



He Aratohu mā te Hapori mō ngā Wāhi Whakatipu Kai

# Kai Growing Spaces

Community Guidelines January 2025, Version 1.0







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Kai Growing Spaces Community Guidelines

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# 1. Purpose of the Guidelines

Being able to grow food is essential in the face of climate change, particularly in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland). Auckland Council has developed a climate plan called Te Tāruke-ā-Tāwhiri to address this challenge. A key objective of the plan is to establish a low-carbon food system. Public open spaces offer opportunities for kai (food) growing activities such as food forests, community gardens, and māra kai. The Auckland Climate Plan emphasizes the importance of supporting locals to grow food, delivering behaviour change programs, and protecting soil to sustainably grow food locally, all of which contribute to reducing food-related emissions and creating a resilient food system.

Before proceeding with creating a new community kai growing space, please investigate what local growing spaces exist that you may be able to join to start harvesting kai.

The purpose of this document is to provide community with an understanding of the process required to create a kai growing space on public open space, outline some of the complexities and considerations, and to better support community groups in establishing kai growing spaces in Auckland. This document collates all the relevant information related to setting up a community kai growing space. However, each initiative will be unique and not every section may be relevant to your initiative.

# 2. What is a Community Kai Growing Space?

For this document, kai growing spaces are defined as community-managed food growing areas located on council-owned or managed open space. Kai growing spaces come in various types but overall, they are spaces where food is grown for the surrounding community. They are designed to provide a range of opportunities and benefits such as:

- Access to fresh, nutritious food: They enable families and individuals without their own land to grow their own produce, enhancing food security by increasing access to locally food.
- Waste minimisation: Communities are more likely to understand the impact they have on the food system and help to promote circular economies models such as composting and reusing of resources.
- Foster a sense of community: By bringing together people from diverse backgrounds, they help build networks, enhance community connections, and increase a sense of belonging.
- Health benefits: Gardening promotes physical activity outside and growing kai has been shown to reduce stress.
- **Environmental**: Kai growing spaces offer significant benefits such as improving air and soil quality, providing habitats for pollinators, increasing biodiversity, and enhancing rainwater drainage.

Kai growing spaces can take the form of small, medium, or large-scale gardens, food forests, orchards, teaching gardens, or allotment gardens. While individual fruit and nut trees can provide community access to food, they are not included in these guidelines as they will always be council managed, allowing for members of the public to forage from them when appropriate.

Growing spaces on public land must adhere to specific guidelines as per this document. They cannot be used for profit and must provide a benefit to the community. Spaces should remain unfenced to ensure that general park access is not restricted, allowing all community members to enjoy the park.

Before proceeding with the creation of a growing space, it is important that the applicant has considered its viability, especially if it is intended for a small group of people. Consider existing options such as other gardens or urban foraging opportunities. Investigate whether there are pre-approved spaces from your local board, as this can simplify the application process. Establishing a kai growing space is a long-term commitment so you will need to ensure you have strong support from your community or relevant community groups.

#### 2.1 Types of Kai Growing Spaces

Various styles of kai growing can be integrated into public open spaces, each with its own benefits and constraints. For Auckland Council, all kai growing spaces must conform to the approved types listed below. Each space requires a full approval process and must operate under a license to occupy.

Note that the type of garden does not limit the gardening methodologies that can be used on the site. For more information on gardening methods that work for Auckland's unique climate please refer to the Auckland Botanic Gardens website: **aucklandbotanicgardens.co.nz/whats-on/news/what-to-plant-where-to-plant-and-how-to-look-after/.** Considerations for cultivating mushrooms on parks will be made on a case-by-case basis but must be open air operations.

