



Boulevard Gardening Guidelines

The City of Victoria has adopted a set of Boulevard Gardening Guidelines. An increase in boulevard gardening will support the City's goal of creating healthy and diverse ecosystems, creating vibrant and attractive streets and improving local food security.

The Boulevard Gardening Guidelines have been designed to help beginners and experts garden on City of Victoria residential boulevards more confidently and responsibly.

Generally speaking, boulevards are the grassy strip of land between a property and the street and are owned by the City. The majority of boulevards have grass and trees between the sidewalk and the curb.

Boulevard gardens can create more beautiful, interesting and diverse streets, add character to neighbourhoods and increase feelings of community pride. They can also support environmental benefits such as increasing ecological diversity and providing bird, butterfly and pollinator habitats. Working on the boulevard can bloom into community building, traffic calming, and healthier living. Edible plants can improve the availability of fresh, local, and sustainable food sources. Not least of all, boulevard gardens can further cultivate Victoria's reputation as "The City of Gardens".

If you are thinking about transforming your boulevard into a garden of the edible or decorative variety, please read the following guidelines carefully.

Happy gardening!

1. Introduction

Property owners can transform or support the transformation of the boulevard immediately adjacent to their property into well-designed and well-maintained gardens. Examples of support includes giving permission to apartment or condo dwellers to garden on the adjacent boulevard, inviting others to help, and guiding their efforts.

Remember that the boulevard is a shared public space, so please be courteous of neighbours and passers-by by keeping your garden tidy, clear of the sidewalk and free of garbage. Products grown on boulevard gardens cannot be sold for profit. Also, remember that underground utilities share the boulevard. The City and utility companies may require occasional access to maintain these underground utilities, to build new sidewalks, install street signage, or prune boulevard trees, for example. The following Boulevard Gardening Guidelines aim to assist residents in transforming their streets in a way that is beautiful, manageable and safe. Kindly review this document in its entirety before you begin boulevard gardening, and if you've already begun, review these guidelines before you continue.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Parks Department

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2. Preparation and Design

2.1 Preparing the boulevard for planting:

- (a) Boulevards are corridors for utilities such as hydro and gas lines and must be maintained so there is always easy access to these services. Be aware that if road or utility work needs to happen on your boulevard, you may lose what you've planted. You may or may not receive advanced notification. In either event, work crews should be treated respectfully.
- (b) Adjacent property owners must confirm the location of underground utilities before disturbing the boulevard, and must ensure that no utility company objects to the property owner's gardening proposal, by phoning BC One Call at **1.800.474.6886**. Visit www.bconecall.bc.ca for more information. To see if there are sewer, stormwater or water lines in the area, residents who plan to dig or disturb the boulevard must also contact the Parks Department with their full name, address and telephone number a minimum of 10 days prior to commencing any gardening activities, at parks@victoria.ca or **250.361.0600**.
- (c) To avoid interference with underground utilities, be careful to comply with instructions provided by utility companies and the City, including instructions regarding where and how deep you may dig. Use hand tools only.
- (d) Keep utility covers clear of plants and soil. Work crews must be able to easily locate and access them. A pot of flowers on top of a utility cover is fine as long as it is easily moved by one person.
- (e) Remove existing grass and shake it well to ensure minimal soil loss. Sod that is removed should be composted. Alternatively, you can flip grass over. Better yet, place a layer of unwaxed cardboard (with any tape and staples removed) on top of the grass, and use layers of compostable materials (except food scraps) to create sheet mulch. Sheet mulching does less to disrupt soil ecology, and builds new soil by allowing the grass and other materials to decompose in place. In order to

speed decomposition and help hold materials together, water thoroughly before, during and after layering the mulch. For more information on sheet mulching, visit <http://compost.bc.ca/education/factsheets/>.

