

ALEXANDRA PARADE
COMMUNITY VERGE GARDEN
Plan of management May 2017

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1. Vision

1.1. Purpose of our community garden

For the members:

The fun of working together to improve the streetscape and grow vegetables and other plants to share.

Meeting the local community on friendly turf.

For the public:

To improve the amenity of the site for residents and visitors...pleasant and interesting to look at, for walking and contemplation. A more attractive and alive shady passage to Harrow Rd and beyond. Less noise and dust from the railway.

For the local government area:

An improved streetscape looked after by local volunteers, which may re-establish the connexions with other green spaces in the Muddy Creek catchment, and enhance the wildlife corridor. The rebalancing of Storm Water 'across ground flow' as 'through ground flow' for water runoff in the verge (and adjacent railway corridor).

1.2. Objectives of our community garden?

We are going to develop a Verge Garden, as a wildlife corridor for the Muddy Creek Catchment, with some community garden beds. One day we would like to garden the verge from King Edward Rd to Harrow Rd...soon! Now we wish to develop two no-dig beds and put in a couple of raised vegetable beds between King Edward Rd, and the two parking bays opposite Ss Mary and Mina's College.

What are our initial objectives:

- Inside the railing, next to the footpath, we will use and add to the leaf litter from the Brush Boxes (and the Morton Bay Fig in King Edward Rd) to develop a no-dig bed (approximately 1m wide) in which we will grow succulents and drought tolerant low shrubs including sages, lemon verbena, rosemary and others.
- Against the railway cyclone-wire fence we will develop a similar no-dig bed and will use locally sourced and drought hardy natives (Hibbertia scandens, Billiardiera and Dianella and more) to add to the already established natives (Glycine, Kennedia and some Acacia) and blending with those planted in the railway corridor.
- Between these beds we will promote a carpet of native grass and forbs to give a low maintenance walking area.
- Between the third and fourth Brush Boxes is a space which receives sunlight from early morning to noon, and again in the mid to late afternoon. We plan to install three raised garden self-wicking beds (commercial or recycled) to encourage the beginnings of a community veggie patch...and add three more raised beds, between Boxes 4 and 5.
- The shaded area adjacent to the first parking lot may be enhanced by some native shrubs of medium height to give a 'rainforest edge' feel where there already are two brush boxes, a wattle and a cabbage palm, typical of such a place.

This first garden is intended to give us the opportunity to show our fellow residents that water sensitive gardening can look good and will revitalise the local wildlife, especially the birds, lizards,

frogs, insects and beneficial spiders. The existence of the garden will also help with noise dampening from the road and particularly the railway. It will also give the opportunity to encourage others to participate.

We would hope to provide an environment where the locals can share their gardening experiences, expand their experience and get cuttings and seeds of things that will do well locally without being weeds.

On the subject of weeds; we will do our best to control the tobacco weed (Cestrum), the milk weed and the baby camphor laurels that keep turning up in the verge. We will also let others know what they look like and safe methods of their removal.

2. Management of site

2.1. Managing waste on site - organic and non-organic waste

How will we manage organic wastes and other waste materials on-site?

The large amount of leaf litter on site, particularly in the November-December leaf turnover and flowering of the Brush Boxes will become our principal organic soil enhancement, especially in the water sensitive beds. The cabbage tree fronds will make excellent edging material for these beds, and will also be part of the organic soil enhancement with time.

Non-organic waste (human litter) will be collected and disposed of through the garbage system.

We will include a compost bin for organic waste which is not directly used in the beds.

2.2. Will our garden use organic gardening practices?

We will, as far as possible adopt organic gardening practices, but may require to use Roundup on the tobacco weed, as its tubers are difficult to remove and tend to persist for long periods.

As the beds develop, we will build up a list of pests and diseases we encounter, and the best practice methods of prevention and eradication, with a strong emphasis on organic methodologies. For instance, the introduced leaf hoppers that attack Lantana also like lemon verbena, and we may both encourage the visitors to any lemon verbena we grow (they do little harm and help pruning), and distribute them to local lantana plants!

