

# Urban Agriculture Guidelines



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Yarra City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and true sovereigns of the land now known as Yarra. We also acknowledge the significant contributions made by other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to life in Yarra. We pay our respects to Elders from all nations and to their Elders past, present and future.

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This publication is available in alternative accessible formats on request.

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**Yarra Council language line**

العربية 9280 1930

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Other 9280 1940

**REF 19555**



### What does Urban Agriculture mean to Yarra City Council?

Yarra City Council is committed to supporting residents to interact with and understand their food system.

We aim to provide opportunities to grow, share and compost food on both private and public land around the municipality. Council's commitment to community based urban agriculture is articulated in the **Yarra Urban Agriculture Strategy 2019 - 2023**.

### Yarra Urban Agriculture Guidelines

Council designs and delivers a suite of urban agriculture projects directly, while other projects are developed by communities in collaboration with Council. To enable Council and communities to work together on visioning, designing and delivering well planned, productive urban agriculture projects on public land, the Yarra Urban Agriculture Guidelines (Guidelines) have been developed. Whether you are keen to grow a communal food garden or want to get together with some neighbours to compost collectively, the Guidelines will outline steps required to work collaboratively with Council to deliver your project.

### Learn and share

We encourage you and your gardening group to attend **My Smart Garden** workshops to build your skills and share your experiences. Other ways that you can share:

- Put photos, videos and short stories of your growing experiences on social media.
- Participate or set up open days to share the joys and benefits of your garden space.
- Attend local produce swap days or donate your excess produce to local charities.

### Measure

Recording your harvest and the food scraps that you compost can be both rewarding and informative. If this is something that you would like to do we suggest **Farming Concrete's toolkit**. The toolkit helps you track your output to showcase the benefits of your garden, and to improve and share your practice.

### Nurture and enjoy

Enjoy and make the most of your growing space. Please consider the visual impact of your garden on your neighbours and maintain your garden accordingly. An untended garden can appear as if no one is using it and may attract vandalism or complaints. If you find that you cannot adequately maintain your garden, please contact Council to discuss options to share or forfeit your growing space. If your garden is clearly left unattended for an extended period of time, Council may remove it following consultation with the applicant or nearby residents.

# Navigating the Guidelines

The Guidelines include information that will help you successfully apply for a new food growing or composting project on public land in the City of Yarra. Before you consider applying to start a new project, you can see what is already available in your area by [visiting our website](#).

There are different project types outlined in the Guidelines. Some project types have multiple options available, so please read the Guidelines thoroughly to understand the different project types and application pathways.



## Section 1: Street-side food gardens

Street-side food gardens are located on public land beside a roadway. They can include laneway gardens, fruit trees and planter boxes. These gardens are supported by Council and cared for by the community.

## Section 2: Community compost hubs

Community compost hubs are spaces where multiple households can recycle food scraps sustainably through composting or worm farming.

## Section 3: Urban agriculture projects

Urban agriculture projects are larger scale food growing projects that may include market gardens, small communal food gardens, community gardens or urban farms. These projects are a space for shared gardening by a community group. They may include a collection of garden beds for food growing fruit tree orchards or intensive food production for the benefit of the community. Projects of this kind, managed by an incorporated association, or similar legal entity are designated to be urban agriculture projects.

# Section 1: Starting a street-side food garden

Street-side food gardens are spaces for growing food located on public land close to or beside a roadway. They can include laneway gardens, fruit trees and planter boxes. These gardens are supported by Council and cared for by the community, located on land such as footpaths, nature strips, some laneways and between the footpath and road.

Growing food on public land close to home can be a great way to reduce food miles, learn new skills and meet neighbours in the process. Many Yarra residents grow crops such as salad greens, herbs and perennial vegetables in their planter boxes. Others grow fruit trees in their nature strip.

It is important to note that with street-side food gardens, while you are responsible for caring for the garden, it is on public land and needs to be shared with the community. Sometimes neighbours apply for street-side food gardens together. Given the limited growing space in inner city suburbs sharing crops is a great way to make your harvest go further.