- (f) Mound up compost or soil up to 20cm high, or mulch up to 40cm high, measuring from the original ground level, to ensure there is adequate soil for plants to root and that underground utilities are not disturbed. (Mound up less material in the area above tree roots, as described below).
- (g) Use new, clean soil, compost or mulch to avoid weeds and toxins. Compost is available from some hardware and grocery stores, garden supply shops and other commercial sources in and around Victoria. Using soil from backyard composting is another excellent option. For more information on composting, visit compost.bc.ca/education/factsheets/.
- (h) The majority of the boulevard should be vegetated, and ground cover can help minimize weeds and hold moisture. Ideal ground covers include natural materials such as woodchips, leaf mulch, or planting a low-lying perennial such as white clover. Stones (i.e. pebbles, river rock, small stepping stones or crush gravel) should not cover an area greater than 10% of the boulevard. The use of geotextile is discouraged.

2.2 Working around boulevard trees:

- (a) Boulevard trees are part of Victoria's urban forest and the City maintains them. More information about Victoria's urban forest can be found at www.victoria.ca/urbanforest.
- (b) Take care not to damage or cut roots, trunk, bark or branches when working around boulevard trees. Do not nail or tie signs, trellises or other fixtures to a boulevard tree.
- (c) Keep new soil, compost or mulch from contacting existing trees as holding moisture against bark or wood causes it to rot, threatening the health of the tree. Drought tolerant native plants are often the best choice for plantings under existing trees.
- (d) Do not place more than 10cm of compost or soil, or 20cm of mulch, in the area directly above underground tree roots as it may lead to shallow rooting, or deplete the roots of the moisture and oxygen they need. Healthy, deep-rooted trees are more likely to survive drought stress and are less susceptible to wind damage. You can estimate the extent of the area above underground tree roots by observing the 'drip line' of the canopy (i.e. the area of ground corresponding with the circumference of the densest part of the canopy above, errant branches excepted). In this area, use compost or soil with a sandy texture (at least 50% sand by volume) for good drainage, or rake sand into the area once your mulch has broken down to form soil.

- (e) If you have a tree on your boulevard, consider selecting plants which will work in collaboration with each other and with the tree. This approach is sometimes called companion planting, and the group of plants is sometimes called a guild. To find out about appropriate guilds for your boulevard tree, Google your tree's name, followed by "companion planting" or "guild." This should give you plenty of information about plants more beneficial to your tree than grass. For example, the Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team offers valuable information regarding native plants well-suited as companions for Garry Oaks, at: www.goert.ca/gardeners_restoration/index.php.
- (f) When planting around trees, keep in mind that work crews may need access to trunk and branches, including enough room for ladders. Again, if work needs to happen on your boulevard, you may lose what you've planted.
- (g) When gardening on a boulevard, remember that existing trees need breathing room and new trees may need to be accommodated. Boulevard trees that have been removed by the City before or after you start your garden will be replanted by the City, and new trees may be added by the City in the future, displacing your own plants. Feel free to contact the Parks, Recreation, and Facilities Department at parcs@victoria.ca for more information on likely tree planting sites.

2.3 Setbacks, access and mobility:

- (a) If there is no sidewalk, access along the boulevard must be provided so that pedestrians are not forced to resort to the street.



- (b) If parking is permitted along the curb, maintain a path of at least 60cm wide along the curb edge to allow pedestrians to easily open and close vehicle doors, and to reach the sidewalk from the street. Garden beds should be no longer than 8m without a break. If parking is permitted along the curb but is seldom used, it may be enough to leave periodic gaps or to place stepping stones in your boulevard garden. Alternatively, if you have observed people relying on the boulevard to unload mobility equipment (e.g. walkers, wheelchairs, strollers) or other large items, look for ways to ease mobility across the boulevard. For example, a pathway with a firmer surface than grass (e.g. fine gravel) could be used to make paths.
- (c) Maintain a 1.5m clearance around fire hydrants, utility poles, bus shelters, concrete bus pads, or other permanent structures. Make sure they are easily visible and accessible from both the street and the sidewalk, to avoid mobility issues, and in particular, to assist emergency workers and other work crews to carry out their duties.

