

GUADALUPE GARDENS

Community Gardens Management Plan

Project Background

Guadalupe Gardens is an open space and public garden project currently under development on 120 city-owned acres in San Jose, California. It is located immediately south of Mineta San Jose International Airport and is part of the larger Guadalupe River Park & Gardens (GRPG).

In April 2002 the San Jose City Council adopted the Guadalupe Gardens master plan, which provides a vision for the project and general direction on how future phases of development should occur. The master plan calls for the entire Guadalupe Gardens to be irrigated with recycled water, which is readily available on site.

In 2004 the nonprofit Friends of Guadalupe River Park & Gardens (Friends of GRPG) proposed development of a community garden as a new garden element, in accordance with the approved master plan. Community gardening on public land has become an increasingly popular activity in urban areas, where private open space is limited. In San Jose, eighteen community gardens already exist and all but two have waiting lists. These year-round gardens are managed by volunteer staff and offer an opportunity for San Jose residents to have their own garden plot. Plots range from 10'x10' to 20'x30' depending on the garden, and are assigned on a first come, first served basis. All gardens have an annual water fee. Community garden ploholders grow everything organically, from vegetables and herbs to flowers and fruit. The addition of a community garden in Guadalupe Gardens will serve nearby residential neighborhoods and people living in high density downtown housing who wish to cultivate their own produce and flowers.

Recycled Water Use

The use of recycled water in a community garden setting makes this a unique project. Friends of GRPG was awarded a grant from the WaterReuse Foundation to fund, among other things, design and construction drawings for the community garden that guarantee the separation of potable and recycled water lines. The grant also funds the development of appropriate management procedures and specialized training for garden ploholders, to ensure the safe use of recycled water.

Project Partners

The partners collaborating on implementation of this project include:

- City of San Jose Parks, Recreation & Neighborhood Services Department
- South Bay Water Recycling
- Friends of Guadalupe River Park & Gardens
- Santa Clara Valley Water District
- City of San Jose, Environmental Services Department
- University of California Cooperative Extension
- Master Gardeners of Santa Clara County

- San Jose State University, Department of Sociology

South Bay Water Recycling (SBWR) staff actively participated in designing the community garden and reviewing proposed construction drawings. All park personnel and Friends of GRPG staff who will be responsible for managing the garden have successfully completed Site Supervisor Training provided by SBWR. In October 2005, SBWR constructed a pipeline to connect the recycled water mainline to the community garden site.

The proposed community garden will be managed through the City's existing Community Garden program, with assistance from the Friends of GRPG. The Friends of GRPG will be responsible for public outreach to promote the new garden, special training for gardeners in recycled water use, and management oversight. The Friends will also provide testing and analysis of soil and plant materials for the first three years of the garden's operations and develop a written manual for use by other community groups who wish to develop a similar garden in the future.

Specific Site

The Guadalupe Gardens Master Plan identifies a two-acre community garden site, with parking and public restrooms nearby, on the northwest side of Walnut Street between Taylor and Asbury Streets. The Master Plan calls for the community garden to be developed in two phases.

The proposed first phase plan encompasses one acre and contains 29 plots, all raised beds. The plots will be 15' x 20' and 20' x 20' in size, 8" above ground. There will also be four handicap-accessible beds, 20' x 5', set at a height of 20".

Physical Features of the Garden

- Exterior fencing will consist of 6' high chain link or tubular steel fence with lockable gates. Only ploholders who have completed the mandatory training and signed an agreement to comply with the rules of the garden will be given a key to access the entrance gates.
- All garden plots will be irrigated with recycled water, which will be provided via a recycled water quick coupler valve (with locking purple cover) installed at each garden plot. A recycled water quick coupler valve will also be located adjacent to the compost bins for wash down of wheelbarrows and wetting of compost.
- Special hoses (clearly marked for recycled water use and possibly purple in color) will be provided for use on site as a reminder that recycled water is being used and is not allowed for drinking purposes. The Site Supervisor will inform ploholders that these hoses are to be exclusively used with recycled water.
- A locked equipment shed will be located adjacent to the common picnic area to store quick coupler valve keys, cover keys, and special hoses. Ploholders who have completed the training course and agreed to the rules of the garden will be given a key to this shed. Keys will be clearly marked "Do Not Duplicate." Ploholders will be required to return special hoses and valve and cover keys to this shed upon leaving the garden.

