



Tenant Community Gardens Policy

Version: 1.0

Policy Owner: Operations

Approval: Board of Directors

Effective Date: February 17, 2026

1. Purpose

Community gardens promote healthy living by increasing physical activity, improving food security, and fostering tenant engagement. Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) recognizes their role in enhancing tenant well-being, community safety, social connection, and environmental sustainability, and encourages tenants to participate in beautification projects and food-growing initiatives.

This policy defines the terms, conditions, and objectives for tenant use of garden space and ensures that community gardens meet tenant needs while aligning with TCHC's strategic goals.

2. Scope

This policy applies to community gardening on TCHC property operated by TCHC including all outdoor, rooftop and indoor gardens that are initiated and led by tenants or tenant-led groups. It includes plot allotments and collective gardening activities for the purpose of growing food, environments for pollinators and/or beautification, composting and similar green projects. All TCHC staff and tenants must comply with this policy and related procedures.

This policy does not apply to:

- gardens established and maintained by TCHC staff;
- gardens established or maintained by third party agencies (see Non-



Residential Use of Space Policy for Agencies and related documents);

- non-gardening activities taking place in gardens including, but not limited to, educational activities connected to garden projects, events or programming in garden space, and storing plants off-season in indoor common spaces etc. (see TCHC's Use of Non-Residential Space Policy for Tenants and Tenant-Led Groups and related documents).

Gardening activities not approved in accordance with this policy and related procedures are prohibited.

3. Definitions

Community Gardening Agreement: an agreement between TCHC and the tenant or tenant-led group participating in gardening activities that outlines the terms of use, roles, and expectations of participation in the community garden space.

Community garden space: non-residential space on TCHC property that TCHC determines can be used for tenant gardening activities. This includes but is not necessarily limited to, ground-level gardening spaces outside of buildings and townhouse complexes, plots, and designated rooftop spaces. TCHC supports the following types of community garden spaces for tenants and tenant-led groups:

- **Allotment Garden:** Garden with individual plots assigned to tenant households for approved gardening activities by tenants or tenant-led group.
- **Beautification Garden:** A collective, non-food producing garden focused on ornamental or pollinator plants.
- **Collective Garden:** A shared outdoor or indoor space on TCHC property designated for gardening activities by tenants or tenant-led groups. Collective gardens can include produce or beautification gardening activities.
- **Composting:** Onsite materials and equipment to manage a process for recycling organic waste into compost for use in the garden.



- **Indoor garden:** Garden using indoor common space, such as windowsill planters, vertical gardens or shelves and light systems.
- **Rooftop garden:** These gardens operate like outdoor gardens; however, they have specific issues to address (access, weight, safety barriers).

Garden Committee: A group of tenants who collectively manage an existing community garden space. With the approval and support of TCHC staff and subject to TCHC’s direction, the group is responsible for governance and the day-to-day management of the community garden space.

Plot: a defined area within a community garden space that a tenant can use for authorized community garden space activities.

Plot abandonment: Occurs when tenants fail to care for their garden space—such as not planting, weeding, watering, or harvesting—resulting in an empty or neglected plot.

Tenant: A lawful resident of TCHC is a person who is either a Tenant (someone who has signed the lease with TCHC as the “Tenant”) or someone who the lawful Tenant has declared to be living with them as part of their household with the approval of TCHC. Tenant, for the purposes of this policy, also includes a residential sub-tenant of an agency that TCHC leases a rental unit to and a lawfully declared member of their household. The reference to all declared residents of TCHC units as “tenants” is for the limited purposes of this policy only.

Tenant-led group: A formal or informal group of tenants who gather to advocate on behalf of tenants and/or organize activities to support and/or engage tenants within the community.

Volunteer community garden coordinator(s): TCHC tenant(s) assigned by the gardening committee to be the point of contact and coordinate activities for a specific community garden space.

4. Policy Details

The principles of this policy align with the City of Toronto’s Confronting Anti-Black Racism and [Black Food Sovereignty Action Plans](#), [City of Toronto’s Indigenous Reconciliation Action Plan](#), the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), and the [Tenant Charter](#).



4.1 Eligibility Criteria for Tenants/Tenant-Led Groups

To be eligible to participate in gardening activities, tenant gardeners must meet the following criteria:

- The gardener must be a TCHC tenant as defined by this policy.
- The gardener must reside in the building or site where the garden is located. Additional plots, space permitting, may be allocated to other tenants residing within the TCHC portfolio on a first-come first served basis if spots are left over after residents of the building or site have been selected.
- The gardener must be 16 years old or older for independent gardening.

4.2. Plot Assignment & Participation in Community Gardens

TCHC is responsible for the allocation and decision-making for the use of community gardens, including plot assignments for allotment gardens and participation in collective garden activities.

For allotment gardens, each household may hold a maximum of one plot per season. Plots are allocated for a term of three (3) years, and are renewable each year. After the term is completed, plots may rotate to waitlisted tenants.