2.4 Plant size:

- (a) Where sightlines or safety may be a concern, plants must be no taller than 1m, in order to allow drivers and pedestrians to see clearly over the tops of the plants. In these locations, choose plants that grow to a mature height of 1m or less or keep plants low by trimming.
- (b) Keep plants lower close to intersections, driveways, curbs, and sidewalk edges. Plants should be no taller than 60cm in these locations.
- (c) Ensure that plants do not hang over the sidewalk or into the street. If a plant threatens to obstruct or interfere with the free use of the sidewalk or the street, cut back or remove the plant.
- (d) Fire hydrants must be easily visible and accessible from both the street and the sidewalk. Maintain clearance to ensure that plants do not interfere with the operation of the hydrant.
- (e) If plants are deemed to be a visibility, mobility or safety concern by the City, or do not meet the above guidelines, the City reserves the right to ask that plants be trimmed, or to have them trimmed. If a plant remains a persistent problem, the City reserves the right to remove it.

2.5 Plant selection and maintenance:

- (a) Consider perennials, native plants, drought-tolerant plants and plants with winter interest. Aim to create a waterwise boulevard that looks great in all seasons. Ideas for plant selection are readily available on the internet, at the Victoria public library, and by talking to other neighbourhood gardeners. For example, the Habitat Acquisition Trust offers ideas in an online guide entitled "Gardening with Native Plants", available at: hat.bc.ca/index.php/publications.

- (b) Consistent with the City's Official Community Plan, food producing plants are encouraged within the guidelines set out below. Many food producing plants offer colourful flowers, plentiful pollen, abundant nutrition, and great taste. Importantly, food producing plants enhance local food security and sustainability.
- (c) Do not plant trees. Trees may outgrow the space and become costly for removal in time. Only trees planted by the City are allowed on the boulevard. The exception: some varieties of dwarf fruit trees, when mature, are similar in size to standard berry bushes (e.g. thimble berries; red currants). Viewed as akin to berry bushes (with larger fruit), rather than akin to standard-sized trees, these dwarf varieties may be appropriate on the boulevard, provided that all guidelines applicable to other plants are followed. Take special note of the guidelines regarding plant height, setbacks, and trimming, and boulevard tidiness. In this way, the City encourages an increased number of food-bearing trees on public lands, consistent with the Official Community Plan.
- (d) For those interested in planting fruit trees in visible, public places, the City of Victoria offers the Urban Food Tree Stewardship Pilot program, and the Community Gardens Policy (for community orchards). More information about these opportunities can be found on the City's website: www.victoria.ca/growing-in-the-city.html
- (e) The non-essential use of outdoor pesticides (including insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides) on public land is generally prohibited in Victoria. To learn more about pest and weed management, visit www.victoria.ca/EN/main/departments/parks-rec-culture/parks/natural-areas/pesticide-reduction.html.
- (b) Temporary structures and ornaments are allowed within the parameters described below, provided they are easily movable and do not interfere with access or visibility.
- (c) All temporary structures and ornaments must be set back 1m from the curb, 30cm from the sidewalk and 1.5m from any pole, fire hydrant or other permanent structure.
- (d) Raised garden beds are considered temporary structures. The recommended height for a raised garden bed is between 15cm and 45cm. Raised garden beds must not exceed 45cm.
- (e) Provide a 1m wide path between raised garden beds and other temporary structures and ornaments to ensure easy access between the sidewalk and parked vehicles. Raised garden beds must be no longer than 8m.
- (f) Where plants must be no taller than 1m, please measure from the ground level, not the surface level of the raised garden bed. Where plants should be kept to a maximum of 60cm (i.e. closer to intersections, driveways, curbs, and sidewalk edges), please measure from ground level.
- (g) If you are building wood-sided raised beds to grow food, avoid treated lumber or creosoted timbers as they may be toxic. Use wood that is naturally rot-resistant such as cedar or juniper. For low garden beds, materials such as bricks, landscape pavers or rocks can be used to retain soil and define the garden edge. A preferable form of raised bed is a berm, a mound of earth in a distinct shape with no hard sides. Instead of using wood, rocks or other hard edges, plant ground cover around the sides of a berm to save materials and resist erosion. It is easier to create an interesting or artistic shape with a berm than with a wood-sided bed.

