

GIBSON RANCH **COMMUNITY GARDEN** *and* **FOOD FOREST**

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GIBSON RANCH COMMUNITY GARDEN AND FOOD FOREST GUIDELINES AND GARDENER RESPONSIBILITIES



Prepared by:
County of Sacramento Regional Parks

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COMMUNITY GARDEN OVERVIEW

This document outlines the guidelines and responsibilities for gardeners participating in the Gibson Ranch Community Garden and Food Forest area. The area is expected to be operated and maintained by community members renting garden plots (gardeners) and overseen by the Sacramento County Department of Regional Parks (Regional Parks). Gardeners are subject to all the guidelines and responsibilities contained herein.

Regional Parks

Regional Parks is responsible for assigning plots and processing registration, garden inspection, policy review and enforcement, approval of common space plantings, organizing volunteer projects, and other types of 'hands-on' activities.

Regional Parks is also responsible for interpreting and enforcing the Community Garden Guidelines and Gardener Responsibilities. This document may be updated at any time and as necessary by REGIONAL PARKS. Any updates to this document will be immediately shared with the gardeners via email.

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Any repeated violation of the guidelines or failure to carryout responsibilities constitutes a breach of the rental agreement and may lead to termination of the rental agreement and participation in any Community Garden activities, and forfeiture of plot rental fees.

Gardeners

Eligibility

Garden plots within the Gibson Ranch Community Garden and Food Forest are available to **County of Sacramento residents**. Non-residents will be considered only if open plots are still available after May 1 of each year.

Plot Limits

- No more than **one primary garden plot** will be assigned to any one street/mailling address.
- A mailing address may have one "primary" plot. A **"secondary" plot** may be assigned if plots are available after May 1 of each year, on a year-to-year basis.

Plot Use and Sharing

- Regional Parks assigns all plots. A plot can only be tended by the gardener(s) to whom it is assigned.
- **Absentee gardening is prohibited**; plots may not be registered to someone "in name only".
- Sharing a plot is allowed. Gardeners sharing a plot are subject to all guidelines and responsibilities. Gardeners that have a plot cannot share an additional plot with another gardener.

Accessible Garden Plots

- Accessible garden plots are prioritized for people with **disabilities or limited mobility**.
- If accessible plots are not rented by May 1 of each year, they may be rented on a first-come, first-serve basis to anyone for the remainder of the growing season.
- Alternatively, Regional Parks may designate these plots as **"common area"** plots for collective community gardening.
- At the end of the growing season, all accessible plots will be listed as available for rent to ensure they meet their intended purpose.
- Those on a waiting list for a standard plot remain on that list regardless of renting an accessible plot.

VISITORS TO GIBSON RANCH COMMUNITY GARDEN

All visitors must follow and abide by these guidelines. Gardeners are responsible for informing their visitors of the guidelines, and a summary will be posted on the community bulletin board.

Hours Of Operation

Hours of operation for the community garden is from dawn to dusk. There is no camping in the garden.

PLOTS AND REGISTRATION/RENTAL

Garden Plots

The Community Garden offers 3 different types of plots as indicated below.

- Accessible Raised Plots: Wooden boxes raised to provide a surface height of 2.7 feet.
 - Small (a – h): Approximately 7.5-feet by 7.5-feet
**** Please note a-h may not be available during the 2026 year ****
 - Large: (I – L): Approximately 7.5-feet by 20-feet
- Standard Plots (1 – 45): Approximately 20-feet by 20-feet.

Gibson Ranch Community Garden Plots



Registration Fees and Processes

The annual fee is \$25 for all plots regardless of type or size. Regional Parks may waive the annual registration fee based on a demonstrated hardship, such as a severe economic hardship.

- The annual registration fee is **\$25** for all plots regardless of type or size.
 - The registration fee is used to sustain garden operations and activities. This fee covers the cost associated with having the plot available for use.

Annual registration fees are used to sustain garden operations and activities. Annual registration fees will be refunded on a pro-rated basis prior to May 1 of each year if a gardener withdraws or is withdrawn from a garden plot. Annual registration fees are **not refundable** after May 1.

Mid-year registrants: Gardeners who register for a garden plot after July 1 will pay 50% of the annual registration fee, which covers the remainder of the current calendar year. Registration for the next year will be at the 100% plot price.

