Sunriver Community Gardens (SCG) Plot Holders Agreement (2025)

We acknowledge and respect T'Sou-ke Nation, whose traditional territory includes the Sunriver Community Gardens.

Welcome to this special food-growing, organic community garden. The primary purpose of the SCG is to improve food security for the District of Sooke. SCG accomplishes this purpose by requiring that 70% of each allotment or plot is used for growing organic food crops, and through the Grow for Sooke program that directs produce to Sooke residents in need.

The gardens are run by the Sunriver Community Gardens Society. Our mandate is to provide Sooke residents with an opportunity to practice organic gardening. To keep our mandate and community values safeguarded it is important to have rules in place.

Please help us keep SCG a place for all of us to showcase. It is expected that plot holders will help whenever they can – e.g., by keeping shared spaces and paths cared for and being mindful of the shared aspects of the garden work, composting, taking garbage home, attending work bees where possible, and being respectful of the community and garden property.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Sunriver Community Gardens (SCG) has two primary uses:

1. Allotment gardens – plots, raised beds, and community spaces; and
2. Grow for Sooke – an SCG volunteer managed and run program that grows food for local not-for-profit organizations.

The overall SCG site is 2.2 acres, and the SCG Society is the licensed occupant. We have a lease with the District of Sooke to occupy and manage the site, and to ensure compliance with the District's environmental standards and bylaws. As of 2025 all gardeners are required to sign a sub-lease agreement with the District of Sooke.

SCG Society Council

The SCG Society Council manages site maintenance and a host of other issues of concern to gardeners, including access to the site, water, drainage, composting and safety. Council also manages the shared resources/assets such as the tool and storage sheds, and the outhouse and is the interface with the District of Sooke, from whom we lease the land.

Council members are elected by Society members, or the plot holders. The positions include President, President Elect, Plot Registrar, Secretary, Treasurer, Site Manager, Grow for Sooke Coordinator and members-at-large.

Council members are all volunteers. Their tasks are made lighter with support and constructive feedback from other plot holders.

Council is not responsible for theft that might occur on people's individual plots and from the communal areas; it is responsible for working with other plot holders to come up with solutions to problems like this. Communication is key.

Safety and Liability - All SCG members are covered by insurance through the BC Council of Garden Clubs. All plot gardeners and volunteers must have an orientation to SCG on the operation of equipment and tools and the use of public spaces before their plot is assigned to them. A first aid kit is in the tool shed for minor injuries. For serious medical incidents, please call 911 or go to the nearest medical centre.

2. PLOT INFORMATION

2a. Number and Size of Plots

There are 106 plots at SCG including five sizes of plots: raised beds, micro, small, medium and large. Each plot has a defined area and is numbered. Plots cannot be divided or combined, and the District of Sooke prevents us from adding new plots to the gardens without prior approval.

At least 70% of each plot is to be used for food production.

SRG's Grow for Sooke program has 3 plots and the polyhouse for its program.

2b. General Plot Rules

Plots are allocated only to residents of the District of Sooke. Plots for new gardeners are typically allocated between January and July of each calendar year.

Plots are renewed by paying the annual fee by November 30. When you pay your annual fee, you are renewing membership in the SCG Society and paying for your plot for the year. Receipt of payment indicates your agreement with the most recent version of the Plot Holders Agreement as found on the website, the SCG Facebook page, and attached to the renewal notice.

The sub-lease agreement required by the District of Sooke need only be signed once. It does not have to be signed annually.

Plot holders may have a secondary gardener, and only one plot per residential address is allowed. Secondary gardeners need to be recorded with the Plot Registrar. Secondary gardeners who have actively gardened a plot for at least three years may inherit the plot should the primary plot holder relinquish it.

No plot holder shall sublet or reassign their plot to someone else.

2c. Allocation of Different Plots for Existing Plot Holders
Plot holders may request a different plot at any time. The plot registrar will maintain a list of names with the request for a larger/smaller plot. This list will be numbered in the order in which they are received (First come, First served). The list carries over to subsequent years unless a person chooses to be removed from the list.