2.6 Structures and ornaments:

- (a) Permanent installations such as in-ground irrigation systems and permanent structures and ornaments are not allowed as they interfere with public safety and the City's ability to quickly access underground services.



- (h) Stake plants that are vulnerable to falling over (e.g. sunflowers), or that might pose a tripping hazard. Top the stake with a bright colour (e.g. a brightly-coloured scrap of fabric, or a piece of brightly-coloured tape) to improve its visibility.
- (i) Be aware that you may lose any temporary structures or ornaments, if emergency or other work crews need to perform work on the boulevard. You may or may not receive advanced notification. In either event, work crews should be treated respectfully.

3. Growing Food on City Boulevards

Under its Official Community Plan, the City wishes to consider new and innovative approaches to urban food production that increase food security, in partnership with community members. The City also wishes to enhance the appearance of major roads through planted boulevards; sustainably grow a healthy share of Victoria's daily food supply within and around the city, and encourage food production activities in visible and suitable public places to foster a connection between people and the process of growing, harvesting and eating fresh produce. Cultivating food plants on city boulevards is a modest yet inspiring step along this policy pathway.

At the same time, growing food on the boulevard can present special challenges. In general, many food producing plants, annuals in particular, require good soil and regular watering, so extra attention to these elements and their cost may be important to you. Also, boulevards are public land, so passers-by are likely to stop and pick. On the bright side, sharing food and friendliness with passers-by can grow into a valuable community building experience. For this reason and many others, a sunny boulevard can be a great place for growing food. Boulevard gardening creates memorable places, for gardeners and passers-by alike.

3.1 Year-round interest and beauty:

Ensuring that your boulevard looks great in all seasons is a key consideration when planning your garden. Many food producing plants are annuals that die back in the winter. Planting these areas with a winter cover will ensure the garden looks well-maintained while also protecting the soil from winter erosion. Consider planting perennials in your garden, to lessen annual workload, prevent soil erosion, create a winter presence, and give your garden a jump-start in spring. Native perennials are particularly well-suited to our local conditions and climate.

3.2 Watering and maintenance:

City-owned infrastructure may not be used for watering. This includes boulevard water services and fire hydrants. Many food producing plants, annuals in particular, demand more water and maintenance. It may be challenging to water your boulevard, so determine how you will water your plants before you begin to



ensure a successful harvest. Be careful not to leave tools on the sidewalk as they can be a tripping hazard for pedestrians. Be aware that garden hoses stretched across sidewalks can also be a tripping hazard. Take reasonable precautions such as brightly-coloured hazard cones or flags to alert pedestrians that the hose is there. Be sure your caution alerts do not block the sidewalk so much that two people walking abreast, or someone using a mobility device, cannot pass.

3.3 Neighbourhood pets and passers-by:

The boulevard is a public space where you have little control over the way people, pets and other animals interact with your garden. Again, plants and produce may be picked by passers-by; and pets and other animals often have little consideration for garden beds. A certain level of quality and contaminant control may be lost when you garden along the street.

3.4 Soil quality:

As with any other land in the city, it is possible for contaminants to be present in soils on boulevards. Contaminants may appear at potentially unsafe levels, particularly in older or more industrial neighbourhoods where paints and sprays were used before the ban of certain chemicals. In many boulevards, the likelihood of industrial soil contamination is unknown; therefore, the City cannot guarantee the suitability of your boulevard for growing food.

Another source of potential contamination is in runoff of water from the street that can contain oil and other residues. Boulevards typically have raised curbs that obstruct the flow of water into the planted area. Gardeners, however, are encouraged to take note of water flow around their gardens.

If you are not certain that your soil is safe, have a soil test done. They are relatively easy, inexpensive and may provide urban gardeners with confidence that their food is safe for consumption.

If you are concerned about soil contamination:

- Use ornamental plants in your boulevard garden. Sustainable choices include native, drought-tolerant and/or pollinator-friendly species that will benefit the urban environment.
- Create raised beds if you intend to grow food. Use new, clean soil, compost or mulch for planting. Make sure your raised beds fit within the applicable guidelines above.