Garden registrations are renewed annually. Registration materials are handed out in January and/or e-mailed to current gardeners at the beginning of each year. If a plot is not registered by the due date, an attempt will be made to contact the gardener to confirm that they intend to continue gardening in the coming season. However, any plot not completely registered (forms and fees paid) by the due date will be listed as available for new gardeners. Gardeners are responsible for providing Regional Parks with current contact information, including home address, email address and phone numbers (work, home, or cell).

Termination, Inspections, and Refunds

When a gardener decides to give up a plot, they should notify Regional Parks as soon as possible to schedule the final inspection. Plots that are free of weeds, plants, stakes, wire, and trash are eligible for a prorated refund prior to May 1 of each year. Healthy crop plants (and their supporting structures) within their normal growing season may be allowed to remain.

All soil amendments will remain in the garden; soil may not be transferred to another plot or taken offsite. The accessible raised bed plots and the soil contained within shall not be removed.

If the plot is in refundable condition, Regional Parks will issue a prorated refund check in approximately one month's time. If a plot does not pass inspection, a gardener will have one week to clean it up. Upon re-inspection, if the plot is still not in refundable condition, the deposit will be forfeited. Plots vacated due to eviction and/or abandonment are not eligible for a refund.

Moving to a New Plot

A gardener in good standing may move to a different plot if one is available. Regional Parks approves and coordinates all plot reassignments.

Plot Abandonment

Any plot that appears abandoned due to extended inactivity of one month or greater during the active growing season may be reassigned following a 21-day Notice of Abandonment. A Notice of Abandonment will be mailed to the registered gardener via certified mail. If the registered gardener fails to respond to the notice within 21 days of the notice's delivery, the garden plot will be considered abandoned.

Personal property (personal garden tools, decorations, etc.) must be claimed by end of the calendar year or one week after submitting a request for deposit refund, whichever is sooner. Any items left behind one week after submitting a request for deposit refund or January 1, whichever is sooner, become the property of the garden. Plots vacated due to eviction and/or abandonment are not eligible for a deposit refund.

If you are unable to care for your plot for an extended period, please consider giving it up so that someone else can use it. In special circumstances, where illness, injury or other commitments will only be for a few months and have a known ending date, other arrangements may be made if approved by Regional Parks. Vacationing gardeners are

not exempt from weed and other maintenance rules, or compliance deadlines. Gardeners are encouraged to contact Regional Parks before leaving on extended vacation so it is known the plot has not been abandoned.

COMMUNITY AND COMMON AREAS

The intent of this community garden is to provide a shared space to garden together and to develop a strong social community-based sharing and caring.

Communication

Gardeners can post general notices on the garden bulletin board or in the designated posting area. Regional Parks reserves the right to remove any notice at any time for any reason.

Regional Parks will e-mail notices of major significance (events, violations, fee deadlines, etc.) to the gardener's last known address. Mailed notices may include time-critical items such as registration or weed compliance deadlines, it is the gardener's responsibility to keep Regional Parks informed of any changes in mailing address, email, or phone.

Common Area Workdays

- Gardeners are expected to contribute a minimum of 5 hours per month to maintain the common areas of the garden. This requirement can be shared among multiple gardeners on one plot.
- Regional Parks will provide a list of clear parameters and tasks for common area work. Gardeners are responsible for tracking and submitting their hours to the Regional Parks Coordinator.
- Common areas include: the perimeter of the entire garden area, landscaped areas along the street, the Food Forest area, and the designated parking area.
- Work within your own garden plot, or weeding the pathway around your own plot, does not count towards the required hours.
- Regional Parks can also provide specific garden projects for gardeners who cannot make scheduled workdays.

Vacation Notice

Gardeners that will be on vacation or unreachable for long periods of time must notify Regional Parks of their absence and indicate who will be tending their plot in their absence.

Harvesting Produce

No produce should be picked from another gardener's plot at any time unless it has been arranged with the gardener of that plot.

Produce Not For Sale

All produce, edible plant material, medicinal herbs, and plants grown in Gibson Ranch Community Garden plots will not be sold, except as part of a "Special Food Project" approved by Regional Parks.

