



2021 Ridgway Community Garden Member Packet

Welcome

We are excited to welcome you to the Ridgway Community Garden (RCG) family and kickoff our tenth season of gardening. We look forward to getting to know you and together nurturing our amazing community!

Vision

Community gardens are shared spaces where people can come to grow food and community. Ridgway Community Garden provides space to grow an abundance of healthy, organic food, while also providing a place where people can gather to learn and share ideas or to relax in a peaceful and beautiful setting.

RCG Basics

Who?

RCG is a program of the Southwest Institute for Resilience (SWIRL). We are a partnership of avid gardeners with administrative support provided by a 6-member volunteer Steering Committee. The planning, design and construction of the Garden was a collaborative effort by community residents, the Town of Ridgway, and the Ridgway Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Committee. The garden is dedicated to serving the community in areas that include education, organic agriculture, healthy living, community pride and community ownership.

Where?

RCG is located on the north side of town at the intersection of Green Street and Marion Overlook in Green Street Park, before the entrance to Ridgway High School. We are a short distance from the center of Ridgway and the Uncompahgre River Trail. It is convenient and easily accessible by car, bike, or foot!

Driving directions: (Coming from Sherman Street.) Turn north onto N Railroad St and continue for 0.6 miles. Turn right on Green Street. Drive until you see the Green Street Park on your left. The Garden will be on your left adjacent to the parking area, on the north side of the Park.

The Space

Currently, the community garden is a one-half acre plot leased from the Town of Ridgway. It may be expanded to a 1-acre garden in the future. For the 2021 May to October growing season, there will be at least 43 raised beds (4' x 10') available to community members and non-profit groups interested in growing organic vegetables in our high-altitude environment.

We have plans to expand the number of growing beds, programming, and garden amenities as our community grows and financial resources become available.

Who's in Charge?

We all are.

The Steering Committee is in charge of coordinating membership, communication, programming, developing partnerships, and overseeing garden maintenance. Garden work outside of the raised beds will be done by garden members. Each garden member contributes in the form of workdays and individual tasks.

Contacts

Maintenance Chair (garden infrastructure & operations)
Kurt Jacobsen: 831-254-3102, kurt.jacobsen61@gmail.com

Member Coordinator (memberships & communication)
Chris Lance: 970-729-1738, ChrissyLance@gmail.com

Member Responsibilities

Member Fees	Membership is open to Ouray County residents. Fees are: \$60 per 4ft x 10ft bed. Groups can share a raised bed(s); the same rules and responsibilities apply. Share gardening shall be organized independently of the Steering Committee administration. A 20% reduced rate is offered to non-profits and those experiencing financial hardships (please contact RCG for more information).
Garden Orientation	Prior to the beginning of the gardening season, we ask members to attend an in-person or virtual garden orientation tour. We will let you know time & dates.
Maintenance of Raised Beds	Gardeners will be responsible for maintaining their raised bed(s): planting, weeding, watering, amending, harvesting and general care.
Maintenance of Garden	Each member is expected to contribute at least 2 hours per month to the ongoing maintenance and development of the garden's shared areas such as the community compost pile, perennial gardens and children's play area. Collective workdays will be coordinated monthly for members though there will also be individual tasks available. We will post Dates and Times of Collective Workdays on our website, Facebook page, and on the Garden Information Kiosk during the gardening season. TO-DO lists are posted on a clip board inside the shed door.
Guidelines	Comply with all garden use and maintenance guidelines.

Resources Available to Members

Members and those helping them have access to the fenced-in garden space and the irrigation system. A limited amount of compost will be available to amend into each raised bed. Various garden tools are available. Please respect all resources to make sure they are available for years to come.

Workshops designed to provide coaching in high-altitude gardening techniques will be offered during the growing season for a nominal fee (children/students are free). We will announce dates and times of the workshops well in advance. If you would like to volunteer to help guide and teach organic gardening techniques, please let us know!

Funding

We thank all our generous community donors who provided funding for construction of the new garden! In 2021, we would like to recognize the Ouray County Community Fund, Dalwhinnie Ranch and Alpine Bank for their contributions toward 2021 garden improvements.

We welcome your support for construction of new raised beds, a Children's Area and ongoing garden maintenance in 2021. All donations are tax deductible and can be made online (www.gardenridgway.org) or by cash or check made out to Ridgway Community Garden and sent to PO Box 635 Ridgway, CO 81432.

