinator habitats.

The City has also allowed for the development of several urban agriculture businesses over the past 6 years. These efforts can be differentiated from the above as commercial operations designed to profit from agri-food products. Notable examples include Smart Greens, Fieldless Farms, Smart Greens - ZipGrow and Pitt Street Gardens.

Finally, in an effort to support and encourage new local food retail spaces, the City amended By-Law 2015-194 Special Events in May 2017 to provide an exemption to farmers' markets on the condition that they are official members with Farmers' Market Ontario and comply with the FMO definition of a Farmers' Market (i.e. 50% food producers). See Cornwall By-Law 2017-091 for details.

Part 1: Residential Food Gardens and Livestock - Personal Use Only

Fruits, Vegetables, and Perennials – Growing In Popularity

Growing fruits and vegetables on private residential property is becoming a very popular activity for Cornwall residents. This approach uses empty space to create viable food sources in front yards, backyards, porches, and balconies. These gardens tend to include a mix of annuals (tomatoes, cucumbers, beans, lettuce, etc.) and perennials (alums, trees, and shrubs).

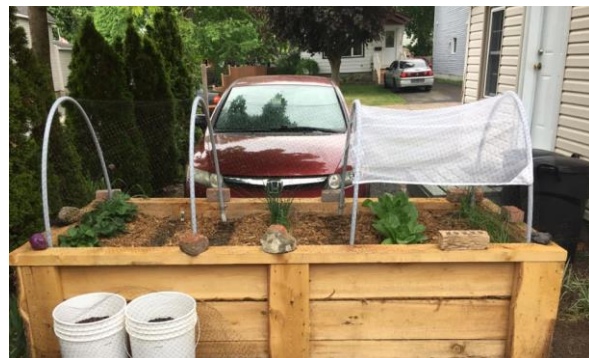
Gardens are planted directly in the soil, in raised beds, containers, hanging baskets, vertical installations, or a combination depending on the space. Typical garden accessories include sheds, small temporary greenhouses, rain barrels, pergola or trellis, fencing, and compost containers.

Cornwall residents are very interested in home gardening for personal use. The “Grow A Garden” page on the Cornwall.ca website (created April 26, 2020) has had 2,600 pageviews to date (1,900 unique pageviews). As a comparison, during the same timeframe, our very popular COVID-19 response homepage had 7,200 pageviews (5,700 unique pageviews).

The first Facebook post on April 27 reached 11,900 people, with 1,300 post clicks and 577 reactions, comments, and shares. This was a general post about all resources, including website, compost, and mulch. Follow up posts at the beginning of May on compost and mulch reached 5,400 people and 8,700 people respectfully.



Considering the traffic on our gardening page, it would be beneficial to expand the Grow a Garden page to outline and promote all permitted home gardening activities, any limitations, and health guidelines. This would become a permanent page on our website and could include information on building temporary greenhouses, raised garden beds, compost piles/containers, pest management expectations, soil inputs, rain barrels, and recommended practices for food consumption from the Eastern Ontario Health Unit.

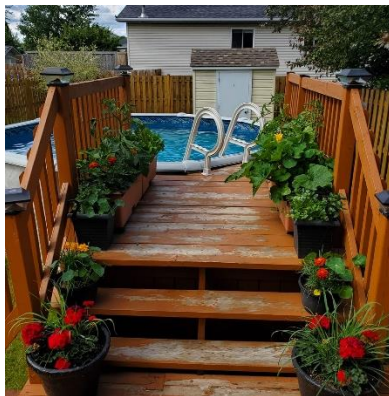




Residents have made more than 870 trips to the landfill in 2020 to take advantage of free garden material. These trips over the scale result in over 550 tonnes of compost, mulch, and clean wood being used in backyards across the city. These numbers represent a 382% increase over 2019.

- Jan 1-June 15, 2019 = 190 Trips and 151.80 tonnes removed
- Jan 1-June 15, 2020 = 873 Trips and 580.81 tonnes removed

Environmental Services will continue to support the increased demand for gardening materials.



Above images provided by Cornwall residents – June 2020.

The above activities and most key elements of home gardening are permitted under residential zones and by city By-Law #2013-212 Yard Maintenance, By-Law #2014-191 Property Standards, and several Building By-Laws. See Attachment 2, Attachment 3, and Attachment 4.

By-Law amendments could be drafted to allow for the use of rainwater collection in closed rain barrel systems and explicit clarification on building temporary greenhouses and raised garden beds (i.e. no permit needed if less than 10m²).

Livestock – Backyard Chickens

The keeping of livestock, bees, cultured fish, and wild game is not permitted in Cornwall unless zoned rural or agricultural. Livestock, as defined by the Farming and Food Productions Act, 1998, includes poultry, cattle, horse, sheep, and goat.

The same is true for our neighbouring six townships in the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry. South Stormont and South Glengarry are in the process of considering backyard hens on residential property (with some land size and licensing restrictions), but no formal decision has been made.

Select communities in Ontario do allow for a limited number of “backyard hens” under a municipal by-law and permit system. Notable examples include City of Kingston Urban Hen By-Laws (2004-144: 2011-65), the City of Toronto Urban Hens Pilot Project (By-Laws 1048-2017, 1109-2017).

