



# Centre Median Garden Guidelines

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## QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions about centre median gardening, please contact the City's Sustainability Department at [306-986-3733](tel:306-986-3733) or [sustainability@saskatoon.ca](mailto:sustainability@saskatoon.ca).



## INTRODUCTION

Centre median gardens are located on [local streets](#) that have a centre raised median area separating direction of traffic. These centre median gardens can grow food and community, add beauty to neighbourhoods, provide habitat and help manage storm water. These guidelines provide information to residents on growing centre median gardens, including where gardens are permitted, what approvals are required and the expectations for maintenance.



# TIPS TO GROW HEALTHY GARDENS AND COMMUNITY

Centre median gardens are part of a shared public space, so please be courteous of your community. We encourage you to get to know your neighbours in this process. You could even team up with them to grow a garden together.

## Tips for gardeners

- ✓ Visit [saskatoon.ca/HealthyYards](https://saskatoon.ca/HealthyYards) for tips to create a beautiful and healthy garden including low-water and no-till gardening, pesticide-free practices, and more.
- ✓ Check out [Saskatoon's Good Neighbour Guide](#) for tips to help keep our neighbourhoods safe, clean, and beautiful.
- ✓ Remember that your garden site is a public space that can be accessed by neighbours, passers-by and animals. Plants and produce may be picked, damaged or contaminated by animals. Keep calm and carry on.

## Tips for garden neighbours

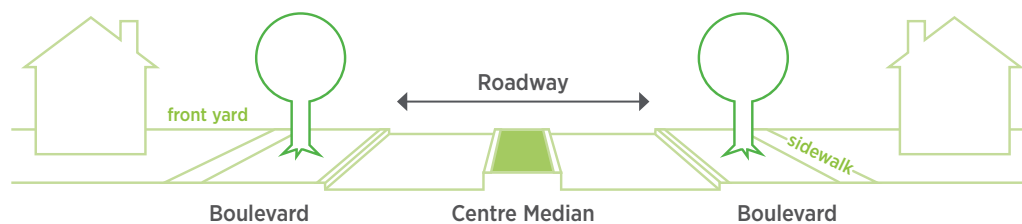
- ✓ Be respectful of your neighbour's centre median garden. Don't take produce or plants that aren't yours, don't leave garbage behind, and don't let your pet damage their garden.



## STEP 1:

# Find out the requirements for your garden site and submit an application

Before you get started, submit your garden application by filling in the online form at [saskatoon.ca/BoulevardGardens](https://saskatoon.ca/BoulevardGardens). After reviewing your application the City will be in contact with you with any questions or to notify you of approval. Applying for a centre median garden allows the City to make sure there will be no disruptions with public service or safety issues, and allows us to track the number of centre median gardens enriching our City.



## Medians in the centre of local streets

A median is a paved, planted, or landscaped strip in the centre of a road. It separates lanes of traffic going in opposite directions. Residents who wish to garden on a centre median must submit an application by filling in the online form at [saskatoon.ca/BoulevardGardens](https://saskatoon.ca/BoulevardGardens) and wait for City approval before starting their garden. In addition to following the other criteria in these Guidelines, centre median gardens must be compliant with the criteria below.

- The gardener must sign a Letter of Agreement with the City, agreeing to be responsible for their median garden and to access their median safely.
- Residents must:
  - ▶ access the median safely at intersections (no jaywalking)
  - ▶ not run anything across the street (e.g., garden hose, electric cord, etc.)
  - ▶ not change the grade of garden space
  - ▶ have a method to distinguish the boundary of their garden
  - ▶ mow or maintain the buffer strip around their garden
- Centre median gardens are restricted to local streets not listed on [snow clearing priority routes](#).
- Residents must maintain a 1.5 m buffer between their centre median garden and street curb. The resident will also be responsible for mowing this buffer.
- Temporary materials must not be placed on the median before June 1 to avoid street sweeping season and removed before Oct 15.
- Other criteria may be needed depending on the median site. The City will contact the resident with more details.



