

Sustainable Solano

Benicia Community Gardens (BCG) Policies & Regulations

I. General

1. BCG Mission & Purpose

Benicia Community Gardens (BCG) is a project of Sustainable Solano, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

The mission of Benicia Community Gardens is to support local food security by helping community members establish and care for gardens that provide fresh food, fellowship, and learning, thereby strengthening community resilience.

BCG also serves an educational purpose by demonstrating sustainable, organic gardening and urban farming methods and promoting the use of available land to increase local food production.

2. BCG Organization, Policies & Regulations (P&R)

a. The Board adopts Policies & Regulations to guide BCG's mission for the benefit of all participants. The Avant Stewardship Team and Swenson Garden Volunteer Coordinator, who are also active gardeners, appointed by and reporting to Sustainable Solano's Program Manager, enforce these Policies & Regulations.

b. Under Sustainable Solano bylaws, the Board retains authority over all matters related to BCG and its activities. Participation in BCG is voluntary and does not confer voting rights. All participants are expected to comply with BCG Policies & Regulations, which are publicly posted on the Sustainable Solano website and displayed at BCG gardens.

c. Sustainable Solano currently maintains two community gardens in Benicia:

- **Swenson Garden**, located at Military East & East 2nd Street, on property owned by Heritage Presbyterian Church
- **Avant Garden**, located at First Street & East D, on property owned by a private developer/businessman.

Avant Garden is considered a “movable” garden due to future development plans for the site. Sustainable Solano may establish additional community gardens in the future.

d. Food crops grown at BCG gardens are harvested by the gardeners who grow them. Surplus produce may be shared with friends or donated to food-sharing programs. Produce may not be sold.

II. Eligibility

1. Statement of Non-Discrimination

Sustainable Solano does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, in any of its activities or operations. These activities may involve voluntary members, staff, contractors and provision of other services. We are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all our volunteers, our staff, subcontractors, vendors, community members and others whom we serve.

2. BCG Membership

Participation in BCG is voluntary. **You become a BCG member when you have signed a Gardener’s Agreement and are assigned a planting bed or container(s) at a BCG-sponsored garden.**

All work performed by members at BCG gardens, including the use of equipment, and all activities performed at other BCG project sites are done at members’ own risk. Sustainable Solano is not responsible for personal judgments or actions taken by a member that may result in harm or injury to themselves or others.

By becoming active with BCG, a member agrees to **HOLD HARMLESS** Sustainable Solano and its directors, officers, employees, agents, volunteers, and assigns (including property owners and Heritage Presbyterian Church) from and against any damages, losses, liabilities, claims, demands, suits, expenses, and attorneys’ fees (including appellate attorney’s fees), collectively referred to as “Losses.” This includes, without limitation, losses arising from death, property damage, or injury of any nature suffered by the member, family members, guests, or others participating in BCG gardening activities or present in the gardens, whether directly or indirectly related to participation in BCG activities or presence in the gardens.

Basic Protocols:

BCG Gardener's Agreement, Assignment of Beds, Waiting Lists & Fees

a. Only the Avant Stewardship Team or Swenson Volunteer Coordinator, may assign or reassign beds. Beds may not be transferred or exchanged without Avant Stewardship Team or Swenson Volunteer Coordinator approval. Beds are numbered according to a garden plan, and that number identifies your assigned bed.

If assigned a bed, you must sign a BCG Gardener Agreement. Agreements can be renewed annually. Each year, agreements expire on March 20. **A renewed agreement and applicable fees must be submitted no later than March 10th.**

b. Sustainable Solano aims to keep BCG gardens productive year-round. The gardening year is divided into two growing seasons:

- Spring/Summer: March 21 – October 15
- Fall/Winter: October 16 – March 20

c. **Gardeners are expected to keep their assigned beds productive** with plants or a cover crop during both growing seasons. If you choose not to garden during the fall/winter season, -notify a member of the Avant Stewardship Team or Swenson Volunteer Coordinator by email and clear your bed by October 15.

If notification is not received by October 15 and the bed is not cleaned out, planted, or covered with compost by November 1, BCG may assume use of the bed for the fall/winter season. Beds may be used for composting, cover crops, or planting winter crops for donation to food charities.

d. A **waiting list** for beds at each garden is maintained by, Sustainable Solano Program Manager. If no beds are currently available at your preferred garden, you may email info@sustainablesolano.org to be placed on the waiting list. Beds are assigned in the order names appear on the waiting list. When a bed becomes available, you will be notified and required to sign the BCG Gardener's Agreement.

e. A **Gardener's Fee** is charged when the Gardener's Agreement is signed. The fee amount is set annually by Sustainable Solano based on projected operating costs and is stated in the agreement. Fees help cover garden maintenance, insurance and water usage. Fees may be prorated for winter-only gardeners. No one is turned away due to inability to pay.

f. Gardeners with assigned beds are responsible for keeping Sustainable Solano informed of current contact information, including address, phone number(s), and email. Updates may be provided to the Avant Stewardship Team, Swenson Volunteer Garden Coordinator or sent to info@sustainablesolano.org.