Southwest Institute for Resilience (SWIRL), PO Box 62 Norwood, CO 81423 is the umbrella non-profit organization that oversees the garden and holds the 501(C)(3) status. Federal ID# 84-1550594; Colorado ID#: 20001121265.

Garden Use Guidelines

General Use

1. The garden area is open dawn until dusk, seven days a week. 8pm to 8am are quiet hours. Please be respectful of fellow gardeners and neighbors. Keep noise levels to a minimum.
2. The combination to the gate lock is **2-0-1-9**. Please lock it each time you leave if you are the last person in the garden. Keep the gate and tool-shed locked at all times. Do not give the combination to anyone not associated with the garden. Always keep the gate closed even when you are inside to prevent wildlife and pets from coming in!
3. The garden should be a safe space for the community, children, and other gardeners. Do not bring anything that will compromise the safety of the garden.
4. Check the Information Kiosk for information concerning the garden, collective workdays, workshops, and notices.
5. The garden welcomes families. Please make sure children are supervised at all times. Teach them respect for others' gardening areas and teach them to conserve water. You are welcome to bring friends to help you work in your garden.
6. Dogs are not allowed in the fenced-in garden area. Leashed pets are allowed outside the fenced-in area. Please pick up after your pets.
7. Please walk or bike to the garden whenever possible. When driving, please park in the designated parking area.
8. Please use garden tools in a safe and respectful manner. Clean and return them to the tool shed when finished.
9. Pick only your crops, even if you believe the bed abandoned, unless given explicit permission by the user.
10. The Steering Committee has the duty of enforcing rules and making decisions for the garden. They have the authority to resolve conflicts, refuse a plot to a gardener, and dismiss a current gardener.
11. Steering Committee reserves the right to use chemical agents to mitigate outbreaks that pose human health risks (ex. stinging insects in the storage shed). All applications will be noticed in advance.

Individual Raised Bed Care

1. Gardeners are solely responsible for planting, watering, weeding, harvesting and taking care of their raised bed.
2. Gardeners must have their raised beds planted by June 15 or it may be forfeited and reassigned.
3. Generally, plan to visit your raised bed at least once a week.
4. Notify the Member Coordinator if you are no longer able to tend your bed and would like to reassign your bed to another gardener.
5. If your bed is overgrown with weeds you will be given a warning. After 10 days, your plot will be reassigned.
6. You will not be refunded membership fees if your raised bed is reassigned for any reason.
7. Keep tall plants such as sunflowers or tall climbing vines in the center of your raised bed so as not to shade your neighbor's plants.
8. Help your visitors understand and follow the rules of the garden.
9. **RCG is an organic, no-till, pesticide/herbicide-free garden.** Dispose of weeds and plant material in designated compost areas. Different care must be given to weeds with seeds - bag and pack them out. Ask Chris Lance if you are doubt about proper disposal.
10. Cut or chop all compost into 1-2 inch pieces. Due to rodents and bears, no outside food/garbage is to be placed in the compost pile.
11. Water restrictions and conservation measures are a must! Your beds should be hand-watered with available hoses. A gardener **MUST** remain on the premises while his/her bed is watered. Excess water cannot be allowed to drain into pathways or adjacent plots. Please do not allow your children to play in the water. Water must be turned off from the main spigot as soon as you finish watering. Hand-held watering wands must be returned to their stations before you exit the garden.
12. The use of floating row cover or shade cloth to protect plants from intense sunlight or wind is encouraged. Row cover also helps maintain soil-moisture.
13. Keep raised bed boundaries weeded and trash free. The Garden does not pay for trash or recycling pickup, so **PLEASE PACK OUT ALL OF YOUR TRASH/RECYCLING.**
14. If you have a surplus of produce contact Ouray County Food Pantry or the Member Coordinator about donating. You may reach the Ouray County Food Pantry at 970-626-4273 or 970-626-5872, info@ouraycountyfoodpantry.org

15. Each gardener is responsible for clearing and preparing her/his raised bed before the close of the season. All dead plants, weeds, trash, tools, sticks, trellises, low tunnel construction materials, and cages must be removed.
16. Children are not allowed in the shed without adult supervision.

Garden Maintenance Guidelines

By following the guidelines below, gardeners contribute to ensuring that community gardening continues to thrive.