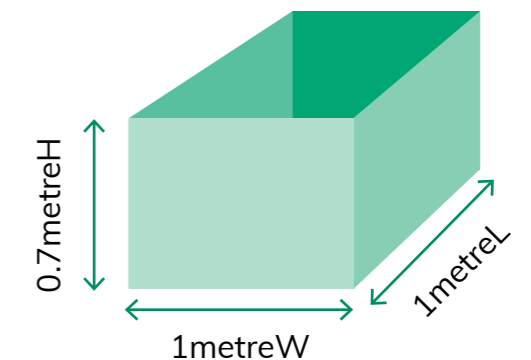
Starting a new street-side food garden requires commitment from gardeners and a small fee if you are applying for use of a planter box or laneway garden. While the Council supports individuals and groups to establish street-side food gardens, it does not maintain these spaces directly. For your application to be successful, Council will consider what you want to do with the space, practical limitations on the space proposed, and the level of support from surrounding community members.

### Planter box and productive tree site selection criteria:

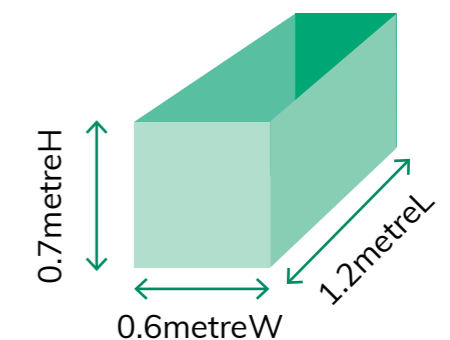
One of the steps Council Officers take in assessing an application for a new street-side food garden is to examine

the proposed site against a set of safety and access requirements. These requirements ensure that the garden is safe, allows access by all members of the community and is a fair use of public land. The following sections detail requirements for planter boxes and fruit trees.

Council provides two sizes of planter box: 1metreL x 1metreW x 0.7metreH and



1.2metreL x 0.6metreW x 0.7metreH.



Choose the size that best fits your location. The maximum height of the planter box, including vegetation, is 1.1 metres. This is to maintain visibility for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists.

Before you choose to apply for a site you must attend a Community Growing Spaces Workshop. Workshops are free and are conducted twice a year, usually in March and August.

## Location

### Proximity to service / structure

Your garden will be in a public place and therefore you should be aware that service authorities may need to access or maintain their assets (such as access pits for communications or power lines, etc.). You will need to assess the area to see what service infrastructure exists and it will be your responsibility to negotiate the protection and/or reinstatement of your garden with the relevant service authorities if work is required in that area.

A street-side garden must be located a minimum distance of 0.5 metres from service infrastructure, and at least 1 metre from a fire hydrant. This includes infrastructure related to water, electricity/power, street cleaning, rubbish/recycling collection and emergency services (emergency panels, etc.). A street-side garden must not be located between any Council infrastructure and a property or boundary line (e.g. Council seating and the property line, etc.).

### Footpaths and roads

When choosing a location for your street-side garden, it is essential that it is safe for cyclists and motorists. The combined height of the planter box and plants should not reduce visibility for road users, particularly motorists parallel parking. It should be located clear of driveways, crossovers and road signs. Productive trees (fruit or nut) are an exception to this height rule, however are limited to being placed in existing nature strips where proximity to services allows. Productive trees cannot be put into planter boxes.

Planter boxes must be located clear of dedicated disability car spaces. Sites not suitable for a street-side gardens include where there is free flowing traffic such as middle of the road verges or nature strips where there is no car parking. You can speak further with Council's Urban Agriculture Facilitator to better understand these site selection criteria and whether your site is likely to be appropriate.

Your proposed site must observe the minimum clearance distances that are relevant to your chosen location:

- Minimum width of 1.5 metres from the property line is clear for the footpath.
- Minimum length of 6 metres is retained for each car space – adjacent to 60-degree parking.
- Minimum clearance of 0.4 metres between your planter box and the back of kerb to accommodate street cleaning.
- Maximum height of 1.1 metres for planter box (including plants) to enable visibility for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.
- Minimum clearance of 0.4 metres from parallel parking bay to allow car doors to open, ideally 0.6 metres to enable easy access.
- Minimum clearance of 0.9 metres from 90 degree angle parking bay to allow for vehicle clearance onto kerb.
- Minimum clearance of 0.6 metres from 45 degree angle parking bay to allow for vehicle clearance onto kerb.
- A street-side garden must not be installed within 7 metres of the intersection to maintain visibility for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.