In January, the Plot Registrar will develop a list of vacated plots. Vacated plots will be offered to the first person on the existing plot holder list.

Plot holders seeking a new plot have a right of refusal; if they refuse a vacant plot the next person on the list will then be offered that plot until everyone on the list has been offered a plot or all vacant plots have been allocated.

2d. Allocation of Plots for New Plot Holders
Anyone who lives in the District of Sooke may request a plot. Requests for plots should be given/sent to the Plot Registrar. Requests will be recorded and numbered in the order in which they are received (First come, First served). The list carries over to subsequent years.

Requests from individuals who are not currently members of SCG will be considered two times during the year: in January after the current plot holders have had their requests met to change plots, and in spring and early summer should plots become available,.

2e. Relinquishing and Vacating Plots
Plot holders may relinquish their plots at any time. They are expected to notify Council when doing so (sookesrg@gmail.com).

Plot fees are partly refundable if a plot is relinquished before July 1, at which point the fees are non-refundable because that plot will not be reassigned until the following January.

Plot holders are required to clean their plots of any annual plants and personal belongings: early in the season, within 2 weeks of relinquishing their plots; late in the season, within 6 weeks. Should personal belongings be left in the vacated plot after mid-December, members of Council will remove them and store them in the locked harvest shed for safekeeping.

Any plants left in a vacated plot after February 15 become the responsibility of the new plot holder to remove or keep.

2f. Ensuring Compliance with this Plot Holders Agreement
Plots will be reviewed four times a year (see 3a below for timeline) by a group of three Council members to ensure they are adhering to the SCG rules and regulations. After each review, the President will contact plot holders who are not abiding by the expectations laid out in the Plot Holders Agreement, detailing the problems.

The President will keep a record of these interactions with plot holders, with the documentation carrying forward from year to year.

The purpose of these reviews is to remind plot holders of their responsibilities, and to raise the overall quality of gardening for all members. In the unlikely event that a plot holder chooses not to remedy their practices, Council will request that they forfeit their plot. Gardening at SCG is a privilege. Council has a responsibility to ensure that the plots are used in the best way possible.

Plot holders will not be asked to forfeit their plots during the growing season. Each October, SCG Council will decide whether plot holders who have not improved their practices will forfeit their plots, based on the documentation kept throughout the year. Plot holders will be notified of the decision before November 1. The Council will take personal circumstances into consideration when making a decision about asking a plot holder to forfeit their plot (e.g. illness, death in the family).

Plot holders who are asked to forfeit their plots will have six weeks to remove personal items from their plots. If personal belongings are left in the plot after mid-December, Council will remove them and store them in the locked harvest shed for safekeeping. Council is not responsible should the items be stolen. Plot holders will be notified that their belongings are being stored safely and must contact the SCG Council to have them returned. Any plants left in a plot after February 15 become the responsibility of the new plot holder to remove or keep.

2g. Plot Sub-license

Plot sub-licenses are required by the District of Sooke. They only need to be signed once. They are in effect for as long as the plot holder is a member in good standing of the SCG Society.

2h. Plot Fees (2026-)

Raised beds (4 x 8 ft): $40
Micro: $65
Small (less than 250 square feet): $80
Medium (250 to 499 sq ft): $90
Large (500 to 750 sq ft): $100

Plot fees for the next calendar year must be paid by November 30th of the previous year.

Fees are payable via e-Transfer (sookesrg@gmail.com); or by cheque (made out to the Sunriver Community Gardens Society) or cash deposited in the drop-off box at City Hall.

Plot fee increases must be approved by members of SCG Society at a general or annual general meeting.

The funds raised from plot fees are managed and administered by the SCG Council. The following are examples of uses of plot fee funds: 1) garden maintenance and equipment; 2) garden operations; 3) soil enhancements; and 4) future site development and emergency repairs. As a general principle, funds for extra projects in the gardens are raised through grants and donations.

Renewing members do not need to sign the Plot Holders Agreement forms annually. Upon issuing payment, you agree to uphold (1) the current plot holder guidelines and (2) the guidelines outlined in the sub-lease agreement required by the District of Sooke.