Garden Raised Beds

RCG is an organic, no-till, pesticide/herbicide-free garden. Each raised bed in a garden is expected to be kept clear of weeds, spent plants, debris and trash. We recommend that each fall, gardeners turn compost and organic material into the soil and cover it with a layer of mulch to regulate soil temperature and retain moisture throughout the winter. This makes a garden bed look cared for to passers-by. Any perennials must appear well kept. We encourage artistic expression within your own garden bed! Additional information on best gardening practices is available on our website and/or the Garden Information Kiosk.

Water Usage

RCG encourages an efficient and wise use of water, which reduces water costs and the proliferation of weeds. This includes using a hand-held watering wand with a shutoff nozzle, rather than a drip system, and watering at the base of the plant with a low volume spray. The EPA estimates that manual watering with a hand-held hose tends to be the most water-efficient method, as households that manually water with a hose typically use 33 percent less water outdoors. Please refer to the hand-out, Effective Water Conservation Techniques, for more suggested water conservation techniques.

Composting

The RCG will have an active and managed composting system, as well as on-going composting workshops. All materials for the compost pile will come out of the garden beds, and no outside sources of food scraps are permitted. Diseased plant material (i.e. fungus, aphids) should not be composted. It should be bagged and removed as trash. Compost should be ready for use by the end of the growing season.

What goes in: vegetable scraps, plant waste without seed heads or disease, wasted straw and grass.

What stays out: all outside vegetable scraps, fruits, oils, meats, and grains. No stems or roots of the nightshade family (tomato, eggplant, peppers).

Fertilizing/Amending

The RCG purchased a high quality, science tested soil mix from a local supplier. It will need to be amended for the 2021 season. RCG will provide a list of organic fertilizers.

Vertical Structures

Structures to encourage vertical growing, including arbors, trellises, tree branch frames, fence sections and cages are only allowed during the growing season if they are functional, orderly, safe and attractive. Vertical structures used for growing must appear in good condition and contribute to the community garden's overall visual continuity. We require that all growing structures be disassembled and removed during the off-season. Permanent vertical structures in the community garden are allowed to remain if they are approved by the Steering Committee, are in good condition, and are attractive from the street.

Shelter Structures & Storage

RCG does not permit the construction or existence of permanent shelter structures within individual or shared community garden beds, including personal sheds, storage, or shade units. Individually constructed shelter structures present safety concerns and are antithetical to RCG's community-based approach. If there is a need for additional community storage space, RCG assesses the possibility of installing additional shared storage in the garden.

Effective Water Conservation Techniques

Gardening in Colorado mandates the conscious use of effective water conservation techniques. RCG believes that community gardens should be models of efficient water use, especially in seasons of drought. Additionally, use of water conservation techniques has several other benefits including reduced water costs and weed proliferation. If the following techniques are applied, plants will respond by growing quickly and by producing an abundant harvest. We've also outlined a set of water restrictions required of all community gardeners in response to the on-going drought. Regardless of the duration of the drought, however, RCG advocates gardeners adopt and incorporate these techniques as a way of life.

Water Plants in the Cool of the Day, especially during the Evening

Watering first thing in the morning or an hour or so before sunset, allows plant roots to utilize moisture more efficiently. Late day watering allows the water to percolate into the soil for 12 hours or more before the sun and wind magnify the effects of evaporation and transpiration from soil and foliage. Mid-day watering is a poor use of gardening time and an extremely inefficient way of watering into thirsty soils. Since plants do a significant amount of their growing at night, it makes sense to provide moisture prior to this critical period.

Water the Roots and Soil, Not the Leaves

Although some plants, such as the broccoli family and lettuces, don't mind overhead watering and moist leaves, most vegetables prefer watering at soil level. Tomatoes, peas, and members of the squash and melon families can suffer from disease problems that proliferate on wet foliage.

Cultivate the Soil Before Watering

Weed and/or hoe around plants at least once a week to control germinating weeds that compete for moisture. Watering should be done after cultivation, while the soil is loose and airy.

Compost Throughout the Season

Compost should be applied at the beginning of the gardening season, digging two inches of compost into the top 4 to 6 inches of soil, as well as several other times during the summer and fall. Spread a shovel of compost around vegetables, flowers, and herbs, lightly cultivating the soil to incorporate the organic material. Since compost has the ability to hold up to 100% of its weight in water, this allows soils to hold and release moisture and organic nutrients slowly. Having compost-enriched soils is one of the best water conservation techniques available to gardeners.