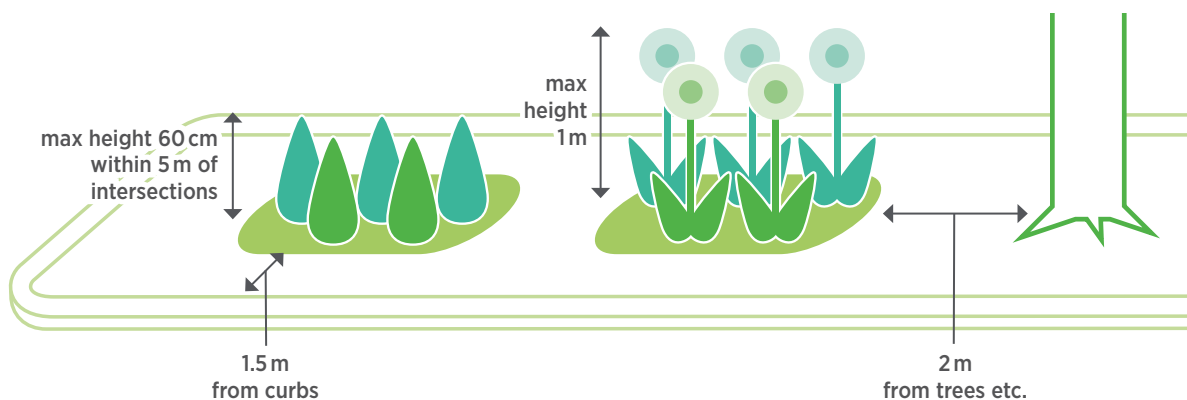


## STEP 2: Design and plan your garden

Centre median gardens are a shared space and need to be accessible, safe, and visible to everyone, including pedestrians, vehicle passengers, those with limited mobility, and work crews who need to access utilities. Do not block access or sight lines to City property (e.g., bus stops, shelters, signs, light poles), road maintenance workers, or City equipment.



- **Setbacks:** Other than low-growing plants or pathway materials, keep your garden at least:
  - ▶ 1.5m (5') from median curbs.
  - ▶ 1m (3.3') from City structures such as light poles and signs.
  - ▶ 5m (16.4') from intersections. Plants up to 60 cm (2') tall may be planted within 5m of intersections.
- **Height Restrictions:** Keep your garden no higher than 1m (3.3') high, including the combined height of plants and structures.







## STEP 3:

### Protect street trees

Remember that trees are highly valued in our community. Follow these steps to make sure that trees near your garden are protected.

- If your garden is within 3 m (9.8') of trees, carefully hand dig your garden, and don't disturb or damage tree roots. Do not rototill within 3 m (9.8') of trees.
- Do not pile soil or add other materials within 60 cm (2') of trees. Lightly top dress with compost or mulch only.
- Do not prune, the City will prune trees based on the maintenance schedule and health of the trees.
- Do not attach signs, trellises, or other structures to trees.
- Review the City's [tree protection requirements](#) for more information.

## STEP 4:

### Plant and maintain your garden

Follow the steps below to make sure your garden stays beautiful, healthy, and safe throughout the growing season.

- Prepare the soil:
  - ▶ **Always Call Before You Dig (1-866-828-4888) to make sure you do not disturb or damage underground utilities or structures. This is a serious safety risk that you will be held liable for.**
  - ▶ Use no-till gardening methods except to establish a new garden. Hand dig up to 30 cm (1') into the soil.
  - ▶ Add up to 15 cm (6") of topsoil, compost and organic mulches. You can access free "dig your own" compost and mulch from the [City Compost Depot](#).
- Plant and maintain your garden:
  - ▶ Plant vegetables, annual or perennial flowers, grasses, or groundcovers up to 1m (3.3') tall.
  - ▶ Do not plant species listed in the [Saskatchewan Weed Control Act](#).
  - ▶ Keep your centre median garden and shared spaces clean, tidy, weed and garbage-free, and well maintained. Do not let garden materials, tools or plants spill onto the road or leave them unattended.





## STEP 5:

### Add materials and accessories

Centre median garden materials must be safe and well-maintained, non-toxic, and easily removed when needed (e.g., before street maintenance). All materials must also comply with the criteria in Step 2.

#### Temporary materials and accessories

- Materials include small pots and planters, garden containers, chairs, bird baths, and ornaments.
- Material must be no higher than 1m (3.3') high.
- Materials must not be placed on site before **June 1** and must be removed before **October 15** each year to avoid damage by street sweeping and [snow removal](#).
- Work crews must be able to easily locate and access utility covers. Potted plants on utility covers are allowed if they can be easily seen and moved by one person. Otherwise, keep these clear of garden materials, plants, and soil.





## Edging, borders, and pathways

- Acceptable edging, borders, and path materials include steppingstones, paving stone, rock borders, and low fencing less than 45 cm (18") high.
- Hard surfaces must not be more than 25% of your garden's footprint to allow drainage.
- Do not place edging or borders on or around trees.

## Unauthorized Materials

Any garden material, accessory, or structure found to be unsafe, toxic, or otherwise hazardous must be removed from the garden site. These may include poorly maintained structures that pose a safety hazard, or structures that do not adhere to the below criteria. Unauthorized materials include:

- **Gravel, landscape rock, and other small stones:** These materials are easily kicked up by vehicles or equipment, which can injure pedestrians, damage property, or spread onto the street. They can also create safety hazards during tree maintenance such as stump removal.
- **Rubber mulches, reused tires, artificial turf:** These materials can be toxic to soil and plants and contribute to the urban heat island effect. They are not allowed.
- **Pesticides:** Pesticides include insecticides (for insects), herbicides (for plants) fungicides (for fungi) or rodenticides (for rodents). Pesticides can pose a risk to people, plants, and soil. Residents are not permitted to apply pesticides on City-owned spaces.
- **Signage:** No signs are permitted on the centre median as per Bylaw 7491. See the City's [signage webpage](#) for more information.