Approved Garden Types	Description
Small Scale Garden	Small scale collaborative projects involve growing and maintaining garden beds or similar spaces. This can include raised garden beds, shrubs, or pots. Small-scale gardens typically cover up to 100 m <sup>2</sup> and involve fifteen people or fewer.
Medium Scale Garden	Medium scale gardens can include forms of growing, such as raised beds or in- ground beds, usually with a mix of a few different growing types. Medium scale gardens typically cover up to 400 m <sup>2</sup> and involve around twenty-five people.
Large Scale Garden	In addition to raised beds or in-ground beds as the primary focus, these spaces can include fruit or nut trees, 'wild' areas such as flower beds, butterfly gardens, and more. Large scale gardens typically cover 1,000 m <sup>2</sup> or more and involve forty people or more.
Teaching Garden	Food gardens centred around providing a teaching environment for individuals, community groups, and organizations. Teaching is delivered by a formal entity.
Allotment Garden	Multiple garden beds are managed by different individuals or groups, each responsible for caring for and harvesting their plots as they see fit. This often includes limited time or a fee. The garden area is licensed to a group, and individuals can obtain a license from the group.
Mahinga Rongoā	A garden centred around the inclusion of traditional Māori medicinal plants, following the rongoā Māori traditional healing system. It consists of groups of five or more rongoā plants planted with the intent of creating a mahinga rongoā.
Māra Kai	Growing vegetables and fruit using Te Ao Māori practices or if mana whenua identifies the garden as a māra kai.
Food Forest	Growing food by applying principles found in a forest ecosystem, substituting native plants with food-bearing plants. This approach includes a mixture of trees, shrubs, vines, herbs, and perennial vegetables.
Orchard	A group of five or more fruit and/or nut trees in a defined, limited space.

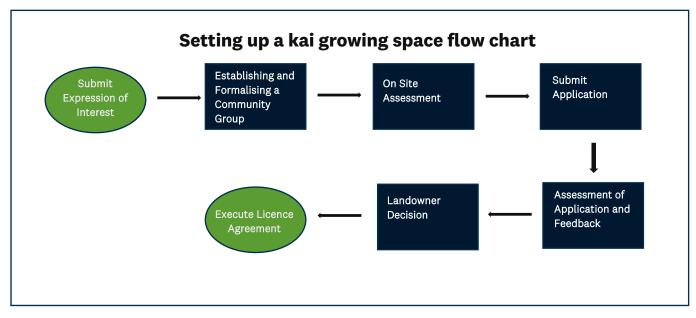
#### 2.2 Existing Kai Growing Spaces within Tāmaki Makaurau

Below is a small list of exiting growing spaces in Auckland, showcasing different garden types. This is not an extensive list, and a full map can be found on the live lightly website: **livelightly.nz/grow/** 

Garden name	Туре
The Sanctuary Mahi Whenua at Auckland's Unitec	Food Forest
Ōtuataua Stonefield's Reserve avocado orchard	Orchard
Pourewa Māra Kai	Māra Kai
Roskill South Community Garden	Small Scale Garden
Project Twin Streams Millbrook Edible Garden	Medium Scale Garden
Friends of Molley Green Reserve	Large Scale Garden
Teaching Gardens by the Teaching Garden Trust	Teaching Garden
Daldy Street Community Garden	Allotment Garden

# 3. How to Set up and Maintain a Kai Growing Space

Establishing a kai growing space involves a six-step process. This section outlines the process and highlights the requirements for any application. This process of creating a kai growing space is designed to ensure that your initiative is successful. Throughout the process relevant council staff are available to support your group and provide advice.



#### 3.1 Community Garden Expression of Interest (EOI)

To start the process, contact the council via their website, phone, or email. Council staff will have an initial discussion about your proposal, which may lead to:

- A request to submit a Community Garden Expression of Interest (EOI).
- An option to join an existing garden.

During the EOI process, staff may suggest pre-approved locations to expedite the process.

Important: Ensure that the sites you consider are either council-owned or managed by verifying them through the Auckland Council Public GeoMaps system: **www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/geospatial** 

The EOI is designed to evaluate the credibility of the proposal and its proponents. It will request details such as: the number of people involved in the initial garden group, the members' skills, community interest, the garden's purpose and approximate size, whether the group has identified a suitable site, financial arrangements for funding and resourcing the garden, and what type of garden that will be implemented.

