



Objectives

The purpose of the Urban Agriculture Best Practices for Growing and Selling Local Food (The Best Practices) is to inform the development and operation of safe, neighborly and productive Urban Agriculture uses in Calgary. The Best Practices create a consistent approach to urban farm inquiries, information on approvals and regulations, and provide best practice guidance.

Guidelines

WHAT IS URBAN AGRICULTURE?

Urban Agriculture is the outdoor growing of fruits and vegetables for sale. Urban Agriculture does not include the raising of animals, nor does it include the growing of products regulated by the *Controlled Drug and Substances Act*.

Urban Agriculture involves many different activities such as planting, maintaining, watering, harvesting and storing of fruits and vegetables.

WHERE CAN YOU START AN URBAN FARM IN CALGARY?

Small-scale commercial urban agriculture is possible in all districts. Urban agriculture can take place on vacant lots, in landscaped areas, or on rooftops. However, The City of Calgary does have Best Practice guidelines for urban agriculture that apply and for some operations a Development Permit or a Building Permit may be required.

Consideration of the location and siting of an urban farm involves several important factors:

- history and previous use of the parcel;
- compatibility with neighboring land uses;
- location of nearby amenities; and
- water, solar exposure, soil and topography.

Once you have identified a parcel of land, you will need to do some initial background research about the site to determine the land use district and previous uses. You will need the parcel address to do this.

WATER ACCESS

A reliable water source is necessary for urban farm productivity. If your site does not have established water access, The City of Calgary provides the following options for water servicing:

1. Connecting services to the City system: If you are willing to invest more in the infrastructure of your farm, you can connect to the city water main.
2. Accessing The City's water services through a Hydrant Control Unit.
3. Accessing water through a City-approved Bulk Water Supply – Urban farm would pay a deposit, water consumption and monthly service charges.

FENCING

Fencing can improve farm security and can prevent animals from foraging on crops. In most situations, a fence does not need a Building Permit, however if your design or location does not meet land use bylaw specifications, then you will require a Development Permit.



Proposed Urban Agriculture Best Practices For Growing and Selling Local Food

CPC2019-0291
ATTACHMENT 2

FARM MANAGEMENT

Urban agriculture operators must adhere to the following City of Calgary policies and regulations:

- i. Urban agriculture operators must obtain the appropriate Development Permit from The City of Calgary Development Authority;
- ii. Cold frames and temporary hoop enclosures that are 1.5 metres in height may be used to extend the growing season;
- iii. Ancillary buildings (greenhouses and sheds) greater than 10 metres squared require a Building Permit in accordance with The City of Calgary Building Approvals.
- iv. Urban agriculture operators are encouraged to obtain liability insurance prior to occupancy of any site;
- v. The Urban Agriculture use is intended for the growing of fruits and vegetables only;
- vi. No additional food processing shall be allowed onsite unless in combination with appropriate permits;
- vii. Urban agriculture operators must maintain the site according to City of Calgary regulations in the [Community Standards Bylaw \(5M2004\)](#) which include regulations on noise, odors, smoke, hours of operation, and accumulation of refuse and waste;
- viii. Outdoor storage shall be limited to the materials or equipment associated with the Use;
- ix. The operation of tools, machinery and power equipment shall be limited to regulations contained in the [Community Standards Bylaw \(5M2004\)](#).
- x. Onsite Local Food Sales are limited to produce grown onsite.

FARM PRACTICES

- i. Pest Management – Farms must follow The City of Calgary's Integrated Pest Management Plan which minimizes the use of chemical control agents by utilizing holistic land management practices.
- ii. Fertilizers – Farms are encouraged to use organic fertilizers and compost to nourish plants and help build healthy soil.
- iii. Compost – The composting of waste and the preparation of other soil amendments for on-site use is permitted.
- iv. Water Conservation – Water is a public resource carefully managed by The City of Calgary. Farmers are expected to follow basic water conservation practices where applicable, including the use of drip irrigation, irrigating during appropriate times of the day to minimize evaporation, and mulching.
- v. Waste Management – Farmers must dispose of all waste, garbage, refuse and other debris generated by their activities. Farmers are expected to comply with The City of Calgary's Waste Management Plan which includes providing receptacles for waste, recycling and organic waste not suitable for on-site compost production.
- vi. Bees – The City of Calgary does not have jurisdiction over bees.
- vii. Bees or beekeeping. Beekeeping is governed by the [Provincial Bee Act](#), which provides guidelines regarding the collection, care and registration of bees.

HEALTH REGULATIONS & FOOD SAFETY

- i. Urban Agriculture includes the growing of fruits and vegetables only. Alberta Health Services recognizes whole fruits and vegetables as low risk.
- ii. Urban Agriculture does not include food processing activities. Food processing requires additional permits from Alberta Health Services.



Proposed Urban Agriculture Best Practices For Growing and Selling Local Food

CPC2019-0291
ATTACHMENT 2

- iii. It is the responsibility of the farm business to ensure that all products meet Alberta Health Services standards and that appropriate permits are in place.

SOIL SAFETY

- i. It is the responsibility of the farm business to ensure soil is safe for growing food. All Urban Agriculture operations are encouraged to conduct soil testing.
- ii. The use of raised-bed cultivation methods with clean imported soil and geo-textile cloth barrier is recommended.

PLANTING, HARVESTING AND HANDLING PRODUCE

PLANTING

- Test the soil
- Use raised-bed cultivation method
- Locate compost pile away from the growing beds

HARVESTING

- Remove as much soil as possible before selling
- Ensure staff wash hands and clothing
- Thoroughly clean tools and containers prior to harvest

HANDLING PRODUCE

- Wash produce thoroughly
- Do not allow washed produce to contact the floor or soil
- Ensure storage areas are clean and pest free
- Ensure proper hand washing and hygiene practices are followed to avoid food contamination

WHERE CAN I SELL THE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES I GROW?

If you are an urban farmer, growing food either indoors or outdoors to sell commercially, you can sell your produce either onsite at the location of your farm or offsite at farmers markets, community markets, to restaurants or retailers.

SELLING ONSITE AT A FOOD STAND:

- i. Only fruits and vegetables that were grown onsite are permitted to be sold;
- ii. Sales are limited to whole fruits and vegetables only unless applicable permits from Alberta Health Services are obtained;
- iii. Food Stand Hours of Operation 8am – 8pm;
- iv. You will require a Business License: Food Service-Premises.

SELLING OFFSITE TO A RESTAURANT OR RETAILER:

- i. If you are selling offsite to a restaurant or retailer, you will require a Business License: Food Service-No Premises.

LOCAL FOOD STAND DESIGN STANDARDS

- i. Food Stands do not require a Building Permit;
- ii. A food stand can be made of tables, baskets, bins, canopy tents or similar temporary removable shade structure;
- iii. A food stand can have one portable sign or one sign attached to the stand.



Proposed Urban Agriculture Best Practices
For Growing and Selling Local Food

CPC2019-0291
ATTACHMENT 2

You can also apply for permission to set up a temporary local food stand at select City-owned facilities. More information can be found [here](#).

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