3. GENERAL GARDEN INFORMATION

3a. Timeline for Cultivating, Planting and Harvesting

As noted above (2f) a committee from SCG Council will review plots throughout the growing season. Plots will be reviewed by a Council committee roughly at these following times, and with the following expectations.

May 1: The plot must be cultivated, weeded and invasive plants removed. Plants that spread easily (mint, oregano, lemon balm) should be planted in containers. Hardy food crops should be planted. Gardeners have until May 31 to bring their plot into compliance.

June 1: The plot must be planted for 70% food production with no weeds going to seed.

July 31: Plots will be reviewed to ensure that weeds are kept under control.

September 15: Summer crops must be harvested, and plants must not be left to go seed. Winter crops should be managed.

Be good neighbours. Whatever you do should have **little or no** impact on the plots next door or near to you; for example, weeds going to seed, or shade from fruit trees or other tall plants or a greenhouse blocking your neighbour's access to light.

3b. Water

SCG is on the Capital Regional District water system. We currently have 11 water stands, and communal hoses. Please be aware that water lines are installed 2 feet under the surface in the allotment garden.

Should there be a concern that something is not working properly, contact the site manager by emailing sookesrg@gmail.com. If you know what is wrong and can fix it yourself, there are spare parts for hoses, taps and connectors in the tool shed.

Water conservation is very important. Please follow these rules: no unattended watering or sprinkler use, including micro systems; no overnight watering; do not water your neighbour's

plot without permission.

The water is turned off during the winter months.

3c. Basic Rules
(i) Each plot must be numbered and have clear boundaries marked that do not spill over into a pathway or service lane.

(ii) Cold frames, greenhouses and growing structures are not to exceed 6'3". Due to safety and best practices, no glass or tires are permitted. Growing structures must be within your plot boundary and not cast shade on your neighbour's plot.

(iii) Only organic fertilizers and organic slug baits may be used. **The use of chemicals and pesticides is not permitted.**

(iv) Weed control: care must be taken not to let weeds go to seed (e.g., thistles, dandelions) or creep (e.g., buttercup, sorrel, morning glory, bindweed), thereby invading neighbouring plots and pathways.

In order to help with the overall care of the garden, plot holders are responsible for any weeds around your plots as well. Please use the wood chips supplied in the parking lot to chip paths that surround your assigned plot.

(v) Invasives: some food plants can also be invasive (e.g., raspberries, strawberries, horseradish). Please keep these plants under control and use a barrier to keep their roots contained.

(vi) Absence: If you are going to be away, make sure someone is tending your plot in your absence. Plot holders cannot utilize a non-member of SCG to manage their plot. In case of an emergency absence, please contact the plot registrar to discuss what can be done to help you while you are away.

(vii) Winter: By November 1 plots should be cleaned up unless one has winter crops. If you are relinquishing the plot, the plot must be cleared of stakes, growing structures, decorative rocks, etc.

(viii) Growing of Cannabis: After consultation with The District of Sooke, the SCG Council has determined that plot holders may not grow cannabis in Sunriver Garden. This complies with the terms of the new B.C. Cannabis Control and Licensing Act which states that cannabis cannot be grown in a public space with public access. Please refer to link: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/public-safety/cannabis.

(ix) Sale of produce: Any produce grown on the site cannot be sold commercially.

(x) Compost: All plot holders are welcome to use community composts for plot waste only. **No household compost is allowed in the community compost bins at the gardens.**

(xi) Soil amendments: manure, leaves, grass clippings, etc. will be available throughout the season. Compost “ready to use” can also be used in moderation by plot holders. Be mindful of sharing the soil amendment materials.

(xii) Donating produce**:** consider donating any surplus food you have grown. Check the board for instructions or email sookesrg@gmail.com to make arrangements for donations.

(xiii) No pressure treated wood is to be used for bed building purposes.

(xiv) Garden security**:** when leaving please check to see that the tool shed is secured and tools are put away. All gates **must** be closed at all times to keep deer, rabbits and other animals out. Please check that children have also closed the gates after entering and exiting. Do not assume “somebody else” will do it.