Council staff will review the EOI to determine if the garden proposal is viable, in alignment with obligations under legislation such as the Reserves Act and Local Government Act, wider council strategies for the open space in question and if your growing space plan has sufficient community support. The relevant Local Board or mana whenua iwi group may provide input at this stage.

#### Please note that:

- At this stage, they will not evaluate the site's physical characteristics like soil, sunlight, or water.
- If the initial site is deemed unsuitable, you will need to find alternative locations, considering their proximity to other community gardens.
- If the proposal is supported, follow the outlined steps to set up and ensure the garden's success.
- Obtaining approvals and establishing a community garden on Council-owned or managed open space can take up to 12 months, due to the need for community consultation and approval from the local board, which acts as the landowner.
- The EOI will be reviewed by specialist staff within the Parks and Community Facilities Special Operations team.

#### 3.1.1 Kai Growing Spaces Success Factors

The success of the kai growing space will be dependent on a number of factors. Auckland Council has identified six key success factors to consider:

Key success factor	Recommendations
Governance and management	Ensure your group has a formalized governance structure with roles and responsibilities clearly defined. There should be some level of flexibility to accommodate changes in a dynamic environment.
Community engagement and support	Groups and gardens that are embedded in the community are more likely to find success. Ensure you have plans for engagement, volunteer support, and stakeholder relationship management. You may also work with schools or other community organisations.
Resource access	Ensure your group has a plan for funding in the short and medium terms. It is important to explore options with vendors that provide resources such as seeds, soil, etc.
Environmental conditions and design	Environmental conditions are crucial to the success of your growing spaces. Check the quality of the soil, sunlight, and water before designing your garden. Work with the land to design your garden and select appropriate plants that are well-suited to your environment and can thrive in Auckland's climate.
Clear community benefits	Your growing space should provide benefits to the community, whether it serves as a teaching space, a place for people to grow their own produce, or a source of free food. Establish clear expectations with both the growers and the community.
Knowledge base	Ensure you use all resources available for successful growing in Auckland. Some guides can be found on the Auckland Botanic Gardens website: aucklandbotanicgardens.co.nz/garden-advice/plants-for-auckland- brochures/edibles/

# 3.2 Step 1: Establishing and Formalising a Community Group

A community kai growing space must be managed by a community group. This group consists of committed individuals who can support and drive the project forward. Network within the community to gather interested participants and communicate your plan to build further interest. A successful garden requires a core group of five to seven people with diverse skills and the time to dedicate to its establishment and management. The group is required to:

- Discuss and define the garden's structure, vision, goals, and management including agreed roles and responsibilities of the group.
- Determine the type of garden.
- Determine the methods of gardening that will be used.
- The activities that will be conducted such as workshops, composting, donations.
- The intended benefits for the community such as learning, social interaction, connection to nature, donation of produce, access to fresh grown produce.

# 3.2.1 Community Group Structure Recommendation for Kai Growing Spaces

For all kai growing spaces, regardless of size or type, it is crucial to establish an organizational structure and clearly define roles and responsibilities. Assign duties based on their interests, time availability, commitment, and skills.

Consider how your group can enhance skills and knowledge in areas such as gardening, team building, administration, grants, sponsorship, conflict resolution, and health and safety. This can be achieved through training workshops, courses, or knowledge sharing with other groups. Once the group is formed, hold regular meetings to discuss the garden's development and ongoing management.

Role	Description
Garden Coordinator	The main contact and liaison person for group members, the community, and Auckland Council. The coordinator collaborates with stakeholders to manage the garden, coordinates, and secures cooperation of participants and maintains continuity. The position may be either voluntary or paid depending on the group's available finances.
Secretary	The role is responsible for ensuring records are accurate and up to date. The secretary is responsible for all internal communication and will organize regular meetings, record, and distribute minutes, oversee members list, and induct new members.
Health and Safety Leader	This role is responsible for ensuring safety standards are met and all volunteers have the correct induction and training to operate on site. Typically, the Health and Safety lead will create and update the risk registers, conduct site inductions, and create six monthly Health and Safety reports.

