CITY OF SYDNEY

Community greening volunteer guidelines

Guidelines
August 2026

The City of Sydney acknowledges the Gadigal of the Eora Nation as the Traditional Custodians of our local area.

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Cover image: City of Sydney volunteers at Sydney City Farm, St Peters. Image: Jon Kingston/City of Sydney

Why we're doing this

City of Sydney volunteers in community greening programs work together to foster a greener, more sustainable city for future generations.

Our greening Sydney strategy outlines our vision to increase greening for a cool, calm, beautiful and resilient city. Under this strategy the community greening framework outlines how we'll support community participation in greening activities, including community initiatives and our volunteer programs.

Our urban ecology strategic action plan guides actions to restore and conserve resilient urban ecosystems that support a diverse range of local native plants and urban wildlife. This plan informs programs under our community greening framework.

These guidelines set out our volunteer community greening programs to support urban greening, urban ecology, biodiversity and food production on land we own or manage.

These guidelines apply to the following community greening programs:

- Bushcare/Landcare volunteer groups
- Parkcare volunteer programs
- Sydney City Farm volunteer programs
- community greening events.

These guidelines don't apply to members of community garden groups, participants in City of Sydney education sessions, workshops, or residents and businesses caring for footpath gardens, laneway gardens or road closure gardens under our footpath and laneway gardens local approvals policy.

Community greening principles

Community greening supported by the City of Sydney will:

- engage the community to nurture urban greening and grow fresh food
- be welcoming and open to all the community and free of discrimination or vilification
- enable community participation by reducing barriers to access and inclusion
- maintain a safe and healthy environment
- encourage sustainable use of materials and resources
- provide opportunities for nature connection and appreciation.

Definitions

Term	Meaning
Bushcare/Landcare volunteer groups	Bushcare/Landcare volunteer groups work to improve the condition of bush restoration areas by engaging in activities like removing weeds, planting native species and enhancing wildlife habitat.
City of Sydney coordinator	Employee who liaises with community garden groups, Bushcare/Landcare volunteer groups and other community greening volunteer groups in the City of Sydney local area.
Volunteer	A person who gives their time to the City of Sydney for the benefit of the community, without financial remuneration.
Community greening participant	Community greening participants work in public spaces to enhance and expand biodiversity, green cover and/or local food production.
Employees	All City of Sydney permanent (full-time and part-time), temporary, agency contractors (labour hire), work experience students, apprentices, and contractor facilitators / supervisors
Group convenor	Bushcare/Landcare volunteer group member who liaises between group members and the City of Sydney.
Parkcare	Parkcare programs provide volunteer greening activities in public spaces under the supervision of a City of Sydney employee.
Public space	Places that are accessible to and intended for use by the public that the City of Sydney owns or manages. This includes parks and open space, squares, streets, footpaths, road reserves, road closures, leisure and community centres.
Risk assessment	A process to identify possible sources of harm and document how risks will be mitigated and managed.

Community greening programs

City of Sydney volunteers

Our community greening programs support our volunteers to:

- enhance bush restoration areas
- grow fresh food to support local charities
- create habitat for pollinators and urban wildlife
- engage with the local community
- participate in healthy outdoor activities.

Volunteer activities may include:

- hand weeding – removing weed species
- planting – appropriate local plant species, using stakes, supports and guards if needed
- watering – hand watering newly planted areas during dry weather
- harvesting – gathering crops for donation to local charities who support people experiencing food insecurity
- plant propagation – growing seedlings from cutting and seed
- seed saving – collecting and processing seed
- mulching – applying mulch to garden beds and planters
- rubbish removal – picking up litter and keeping sites clean and tidy.

Volunteers hosting the Urban Agriculture Forum at Sydney City Farm, St Peters, with Clarence Slockee and Costa Georgiadis. Image: Abril Felman/City of Sydney

Responsibilities

City of Sydney responsibilities

We support our volunteers in community greening programs by:

- providing initial and ongoing advice and support
- promoting a safe and healthy work environment
- providing public liability insurance for community greening activities on land we own or manage
- providing personal accident insurance coverage for volunteers aged 18 years or older for community greening activities on land we own or manage (noting coverage and benefits are reduced for volunteers over 85 years old)
- producing and providing access to educational workshops and events
- providing maintenance, renewal and upgrades of our assets
- promoting community greening programs on the City of Sydney's website and in other media, publications and at events
- fostering partnerships and collaboration between groups involved in community greening.