COMMUNITY GARDEN APPEARANCE

- Gardens must be actively and obviously used for growing crops, herbs or flowers, and must be maintained year-round (inside the garden plot and along the adjacent paths

surrounding the garden plot). At no time shall grass or weeds be over 4” tall unless the plant(s) were intentionally planted and are being maintained.

- Plots shall be maintained per “Plot Appearance” below.
- Only shade structures that have been approved by Regional Parks are allowed onsite.
- Pathways must be free of weeds, tools, hoses, and maintained in good condition.
- Gardeners are required to remove any trash they create and/or bring to the garden.
- Gardeners must bag all trash or place it in a container.
- This refers to the gardener's personal trash container.
- Since the gardens do not have trash pickup service, gardeners are required to remove any trash they create and/or bring to the garden.
- All garbage will be contained in a small can, and all garbage will be taken off site by the gardener.
- Recycle plant containers in a designated area.
- Piles of junk and debris are not allowed onsite; project materials must be used within the current growing season.
- Vines on fencing and perimeter plants must be maintained and not create a hazard or a nuisance. Vines will not spread on the ground more than 6” from the fence.

Plot Appearance – Year Round

- All plots must be kept free of weeds, diseased and dead plant matter during the year.
- Personal compost bins are not allowed in a plot. A community compost area will be created onsite.
- Plastic containers, Clay or ceramic pots may be used in a plot, but the pots may not cover more than 10% of the plot.

Plot Appearance – Winter

- All diseased, dying, or end of season plantings will be removed by November 15 of each year.
- All plots will be kept free of weeds during non-planting months.
- A winter garden must be maintained with a cover crop, new winter garden, or straw / leaf mulch.
- Carpets and plastic are prohibited in the garden to cover a plot or as a weed barrier during the off growing season.
- All tomato cages and stakes must be stored in a tidy stack within the plot or in a specified storage area in the community garden area at the end of the growing season.

USE AND CARE OF THE GARDEN

Gardeners are responsible for caring for community garden plots, common areas, and areas along the street outside of the garden year-round – including during winter. Regular care includes watering, harvesting, and the prompt removal of weeds, spent crop plants, and diseased plants. Insect problems and infestations must be addressed at once to stop their spread to other plots.

REGIONAL PARKS reserves the right to hold special events at the gardens in its program. Such events may include opening the garden to the public. All events will be monitored by REGIONAL PARKS staff to protect the Gibson Ranch Community Garden Program participants’ plots from damage.

Paths

Paths adjacent to each plot are the joint responsibility of the gardeners on both sides of the path. Paths must be kept clear, level, and free of obstructions (tools and hoses) and free of plants. Please note that herbicides are not allowed (see "Chemicals" section). You may not extend your garden beyond its official defined boundary. Your garden plants must not extend into or over paths.

Dust and Noise Control

DUST

Dust must be contained on site. To reduce dusty conditions, water down the work area and keep the area under a light mist as needed to keep dust from becoming air borne and so there are no visible dust emissions offsite.

NOISE

- Equipment Noise – Use noise making equipment (tillers, shredders, lawn mowers, line trimmers, etc.) only between the hours of 9:00 am – sunset.
- Other Noise – No amplified music will be allowed without approval from Regional Parks. Keep personal music players turned down so others cannot hear them.

Chemicals

The Gibson Ranch community garden is an organic garden. Inorganic chemical fertilizers, insecticides, pesticides, and herbicides are prohibited. Gardeners using these materials will be prohibited from gardening within REGIONAL PARK's Community Garden.

Only under extreme conditions will herbicides be used outside of the limits of the garden plots to control problem areas; this will ONLY be done by the REGIONAL PARKS under controlled conditions. Dates of spraying will be posted in the garden and will depend on weather conditions.

Composting

Composting areas are available in the garden. Useable plant matter from the garden shall be free of seeds, and seed heads, and shall not be diseased or harbor insects; unusable plant material will be bagged and tied shut. All useable plant matter shall be cut to 6 inches and placed immediately in the compost bin. **Do not** place any compostable materials alongside of the compost bin; all materials must go inside the bins otherwise it must be bagged. All fresh vegetables scraps shall be buried in the compost bin and not left on top of the pile.