(xv) Signs: There is to be NO posting of signs (political or business promotion) at the Sunriver Community Gardens – roadside or within the gardens. There will be no distribution of promotional material of any kind in and outside the gardens.

3d. Rules regarding children, visitors, pets and fires

(i) **Children** are welcome to visit SCG; however, they must be supervised to ensure their safety. Children must not wander into other plots and pick berries or vegetables. Play areas with sand boxes are on site, with toys, for children to enjoy.

(ii) If you, as a plot holder, bring in non-plot registered **friends to visit the gardens**, you are responsible for ensuring visitors abide by the same rules as registered plot holders.

(iii) **No Pets** within the garden gates. Pets must be kept in your vehicle while you are in the gardens. All pets must be on a leash and under control while in the parking lot.

(iv) **Burning** must adhere to the District of Sooke’s burning bylaws. A water source (hose, can, etc.) must always be at hand.

(v) **Small cooking fires** are permitted in the gazebo, provided there is no fire ban in effect. Please ensure that you have a water source at hand before starting a fire.

3e. Communication

Please email sookesrg@gmail.com for general queries or if you are unsure of whom to contact about a specific issue. You can generally expect a response within 48 hours.

Primary and secondary plot holders will receive communication from the SCG Council. Email

addresses will be kept private. It is the responsibility of the primary plot holder to ensure the secondary gardener's email is given to the Plot Registrar.

No member of the allotment garden shall solicit business or promote other non-SCG business by using the Sunriver Garden email address.

Communication will be posted on the Notice Board outside the tool shed.

Please see our website at http://www.sunrivercommunitygardens.ca/ for Council Meeting minutes, newsletters, and any other pertinent information.

3f. Non-compliance with the Garden rules and regulations

If a plot holder cannot comply with any of the above guidelines, at least two representatives from Council shall discuss the problem with the person(s) to resolve the issue. Should the issue not be resolved, the plot holder's membership will be revoked for non-compliance with the user agreement, and they will forfeit their plot. The plot will be available for reassignment through the wait list. **No refunds will be issued.**

4. PLOT HOLDERS AGREEMENT

Paying this year's plot fees implies that:

I / We have read the Sunriver Gardens Plot Holders Agreement,
I / We understand and agree to comply with the Sunriver Gardens Rules and Guidelines, and
I / We have read and signed the District of Sooke Sub-Lease Agreement.

PAYMENT: DUE BY NOVEMBER 30

Please see **2h** above for your plot payment amount.

METHODS OF PAYMENT
- E-Transfer to sookesrg@gmail.com
- Cheque payable to **Sunriver Community Gardens Society**, or cash, delivered in person to a member of the Council or deposited in the drop-off box at City Hall.

New members: please complete the following, print, and submit to a member of the SCG Council.

Date: Plot # _____

Primary Plot Holder (print name) _____

Secondary Plot Holder (print name) _____

Secondary Plot Holder email _____

PRIMARY PLOT HOLDER CONTACT INFORMATION

Mailing address:

Phone: Home _____ Cell _____

Email address: _____

PRIVACY: Sunriver Community Gardens will use personal information to communicate with you, process applications and provide you with the services you have requested. We will not sell or trade any personally identifiable information that may be collected from you and will not disclose such information to third parties except as authorized by law.

I, _____, recognize that the District of Sooke owns the lands on which Sunriver Community Gardens reside. I also recognize that, as a leaseholder on these lands, both I and SCG Council must uphold the user agreement in order to comply with the lease.

I agree to uphold the user agreement, which includes the following:

☐	Ensuring my plot has been worked by May 1
☐	Having 70% food production and weeds under control by May 31
☐	Continuing to maintain 70% food production during July and August
☐	Keeping my plot weed free throughout the growing season, and not letting weeds go to seed or creep, and thus affecting other plots
☐	Harvesting produce in a timely manner

I acknowledge that failure to uphold the SCG User Agreement will forfeit the opportunity to lease a plot at Sunriver Community Gardens.

Signature	_____ Date _____

(October 2025)