Space Plants so that their Mature Leaves Shade the Soil Surface

Soil that is in shade, even in conditions of drought, is more capable of retaining moisture and reducing evaporation. The mini-climate that is produced by plants that are spaced so that mature leaves almost touch, provides a shading and cooling effect of the soil surface below. You can extend the growing season of "cool season" plants, such as lettuce, by growing in the shade of taller plants such as pole beans. Their leaves provide a "living mulch" to help cool the roots of surrounding plants and to retain moisture.

Mulch any Uncovered Soil Areas

Mulch conserves water, moderates soil temperature, helps to prevent erosion, and slowly enriches the soil with humus as it decays. Pesticide-free grass clippings that have dried out for a few days, fall leaves or clean straw, are all excellent sources of mulch. Exposed soil areas that are not being used for growing, quickly become weedy and unsightly and are spaces where wasteful evaporation occurs. Mulch warm season crops, such as tomatoes and peppers after the soil warms. Mulch cool season crops, such as lettuce, peas and broccoli several weeks after they have been transplanted or after they have been growing for about a month after germination.

Check the Soil for Needed Moisture

Most vegetables need about an inch of water per week for adequate growth. Poke a stick or your finger 1 to 2 inches below the soil surface to see if water is needed. Soils that are exposed to the sun (with no mulch), and are deficient in organic matter, will be significantly less efficient at retaining moisture and nutrient supplies than those that are shaded and compost enriched.

Wilting Leaves Don't Always Signal a Call for Water

Large leaved plants, such as those in the pumpkin/squash family, normally droop during the heat of the day. Plants are just minimizing the water loss (due to transpiration), and watering them at this time will increase water loss rather than lessen it. It also weakens the plants by promoting shallow rooting structure.

Utilize Efficient Watering Tools

Using a hand-held watering wand with a shutoff nozzle, allows you to water underneath leaves, close to the soil surface. This also breaks the force of the spray and lessens effects of soil compaction and erosion. Water with a low volume spray, as this lets water percolate deeply into the soil. Clay soils absorb water slowly. Watering for a short period of time, allowing the water to infiltrate the top layer, and then remoistening the area is a more efficient watering technique rather than short, intense watering.

Harvest Frequently

Harvest crops while plants are actively producing and healthy. Overgrown, insect and/or disease-laden plants should be removed and the area replanted to another type of plant or seeded with a cover crop. When the plant is taking more out of the soil than it returns, it is time to concentrate on soil improvement.

2021 RIDGWAY COMMUNITY GARDEN RENTAL AGREEMENT

Please complete this form and return with your payment to RCG at the address below.
 If you are sharing bed(s) with other gardeners, please complete Sections 1 and 2. Only the Primary Contact needs to complete Section 3 and submit payment.

1. ABOUT YOU:

Name: _____

Primary Contact if you are sharing bed(s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____ E-mail: _____

My raised bed(s) will serve # _____ adults and # _____ children.

2. SIGNATURE:

I have read and understand my responsibilities and will follow the garden use guidelines as stated in the 2021 Ridgway Community Garden Member Packet. I understand there are water restrictions required of all community gardeners in response to the on-going drought and have read the handout: *Effective Water Conservation Techniques*. I agree to comply with COVID safety guidelines as provided by Steering at the opening of the garden for the 2021 season.

Signature _____ Date: _____
 (or Parent/legal guardian signature if participant is under the age of 18).

3. Payment:

Raised Bed Size	Cost/bed	Number of beds requested*	Total
4' x 10' bed	\$60		
	<i>Optional tax deductible contribution**</i>		
	TOTAL DUE		
	***Paid with check #		

* For the 2021 growing season, you may retain your same bed, or if new to RCG, rent one raised bed as space and demand allow.

** All contributions support garden member scholarships, garden amenities, programming and future growth. Southwest Institute for Resilience (SWIRL), PO Box 62, Norwood, CO 81423 is the umbrella non-profit organization that oversees the garden and holds the 501(C)(3) status. Federal ID # 84-1550594; Colorado ID #: 20001121265.

*****Make checks payable to Ridgway Community Garden**

Send your check to:
Ridgway Community Garden
PO Box 635
Ridgway, CO 81432

Questions? Email us at gardenridgway@gmail.com