Volunteer responsibilities

Volunteers in our community greening programs are required to:

- follow the community greening principles
- foster an inclusive environment and productive relationships with other volunteers, neighbours and the local community
- be 18 years or over, or supervised by their parents or carers if under 18
- sign an attendance record each time they volunteer
- attend inductions, safety briefings and participate in learning activities
- follow the directions of City of Sydney employees or the group convenor
- follow safe work practices, safety recommendations and wear or use personal protective equipment
- determine if their experience, skills and physical ability or health is suitable for the nature of the volunteer work being carried out and the equipment used
- promptly report to City of Sydney employees or the group convenor any issues that might impact on capability to effectively perform in a volunteer role
- follow risk mitigation controls, for example, stop work or postpone activities in extreme heat, lightning storms, strong winds, heavy rain or when hazardous air quality is predicted
- report any hazards observed to supervising City of Sydney employees or the group convenor
- report any injuries or incidents that occur during volunteer sessions to supervising City of Sydney employees or the group convenor
- comply with relevant laws and regulations about collecting, storing and using all personal and health information and not disclose, either while engaged as a volunteer or afterwards, any confidential, personal or health information gained while volunteering with the City of Sydney

– have a current NSW working with children check where it's identified as a requirement for an event or activity (this currently only applies to Sydney City Farm education and event volunteers).

Volunteers planting native understorey plants for National Tree Day, Glebe. Image: Katherine Griffiths/City of Sydney

Getting started

We develop community greening volunteer programs aligned with our strategies to support different volunteer activities.

Bushcare/Landcare volunteer groups

We're working to protect, expand and improve the condition of bush restoration areas across the local area. Our activities are guided by our urban ecology strategic action plan and bush restoration management plan. Our bush restoration areas are maintained by qualified City of Sydney employees.

At some sites we work together with Bushcare/Landcare volunteer groups to improve the condition of bush restoration areas. Volunteers participate in activities like removing weeds, planting native species and enhancing wildlife habitat.

Volunteer efforts to reduce weeds are critical to enhancing habitat for local native wildlife. Regular manual weed removal aligns with the principles and approach in our weed management policy.

Self-coordinated Bushcare/Landcare volunteer groups in the local area manage their own group operations and activities. Members of these groups are considered City of Sydney volunteers when involved with activities on land we own or manage.

We will, on request, assist smaller groups and new groups with their operations on land we own or manage, including onsite bush restoration supervision, guidance and education.

We provide self-coordinated Bushcare/Landcare volunteer groups with:

- approval to carry out community greening activities on land we own or manage
- assistance from our urban ecologist to develop local site plans
- support with removing litter and debris collected during volunteer activities
- supply of native tubestock plants, selected from species listed in approved site plans, for planting on land we own or manage
- limited donation of native tubestock plants to support volunteer activities on land in the local area we don't own or manage
- information about local ecology and enhancing local biodiversity
- group support including meetings with the City of Sydney coordinator
- onsite bush restoration supervision, guidance and education as requested by the group
- maintenance of our assets including fences, tool storage sheds/storage cages and native bee hives
- first aid training for a group representative and a basic first aid kit
- signs for some Bushcare/Landcare sites
- guidance for best practice volunteer record keeping including maintaining privacy, confidentiality and security of information collected.

In addition to the general requirements for our volunteers in community greening, self-coordinated Bushcare/Landcare groups are required to:

- request permission to carry out volunteer activities on land we own or manage
- nominate a group convenor to liaise with our coordinator, manage records, oversee site inductions and ensure participation in required learning/training
- maintain volunteer attendance records for each volunteer activity
- carry out activities in line with our urban ecology strategic action plan, bush restoration management plan and local site plans
- ensure risk assessments are developed for volunteer activities on approved sites on land we own or manage
- coordinate sessions/activities and manage internal group communication
- complete site inductions for new volunteers and safety briefings at sessions/activities
- nominate a representative to attend first aid training and provide first aid to volunteers in the group if requested or required
- submit a brief annual update to us about volunteer activities.

We cannot give approval, or take responsibility, or provide insurance coverage for Bushcare/Landcare volunteer group activities on land we don't own or manage.

Bushcare/Landcare volunteer groups sometimes partner with local organisations to seek further funding and donations. Bushcare/Landcare volunteer groups are not permitted to install promotional signs or logos promoting donors or sponsors on land we own or manage.

Existing Bushcare/Landcare volunteer groups

There are several self-coordinated Bushcare/Landcare volunteer groups who meet regularly to maintain native vegetation and enhance wildlife habitat in the city. These groups are actively maintaining sites across Pyrmont and Ultimo, as well as the Orphan School Creek bush restoration corridor through Camperdown, Forest Lodge and Glebe.

Some of these groups have been participating in bush regeneration and biodiversity projects in the local area for more than 20 years.