- If ploholders supply their own irrigation accessories (wands, nozzles, etc), the Friends of GRPG Site Supervisor will inspect and attach a purple-colored, SBWR-approved tag reading “RECYCLED WATER – DO NOT DRINK”. The Site Supervisor will advise ploholders to designate this equipment exclusively for recycled water use.
- A drinking fountain, located in the site’s first phase picnic area, will have a locking hose bib accessible only to the designated maintenance staff to provide potable water for use in washing down common picnic areas.
- Sinks with faucets (without hose threads), located in the first phase picnic area, will provide potable water for washing of hands and produce.

Signage Elements

Special signs will be installed at key points in the Community Garden.

- A standard SBWR recycled water advisory sign will be attached to the fence at each gate entrance.
- Special entry signage, located at the main entrance on Asbury Street, will contain introductory and educational statements informing the public of the use of recycled water at the site.

This sign, to be approved by SBWR, will indicate:

- This community garden is irrigated with recycled water for growing produce
- Recycled water is not suitable for drinking
- Potable water is available at the site for drinking and washing of hands and produce
- Anyone visiting this site must observe the rules of the garden
- A Community Gardens Special Rules sign for gardeners using the site will be posted at the equipment shed and at the parking area adjacent to the compost bins and supply drop-off area, in the languages predominant among ploholders.
- A SBWR-approved purple recycled water identification tag will be installed on each quick coupler valve.
- The potable water hose bib (on drinking fountain) and any potable water hoses will be labeled with SBWR-approved tags reading “POTABLE WATER” in black letters on blue background.

Program Elements

- The operating hours of the Guadalupe Community Garden will be from sunrise to sunset daily.
- The City and Friends of GRPG Site Supervisors will be responsible for general oversight of this garden, but will not be present during all hours of operation.
- Ploholders will be required to take a mandatory training course on recycled water use, in addition to what is required by the City’s Community Garden Program.
- The training course will be directed by a certified Friends of GRPG Site Supervisor, utilizing speakers and materials approved by South Bay Water Recycling.
- The training curriculum will include:
 - Overview and history of recycled water and how it is produced

- Review of approved uses for recycled water
- Current agricultural uses for recycled water in California
- Guidelines for use of recycled water
- Special rules/regulations for community gardeners adopting plots in this recycled water community garden
- Each plotholder will be required to sign an agreement, upon completion of the training, in which he/she agrees to the rules of the garden. The agreement will contain a provision for cancellation of gardening privileges if rules are not observed
- A Friends of GRPG staff representative, trained as a Site Supervisor through South Bay Water Recycling, will serve on the volunteer Community Garden Management Team for the Guadalupe Gardens Community Garden to ensure enforcement of regulations pertaining to recycled water use

Benefits

One of the most significant benefits of this project is the opportunity it presents to provide “hands on” education to the public on the safe uses of recycled water. Many individuals continue to have questions and concerns about the quality of recycled water and wonder if they or their plants will be adversely affected. Our participating community gardeners will learn about recycled water in a classroom setting and then have the opportunity to use it. Other interested citizens can visit the garden to see a working demonstration, talk to gardeners who are growing vegetables on their own plots, and ask questions about recycled water use. Through partnerships with the Santa Clara Valley Water District, the City of San Jose’s Environmental Services Department, and South Bay Water Recycling, the Friends will provide ongoing lectures, trainings, workshops, and docent tours of the garden for the general public.

Equally important, by surveying the attitudes of gardeners before and after they become familiar with recycled water and educated about its use, the project will provide important information to project sponsors about how the public perceives the relative benefits and risks of recycled water and how to address their concerns. The results of soil and plant tests and surveys of gardeners’ attitudes toward recycled water will provide data for analysis and will serve as a program assessment tool. The data can also be used to generate recommendations for implementing similar programs in other communities in Santa Clara County and beyond.