Trash

Trash must be picked up and disposed of promptly. Gardeners must bag all trash or place it in a container. Since gardens do not have trash pickup service, gardeners are required to remove any trash they create and/or bring to the garden. Recycle plant containers in a designated area.

Water

Water is provided by REGIONAL PARKS. Timers and drip irrigation may be used but must be paid for by each gardener. This includes all modifications to the faucets or hose bibs. Faucets must be available to other gardeners as well.

Gardeners are responsible for conserving water. Do not leave water turned on while you are not in the gardens. Make sure the faucet is turned off when you leave. Any water that is left on unattended may be turned off by any gardener. Each gardener must take care not to drag hoses and tools over other gardener's plots.

If there is an emergency such as a broken water line, turn off the water to the garden then contact the County Operator by dialing 311. Other non-emergency leaks that need to be fixed should be reported to the REGIONAL PARKS coordinator listed above.

To prevent mosquitoes, standing water is not allowed in community gardens; this includes, fountains, water gardens, bogs, water in containers of any size used for starting plants or any other type of wet environment that could sustain mosquito breeding.

Personal Items in the Garden

Gardeners may bring personal items into the garden at their own risk. Regional Parks is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged personal items in the garden.

Tools and Storage

A community tool shed and storage area will be available for shared tools and approved materials in the near future. Gardeners are expected to return all tools clean and promptly after use

Leaving the Garden for the Day

When leaving the garden for the day, let other gardeners present that you are leaving. Turn off water faucets, and scramble the lock combinations if you are last one to leave the garden.

PROHIBITED PLANTS AND MATERIALS

Garden plots are intended to be used to produce vegetables, plant bearing fruits, edible seeds, herbs or other plants used for cooking, edible extraction products, fermentation, or ornamental/beneficial floral production

Prohibited Plants:

- Trees (all species)
- Marijuana, hemp, tobacco or any other plant used in the production of a controlled substance.
- Needle bearing catus and succulents.
- Plants that produce scrambling thorny stems (exception: roses)
- Plants that at maturity will grow beyond the boundary of the garden plot and cannot be maintained to remain so, or to such a height that the plant(s) blocks the accessibility of sunlight or impedes access to another garden plot.
- Plants that propagate by means of rhizomes or stolons.
- Plants that produce an odor that is deemed to be foul or obnoxious to other people.
- Plants that can create a safety hazard or possible damage to the garden infrastructure.
- Plants grown from genetically modified seeds or from seeds containing prophylactic or growth enhancing coatings.
- Plants grown from license protected seeds.
- Plants bearing poisonous fruit or berries

Plants listed as invasive: <https://calinvasives.ucdavis.edu/>

Weeds listed as noxious:

https://wric.ucdavis.edu/information/info_spec_weed.htm

Prohibited Materials

- Pressure treated or chemically treated lumber
- Ground coverings not otherwise manufactured for use in gardens.
- Clear plastic may only be used to solarize a garden plot. Plots covered in plastic for solarization may remain covered up to 8 weeks maximum.
- Tires
- Plywood, oriented strand board, composition board and particle board
- Sheet metal
- Landscape materials such as wood chips, wood fiber larger than 1/16 of an inch in diameter, decorative bark, rocks, pebbles, sand, and polished glass beads.

Items Brought Into the Garden

Items intended for use within the garden weighing over 50 pounds or 3'X3'X3' (1 cubic yard) in size must be approved by Regional Parks before they are brought into the garden. This includes, but is not limited to, concrete, bricks, soil, rock, wood chips or mulch, lumber, or metal objects. All deliveries must be coordinated and approved by Regional Parks.

Personal Safety

All gardeners should be familiar with their fellow gardeners and should recognize others in the garden that are visiting or volunteering. It is recommended that gardeners be aware of all others in the garden and that gardeners notify others when they are leaving the garden.

Appropriate safety equipment should be worn when working in the garden and using power equipment, including but not limited to, shoes or boots, gloves, eye protection, and ear protection. Tools and equipment are used at the gardener's own risk.