Experienced volunteers share knowledge and expertise with new volunteers willing to get involved in weekly, monthly or seasonal activities. Our biodiversity volunteering groups webpage includes contact details for current Bushcare/Landcare volunteer groups.

Bushcare and Landcare group volunteers, Forest Lodge. Image: Katherine Griffiths/City of Sydney

Parkcare programs

Parkcare programs provide volunteers with opportunities to participate in greening activities in public spaces under the supervision of our employees.

Parkcare volunteers may be involved in nurturing:

- local native vegetation
- plantings and habitat features to support native wildlife
- pollination gardens to attract beneficial insects and pollinators
- educational plantings of native foods
- communal plantings of herbs and other edible plants (restricted to designated areas where growing edible plants is compatible with regular parks maintenance activities).

We'll provide all plants, mulch and materials to manage risks of accidentally introducing invasive species, pests, disease and contaminants into public spaces.

Parkcare programs are planned by our employees to meet site specific requirements and to align with relevant objectives in our urban ecology strategic action plan. Volunteer opportunities at Parkcare sites may involve one-off, occasional or semi-regular activities.

Participants are required to sign an attendance record each time they volunteer. We'll guide volunteers and provide tools, equipment and materials.

Our employees will maintain Parkcare sites before, after and in between volunteer activities.

Parkcare volunteer opportunities are promoted on the What's On website.

To find out more, email communitygreening@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

Starting a new Bushcare/Landcare volunteer group or Parkcare program

We'll coordinate the formation of a new group or program provided:

– there is strong interest in volunteering
– a group does not already exist nearby
– there is a suitable site available
– there is a high level of commitment to the site by the local community.

To find out more about starting a new Bushcare/Landcare volunteer group or Parkcare program on land we own or manage, email communitygreening@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au.

New Bushcare volunteer groups may request to operate as self-coordinated groups or under supervision of our employees.

Sydney City Farm volunteers

Sydney City Farm is a 0.5ha urban agriculture project in Sydney Park at St Peters.

Volunteers work with our employees to grow fresh food using organic growing principles. The harvest is donated to local charities who support people experiencing food insecurity. The farm also offers educational talks and hands-on workshops about urban agriculture and sustainable food production.

Volunteers at Sydney City Farm, St Peters. Image: Chris Southwood/City of Sydney

The farm has a flexible volunteer model, with various roles to suit availability and desired commitment. Volunteer activities align with Sydney City Farm site operational plans. Details can be found on the volunteer for Sydney City Farm webpage.

Supervised volunteer working bees

Volunteer working bees are held several times each week, including weekends.

Each volunteer session involves different seasonal activities such as raising seedlings, collecting and processing seed in the nursery, caring for fruit trees in the orchard, and weeding, watering, planting and harvesting in the cropping area.

We provide materials, equipment, a safety briefing and guide volunteers during activities.

Volunteers must:

– complete a new volunteer registration form
– attend an induction session
– book into each volunteer working bee
– sign an attendance record each time they volunteer
– wear recommended clothing for outdoor activities and use personal protective equipment as required.

To register for an induction session for new volunteers and sign up for working bees on the farm, visit the What's On Sydney City Farm webpage.

Farmhand volunteers

Farmhand volunteers work on farm tasks assigned by our employees in small self-coordinated teams outside of regular volunteer sessions. These teams collectively organise times and days of volunteer activities.

We provide specialised guidance, safety information, equipment and materials to support activities.

Farmhand volunteers must:

– attend and complete an induction program
– sign an attendance record each time they volunteer
– work during daylight hours and in minimum groups of 2 volunteers
– wear recommended clothing for outdoor activities and use personal protective equipment as required.

To register your interest or find out more email cityfarm@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au.

Education and event volunteers

Sydney City Farm education activities and events are held at the farm, in Sydney Park and other locations in the city. Education and event volunteers participate under the supervision of our employees to welcome visitors and support participants to engage safely in hands-on gardening activities.

Volunteers may also assist with serving light refreshments, set up and pack down of displays and workshop or event areas. We'll provide materials, equipment, a safety briefing and guidance to volunteers during events and activities.

This volunteer role is flexible to individual volunteer availability, with many programs running outside work hours and on weekends. Volunteers must complete an induction session and are then able to assign themselves to volunteer at events and programs on a seasonal roster.

Education and event volunteers must:

- attend and complete an induction program
- sign an attendance record each time they volunteer
- wear recommended clothing and personal protective equipment suitable for outdoor activities
- have a current NSW working with children check where it's identified as a requirement for an event or activity.

To register interest or find out more email cityfarm@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au.