## Community interest and support

- Once you have identified a suitable location for your planter box or productive tree, you need to consult with your neighbours to ensure they are happy with your plans.
- When you consult with your neighbours you might find they would also like to apply for a growing space, encourage them to participate and apply also.

- Neighbours within 25 metres of the proposed location must be consulted and their comments noted.
- A minimum of 85% of these neighbours must support your application for it to be approved.
- Any objections over this threshold will be considered on their merit.

## Example of an appropriate footpath site



A 0.6 metres by 1.2 metres planter on a 3 metres wide footpath, with more than 0.4 metres between the kerb and the planter box to allow for easy access to parked cars.

## Laneway site selection criteria

### Location

The selection of a suitable laneway is essential for the development of a successful community growing space, along with the building of a strong resilient community. Many factors must be taken into consideration to ensure both the safety and rights of the community and the legal obligations of the Council are maintained. When choosing an appropriate laneway consider the following:

### Accessibility and services

- Access requirements for the laneway (e.g. is the laneway used by trucks, cars, bicycles or only pedestrians? Please consult with the Urban Agriculture Facilitator if you require any clarification);
- Appropriate access for emergency services;
- Property owners rights of access to their property from the laneway (whether by motor vehicle or otherwise);
- Community rights of access to the laneway;
- Council's statutory obligations as managers of the laneways/roads, including the encouragement of public safety on all public land, including roads and lanes, at all times;
- Implementation of appropriate risk management processes in order to minimise any legal liability of Council and its ratepayers; and,
- Assurance that laneways/roads are trafficable at all times (regarding their respective status whether for vehicles or pedestrians and/or emergency services).

- Is the planter type suited to the ground conditions which it is set on? It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure the suitability and especially the stability and safety of the receptacle selected. Are the receptacles easily movable?
- Have you provided a minimum clearance of one metre around any light poles/service/drainage etc.?

Council has carefully developed an outline of categories to determine an area's suitability for temporary laneway garden development. While these guidelines provide a general outline to assist you in determining the suitability of your laneway for a temporary garden, a short discussion with the Urban Agriculture Facilitator may help to clarify which category your laneway falls into.

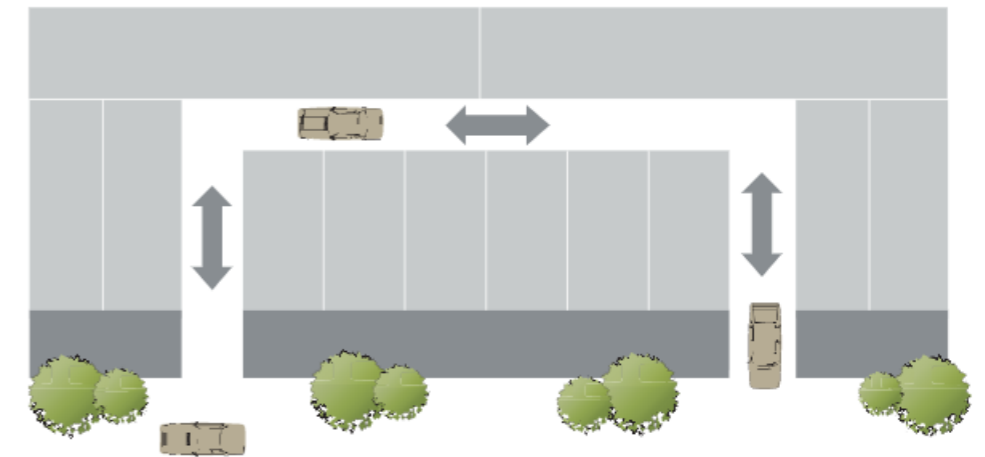
### Community interest and support

- Once you have identified your laneway is suitable, you need to speak to your neighbours to make sure that they are supportive of the plans. You might find they would also like to apply for a growing space, encourage them to participate. Applications, while considered individually, may be submitted together.
- All residents with properties abutting the laneway, and their access potentially limited by the garden, must be consulted.
- A minimum of 85% of these neighbours must support your application for it to be approved.
- Any objections over this threshold will be considered on their merit.

