Express Interest

An Expression of Interest starts the application process. After you fill out the requested information and click on the “Express Interest” button, PHDC will contact you in a few weeks. The information PHDC will request from you will depend on whether you are applying for a community garden or an individual garden.

Gardening Resources

PHDC
www.phdcphila.org
215-448-3000

Neighborhood Gardens Trust
www.ngtrust.org
215-988-8798

PHS Garden Tenders Program
www.phsonline.org/learning/gardening
215-988-8800

Public Interest Law Center - Garden Justice Legal Initiative
www.groundedinphilly.org
215-627-7100 x236

Farm Philly Program
Department of Parks and Recreation
www.phila.gov/parksandrecreation
(Select “Environment” then “Urban Agriculture”)
215-683-3583
What is a community garden?
A community garden is a shared open space where people come together to grow plants and food. The garden may be divided into plots that are tended individually, or the group might share the whole parcel. Community gardens are a great way for neighbors to get to know each other. A well-tended garden also strengthens the entire neighborhood.

What is an individual garden?
An individual garden is a small parcel tended to by a single person or family. It is usually located next door to, down the street from or around the corner from the person’s home.

To be eligible for an individual garden you must live within 500 feet of the property (1,500 feet if the Land Bank Board agrees) and be up-to-date on your taxes.

Individual gardens are a temporary use. An Individual Garden Agreement is for one year, and can be renewed. The annual cost is $25.

Does the City of Philadelphia support gardens?
Yes! Gardens help Philadelphia achieve its goals of reducing blight, controlling stormwater, improving access to fresh, healthy food, access to open space, and resident engagement. Studies have found that well-tended open spaces increase property values, reduce crime and improve public health. Gardens are an important component of the Philadelphia Land Bank’s Strategic Plan.

Can a garden be located on public land?
Yes! Many gardens in Philadelphia are located on publicly owned land. If you or a group of neighbors or friends want to garden on public land, see the next section for guidelines.

Can a garden be located on private land?
Not without the property owner’s consent. However, some vacant properties are essentially abandoned by the property owner. In that case, the PHDC might be able to help you garden there.

Is there someone who can help me with the ins and outs of a community garden?
Yes! Philadelphia has a number of organizations that can help with many aspects of starting and running a community garden. Some are listed on the back panel of this brochure.

Are you ready to start gardening? Here’s how!

- The first step in trying to use a vacant property for a garden is to find out who owns it. The Neighborhood Gardens Trust website (ngtrust.org) has a number of links to websites that have property ownership information. Use the “Who Owns Your Garden” button under “Join NGT.”

- If the property is privately owned, you’ll have to try to contact the property owner to ask for permission. In certain instances the PHDC land management can help you try to acquire a privately owned property.

- If the property is publicly owned, you can apply to use it. Go to PHDCphila.org/land-management/maps-data/policies/property-map-land-data and search for the property on the map or use the search box.

- Once you’ve found the property or properties you want, click on the property address(es) to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI). Fill in your information, select “Garden” from the drop down menu and click “Express Interest.” (See the back panel for a sample EOI.)

- After you complete an EOI PHDC will send you an application. A community garden application will ask that you detail the benefits the garden will bring to the community. Those benefits can include removal of blight, providing fresh, local produce, community engagement and education, and others. PHDC’s Land Management will review the application and get back to you with next steps, including whether the property is eligible for purchase or just leasing.

- You can:
  - Grow food, flowers and other plants
  - Compost
  - Host social and garden business events
  - Construct minor improvements (with prior permission)

- You cannot:
  - Park or store any vehicle
  - Keep pets or other animals
  - Grow illegal plants
  - Store building materials for off-site use

- PHDC will explain in more detail what you can, must and cannot do with the garden in the lease or agreement of sale. Leases for community gardens are for one year, or for a longer period with City Council approval. If the property you want includes privately owned parcels, PHDC can talk to you about whether those parcels can be acquired for public ownership.