For collective gardens, TCHC can specify membership limits, and the composition of membership will be stipulated in the Community Gardening Agreement. Those on the waitlist can become involved in the garden as long as the membership limit has not been reached.

4.3 Termination

- Tenant use of all or any part of community garden spaces is at the will of TCHC. This means that TCHC can revoke authority to use the community garden space at any time with or without notice.
- TCHC may terminate a tenant gardener for breach of policy or non-compliance of the gardening agreement. At that time, plots may be re-



assigned to another gardener or tilled in.

- Where there is no breach of any TCHC policy, TCHC will try to give fourteen (14) days' advanced notice if a tenant's use of community garden space is being terminated.
- If a gardener is no longer a TCHC tenant, they will lose access to all parts of the community garden space.
- If emergency work, repairs or construction is required at or adjacent to the site where a community garden space is located or any other emergency circumstances dictate permanent or temporary closure of the community garden space, TCHC is entitled to close all or part of the community garden space immediately and without notice. What constitutes an emergency shall be determined at TCHC's sole discretion.
- For non-emergency related repairs or construction, TCHC will give at least four (4) weeks notice before terminating a tenant's use of a community gardening space. Despite anything in this policy, TCHC will shut all or part of any garden in accordance with any requirement imposed by law and this may be done immediately and without notice.
- Plot abandonment may result in termination. If a plot is abandoned, the plot will be returned to the inventory of available garden plots and made available to the next tenant on the waitlist.

4.4 Site Selection Criteria for New Gardens

Tenants can request that TCHC create a new community garden space in their community. Proposed community garden spaces should promote healthy living and enhance tenants' quality of life while ensuring they do not interfere with other community functions, facilities or site operations. The use of a community garden must not create risks to neighbouring residential spaces and/or adjacent properties.

TCHC Operations staff, in consultation with Facilities Management and Risk Management, are responsible for assessing and approving new garden sites and will evaluate proposals using transparent criteria including safety including soil testing, sunlight, water, accessibility, and impact on operations and to any

existing construction.

Tenants may not create or occupy a garden space without prior authorization and approval from TCHC.

TCHC has the authority to decide whether a community garden space will be allowed.

Where a new community garden space is approved, participating tenants will have to follow the appropriate garden procedures.

4.5 Equity and Accessibility

TCHC is committed to working with tenants to create and maintain buildings and properties that are accessible and inclusive so that everyone can equally participate in their communities. TCHC must comply with the AODA and Accessibility in the Built Environment Policy to ensure that community gardens are accessible to all tenants.

TCHC is committed to intentional engagement of Black and Indigenous tenants. TCHC will undertake initiatives to support and expand community gardening for Black and Indigenous groups by working with external agencies to create targeted programming, creating access to green space, and providing support to these groups to participate in community garden committees, initiatives and leadership roles.

4.6 Education, Training and Partnerships

TCHC will provide orientation materials for gardeners, as well as appropriate training for staff.

Where possible, TCHC will partner with community organizations for training, information sharing, activities, as well as evaluation of tenant gardening initiatives.

4.7 Distributing or Selling of Produce

Produce grown in community garden spaces are intended for personal consumption. Selling or distributing produce or anything grown in TCHC community gardens is forbidden without written authorization from TCHC which may include

demonstrating compliance with any applicable zoning, food safety, and public health regulations.

4.8 Gardening Resources

Wherever possible, TCHC will provide gardeners with the necessary infrastructure to support their participation, at minimum this may include: access to water, raised beds/accessibility features, fencing for security.

Gardeners are expected to source their own resources which may include plants and seedlings, gardening soil and gardening amendments, tools, decorative features and any infrastructure that is either non-essential or designated for individual plots (trellises, stakes, etc.) etc.

Tenants may seek gardening related resources from tenant funding programs. Supplies purchased through tenant funding programs remain the property of TCHC and must be available for use by the entire community.

4.9 Signage

All community gardens governed by this policy will have posted signage advising the area is governed by applicable TCHC policies and procedures.

5. Compliance and Monitoring

All TCHC staff and tenants must follow this policy and the requirements set out in the Procedure for Tenant Community Gardens.

Operations, in consultation with Facilities Management and Risk Management is responsible for monitoring staff activity to ensure compliance with this Policy and related procedures.

Failure to comply with this policy, procedure or the Community Gardening Agreement may result in removal or disqualification from participating in community gardening programs at TCHC.

4. Governing Legislation

- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005
- Environmental Protection Act
- Human Rights Code
- Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Act
- Pesticides Act

5. Related Policies and Procedures

- Accessibility in the Built Environment Policy
- Procedure for Tenant Community Gardens
- Non-Exclusive Use of Space Policy for Tenants and Tenant-Led Groups
- Non-Exclusive Use of Space Procedures for Tenants and Tenant-Led Groups

6. Commencement and Review

Version	Date	Description of changes	Approval
1.0	February 2026	Revised final policy. This Policy replaces the Interim Policy for Tenant Community Gardens	Board of Directors (BOD)

Next Planned Publication: February 2031