## Street-side laneway selection criteria

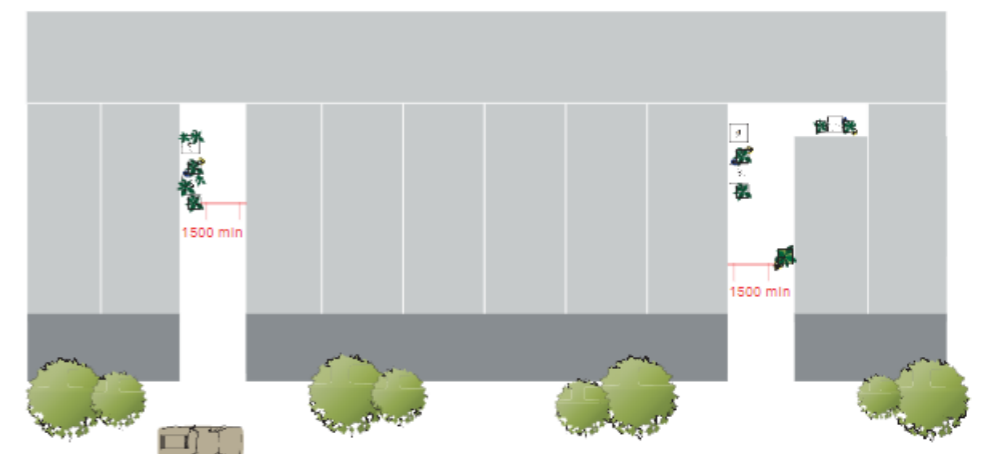
Laneway Type	Description	Suitable for garden?
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A	Laneway is extensively used by surrounding properties for regular vehicular access.	Not usually. A temporary laneway garden will either be prohibited or in no way permitted to obstruct traffic or negatively impact adjacent community members.
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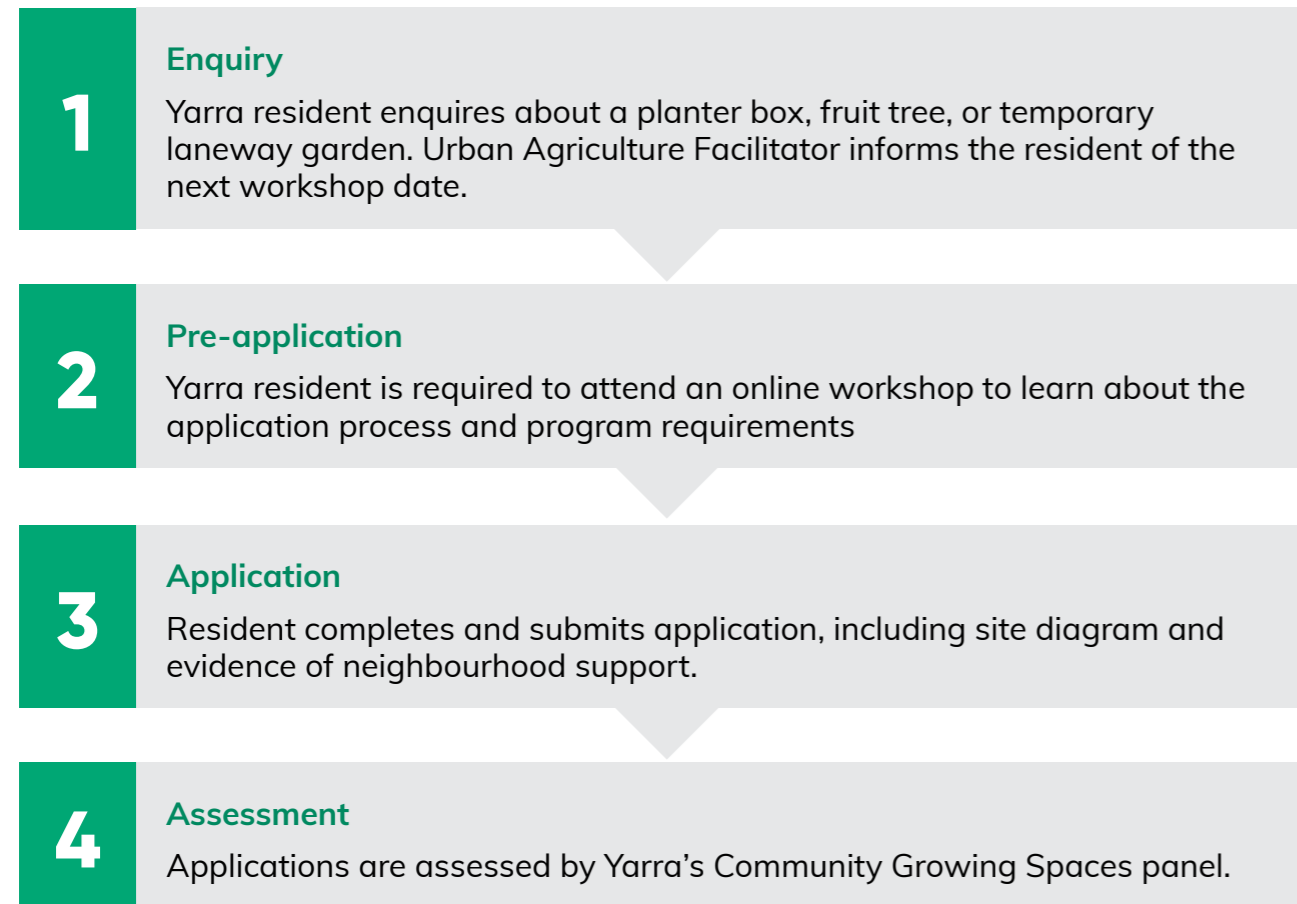
B	Laneway is used by surrounding properties for intermittent vehicular access to off-street garages or carports or access.	Consent or permission may be granted with conditions to ensure partial or occasional access to neighbouring properties can be provided as needed.
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C	Laneway is not used, or used rarely, by surrounding properties for vehicular access to off-street garages, carports or access.	Consent or permission may be granted with conditions to ensure partial or occasional access to neighbouring properties can be provided as needed.
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Street-side food gardens can be established by an individual or group of neighbours applying as part of Council's Community Growing Spaces Program. The application process is outlined below. This diagram outlines the process Council follows to assess an application and proposed site, including the responsibilities of the applicant and Council officers. It is important to note that this process will take time. Council assesses applications at set times of the year and must work through the technical and legal aspects of each application to ensure that safety and access requirements are fully considered.