Plot Fencing, Trellises, and Other Structures

Plot fencing is subject to Regional Parks approval. Approved plot fencing will be temporary only, not in excess of 48" in height, open wire and post construction only, and is not to be constructed of permanent material (i.e., concrete). A trellis not more than six feet tall adjacent to paths may be used on two sides of a plot. Trellises must not be constructed so that they block sunlight from other plots at any time. Both fences and trellises must be easy to remove and must be removed when a gardener gives up the plot. High-rise towers, walls, or any construction or assemblage of materials that encloses a plot or intrudes on another's plot are not permitted. Only one side of a plot can have vertical trellis-like, open, airy structures for supporting climbing vegetables, vines or flowers. Poles, stakes, cages and light wooden trellises are permitted.

Parking

Private vehicles are only allowed in the designated parking area and are not allowed in the community garden areas. Gardeners should contact Regional Parks to arrange assistance with deliveries.

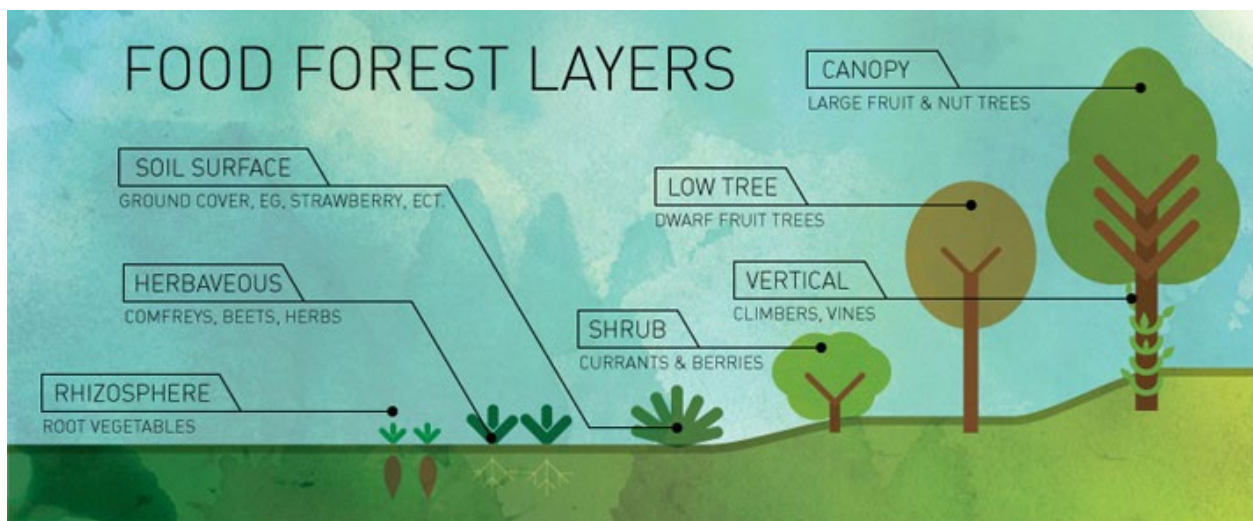
GIBSON RANCH FOOD FOREST

The Food Forest is adjacent to the Community Garden and is open to the public.

- Community Gardeners can work on Food Forest projects to meet their required monthly volunteer hours, but must coordinate and get prior approval from Regional Parks for all work.
- **SUGGESTION INCORPORATED** Harvesting from the Food Forest is allowed for the general public, but only for personal consumption and in limited quantities (e.g., a quart container per visit). Community Gardeners may also harvest for personal consumption within these same limits. Food Forest hours are the same as Community Garden hours (dawn to dusk).

The Gibson Ranch Food Forest is adjacent to the Gibson Ranch Community Garden, and is open to the public. Gardeners who participate in the Gibson Ranch Community Garden can work on projects in the Gibson Ranch Food Forest to help meet their required monthly volunteer hours but should coordinate and get prior approval from Regional Parks for all work completed in the Gibson Ranch Food Forest.

You can learn more about what a food forest is at <https://sustainableamerica.org/blog/seattles-first-food-forest/>



Policy Agreement Signature Page

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read, understand, and agree to comply with the Policy. I understand that failure to adhere to the policy may result in revocation of privileges or access.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Email Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Home
Address: _____



For administrative purposes only

Plot Number Assigned: _____

Date Paid: _____