Roles that are recommended to be part of your structure include:

Treasurer	This role is responsible for the fiscal management of the organization. The treasurer will ensure that there is cash flow and financial planning for the future. The treasurer may also seek funding through grants and donations.
Head Gardener	This role is responsible for all operational and day to day aspects of the organization. The head gardener will make and implement the planting plans, pest control plans and manage all resources.
Volunteer Coordinator	The role is responsible for ensuring the there is sufficient volunteer numbers for operations and the group has community support. The coordinator will oversee the addition of new members, run all external communication and be the conduit for concerns to operations and management.

# 3.2.2 Create or Identify a Host Legal Entity and Obtain Public Liability Insurance

To operate a community garden on a council park or open space, community garden groups are required to be incorporated (e.g., as a charitable trust or not-for-profit organization) or to have an incorporated group as the host organization for the council to license the land to. A license for a community garden will not be granted to an individual. Being an incorporated group provides structure, requires regular meetings, will have clear rules for membership and establishes a management committee. It allows the group to be a legal entity, obtain public liability insurance, and apply for grants and funding from various sources.

Liability insurance is required for community gardens located on council parks or open spaces to protect both the community garden group and Auckland Council against liability for injuries or damages that may occur in the garden. If the community garden group is under the auspices of an existing incorporated organization, insurance coverage may extend to include the community garden. Evidence of your group's status as a legal entity and insurance will be required to receive a license to occupy.

#### 3.2.3 Cost of a Kai Growing Space

The costs associated with establishing, operating, and managing a kai growing space are the responsibility of the kai growing group. Securing funding or having ongoing funds is crucial for the success and long-term sustainability of the project. Your group will need to develop a comprehensive budget and have financial resources. The initial costs for new gardens can include:

- Community involvement expenses, such as promotional materials, signage mail-outs, local advertising, and venues for meetings.
- Public liability insurance.
- Site preparation, including soil tests.
- Construction materials for garden beds, pathways, water systems, sheds, and other structures.
- Tools and equipment such as soil, compost, mulch, hand tools, wheelbarrows, watering cans, and hoses.
- Rainwater tanks, including fittings, professional installation, water pumps, irrigation systems, and Watercare water connection fees.
- Professional trades for construction.
- Legal and consultant fees.
- Ongoing costs to consider include water, power, waste removal, maintenance of communal areas, any improvements, and license fees.

#### 3.3 Step 2: Site Assessment

This section aims to evaluate whether the selected site has the necessary features for successful kai growing. It will include both site assessments and desktop evaluations to thoroughly understand the site's characteristics and identify methods needed for successful cultivation.

#### 3.3.1 Site Characteristics

In determining the feasibility of your site there are key physical characteristics that will lead to your growing spaces success. There are common issues to consider when deciding on your site that should be considered such as theft, vandalism, and crop stripping. The following table outlines what is important to be considered and recommendations for success:

Physical Characteristics	
Sunlight	Plants should receive adequate sunlight, ideally full sunlight for at least six hours per day during the summer months.
Wind	Evaluate the wind patterns to determine their potential impact on plant growth. Some plant species may need shelters, such as trees, which could provide protection.
Relief	Consider the shape of the land and choose the appropriate type of growing space for the selected area.
Drainage	Ensure the site is located away from drainage lines or significant flow paths and is set back from riparian areas such as creeks and streams to minimize impact on the stream bank. Assess the site's water movement, checking if it absorbs quickly or has waterlogging. Different plant species have varying requirements, so select species suited to the specific conditions of your location.
Soil type and Conditions	Check the soil suitability to ensure it matches the requirements for your intended garden. Use a test kit to measure soil pH and have the soil assessed for contaminants, including heavy metals. Consider testing for nutrient deficiencies to determine necessary soil improvements. Investigate the land's previous use to assess potential contamination risks, especially if planting crops directly in the soil. If elevated levels of contaminants are found, seek expert advice on the soil's suitability for growing food and any needed remediation.
Access to Park Utilities and Features	Consider the placement of gardens and buildings relative to existing underground infrastructure drainage lines, pipes, and wires. Consider the impact of playgrounds, off leash dog areas, or sports fields on your garden. Your site must have toilets available onsite.
Access to Toilets	If not already on the park, then Portaloo's must be provided for volunteers and contractors.
Location and Safety	Consider sites where a community garden can be integrated without interfering with existing uses or neighbouring areas. Assess the current use of the site and determine if a garden would be compatible. Address and mitigate potential issues, such as noise, odors, and traffic, as needed. Ensure the site has no significant safety or health concerns and benefits from good passive surveillance.