### Street-side food garden application process



**Application successful**  
Yarra resident is sent relevant agreement and invoice (if applicable).  
After agreement/invoice paid:

- Planter box delivery is arranged; or
- Resident can plant productive tree; or
- Resident can set up your temporary laneway garden.

**Application unsuccessful**  
Urban Agriculture Facilitator contacts resident to explain reasons for rejecting application and offers to discuss other options for food growing or composting.



Street-side: Planter box and productive tree selection criteria guide			
	Essential	Ideal	N/A
Close to community garden			✓
Near to resident users	✓		
Space can house infrastructure			✓
Community interest and support		✓	
Water and solar access	✓		
Safety and security	✓		
Distances to	Footpath	Distance to curb	Height
Roads and traffic	1.5m wide	0.4m	1.1m
Proximity to parking bays	0.4 to 0.9m		
People	1	2+	5+
Households involved	✓	✓	✓

## Section 2: Community compost hubs

Composting is becoming increasingly popular in cities with people wanting to responsibly dispose of their food scraps and utilise compost in gardens and growing spaces. Council provides many resources which support composting, including advice on how to compost and discounted access to composting materials and infrastructure. To learn more about these resources and to view equipment available for purchase at discounted rates visit [Council's website](#).

### Starting a community compost hub

A compost hub refers to a collection of composting infrastructure for the purpose of community members processing food scraps into usable compost.

Having a shared space for processing food waste responsibly is a great way to share the work of composting with others. This can be anything from two shared worm farms to larger-scale composting systems or a combination of systems suitable for the site. Before applying to start a new community compost hub, it can be helpful to consider other options for handling food scraps in your local area, such as composting at your home or at an existing community compost hub.

Starting a new community compost hub requires resources and community involvement. While Council supports community groups to establish shared compost spaces, it does not run or operate compost hubs directly. For this reason, it is essential that you have committed members to work through the application process and the ongoing management and maintenance of the community compost hub.

Council needs to ensure that any use of Council land or resources is in the best interest and inclusive of the whole community. The processes outlined in these guidelines are designed to allow Council to assess applications for

community compost hubs fairly, and to collect feedback from both those directly involved and from other resident stakeholders.