Keeping hens in urban areas continues to gain popularity, and a pilot backyard chicken licensing program could be considered by City Administration pending direction from Council.

Part 2: Community Gardens and Edible Landscaping - Personal Use Only

Community gardens on public or private land are designed for residents who have limited access to growing space at their place of residence. Food grown in community gardens is intended for personal use, teaching, or donation.

City Support For Community Gardening and Edible Landscapes

The City has a long history of supporting various community gardens at Cornwall Social Housing, Cornwall Fire and Police stations, food banks, primary and secondary schools, retirement and long-term care homes, after school programs, community health centres, places of worship, and outside businesses.

The following chart is a summary of existing community garden locations, capacity, and potential to expand:

Initiative	Location	Organizer	Access	Gardener Capacity	Potential To Expand
Eco Gardens	Race Street	Centre De Santé Communautaire De L'Estrie	Registered gardeners including space for Agape Centre garden	54	Yes, 17 gardeners on wait list
Brookdale Gardens	Fourth Street and Brookdale Avenue	Centre De Santé Communautaire De L'Estrie	Registered gardeners and clients of Canadian Mental Health Association	20	maybe
Hamilton Crescent Community Gardens + Edible Forest	Glenview Heights Social Housing: 650 Hamilton Cres.	Seaway Valley Community Health Centre and Social Housing	Housing residents only	50 registered in program 26 in plots 24 in containers	Yes, SVCHC counted 69 additional HC residents gardening
Lemay Street Community Gardens	New Johnstown Court Social Housing: 550 Lemay St.	Seaway Valley Community Health Centre and Social Housing	Housing residents only	10 in raised beds and containers	Yes, SVCHC counted 15 additional LS residents gardening
Seaway Valley Community Health Centre	353 Pitt Street, near parking lot	Seaway Valley Community Health Centre	SVCHC clients and public	3 container gardes	Yes
Chartwell Community Gardens	801 Fourth St East	Chartwell McConnell Retirement Residence	Retirement home resident only	Raised bed	Maybe
Edible Cities Project Garden Boxes	Lamoureux Park Bandshell	Edible Cities Project	General public	10 planter boxes + 2 larger installation at the Bandshell	Yes, Parks and Recreation considering new locations
Transition Cornwall + Community Gardens	Pitt Street Fire Station, Police Station	Transition Cornwall +	General public	4'x32' garden bed 4'x12 garden bed	Yes, if new boulevard places were provided

Riverdale Community Garden	Second Street and Power Dam	Mr. and Mrs. Towndrow	Private	6	Yes, there is space to offer land to other residents
Boys and Girls Club Gardens	1st Street Club House	Boys and Girls Club	Clients only	2 raised beds	Yes
Children's Aid Society of SDG	150 Boundary Rd	Children's Aid Society of SDG	Clients only	Large community planting	Yes
Growing Up Organic	Various primary and secondary schools in Catholic District School Board	Originally Canadian Organic Grower, now managed by schools themselves	Students only	Typically 2-4 raise garden beds	Yes



Transition Cornwall+ gardens at Fire Station and Lamoureux Park. June, 2020.

The City has a history of supporting various community gardening events and activities through in-kind or financial support.

- March: Cornwall Seedy Saturday at Benson Centre (Est. in 2014)
- May: Incredible Edible Plant Festival and Give-Away at Justice Building or Lamoureux Park (Est. 2012)
- May: Cornwall Horticultural Society Bark and Compost Day, City Landfill
- August: Transition Cornwall+ Heirloom Tomato Tasting at Cornwall Library (in 2017, 2018)



Incredible Edible Plant Give-Away, May 2020 | Riverdale Community Garden at Power Dam and 2nd West

In 2018, the City of Cornwall endorsed the Edible Cities project, an initiative which aims to convert underused recreational spaces to edible gardens, community gleaning, tiny forests, and pollinator habitats. The area around the Bandshell in Lamoureux Park was the first location for planting in 2019.

We are now considering new locations for edible landscaping along the waterfront as part of the Recreation Master Plan review.

Establishing New Community Gardens



There is a growing demand for access to community gardens. The City will continue to support institutions and groups within the community to maintain and establish new community garden spaces. We will help by continuing to assess City owned lands for areas suitable to community gardens such as Open Space or Environmental Constraint designation. Notably, the City's Official Plan highlights Utility Corridors as optimal locations for community gardens as well the general premise of the Open Space Designation. We could also consider the Environmental Constraint zones in the Business Park if there was further demand.

The City does not have a definition for a community garden in the Zoning By-Law. A definition could be introduced in the Zoning By-law however, we would suggest that a general provision be included to allow the establishment of new community gardens along with provisions that would regulate the use, this can be fine tuned i.e. distance from abutting residential properties. We would not suggest specifying a zone as it could possibly cause future zoning deficiencies such as land-use conflicts or exclusion in a particular zone.