#### 3.4 Step 3: Application Process and Documentation

After consultation with Council, formation of the community garden group and selection of a suitable site, your group will need to complete the community garden application form.

Supporting documents that will need to be provided as part of your application process include:

- Garden Management Plan.
- Garden Design Plan.
- Health and Safety Plan.

#### 3.4.1 Garden Management Plan

A garden management plan is required to outline how the garden will operate and what is expected of the participants. It is recommended that this be established through consultation with gardeners and other key stakeholders. This should include:

Sections	Description
Vision and Purpose	Describe the ideal goal your group aspires to achieve. Clearly explain why your organization is committed to growing kai and what your primary focus is on. Identify the core beliefs that guide your group's actions and decisions and reflect on how these beliefs shape your organization's culture and ethics.
Management Structure	Outline who will be in what position, including their contact information to enable relationships with key Council staff. Refer to section 3.2.1 for more information.
Site Management	Create a plan for how the site and its resources will be managed. The plan should include waste removal from the site, accepting deliveries of materials, and show how the site will be managed from the construction phase to the operational phase.
Pest Control Plan	Pest control of pest plants and pest animals will need to be provided and should include an indication of pest control activities the group will be involved in on-site.
Gardening Procedures and Methods	Outline the gardening methods that will be used. This can include no-dig, vertical, organic farming, regenerative practices, etc.
Code of Conduct/Gardener's Agreement	A code of conduct for all persons working on the kai growing space that outlines the appropriate behaviours and expectations.
Operation Times	Indicate the days and times your group will want to operate on-site.
Funding	Indicate if your group has secured funding or grants to support the garden. This must be included as part of the startup budget.
Partnerships/Community engagement	Create a communications plan that outlines how your group will engage with the community and key partners involved in your project.
Exit Plan	Create a plan for situations where key members of the group leave or if the group is no longer able to support the garden. The plan should include contingencies to ensure the garden remains operational. The formal agreement with Council will outline what the group must do to return the land to as it was previously in the event of the initiative ending.

#### 3.4.2 Garden Design Plan

A garden design plan is required to show the proposed layout of the key features. The list bellow provided highlights some of the features you may want to include in your garden design. Community gardens cannot be fenced or hinder recreational and/or operational access.

Garden Features	
Garden Beds	Most community growing spaces will require some form of garden bed, whether it is a raised garden bed, a no-dig garden bed, or an on-ground bed. You must identify where these beds will be located and determine if you will be using multiple types.
Trees	It is important to note the location of trees in proximity to your garden, as trees can reduce the amount of sunlight and, in some cases, deplete nutrients from the soil.
Accessibility Features and Safety	Considerations for access must be included in your garden plan. It is important to indicate where accessible features will be located and how specific safety concerns will be addressed through design.
Access to Services	Your plan must identify the locations of toilets, drinking water, and parking.
Storage	Your plan may include on-site storage, such as a shed. Please identify where these will be located and provide the dimensions.
Shade	Your plan must include the locations of shaded areas for volunteers or workers.
Signage	Informational and wayfinding signage is important for identifying your garden area and informing the public about your operations on site. Your plan should identify key locations where signs can be placed.
Aesthetic	It is important to consider how you want your garden to look and feel. Various aesthetic designs, such as traditional gardens, healing gardens, or naturalist gardens, can be used. The aesthetic of your garden will be evaluated during the approval process to determine if it is appropriate for the desired location.
Crime prevention Through Environmental Design	To make your community garden safe and welcoming, ensure clear sightlines, maintain well-defined boundaries, and keep the space well-maintained. Install adequate signage, inform the community of your activities, and host events or hui to promote the garden as a public space.
Water	Your plan must include the locations of water sources, whether you plan to bring water from off-site, use rainwater tanks, or utilize a mains water supply.
Plant List	Your plan must include a list of the plants you want to include and their proposed locations. Please note that you are not limited to this list, and plants can be interchanged. The inclusion of the plant list is to ensure that all plants are not on the regional pest management plan.
Animals	Domestic animals such as chickens and goats are not permitted on site, though assistance animals are exempt. Beekeeping to support local pollinators may be allowed with specific approval. For further details, refer to the Animal and Public Places Bylaw and the Reserves Act 1977.
Pest Control	Your plan must identify any animal or plant pest issues around your garden and outline how you will manage or remove them. You must also include a pest management plan and specify the locations of any pest traps your group will use, whether around the growing space or within the parkland.