### Community compost hub site selection criteria

One of the steps Council officers take in assessing an application for a new community compost hub is to examine the proposed site against a set of criteria. These criteria assist the hub to be successful, and that the assessment is fair. Before you apply for a site, it can be helpful to consider the criteria to decide whether the site is likely to be suitable.

#### Location

- Your proposed location may already have land uses that are contradictory to a community compost hub. For example, dog parks, nature reserves and heritage parks would not be suitable locations for a community compost hub.
- Co-locating a compost hub with an existing community garden or community growing space will ensure that there is a nearby garden which can make use of your finished compost.



- If your proposed location is nearby to a road or pathway, it must adhere to the same minimum distances and visibility restrictions outlined in Section 1: Street-side Food Gardens site selection criteria of the Urban Agriculture Guidelines.
- If there is already a nearby community compost hub that residents can join it may be preferable to join in with the existing hub rather than initiating a new one.
- It is important to consider if the proposed site is close to where people live so that residents can easily get involved.
- It is helpful to consider if the site is big enough to house appropriate compost/worm farm systems and associated materials (such as carbon storage containers, tools and equipment).
- Your proposed site will need to have access to water so that users are able to wash out buckets and tools and add water to the compost when required.

#### Community interest and support

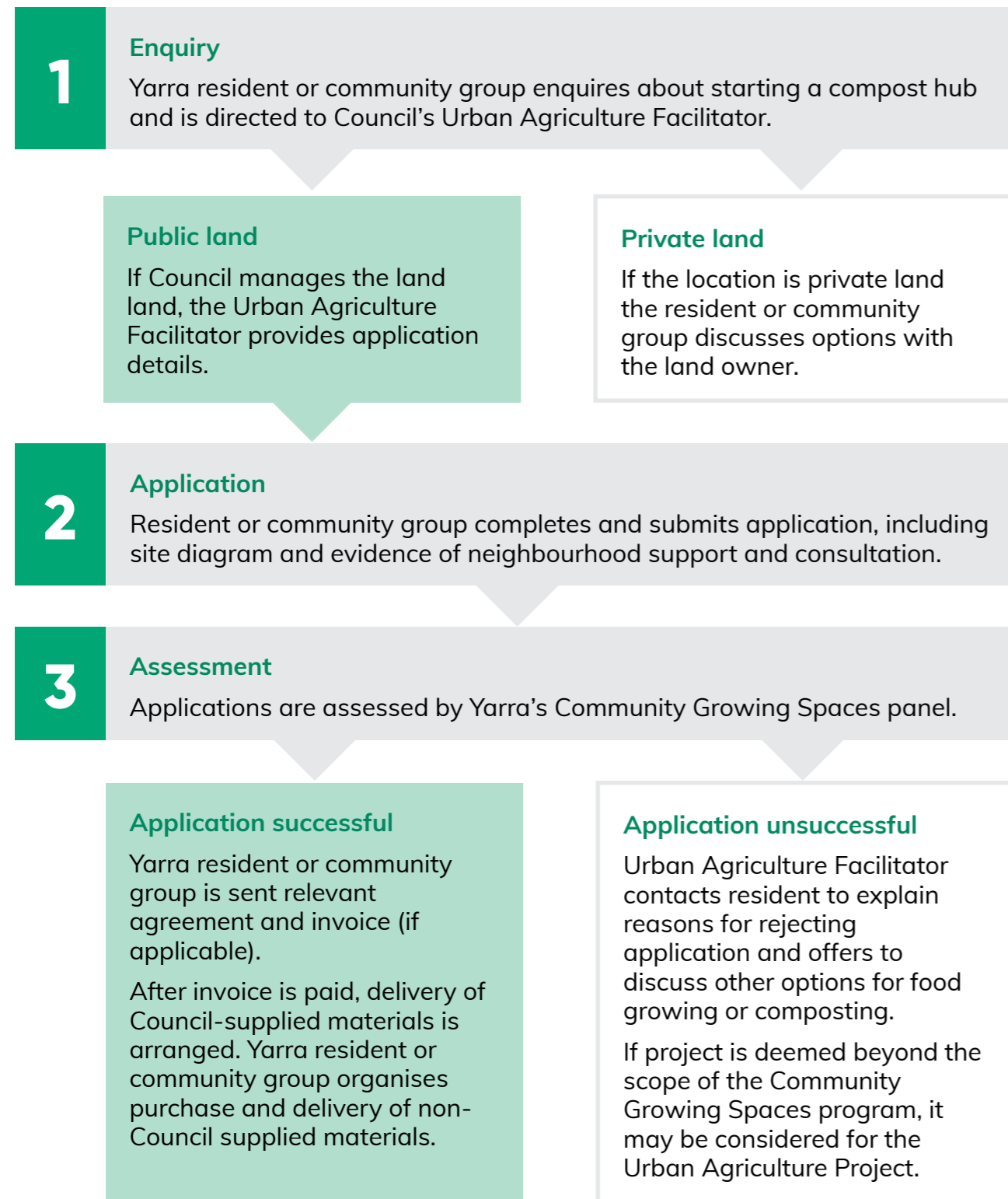
- Do you have a group of committed locals who would like to be part of this project? This is especially important for getting the compost system going and keeping it maintained. Are residents and businesses in the surrounding area likely to be supportive of the project? There will need to be broad community support for the project to go ahead.