Community greening events

Community greening events provide opportunities for the city's diverse local communities, including families, to gather, volunteer, connect, celebrate, learn and share.

Events are held at various outdoor locations across the city and may involve planting and citizen science activities. These include National Tree Day, Bioblitz and NAIDOC Week community planting activities. These events are planned by our employees to meet site specific requirements and align with objectives and targets in our urban ecology strategic action plan.

Events are usually one off and advance registration is usually required. Participants are required to sign an attendance record each time they volunteer. We'll provide materials, equipment, a safety briefing and guide volunteers through the activities.

These events are promoted on the City of Sydney website and through the urban ecology enewsletter.

To find out more email urbanecology@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au.

Getting hands-on with weeding. Image: Katherine Griffiths/City of Sydney

Information for City of Sydney volunteers

Our policies and procedures

We have several policies and procedures that our volunteers must follow.

Volunteer policy

Our volunteer policy provides guidance on how volunteers are engaged, inducted and managed. It outlines roles and responsibilities of the City of Sydney and volunteers.

Code of conduct for volunteers

Volunteers are expected to exhibit the highest ethical standards at all times and behave in ways that are consistent with our values and code of conduct. Volunteers must treat others fairly, equitably and with respect, follow Work Health and Safety policies and procedures and never put themselves or others at risk.

Work health and safety policy

We're committed to the health and safety of our employees and volunteers. Volunteers are required to follow our work health and safety policy.

Information management and privacy

Volunteers must not disclose, either while engaged as a volunteer or afterwards, any confidential, personal or health information gained while working with us.

Volunteers are required to:

- exercise caution and sound judgment in discussing other people's confidential, personal or health information
- comply with relevant laws and regulations about collecting, storing and using all personal and health information.

For more information, refer to our privacy management plan.

Child safety policy

Our child safety policy outlines how we meet our commitments and obligations to safeguard children's wellbeing and rights.

Education and event volunteers at Sydney City Farm and other volunteers supervising children or young people may be required to hold a current NSW working with children check.

Media

Volunteers are not authorised to answer questions or make comments to the media, or to use the City of Sydney logo without permission.

All media enquiries must be directed to our media team, by phone on 02 9246 7292 or email to Mediateam@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au.

Working safely

We're committed to the health and safety of our employees and volunteers.

Volunteers are expected to:

- take care to ensure the health and safety of themselves and others
- follow directions of our employees or the group convenor
- attend inductions and safety briefings
- follow safe work practices, safety recommendations and use appropriate personal protective equipment
- report any hazards, injuries or incidents that occur during volunteer sessions to our employees or the group convenor (who can report these to our coordinator by email at communitygreening@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au or on 02 9265 9333).

If you experience antisocial behaviour while volunteering, we recommended you leave the area. Don't engage or escalate a disagreement. If volunteers feel unsafe or observe illegal activity, contact NSW Police.

Risk assessments

We carry out risk assessments for Sydney City Farm, Parkcare programs and community greening events. These ensure volunteer sites are safe and any activity-specific risks will be managed appropriately. They identify potential hazards and document how safety risks will be mitigated by implementing controls.

Self-coordinated Bushcare/Landcare groups are required to ensure risk assessments are developed for volunteer activities on approved sites on land we own or manage. Our coordinator can provide support with developing these risk assessments. Email communitygreening@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au or call 02 9265 9333.

Onsite inductions and safety briefings

All volunteers are required to complete a site induction, so they're familiar with the site, activities and overall safety considerations. Records must be kept of all volunteer inductions.

Safety briefings are carried out at the start of every volunteer session, activity or working bee to cover specific activities, current site conditions and considerations for tools, equipment and personal protective equipment to be used.

Inductions and safety briefings at Sydney City Farm and Parkcare programs are carried out by our employees.

Self-coordinated Bushcare/Landcare groups are required to induct all volunteers into sites and activities and carry out safety briefings. Our coordinator can assist with developing appropriate onsite inductions and briefings. Email communitygreening@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au or call 02 9265 9333.

Community greening event volunteers are provided with a safety briefing by our employees before activities.

General volunteer safety considerations

All volunteers are expected to:

- determine if their experience, skills and physical ability or health is suitable for the nature of the volunteer work being carried out and the equipment used
- bring a water bottle to volunteer sessions and stay adequately hydrated
- warm up and stretch before and after physical activities

- be aware of their surroundings including slip or trip hazards such as steps, stairs, holes, uneven ground, wet or slippery surfaces
- take regular breaks and frequently vary posture and tasks
- use appropriate equipment to move heavy items (such as wheelbarrows and trolleys) and seek assistance to move loads outside their capability – contact our coordinator for assistance with moving heavy loads. Email communitygreening@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au
- not work when fatigued or distracted, be mindful of moving vehicles and equipment, avoid rushing through tasks without full attention and maintain good balance, traction and grip
- stop work or postpone activities under extreme heat, lightning storms, strong winds, heavy rain, or when hazardous air quality is forecast.