- Contaminant levels are higher in the soil than in the plant material and therefore, the risk of exposure is higher from direct contact with the soil (or soil particles on the surface of plants) rather than from the consumption of garden produce. Washing garden produce thoroughly will greatly reduce the risk of contaminant consumption. Gardeners should take care not to ingest soil or dust and wash hands, gardening clothes and tools well.
- Adding compost helps bind metals such as lead and also assists with the breakdown of oil or pesticide residues, making the soil safer for food growing. Compost also offers many other benefits, like enriching soil, holding moisture, and fighting pests.
- Fruiting crops like squash or berries are less likely to take up common contaminants than root crops or greens.
- The Society for Organic Urban Land Care has developed an Organic Land Care Standard as a guide and resource. The Standard is available for download at: www.organiclandcare.org/soul-organic-land-care-standard.html. Boulevard gardeners may find it challenging to comply with the entire Standard, because the historic use of your site may be unknown, airborne toxins along major streets may be excessive, and row covers may be unaffordable to you, for example. Just the same, the principles, practices and products described in the Standard should be helpful to those who value working toward preserving and supporting the health of ecosystems and human communities. In particular, beware of unsafe levels of heavy metal contamination, and toxins generally, as described in the “Environmental Toxins” section of the Standard.

4. Cultivating Community along City Boulevards

4.1 Notions of Neighbourliness

A boulevard garden, cultivated courteously and consensually, can pull neighbours together; done recklessly, it can push people apart. Bear in mind notions of neighbourliness at every turn.

If you wish to establish a garden on a boulevard adjacent to your property, ask yourself: “How will my neighbours react to this boulevard garden?” If you are uncertain, why not ask them? One approach would be to canvas those neighbours who will be able to see your garden from their properties, aiming to get the ‘ok’ from a strong majority of them (say, 75%). Another approach would be to canvas immediate neighbours (those on either side of you, and directly across the street), aiming to get the ‘ok’ from all of them. Be sure to let your neighbours know how big the garden would be, and the kinds of plants you’d like to grow. Obtaining informed consent is the ethical way to go.

On the other hand, if boulevard gardens already dot your block, you may feel confident that those who have planted before you have helped stake out a new social norm in favour of boulevard gardening. Under these circumstances, you may believe that informed consent is implied by all concerned.

Under some circumstances, obtaining informed consent from your neighbours may be difficult or impossible. For example, your property may be adjacent to multi-unit buildings, occupied by large numbers of condo owners, tenants or both. Simply gaining access to these neighbours may be unworkable, and systematic canvassing may be unwelcome. In these kinds of situations, it is

wise to start small. Establish your garden on only a portion of the boulevard adjacent to your property, with plants familiar to most people. While working in the new garden, you may recognize some passers-by as your neighbours. Observe how they react, listen to their comments. Consider shaping your subsequent gardening efforts based on the feedback you receive.

If you are a tenant, be sure to obtain the informed consent of your landlord before you begin gardening on the boulevard adjacent to your rental building. If you are a condo owner, you will want to approach your strata council. Boulevard gardeners who ignore the interests or objections of neighbouring stakeholders can expect to sow discord and discontent along the boulevard.

Major changes to a boulevard garden can be controversial, so consider renewing community-building efforts whenever garden expansions or redesigns are planned. Once it appears that support for establishing or expanding a garden is strong, aim to create a garden that you and your neighbours can be proud to show to visitors.

4.2 Neighbourhood Participation

Informed consent is one thing, active support is one better. You may be pleasantly surprised that your neighbours are eager to participate in your boulevard gardening project, in various ways. Neighbours may wish to help by propagating plants, pulling weeds, or watering while you are away. A neighbour may be inspired to establish their own boulevard garden, when they hear about your potential project. Consider declaring your boulevard garden to be an open one, where anyone can help and harvest. Even if you don’t, the boulevard is public space, so expect that some passers-by will walk the garden, admire it, even graze, and you would have no cause for complaint.