- You can speak further with Council's Urban Agriculture Facilitator to better understand these questions and the considerations that go into approving a site for a new community compost hub. The Urban Agriculture Facilitator can also assist by advising you on suitable compost and worm farm systems for your site.

Community compost hubs can be established in several ways, including as part of a community garden or on private property. For community compost hub proposals on public land, a group of residents can apply as part of Community Growing Spaces Program. This process is outlined in the diagram on the following page.

This diagram outlines the process Council follows to assess an application and proposed site, including the responsibilities of the applicant and Council Officers. It is important to note that this process will take time; there are set times of the year when the applications are assessed to enable Council to work through the technical and legal aspects of the proposal. The process outlined below is for land managed by the Council. The Urban Agriculture Facilitator can assist you in determining who owns a piece of land if it is not the City of Yarra, but you will need to contact that landowner independently.

## Community compost hub application process



Compost hubs selection criteria guide			
	Essential	Ideal	N/A
Close to community garden		✓	
Near to resident users		✓	
Big enough to house infrastructure	✓		
Community interest and support	✓		
Water and solar access	✓		
Safety and security		✓	
<b>People</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2+</b>	<b>5+</b>
Households involved		✓	



## Section 3: Urban agriculture projects

Starting a community garden, market garden or other urban agriculture site.

Urban agriculture sites such as community gardens can be great places for people to grow food, compost, learn and share skills and meet other people in their local community. Yarra already has several diverse and vibrant community gardens and urban agriculture sites and is committed to supporting residents to establish more. You can find information on existing community gardens in Yarra on [Council's website](#).

Starting a new Urban Agriculture Project requires ongoing resources and community involvement. While Council supports community groups to establish food growing spaces, it does not run or operate community gardens or other urban agriculture projects directly. For this reason, it is essential that you have committed members to work through not only the application process, but the ongoing management and maintenance of the project and site. Before making plans, it can be helpful to see if there are already Urban

Agriculture Projects that you can be involved with near where your proposed project would be.

Council needs to ensure that any use of Council land or resources is in the best interest and inclusive of the community. The processes outlined in these guidelines are designed to allow Council to assess applications for urban agriculture projects fairly, and to collect feedback from both those directly involved and from other resident stakeholders.



### Urban agriculture project site selection criteria

One of the steps Council Officers take in assessing an application for a new urban agriculture project is to examine the proposed site against a set of criteria. These criteria exist to ensure the project is likely to be successful, and that the assessment is fair.

Before you choose to apply for a site, it can be helpful to refer to [Yarra's Open Space Strategy 2020](#).

Criteria for existing and future proposals for Urban Agriculture projects in public open space are as follows:

- Demonstrate the use of land for a community garden benefit and is supported by residents in the local catchment of the proposed garden.
- The land area is large enough to sustain a viable community garden including areas for plots, compost, sheds and water storage
- Meets the multiple-use and sustainability principles, for example is co-located with an existing built facility to share facilities and resources such as rainwater

harvesting, water supply and secure storage.