As mulching and water sensitive practice is the basis of the two long beds, these will be managed in that way. Annual pruning of small shrubs will both provide compostable material and propagules.

The raised beds will follow similar organic practices.

2.3. Outline our proposed organic gardening practices

Building healthy soil to reduce pest and diseases, use of organic practices such as crop rotation, companion planting, mulching, watering, Integrated Pest Management etc. (include as attachments to your application for assistance in starting a community garden some of the Australian City Farms and Community Garden Network fact sheets on organic gardening, crop rotation, no-dig gardening if you wish).

The two verge beds will be designed as minimum dig gardens.

Along the railway corridor fence the main plantings will be of natives, locally sourced, to add to those already present on the railway side of the fence. Leaf composting will be used to improve water holding capacity of the soil.

Along the footpath rail, the bed will be slowly built up with locally sourced leaf litter. The plants selected will be succulents and drought tolerant low shrubs like sages and rosemary (native and Mediterranean). These will be grown from cuttings and while initially watered in, will have to survive the seasonal conditions of the site.

The raised beds will have to be self-wicking, so that watering is minimised. The growing medium in the raised beds will be selected for its water holding capacity and to minimise pests. Mulching and crop rotation will help with soil development as well as water holding and pest minimisation.

As part of the aim is to revive the native corridor, it is hoped that as the birds and lizards return, the insect and spider balance will favour both diversity and non pest species.

2.4. Water management

Outline how we would prevent runoff and fertilisers flowing onto neighbouring properties or into adjacent waterways.

We have no water source on site and will need to retain and manage as much rainwater as we can.

One objective at the earliest stage of the garden will be to repair the ground where storm water runoff has cut a gutter to the railway (and so to Muddy Creek, via the storm water pipes on the eastern side of the railway, down Kent St). This will be part of the mulching bed for native plants along the cyclone wire railway fence. The existence of such a bed will in the first instance provide a slowing down of across ground water, and as the soil improves and the plants take root, a mop to absorb most of such across-ground-flow and turn it to through-ground-flow (with nutrient depletion as part of the action).

We will hand water with watering cans to establish plants in the beds, then leave them to cope. In the raised beds we will hand water as required.

Where possible the raised beds will be constructed with a water holding base and wicking mechanism to allow retention of all watering and precipitation.

How would our garden harvest, store and use rainwater for irrigation?

At this stage we have no expectation to store rainwater. The mulching of beds will capture as much water as we can, and lower evaporation, especially as plants grow.

2.5. Use of sustainable materials on site

Outline the types of materials you will use for construction and how you will store these materials safely on site. Specify what types of materials we would use for garden beds, paths and structures.

As noted above, the on-site leaf litter and palm fronds will be exploited there. The raised garden beds may be commercial initially, but may be replaced with sustainable materials as time and finances allow.

2.6. Garden tools and storage

We will use our own tools, and share them, and store them at home, bring them to site as required.

2.7. Site safety

All members, including founding members, will be introduced to the site, its peculiar risks (physical and biological) and general good practice when gardening, and sign that they have been so inducted before working on site. New members will be inducted by a committee member. Appendix 2 is the OH&S agreement.

There will be a sign-in sheet for each day members (and their visitors) work on site. There will be a simple First Aid kit.

An Incident Report Sheet will also be used, for accidents and 'near misses'.

The corner of King Edward Rd and Alexandra Parade is a sharp one. When working in the garden, members will be expected to wear a visibility vest, and to use caution when collecting leaf litter from gutters and foot paths.

2.8. Allocation of plots

The raised garden beds will be limited in number by the constraints of the site, and will remain the investment of all members. Allocation of a particular bed will be by application to the committee.

These beds will be provided by the members; initially used in common; specific allocation to a member will be done by the committee. There may need to be a waiting list.

Much of the gardening will be in the two margin beds, and will be done in cooperation by all members.

2.9. Management of shared areas

Will we have a roster of tasks to maintain shared gardening areas and garden infrastructure such as paths, compost, structures, garden beds etc.?