There is no formal application process or requirements for establishing a new community garden. We would recommend developing a licensing application and guidelines for the establishment of new community gardens in Open Space or on private property. The development of a licensing program should occur following the completion of 2020 Zoning By-Law and Recreation Master Plan to avoid any conflicting elements. This process would also help identify which department would be responsible for application receipt, approval, and annual inspection, should it be required.

Part 3: Urban Agriculture – Food Produced For Sale

Urban agriculture refers to the growing, processing, and distribution of food and food-related products for commercial uses. More traditional operations include direct soil planting and greenhouses, while more advanced technologies are allowing for all-season indoor growing operations using hydroponics and aquaponics.

Private property growers that are interested in selling their produce must follow the provincial standards and regulations governed by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Farming and Rural Affairs. One does not require a business license to grow and sell produce in Cornwall however, the farmer must be properly zoned (a minor variance may be required), follow the applicable zoning setbacks and building permit requirements, may need to have their soil tested for contamination, register with the Eastern Ontario Health Unit, and package foods with clear identification labels or signage (i.e. picked when and from where). Farmers' Market of Ontario (umbrella organization for Ontario markets) and the EOHU also require compliance with safe food handling during production and at the point for sale, as well as liability insurance for food businesses.

Existing urban agriculture activities in Cornwall are as follows:

- **Pitt Street Garden** is a 1.8-acre farm located north of Tollgate and Pitt Street. The business obtained a minor variance on their residential property in 2016 to allow for agricultural practices. Due to neighbouring resident concerns, the minor variance stipulates that commercial sales are prohibited. The farmer therefore sells his products at farmers' markets and his community supported agriculture subscription program. See Attachment 5 for a letter from Pitt Street Gardens in support of urban agriculture and which outlines future goals.



- **Smart Greens** produces a variety of leafy greens in a hydroponic farm on Fourth Street West using vertical farming technology at the ZipGrow manufacturing warehouse. The farm is on Manufacturing 40 zoned property and the primary agriculture products (leafy greens) are considered a manufactured product. Each Wednesday the produce is harvested and delivered to pick-up locations.



- **Fieldless Farms**, located at 705 Boundary Road, is in the process of establishing their indoor hydroponic farm. The property is zoned Manufacturing 40 which permits the manufacturing of food and beverage products. Once operational, the primary agriculture products (leafy greens) will be considered a manufactured product and fall within permitted uses.

In 2017, we amended By-Law 2015-194 Special Events to offer an exemption to farmers' markets on the condition that they are official members with Farmers' Market Ontario and comply with the FMO definition of a Farmers' Market (i.e. 50% food producers). Find By-Law 2017-091 for details.

Several municipalities in Ontario have taken additional steps to support urban agriculture. The most notable example being Hamilton with its novel Zoning By-Law defining how community gardens, farmers' markets, private property farm stands, and urban farms can operate in the City of Hamilton (By-Law 14-273). The by-law identifies new rules for allowing community gardens and urban farms to operate in parts of the city where residential and commercial zoning had

prohibited agricultural uses. That said, it is worth noting that keeping livestock (animal husbandry) remains prohibited unless zoned rural or agricultural.

In 2016, Ottawa approved amended their Comprehensive Zoning By-Law to allow for urban agriculture from community gardens and residential zones. Specifically, gardening residents may sell food grown at a community garden and/or from private property at farmers' markets. On-property retail sales are not permitted but this has simply encouraged new market locations in the city.

We would not suggest establishing a community garden on a public or private residential lot if the intent is to sell produce. This would be contrary to Home Occupations standards and may cause nuisances. The City has received complaints from sales of produce from residential lands, smell, parking etc.

Food processing is identified as a target sector in the Economic Development Strategic Plan. The plan also speaks to leveraging green/eco opportunities (clean air, walking/cycling paths, local food initiatives) to help promote Cornwall to residents, visitors, and investors.

Further development of urban agriculture activities, along with Farmers markets and commercial kitchen facilities, would support ongoing entrepreneurial and tourism sector growth. As an example, Toronto has a strong history of supporting urban agriculture in underused spaces following the GrowTO: Urban Agriculture Action Plan 2012. As part of the Action Plan, Toronto has developed several unique business licenses, leasing documents, guidelines, and tools for urban growers. Similar resources could be developed for Cornwall pending direction from Council.

Finally, we are also aware of several funding opportunities currently available to businesses and municipalities to help strengthen the development of local food infrastructure.

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Outdoor Gardening - COVID-19 - 2020-314-PDR.docx
Attachments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attachment 2 Highlighted Sections from By-law 2013-212 - Yard Maintenance By-law Consolidation.pdf - Attachment 3 Cornwall.ca summary on building permit requirements.pdf - Attachment 4 Highlighted Sections of By-Law 2014-191 Property Standards By-Law.pdf - Attachment 5 Letter from Pitt Street Farm Re Urban Agriculture In Cornwall.docx - Attachment 1 Outdoor Gardening - COVID-19 - 2020-09-Council Members.pdf - Attachment 6 Le Village BIA -Outdoor Gardening - COVID-19, May 18, 2020.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Jun 16, 2020

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Mark A. Boileau - Jun 16, 2020 - 4:33 PM

Maureen Adams - Jun 16, 2020 - 8:17 PM