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

Volunteers in community greening programs work outdoors and must consider clothing suitable for the conditions and personal protective equipment to reduce risk of harm.

Recommended clothing and equipment includes:

- closed toe shoes with good grip
- long sleeved shirt and trousers or below the knee shorts
- broad brim hat (UPF material)
- gardening gloves
- SPF 50+ sunscreen and lip balm
- wrap-around sunglasses with eye protection factor 9 or 10
- wet weather jacket if raining
- high visibility clothing if working near roads or moving vehicles.

Injuries and incidents

An employee with first aid training attends all Sydney City Farm and Parkcare programs and community greening events. They have access to a basic first aid kit and can assist with minor injuries if required.

Self-coordinated Bushcare/Landcare volunteer groups may have a representative onsite with access to a basic first aid kit.

All injuries including minor injuries (like a cut, sting, sprain) or incidents (like conflict or antisocial behaviour) should be notified to our employees or the group convenor, who can report these to our coordinator as soon as possible Email communitygreening@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au or call 02 9265 9333.

Contact emergency services on triple zero (000) immediately for any significant injuries or incidents.

Community sharps

Community sharps are needles, syringes and lancets that are used to administer medications and drugs outside a clinical setting.

Whether or not a community sharp is used for medication or drug use, sharps are to be treated as clinical waste, like they would be in a hospital.

If volunteers find a community sharp they must alert our employees or contact the NSW Health needle clean-up hotline on 1800 633 353.

Self-coordinated Bushcare/Landcare volunteer groups should also notify their group convenor and advise other volunteers onsite to avoid working in the area where the sharp is located. Groups can

request hazard safety cones from us, which can be used to mark the location of community sharps while waiting for removal.

Visit our website for more information about managing community sharps.

Insurance

We hold public liability insurance to provide protection against claims for compensation by third parties for reasonably foreseeable injury, loss or property damage caused by volunteer actions or lack of action.

We also hold personal accident insurance coverage for volunteers claiming injury sustained while volunteering who:

- are participating in volunteer activities on land we own or manage
- have completed a site induction and/or safety briefing before volunteering, and have completed any required registration forms
- are carrying out activities within their capabilities and in line with City of Sydney plans, and any instructions provided
- sign an attendance record each time they volunteer
- are 18 to 85 years old (children under 18 are not covered by personal accident insurance and must be supervised and in the care of a parent or guardian at all times).

Reduced personal accident coverage is available for volunteers over the age of 85. Contact our coordinator for more information email communitygreening@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au.

Personal injury insurance claims process

If an injury is sustained while volunteering, contact our coordinator for assistance by email at communitygreening@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au or call 02 9265 9333.

Please note:

- attendance records/sign on documentation, witness statements, photos and other evidence may be required for investigations
- keep documentation and tax invoices for any treatment you receive
- an excess of $500 may be payable if a claim is made.

Duke of Edinburgh volunteers

Young people (16 to 18 years) taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh International Award may request to participate in community greening programs as part of their voluntary service award requirement.

These volunteers are usually covered by Duke of Edinburgh Award insurance and may need to provide proof of program registration from their school.

Partner organisations

Some community greening events hosted by partner organisations will offer insurance to registered participants. The conditions of these policies may differ from ours.

Visitors to volunteer sites

Self-coordinated Bushcare/Landcare volunteer groups must manage the risk of visitor groups joining their activities. Volunteers or visitors paying a fee to participate in activities are not covered by our insurance for City of Sydney volunteers.

Volunteer host groups should ask fee-paying visitor groups to provide a copy of their public liability insurance certificate.

City of Sydney contacts

Community greening team

For general information about community greening volunteer opportunities, contact our coordinator by email communitygreening@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au.

For information about community greening events, bush restoration plans, plant selection, habitat creation and fauna, contact our urban ecologist by email urbanecology@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au.

For information about Sydney City Farm volunteer opportunities and activities email cityfarm@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au.

Report an issue

You can call 02 9265 9333 or make a report online to:

- report illegal dumping
- report a tree issue
- report illegal graffiti
- address pest issues in public spaces
- report a badly behaving animal.

Homelessness

If volunteers are concerned about the wellbeing of a person experiencing homelessness, email homelessness@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au or call 02 9265 9333.

CITY OF SYDNEY