Initially members will work cooperatively on establishing the two strip beds and acquiring and setting up the raised beds. Everyone will be required to be involved in ongoing maintenance of infrastructure, and of shared areas (strip beds).

Working bees will be weekly at the start, but will become monthly when the gardens have settled and established. There may also be a 'spring flush' of gardener activity. We will set up a schedule for general maintenance and works.

2.10. Dealing with common objections to new community gardens

There can be a number of common objections raised to proposals for new community gardens. They are likely to appear, if at all, during a public consultation phase before starting the community garden. Addressing these at the planning stage allows us to consider how we would deal with them.

Most of the objections are dealt with through the design of the community garden and the training of community gardeners. The objection that community gardens alienate public open space for the

benefit of the few is dealt with by thinking about how we make it possible for the public to visit our site without interfering with our gardening.

How will we deal with:

Odours—these may come from poorly managed compost and the use of some organic fertilisers such as blood and bone.

The strip beds are intended to be minimum dig drought tolerant plantings of succulents and drought tolerant low shrubs and no odours are foreseen. While some organics will be used in raised beds, this will be kept to a minimum...and will probably be outcompeted by the railway soot.

2.11. Noise

The railway, especially the goods trains, already makes the site quite noisy for short periods. Gardening noises will be insignificant beside these, but will be kept to a minimum out of respect to neighbours (this will be in Appendix 1, Gardeners Agreement).

Attraction of vandals and undesirables—the attraction of vandals and consequent damage to the community garden and adjacent areas; the attraction of people who might overnight in the garden or otherwise misuse it. On the rare occasion gardens maybe graffitied and young fruit trees may be stolen.

As the verge is a walking corridor, and people choose to use the verge or the footpath on whim, the members are aware that vandalism may occur. It is hoped that by making the area aesthetically pleasing and by keeping an active presence on site and engaging with passers-by we will minimize damage and theft.

2.12. Loss of parking space for local people.

As this is intended to be a 'residents group' people will be expected to walk to site, to avoid adding to the already very congested local parking.

2.13. Poor aesthetics and unsightly or messy gardens

All gardens are messy or bare from time to time. We will engage with our neighbours, as they pass through and endeavour to meet expectations while preserving the essentially natural nature of the plants in the two strip beds. Shrubs will be planted not to impinge on the footpath, and will be pruned if they do.

2.14. Alienation of public open space

The verge will remain open for people and their pets to come through, and the members will take into consideration the views of other locals on what is planted, always being aware that most plants (outside the raised beds) will be selected for drought tolerance. One of the aims is to restore the native corridor to the Muddy Creek catchment corridor (under the viaduct).

2.15. Vermin

While there are bush rats in the railway corridor, were we to have a compost system it would be designed to be closed to rodents.

3. Management structure

3.1. Roles in the community garden

| ROLE | ADOPT | FUNCTIONS | WHO |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| MANAGEMENT TEAM | | | |
| Coordinator | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | Responsible for the coordination of the agreed development of the community garden and its effective operation. | Stephen Skinner |
| Secretary | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | Organises meetings; keeps records; correspondence. | Stephen Skinner |
| Treasurer | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | Manages community garden funds; banking and payments; management of grant funds; needs ability to produce a balance sheet of incoming/outgoing funds. Produces financial reports for meetings, for the annual general meeting and reporting to the state government authority that administers community associations. | Olga Petkovic |
| Public officer | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no | A role called for when incorporating, the public officer is a signatory for the association and a contact for official business. | n.a. |
| Committee members | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | Elected members that attend management team meetings. | Stephen Skinner, Olga Petkovic, Gou family |
| OTHER ROLES | | | |
| Membership coordinator | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no | Maintains register of members, organises member inductions and other membership business. This role helps with internal communication between members. | n.a. at this time |
| Media liaison | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no | Someone articulate, who has a knowledge of the community garden (and perhaps of the media), its processes and purpose. The role responds to media enquiries and issues media statements. | n.a. at this time |
| Liaison with landholder | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no | Communication and negotiation. Passing information back and forth between the community garden team and the council/landholder. | n.a. at this time |
| Social organiser | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no | Plans and implements social activities such as shared meals in garden and celebrations. | n.a. at this time |
| Compost coordinator | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no | It can be helpful for someone who knows about composting to help skill people up and monitor compost. This is also a training role. | n.a. at this time |
| Shared garden working bee coordinator | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no | Someone who organises working bees and makes sure the shared areas and garden infrastructure are well maintained. | n.a. at this time |
| Education coordinator | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no | Someone may wish to coordinate the skilling up of gardeners over time. Training could be in the areas of gardening skills, construction or arts in the garden skills. | n.a. at this time |
| Other | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | | |

3.2. Code of conduct/gardeners agreement

See attached Appendix 1, Gardeners Agreement.

Members will be expected to be active in the garden, to consult about jobs and to behave courteously to one-another and the general public on site.

Smoking and drinking are not allowed; quiet conversation is expected; awareness of garden hazards and risks is expected.

As this is a public thoroughfare visitors are both expected and welcome. Members will greet visitors and answer their inquiries.

3.3. Decision making process

Weekly meetings will be informal and on site. There will be an annual general meeting, with public notice. All members have equal voice.

A quorum will be set when membership increases.

Minor decisions will be ad hoc, and within the judgement and experience of the gardener. Decisions on methods of weed removal and bed reconfiguration, as well as selection for planting will be done by consensus of the members at the meeting before work commences.

3.4. Resolving disagreement

These issues are addressed in the attached Appendix 4, Dispute Resolution Statement

3.5. Communication

Internal — Communication will be open and often, as membership diversifies, members will use on-site meetings and phone/email; notices will be by email.

External — There will be a public notice on site, as already indicated, with contact details. We will set up a blog to report on progress, and will use the good offices of the Council, if permitted. We will engage with the St George & Sutherland Leader when we have something to celebrate.

4. Policies

4.1. Access and acceptance

As this is a verge garden, along a public footpath and open at all times (day and night) there is no Opening Time. There is no restriction on public access.

As there is a permanent railing there is no direct access for disabled persons, but this could be resolved (with the Council) should such access be required. The railing is low, and a disabled person may be able to be manoeuvred onto the site even now.

There will be a public notice about the site, on which methods of contact will be outlined. Anyone can engage with members when they are there.

Alcohol, smoking and drugs on site

Members are not to drink or smoke on site. As it is a public space, the general public cannot be so constrained.

5. Funding

5.1. Membership fees

Please see Fee Schedule in the Membership Form, Appendix 3. Fees will be set at the Annual General Meeting.

5.2. Applying for grants

We will apply to Council for such grants as we may qualify for, and seek funding beyond that as opportunity arises.

5.3. Fundraising activities

As interest grows, and we attempt to extend to the rest of the corridor along Alexandra Pde we will develop a Fundraising Plan and Donation Protocols.

5.4. Other

As participation is voluntary, we will work towards sustainability and minimise costs by careful uses of resources.

5.5. Training

As we are a very small group at this stage, we will share what we know and seek help as we need it.

New members will be shown how the site operates, and be warned of its potential hazards and weed management. We will have a simple Plan of Management for new members.

Should we expand, we will seek help from The Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network and similar organisations to help us all with appropriate training.

6. Partnerships and community engagement

Are there potential partnerships with other organisations that would be mutually beneficial? How will our garden involve the local community?

As the verge is a public thoroughfare we aim to engage with the local community by providing them with an aesthetically pleasing streetscape to which they can contribute should they wish to join the group.

7. Contacts

For the public / for council / internal / coordinators of teams

Dr Stephen Skinner

6/3 Alexandra Pde

ROCKDALE, NSW 2216

Phone: 0413 665 655

Email: synura678@gmail.com

Produced by the Australian City Farms & Community Gardens Network.