III. Members' Responsibilities

1. General

Community gardening is a social, civic, educational, and recreational activity. Members are expected to treat one another with respect, dignity, and courtesy, and to learn from one another. All members must follow BCG Policies & Regulations, which are posted in garden tool sheds, distributed electronically with applications and agreements, and available on the Sustainable Solano website.

Concerns, complaints, or disputes should be brought to the Avant Stewardship Team or Swenson Volunteer Coordinator for resolution. Respect for fellow gardeners' privacy and consideration for neighbors and visitors is expected at all times.

Gardens should be attractive, welcoming, and orderly. BCG gardens are located in highly visible areas of downtown Benicia and are an important part of the city's cultural landscape. Gardeners and volunteers share responsibility for maintaining a pleasant garden environment.

a. **Guests, Visitors and Children.** Members are encouraged to be courteous and welcoming to visitors coming into the garden. Policies & Regulations apply to all visitors and participants. Members are responsible for their guests' behavior. **Children must be supervised by an adult at all times.**

b. **Pets are not allowed in BCG gardens,** whether leashed or not, due to sanitation and safety concerns. Gardens may be visited by wildlife. Feeding wild animals is prohibited. Please report wildlife concerns to a Board member or Volunteer Garden Coordinator.

c. **Use of BCG equipment** is a privilege. All work is done at the gardener's own risk. Tools and equipment must be used properly and with care. Sustainable Solano is not responsible for injuries or damage resulting from misuse.

d. **Each garden has a tool shed** stocked with basic tools. Active members will receive the lock combination. **The shed must be locked after use.** If you are the only person in the garden, you are responsible for securing the shed and returning all tools clean and in good condition. Tools must not be left outside. Report broken tools to the Avant Stewardship Team or Swenson Volunteer Garden Coordinator. Gardeners are responsible for turning off water faucets after use.

e. **A basic first aid kit** is available in each tool shed for minor injuries. Raised beds at Avant Garden are primarily constructed of recycled redwood; splinters should be removed promptly. Members garden at their own risk. **Report safety hazards to the Avant Stewardship Team or Swenson Volunteer Coordinator promptly.**

f. **Each gardener is expected to contribute at least six (6) hours per year to general garden maintenance and improvement.** Tasks may include path upkeep, planting borders, watering containers, organizing tool sheds, and other shared responsibilities. Scheduled work parties are announced via email.

g. **Gardening hours** are limited to daytime for safety and neighbor consideration. At Swenson Garden, Sunday gardening is restricted to afternoons after church services. Gardeners will be notified if special events require additional restrictions.

h. **A designated Share Garden Plot at Avant Garden** may be planted year-round to provide fresh produce to local food charities. Gardeners with extra produce who would like to support local charities can contact a member of the are Stewardship Team to participate.

i. **Watering and Reporting Leaks** is primarily done manually by hose to conserve water and encourage regular bed maintenance. Always remain with the hose while watering. Sprinklers, diffusers, and soaker hoses may not be attached to community hoses. Report leaks or equipment issues promptly.

j. **All personal trash, garbage, and recyclables must be removed from the garden. Sustainable Solano does not provide trash or recycling services.**

2. Gardeners' Responsibilities for Beds and Planting

a. **Maintenance:** Gardeners must maintain their beds by weeding, watering, and enriching soil with appropriate organic amendments. Beds should be topped with soil and compost as needed. Surrounding paths must be kept weed-free. Gardeners who will be absent due to illness or travel must arrange for garden bed care and inform the caregiver of BCG policies.

b. **Abandoned Beds:** Beds that appear abandoned will be reviewed by the **Stewardship Avant Stewardship Team or Swenson Volunteer Coordinator**. Gardeners will be contacted by email and phone and given 15 days to restore the bed. If there is no response or improvement, the bed may be reclaimed and reassigned to someone on the waiting list.

c. **Weeding Around Beds:** Beds and paths must be kept clear of invasive weeds, diseased plants, and dead material. You are responsible to weed around your bed, either halfway to the next bed or three feet from your bed if no contiguous bed. Keep pathways clear. Plants must be contained within assigned beds.

d. **Bed Diversity:** Gardeners are encouraged to plant diverse crops. **We recommend no more than 25% of a bed should be flowers or herbs, and no more than one-third of a bed should be a single crop. Crop rotation is important to prevent disease.** Thoughtful placement of perennials, biennials, and self-seeding plants is encouraged to allow for seasonal rotation.

e. Paths must remain clear. Trailing plants must be contained within assigned beds and not encroach on neighboring beds or walkways.

e. **Decorating Beds:** Beds may be modestly decorated. Signs must not exceed 5" x 7" in size. Business advertisements are not permitted.

f. **Non-organic chemical pesticides, fungicides, and fertilizers are prohibited.** All herbicides are prohibited. Products containing glyphosate (including Roundup or similar products) may not be used. Only approved organic products representing minimal risk to people and animals may be used, including those exempt under Section 25(b) of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act.

g. Soil conditioning should be done using organic materials such as compost, cured manures, rabbit manure, worm castings, and other natural amendments. Mulches such as straw or bark are encouraged to conserve moisture.

Enjoy your community gardening experiences with BCG!