4.3 City Hall as Stakeholder

In Victoria, boulevards are public land, and the City is a key stakeholder. As a result, your garden will be vulnerable to public projects and purposes. You may find your garden limited in unexpected ways, in terms of time and space. For example, road reconstruction or block redevelopment may uproot your boulevard garden, and disrupt other street features. If the street is changed or widened, the new streetscape may include no boulevards at all. On the upside, the City gives advance notice of major construction projects to adjacent property owners. As a result, you should have an opportunity to transplant your favourite plants into pots, or over to other gardens.

4.4 Neighbourhood Maintenance Help

If you have a stake in a boulevard garden and see a need for help with maintenance, consider sending an email to the Compost Education Centre at vicboulevardgardens@gmail.com. The Compost Education Centre keeps a list of neighbourhood volunteers who wish to work in local gardens. If the Centre is able to provide contact information to you regarding potential volunteers, it would be up to you to contact them, screen them, and work out some maintenance arrangement (including a basic understanding of the work involved, and how you might share seeds, cuttings, food or flowers, for example). Likewise, if you are interested in gardening but have no access to a garden plot, consider sending an email to the Compost Education Centre and include the name of the neighbourhood where you’d like

to garden in the subject line. The Centre would add your name, neighbourhood and contact information to its list of potential garden volunteers.

5. Safer Gardening on City Boulevards

Gardens on City boulevards are close to vehicle traffic. You can keep yourself and others safer while gardening if you follow these tips.

5.1 Be visible

- (a) Garden during daylight hours and when the weather provides clear visibility. Garden when traffic is light rather than during peak traffic hours. Your experience will be safer and more enjoyable.
- (b) Wear a safety vest or other bright clothing when working in your boulevard garden.

5.2 Be alert

- (a) Pay special attention to passing bicycles and motor vehicles.
- (b) Access corner bulges from the sidewalk and not from the street. Avoid standing on the street or having your back towards traffic while tending your boulevard garden. Stand in the garden or along the sidewalk edge.

5.3 Be responsible

- (a) Make sure that children are closely supervised if they are helping with your boulevard garden.
- (b) Keep an eye on your personal belongings. Keep hoses, tools, and gardening supplies off the street. These items can be a hazard to pedestrians and cyclists. Do not leave open holes unattended.

6. Boulevard Taxes, Boulevard By-laws and Other Legalities

6.1 Boulevard Taxes:

In the City of Victoria, most of the boulevards are maintained by the property owners who own the land adjacent to the boulevard. If you are one of these property owners, feel free to simply switch from mowing to gardening, on all or part of the boulevard adjacent to your property. You may wish to leave a portion of the boulevard as grass, and continue to mow it, in order to maintain the setbacks and pathways described under these Guidelines. Another attractive alternative is creating and maintaining a wood-chip path.

Some boulevards are mowed, watered, fertilized, and edged by the City, as a maintenance service to adjacent property owners. A service fee is applied to the property owner's tax bill as a 'boulevard tax'. If you are one of these property owners, the City will no longer maintain those portions where there are boulevard gardens. If you wish to no longer pay the service fee, you will need to work with your neighbours to opt out of the boulevard tax, through the process described on the City of Victoria's website: www.victoria.ca/EN/main/departments/parks-rec-culture/parks/boulevards-program.html.



6.2 Garden Maintenance and Upkeep

It is the homeowner's responsibility to keep their boulevard garden well-maintained and operating within the guidelines established by this document. The City of Victoria does not monitor the state of gardens on boulevards, and will respond to issues on a complaint-basis. If you feel that a boulevard garden in your neighbourhood poses a safety risk or has been abandoned, you may first wish to speak with the adjacent homeowner. Complaints about boulevard gardens can be directed to parks@victoria.ca. Homeowners will be notified when a complaint is received about their boulevard garden.

If multiple (three or more) complaints are received by the City in a single calendar year, the homeowner will receive a thirty (30) day written notice to respond and remedy the situation. If the situation persists beyond the 30 day window, the City reserves the right to remove the boulevard garden, at the cost of the homeowner.