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Appendix 1. Gardener's Agreement

The purpose of this agreement is to ensure that new gardeners are aware of the common vision and direction of The Alexandra Parade Community Verge Garden. This may lessen the possibility of conflict and facilitate decision making as the group expands, so benefiting the interests of all participating gardeners, and fulfil the expectations of social harmony and personal enjoyment that is the core of participation.

New members are asked to read this carefully before signing. In signing, you agree to fit in with the established process for decision making and conflict resolution.

Shared Vision

This Community Verge Garden group will become a small community of likeminded gardeners, working cooperatively and sustainably, as part of the local community, aiming to improve the biological connectivity and the streetscape of Alexandra Parade. We hope that the garden will be a focal point for locals, and an educational and aesthetic resource, which they can share in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. It will become an asset for the Rockdale residents to be proud of and enjoy.

Respect for other gardeners

- The removal of plants, flowers or other produce is discouraged unless commonly agreed.
- Noise should be kept to a minimum, out of respect for the local residents.
- Disagreements should be resolved calmly and amiably; the committee's decision on the matter will be final.
- Bad language is not suitable adult modelling near a school, so abusive, threatening and indiscrete language is not appropriate.
- Smoking of any substance is not allowed.
- Alcohol and drug consumption will not be tolerated in the verge, and gardeners are requested not to come to the garden under the influence.

Maintenance of the common areas

- The small number of raised garden plots will be worked in common.
- Gardeners must help with care, maintenance, and development of the garden.
- Working bees will be organised from time to time. Tasks at such times will include weeding of communal plots, rubbish removal, tidying up social areas.
- Your knowledge and expertise will be appreciated; so committee membership and fundraising skills will be gladly received.

Waste Management

Mulching of broken-up vegetable matter will be encouraged to quicken the composting process and the addition of organics to the very sandy soil. Kitchen scraps will be vetted for utility: meat, fish and dairy products are discouraged.

Gardeners are to take all non-biodegradable waste with them as they leave, and dispose of it appropriately elsewhere.

Water Efficiency and Management

Water efficiency is always encouraged. Plots will have to be hand-watered. Efficiency will be maximised by deep, infrequent watering and the generous use of mulch. When we eventually get a shed, we will have a rainwater tank.

Water restrictions imposed by Sydney Water must be adhered to.

Pest Management

Organic and dry-land gardening practices will be employed to make the verge garden sustainable. Pest controls will be approved organic ones, and the sustenance of the local beneficial insect populations, birds, lizards, frogs and mammals will come first...a few chewed leaves may be a small price for butterflies!

Garden Tools

Gardeners will be encouraged to bring their own tools, and use shared tools in a generous way. The committee cannot be liable for loss or breakage.

Animals (domestic) and visitors

As the verge along Alexandra Parade is a public thoroughfare, the public and their animals have free access. We will, as the guardians of the area, encourage their supportive use of the facility.

Gardener's Declaration

I fully understand that my participation in the garden is at my own risk and am aware of my personal responsibility for safety, as outlined in the Occupational Health and Safety Guidelines for members.

I share the vision and the objectives of this verge garden, and agree to abide by the Gardeners Agreement in order to preserve a safe and harmonious working environment for all.

Signature:.....Date:.....

Acknowledgement

This document was originally designed by Rus Grayson for the Carss Park Community Garden in the then Kogarah Council area, and has been altered to meet the requirements of The Alexandra Parade Community Verge Garden in the Bay City area.

Appendix 2.

The Alexandra Parade Community Verge Garden's Occupational Health and Safety Guidelines

Preamble: The safety and health of all community gardeners is crucial, and as we have a site which is a public thoroughfare, we also need to be sure the site is safe for visitors.

All new gardeners will be given a copy of these OH&S guidelines, and a briefing by an established member, before they are able to work on site. Gardeners are expected to work safely at all times.