#### 3.4.3 Health and Safety Plan

Auckland Council is committed to providing a healthy and safe workplace for gardeners and ensuring they are informed about their work health and safety responsibilities. You are required to follow health and safety guidelines that outline how you will manage potential hazards, risks, and safety issues associated with running the garden.

Following the steps the risk assessment and management (RAMS) from must be filled out and submitted. Note: RAMS forms must be re-completed every 6 months and submitted to Council.

- 1. Identify Hazards: List all potential hazards in the garden environment.
- 2. Assess Risks: Evaluate the likelihood of harm from each identified hazard.
- 3. Mitigation Strategies: Develop strategies to manage or eliminate risks associated with each hazard.
- 4. **Training and Awareness:** Ensure all gardeners are aware of hazards and trained to handle them safely.
- 5. **Documentation:** Use the provided template to document your risk assessment thoroughly.

Ensure that your health and safety plan address all potential issues and that gardeners understand their responsibilities to prevent accidents and promote a safe working environment. Ensure all training is documented and is up to date.

#### 3.5 Step 4: Assessment of Application

Upon submission of your application, Council staff will review and assess the proposal. During this review period, they may request additional information and schedule meetings to address any issues. This could lead to revisions in the garden proposal. The assessment process typically takes several weeks but may be extended depending on various factors.

#### 3.6 Step 5: Decision and Outcome

To establish a new community garden on Council parks and open spaces, approval from your local board is required. The process is as follows:

- 1. **Community Consultation**: Under the Reserves Act 1977 or the Local Government Act 2002, community consultation will be necessary. Council staff will conduct this to gather feedback and assess community and mana whenua support.
- 2. Workshop Discussion: Your proposal will be reviewed with the local board at a workshop. They may suggest changes, which will be discussed with your group.
- 3. **Business Meeting Approval**: A report seeking approval in principle will be presented to the local board at their business meeting for consideration.
  - o If significant concerns arise, the proposal might need modifications.
  - If opposition cannot be resolved, it may lead to a hearing or require considering alternative sites.

This process ensures that the proposal aligns with community needs and local board requirements.

#### 3.7 Step 6: Execute Licence Agreement

If your proposal is approved, a Licence to Occupy will be signed. This licence will include a set of conditions outlining your group's responsibilities and requirements, typically with a term of one to five years.

- The community garden group must be incorporated and have insurance in place before the licence can be finalized.
- No work can commence until the Licence to Occupy is issued.
- Applicants are responsible for any legal costs arising out of their applications including site assessments, application fees, insurance and legal costs related the application process.
- Once the licence is signed, you can start developing the community garden according to the agreed design with the agreed methodologies.

### 4. Templates and Forms

Templates and forms will be available on request from your local Auckland Council staff member:

- 1. Growing Space Application Form.
- 2. Risk Assessment and Management form (Health and Safety Plan).
- 3. Garden Design Plan.
- 4. Garden Management Plan.

### 5. References

https://www.aucklandbotanicgardens.co.nz/whats-on/news/5-step-guide-to-your-own-edible-garden/

https://www.aucklandbotanicgardens.co.nz/garden-advice/plants-for-auckland-brochures/edibles/

https://www.aucklandbotanicgardens.co.nz/whats-on/news/what-to-plant-where-to-plant-and-how-to-look-after/

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