6.3 Liability and Indemnity

(IMPORTANT PROVISIONS THAT AFFECT YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS – PLEASE READ CAREFULLY)

With control comes responsibility. By assuming control of the boulevard adjacent to your property for gardening purposes, you and your helpers assume full and sole responsibility for any bodily injury, property damage, or other harm that is suffered by you, your helpers, or any third party, arising in any way from, or connected in any way to, your garden-related activities, and any related liabilities, damages, complaints or claims (collectively, "Claims") including, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, injury to anyone who may trip and fall in your garden, illness to anyone who may eat plants from your garden, and lost or damaged plants, structures or ornaments caused by anyone including the City.

The publication of these Guidelines and the granting of permission to engage in gardening on City boulevards is not intended to establish any agency or other relationship between the City and any person engaged in gardening on a boulevard. The City does not assume any responsibility or supervising authority for gardening on boulevards and will not inspect or manage boulevard gardens in any way.

By engaging in boulevard gardening, you agree, in return for permission to garden on City boulevards in accordance with these Guidelines, to comply with these Guidelines and to waive any and all claims against the City, its officers, employees, elected officials, contractors and agents (collectively, “Releases”) in relation to any Claims and you further agree to indemnify and save harmless the Releases from any and all Claims including legal costs and expenses that may be based on or related to your action, omission or inaction.

Publication of these Guidelines and the granting of permission to garden on City boulevards is not intended to confer any legal or equitable interest or property right in the City boulevards. The City reserves the right to re-occupy the boulevards at any time and for any reason without notice to you or payment of any compensation for removal of the plants or other property from the boulevard or for the time and effort spent by you or anyone else in gardening or improving the boulevard in any way.

The capacity to prepare for and respond to change is a cornerstone of a sustainable and resilient community, and policies are developed with inherent uncertainties. These Guidelines are provided for information purposes only, are not exhaustive, and are no substitute for relevant experience, careful research, and sound judgment in relation to each specific site. These Guidelines reflect the City’s position in light of the information available to it at the time of preparation, including the fact that informal street gardens have been sprouting up in Victoria for several years. While reasonable steps have been taken in preparing these Guidelines, any use that a gardener or any other person makes of them, or any reliance on or decisions based on them, are the responsibility of those parties. The City accepts no responsibility for Claims, if any, made or suffered by anyone as a result of decisions or actions based on these Guidelines.



PHOTO: MIKE LARGE

7. Measuring and Sharing Success

Once you have sketched out a plan for a boulevard garden adjacent to your property, or even after the garden is established, kindly send an email to the City at parks@victoria.ca. Tell us your name, your street address, and the nature of the garden (ornamental, food producing, or both). This is not an application or approval process. Rather, the City wishes to collect basic information about your boulevard garden, to help monitor and evaluate the progress of boulevard gardening and report on the success of these Guidelines. The City may contact you down the road with additional questions about your gardening experience. If you run into obstacles and decide to return the boulevard to grass, kindly send another email to the City, at the same email address, saying that you no longer count yourself as a boulevard gardener.

8. Conclusion

In light of the number of boulevard gardens already growing in Victoria, it is clear that many people stand ready to establish and maintain these potentially productive spaces. In part, this trend arises from people’s recognition that maintaining grassy boulevards consumes time and energy in ways that may be unsustainable, yet grass offers no food or flowers. In part, this trend arises from the demand for allotment gardens exceeding supply due to the high number of people renting or living in multi-unit buildings who lack access to land.

The City’s Official Community Plan acknowledges that local people should have access to the knowledge and resources needed to produce their own food in urban areas. These Guidelines aim to increase the opportunity for urban food production on public lands, along with encouraging other forms of gardening. With these Guidelines in hand, beginners and experts alike will have basic information to help them garden on boulevards more confidently and responsibly.

For decades, the City has taken care of boulevards for local people, and local people have taken care of boulevards for themselves. Under these Guidelines, conscientious care-taking can continue in a spirit of reciprocity and respect.

Questions, concerns and comments regarding these Guidelines can be directed to parks@victoria.ca.