General Site Safety

Safety risks on site have been assessed and include:-

- Hazards associated with soil, and with breathing in soil- or compost-borne organisms
- Slip and trip hazards from poorly maintained beds or improperly stored tools while not in use
- Sunburn and heat stress
- Injury from carrying heavy loads
- Injury from poorly maintained equipment
- Risks associated with gardening equipment (all tools are to be manual or battery driven...no electric chords)
- Risks associated with preparation, handling, application and disposal of approved fertilizers, pest control materials or other potentially hazardous materials
- Possible spider and insect (or even snake or bat) bites on site
- Allergic responses to contact with plants known to cause such things (eg Cestrum, Grevillea, chillies, tomato)
- Proximity of traffic on Alexandra Parade

Responsibility of Gardeners

Each gardener must:-

- Ensure that Tetnus vaccinations are up to date
- Provide and wear dust mask, gloves, hat and use them appropriately
- Cooperate with others to minimise identified risks at all times
- Wear a visibility vest and covered shoes when gardening
- Use appropriate sunscreen and remain adequately hydrated when working
- Agree to not working on days when forecast temperatures are above 33°C
- Work with especial care with irritant plants
- Provide own tools and maintain their condition and safety
- Seek help with tasks where they will be lifting or moving heavy objects.
- Limit working in gutters or footpaths
- Take responsibility for the safety of visitors
- Note new hazards, and report them to the committee

- Report any injuries to a committee member, and follow up to see that appropriate safety changes have occurred, as necessary
- Fill in the log when using pest management materials
- Take all their tools home at the end of the session.

Responsibility of the Management Committee

The committee must:-

- Promote and maintain an OH&S culture that ensures safety in the garden
- Provide a log for recording the use of pest management materials
- Promptly address all safety matters brought to their attention
- Ensure that any equipment used on site is both safe and used appropriately
- Provide a simple First Aid Kit for the site
- Provide training and backup for all gardeners in OH&S practice on site.

Appendix 3.

The Alexandra Parade Community Verge Garden Membership Application Form

Personal Details

Please Print Clearly, and fill in all fields.

Family Name.....Given Name.....

Address.....

Suburb.....State.....Postcode.....

Telephone (Home).....Mobile.....

Email.....

Medical Statement

Please describe any allergies or medical conditions which you know about and may affect your safety as a gardener in this Verge garden.

.....
.....
.....

Membership Fee

Membership fee is \$.....p.a. payable upon joining and each July thereafter.

Agreement

I have read the supporting documents provided to me as a member of this verge garden group and understand my rights and responsibilities as a member of this group.

Signature.....Date.....

Treasurer's signature.....Receipt Number.....

Appendix 4. Dispute Resolution Guidelines

Disputes between members

- If a dispute arises between two members (in their capacity as members), they should first try to discuss their grievance with a view to resolving the situation cooperatively.
- If they fail to reach a resolution, then the matter is to be discussed with a designated member of the committee, in an informal way. Both parties are to be present when the issue is raised and discussed. Any decision reached must be brought forward and documented at the next committee meeting.
- If there can be no resolution in this informal process, then it should be raised with the committee formally, in writing, for action by the committee. The committee will investigate and make decision.
- If there is no resolution achieved by the committee and the disputes, then the dispute goes to independent outside mediation or facilitation.
- In such circumstances the parties are to make written statements of the dispute, stating the facts and their desired outcomes, and exchange these papers at least 7 days prior to the mediation session. The mediator must also receive copies of these papers 7 days before the session.
- Whatever resolution is then arrived at is to be passed on to the membership, and no further disputation is to occur on this matter.

Disputes between members and the committee

- If a member (as a gardener) has a dispute with the committee, that dispute should first be discussed informally with a member of the committee.
- If no resolution is agreed, then the matter is to be raised with the committee formally. The member or members should each present both their point of dispute and preferred outcome. The committee then needs to confront the dispute and present a written decision.
- Unresolved disputes may be taken to a general meeting, where all members will be involved in the decision. Otherwise the dispute may go to mediation.

Acknowledgement

This document was originally designed by Rus Grayson for the Carss Park Community Garden in the then Kogarah Council area, and has been altered to meet the requirements of The Alexandra Parade Community Verge Garden in the Bay City area.