- Preferably co-located with other facilities.
- There is adequate public open space available in the surrounding area or on the remainder of the site to retain adequate access to open space for recreation use.
- The site is suitable for growing food produce such as vegetables, fruit and herbs that typically require adequate sunlight access and water.
- The community gardens are run by an incorporated organisation that meets regularly or have a formal auspice agreement with a relevant organisation.
- The proposed location does not negatively impact on heritage or identified environmental values of the open space or immediate surrounds. local catchment of the proposed garden.

Urban Agriculture Project applications will be assessed against, but not limited to the following criteria:

## Location

Your proposed location may already have land uses that are contradictory to an Urban Agriculture Project. For example, dog parks, nature reserves and heritage parks would not be eligible sites for an Urban Agriculture Project.

If there is already a nearby Urban Agriculture Project site such as a community garden or small communal garden that residents can join, it may be preferable to join in with the existing garden rather than initiating a new one.

If your proposed location is nearby to a road or pathway, it must adhere to the same minimum distances and visibility restrictions outlined in Section 1: Street-side Food Gardens site selection criteria of the Urban Agriculture Guidelines.

Sites located near to a community facility such as a neighbourhood house or library who will be able to support participant involvement will be looked at favourably.

## Accessibility and Services

The location should be accessible for all abilities with surfaces and pathway width suitable for wheel-chair access. The proposed location should be accessed by transport options other than driving. Are there nearby facilities such as bathrooms that participants can use?

## Safety and security

Check if there are neighbouring sites that might pose a problem for the urban agriculture site such as from pollution or persistent noise. Check that the site has adequate lighting and is visible from other locations to improve safety and security for site users.

## Water and solar access

Your proposed site must have access to mains water. Water access is essential for a successful garden.

It also needs to receive at least six hours of direct sunlight per day in both summer and winter. This is essential if edible plants are going to grow successfully.

## Community interest and support

Do you have a group of committed locals who would like to be part of this project? This is very important for getting the project going and keeping it maintained and thriving long term. Are local residents and businesses likely to be supportive of the project? There will need to be broad community support for the project to go ahead.

## Urban Agriculture project application process

The Urban Agriculture Project application process is outlined on the opposite page. The process relates to land managed by Yarra City Council.

The Urban Agriculture Facilitator may be able to assist you in determining who owns a piece of land if it is not Council, however, you will need to contact that landowner independently. There are some online resources that you may find useful when looking to start a community garden on land owned by someone other than the Council.

## Urban Agriculture project application process

1

### Enquiry

Yarra resident or community group enquires about establishing a new urban agriculture project and is directed to Council's Urban Agriculture Facilitator

2

### Intake

If Council manages the land, the Urban Agriculture Facilitator directs resident or community group to address the selection criteria

**The project meets the selection criteria**

**The project does not meet the selection criteria**

The resident or community group must select another site for the project

3

### Pre-assessment

Urban Agriculture Facilitator consults with internal Council areas about the viability of the site for an Urban Agriculture Project

**Site is suitable**

There is internal Council agreement that the site could be suitable. The project is handed over to the relevant team to prepare a budget bid

**The site is not suitable**

The resident or community group must select another site for the project

**Budget bid successful**

The team will take project forward for consultation, design and delivery

**Budget bid unsuccessful**

The project is kept on the list for future opportunities

Urban agriculture project selection criteria guide			
	Essential	Ideal	N/A
Close to community garden			✓
Near to resident users		✓	
Big enough to house infrastructure	✓		
Community interest and support	✓		
Water and solar access	✓		
Safety and security		✓	
<b>People</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2+</b>	<b>5+</b>
Households involved			✓

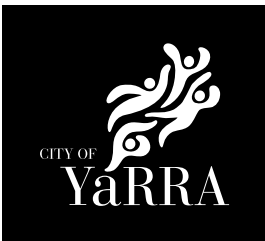
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- [Community Gardens Australia](#)
- [3000 acres' guide to starting a community garden](#)
- [Sustainable Gardening Australia's guide to setting up a new community garden](#)

#### Yarra's Urban Agriculture Facilitator Contact Details

Urban Agriculture Facilitator  
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**Customer service centres**

Richmond Town Hall

333 Bridge Road, Richmond

Collingwood Town Hall

140 Hoddle Street, Abbotsford