



2025 RCG Use Guidelines

Welcome

We are excited to welcome you to the Ridgway Community Garden (RCG) family and kickoff our 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?

We are a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that operates as a cooperative of avid gardeners with administrative support provided by a 7-member volunteer Board of Directors (BOD). 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. Membership is open to Ouray County residents.

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. For the 2025 May to November growing season, there will be 50 raised beds (4' x 10') available to community members and non-profit groups interested in growing organic vegetables in our high-altitude environment. In addition, we will offer 4 waist-high beds (3' x 8') for members in need.

Who's in Charge?

We all are.

The BOD is in charge of coordinating membership, communication, programming, developing partnerships, and overseeing garden maintenance. Work outside of the raised beds will be done by garden members as part of everyone's commitment to the cooperative support of the entire garden for the benefit of all members. Each garden member contributes in the form of workdays and individual tasks.

Contact

Member Coordinator Dave Peterson: 303-241-8222, dapetersonrd@gmail.com

Resources Available to Members

Members and those helping them have access to the fenced-in garden space and the irrigation system. **Member fees cover** premium garden soil and a limited amount of fresh compost for amending raised beds, use of garden tools, water, and free educational workshops. Since RCG will no longer be replacing worn out Dio-Betalon or Agrobon row cover, please treat it gently to extend its lifespan.

Workshops designed to provide coaching in high-altitude gardening techniques are available on our website and may be offered during the growing season. 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!

Financial Support

We welcome your support in sponsoring garden scholarships for non-profits and those in financial need. We also need financial support to make improvements to the garden. 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. In Oct 2021, the RCG became a non-profit organization and holds 501(C)(3) status. Federal EIN: 87-2994109; Colorado Secretary of State ID#: 20211928620.

Financial Assistance

Please contact the Member Coordinator Dave Peterson at 303-241-8222 or dapetersonrd@gmail.com if you would like to request financial assistance for fees?

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 **2-0-2-5**. Please lock it each time you leave if you are the last person in the garden. Keep the gate 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 clean and return garden tools to the tool shed when finished.
8. Pick only your crops, even if you believe the bed abandoned, unless given explicit permission by the user.
9. The BOD 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.
10. BOD reserves the right to use chemical agents to mitigate outbreaks that pose human health risks (ex. stinging insects in the storage shed).

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, Dave Peterson at 303-241-8222 or dapetersonrd@gmail.com, 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 6-12 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 about donating. Produce drop-off is accepted every Thursday morning before 1:00 pm. 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 on 1 November. All dead plants, weeds, trash, tools, sticks, trellises, low tunnel construction materials, and cages must be removed. Detailed instructions are emailed in October. **Gardeners who abandon their beds will not be allowed to join the garden the following year.**
16. RCG does not permit the construction or existence of permanent shelter structures within individual or shared community garden beds.

Member Responsibilities & Fees

Member Fees	<p>Member fees are \$60 per bed for those who can volunteer a minimum of 6 hours during the growing season — please respect this requirement. These hours can be given during collective workdays, or as individual tasks completed on your own schedule. These individual tasks can be set up with Chris Lance. We will post dates and times of collective workdays on our website and on the garden information kiosk.</p> <p>Member fees are \$80 for those who cannot give a minimum of 6 hours of volunteer time during the growing season. Groups can share a raised bed(s); the same rules and responsibilities apply. Share gardening shall be organized independently of the Board of Directors.</p>
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 end-of-season/winter preparation.
General use and water conservation.	Comply with all garden use and water conservation guidelines.

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.

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, so 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 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.