## STEP 6:

### Clean up your garden before winter or moving away

Make sure you clean up your centre median garden before winter or if you decide to no longer garden, and remove temporary structures before October 15. Snow removal equipment not only could damage the garden, but create a safety hazard for snow clearing personnel.

If you move away or stop gardening, remove all garden materials and structures, and return the site to its original state. Grass seed to restore boulevards and centre medians can be picked up at the City of Saskatoon Inventory and Asset Recovery Division at 202 Portage Avenue, Monday through Friday between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. during regular working hours. The office is closed on statutory holidays.





## STEP 7:

### Review your responsibilities and risks

#### Food grown on public land is consumed at your own risk

The City of Saskatoon cannot guarantee the suitability of your garden site for growing food. Soil contaminants may be present at unsafe levels, particularly in neighbourhoods with a history of high industrial and commercial use, or along major roadways.

If you are concerned about soil contamination:

- Consider growing food plants in containers instead of in the ground.
- Consider having the soil tested for contaminants.
- Contact the Sustainability Department at [306-986-3733](tel:306-986-3733) or [sustainability@saskatoon.ca](mailto:sustainability@saskatoon.ca) for more information about soil contaminants.

#### Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement

Approval of your centre median garden application in accordance to these guidelines constitutes written permission from the General Manager to place, dispose, or direct material on a street, boulevard or sidewalk per section 58.2 of Bylaw No. 7200, *The Traffic Bylaw*, subject to compliance with these Guidelines.

All centre median gardening activities are subject to the [Zoning Bylaw](#), [Traffic Bylaw](#), [Drainage Bylaw](#), [Property Maintenance and Nuisance Abatement Bylaw](#), [Trees on City Property Policy](#), and the [Saskatchewan Weed Control Act](#). If there are differences between these Guidelines and City Bylaws or Policy, the Bylaws or Policy will take precedence over the Guidelines. It is the resident's responsibility to keep their centre median garden well-maintained and operating within these Guidelines and the above noted Bylaws.

The City of Saskatoon does not monitor the state of centre median gardens and will respond to issues on a complaint basis. City of Saskatoon employees and bylaw inspectors may conduct inspections and take steps to administer, enforce, or remedy violations of City of Saskatoon bylaws or policies. The City reserves the right to remove any plants or garden features at any time.



## Safety Tips

Gardens on City streets are close to vehicle traffic. You can keep yourself safe while gardening if you remember these tips.

### Be Visible

- Garden during daylight hours and when the weather provides clear visibility. Garden when traffic is light rather than during peak traffic hours. Your experience will be safer and more enjoyable.
- Wear a safety vest or other bright clothing when working in your garden.

### Be Alert

- Pay special attention to passing bicycles and motor vehicles, especially when working in centre medians.
- Avoid standing on the street or having your back towards traffic while tending your garden. Stand in the garden.

### Be Responsible

- Make sure that children are closely supervised if they are helping with your centre median garden. It is not recommended that children help with centre median gardens.
- Keep an eye on your personal belongings. Keep tools and gardening supplies off the street and sidewalk. Unattended tools can be a hazard to pedestrians and cyclists.
- Do not run hoses, electrical cords, or any other objects that could cause a safety hazard across the street to your centre median garden.



## If you have a concern

If you have a concern with a neighbour's centre median garden, consider the following approach:

1. Discuss potential solutions with the gardener first.
2. Contact the City of Saskatoon's Sustainability Department at [306-986-3733](tel:306-986-3733) or [sustainability@saskatoon.ca](mailto:sustainability@saskatoon.ca) to let them know about your concern. If the centre median garden is not compliant with the Guidelines, the Sustainability Department will help the gardener identify options to comply with the Guidelines.
3. If the above options fail, or if there is an imminent safety risk, complaints about bylaw infractions can be directed to [Bylaw Compliance](#) and homeowners will be notified when a complaint is received about their centre median garden.

## Liability

The City of Saskatoon does not take responsibility for injury or damage caused by the vegetation or other garden features you place on its property. You could be held liable if your centre median garden causes harm to people, pets, wildlife, vehicles, street tree or City-owned property including snow removal or street sweeping equipment.

## City Access

The City of Saskatoon sometimes needs access to public land, for example, to maintain underground utilities, build or repair sidewalks, store or remove snow, install street signage, access hydrants, or prune street trees. This could mean that plants or other garden features may be removed or damaged. The City is not liable for damage to or removal of garden materials or structures on public land.





