



Item No. 18 Town of Atherton

CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT – REGULAR AGENDA

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
GEORGE RODERICKS, CITY MANAGER

THROUGH: ROBERT OVADIA, PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

FROM: SALLY BENTZ-DALTON, PARK MANAGER/TOWN ARBORIST

DATE: JUNE 16, 2021

SUBJECT: FEEDBACK AND DIRECTION REGARDING A PROPOSAL OF A
COMMUNITY GARDEN IN HOLBROOK-PALMER PARK

RECOMMENDATION

Provide feedback and direction regarding a proposal of a community garden in Holbrook-Palmer Park and potential resident outreach efforts seeking feedback on the concept of a community garden.

BACKGROUND

At the April 7, 2021, Park & Recreation Committee meeting, Atherton resident Christine David presented a proposal for a new Community Garden in Holbrook-Palmer Park during public comment. The proposal is attached as Attachment 1. As the item was presented during public comment, the Park & Recreation Committee wanted the item to be added to the following meeting's agenda to allow discussion of the proposal.

At the May 5, 2021, Park & Recreation Committee meeting, the Committee reviewed and discussed the proposal.

During their discussion, several areas of concern were raised by the Committee including:

- Does it fit in with the goals of the Park and Town?
- How many people will it benefit?
- Are people interested in it?
- Cost and funding of the project
- Location and layout
- Management of the garden and plots
- Maintenance

- Security of the site

ANALYSIS

The Holbrook-Palmer Park Master Plan approved in May 2015, and revised in November 2019, outlines the vision for Holbrook-Palmer Park and was developed through a significant public engagement and outreach process and does not include a community garden.

Before the Park & Recreation Committee moves forward with studying and considering the proposal, they are suggesting an outreach effort to the residents seeking feedback regarding the concept of a community garden at Holbrook-Palmer Park.

The Committee discussed several different outreach methods that could be considered, including an emailed survey, information and/or survey included in town-wide email blasts, a mailed survey, or outreach in the Athertonian.

As the Park & Recreation Committee does not have the authority to expend Town resources, the Committee made a motion at the May 5, 2021, meeting to request Council authorization to have staff work with Christine David to develop and conduct outreach to Atherton residents to gauge interest in developing a community garden.

POLICY FOCUS

The concept of a community garden is not included in the Holbrook-Palmer Park Master Plan. The addition of a community garden, depending on timing and location, would likely alter the layout of the desired improvements identified in the plan. As noted above, there are several issues and concerns related to developing, managing and maintaining a community garden.

Council policy focus should be on the compatibility of the proposed community garden with the remaining park uses and priority in relation to other desired improvements at the park, as well as the potential outreach efforts.

FISCAL IMPACT

There would limited costs, mainly related to staff time, if the outreach effort and survey are conducted electronically with an emailed survey, and publication in the Athertonian. However, if a mailer is sent out separately to each resident, then there will be a cost for printing and mailing.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notification was achieved by posting the agenda, with this agenda item being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting in print and electronically. Information about the project is also disseminated via the Town's electronic News Flash and Atherton Online. There are approximately 1,200 subscribers to the Town's electronic News Flash publications. Subscribers include residents

as well as stakeholders – to include, but be not limited to, media outlets, school districts, Menlo Park Fire District, service providers (water, power, and sewer), and regional elected officials.

COMMISSION/COMMITTEE FEEDBACK/REFERRAL

This item X has or has not been before a Town Committee or Commission.

- Audit/Finance Committee (meets every other month)
- Bicycle/Pedestrian Committee (meets as needed)
- Civic Center Advisory Committee (meets as needed)
- Environmental Programs Committee (meets every other month)
- X Park and Recreation Committee (meets each month)
- Planning Commission (meets each month)
- Rail Committee (meets every other month)
- Transportation Committee (meets every other month)
- Tree Committee (meets each month)

ATTACHMENT

1. Community Garden Proposal

Community Garden @ Holbrook-Palmer Park

Proposal

Presented To: The Park and Recreation Committee

Presented By: Christine David, Former Vice-Chair

April 7, 2021

Introduction:

The idea for a Community Garden was originally discussed when Council Member Rick DeGolia walked through Holbrook-Palmer Park with former Park and Recreation Committee Vice-Chair Christine David discussing plans for the Verdi redesign project currently under consideration. The proposed space for a Community Garden is located within the landscaping being redesigned and sits north of the loop planting area and in currently unused space except for its rare use as a parking space.

During last month's Town Council Meeting the subject of a Community Garden was addressed within the City Manager's Report, dated March 17, 2021. Comments specific to the potential addition of a Community Garden to the existing Circulation Plan and Revisions are found below.

"In addition to the review of the Circulation Project, former member Christine David attended the meeting and requested consideration of a community garden north of the loop planting area. The Committee was advised that such a project was outside the scope of the Circulation Project and was not identified in the Master Plan. The Committee expressed interest in the Project and tabled the discussion to a future meeting where it could be agendaized. As the Committee and ultimately the Council considers the possibility of a community garden, it will be important to consider a number of factors –

1) Placement - this will be important as users of the facility will likely be parking and bringing items in and out of the garden area. It will be important to consider where these patrons cross travel areas or obtain access.

2) Security - community gardens are typically in stand-alone parcels separate from public parks. One of the reasons for this is that public parks are generally open access and users of the park may see the community garden space as accessible or "free access" despite signage.

ATTACHMENT 1

3) Users - community gardens come in a couple of varieties - those owned and managed by the municipality where plot users are both residents and non-residents; or those owned and/or managed by community groups (such as Rotary, Kiwanis, or Master Gardener groups) where plot users are generally restricted (residents only or seniors, or low income, etc.).

4) Design - most gardens are designed to accommodate individual plot rentals for a fee and for a specified period of time. The number of plots available depends on the size of the overall garden space. The water usage is typically separated from that of the surrounding area. Each plot or sections of plots are often allowed to design their own water access so this needs to be considered in early design.

5) Rules and Guidelines - most gardens will have bylaws or guidelines governing participation. There are provisions for waiting lists, priority, prohibited plants, fees, regular maintenance, group maintenance, watering, trellises, fencing, and general etiquette.”

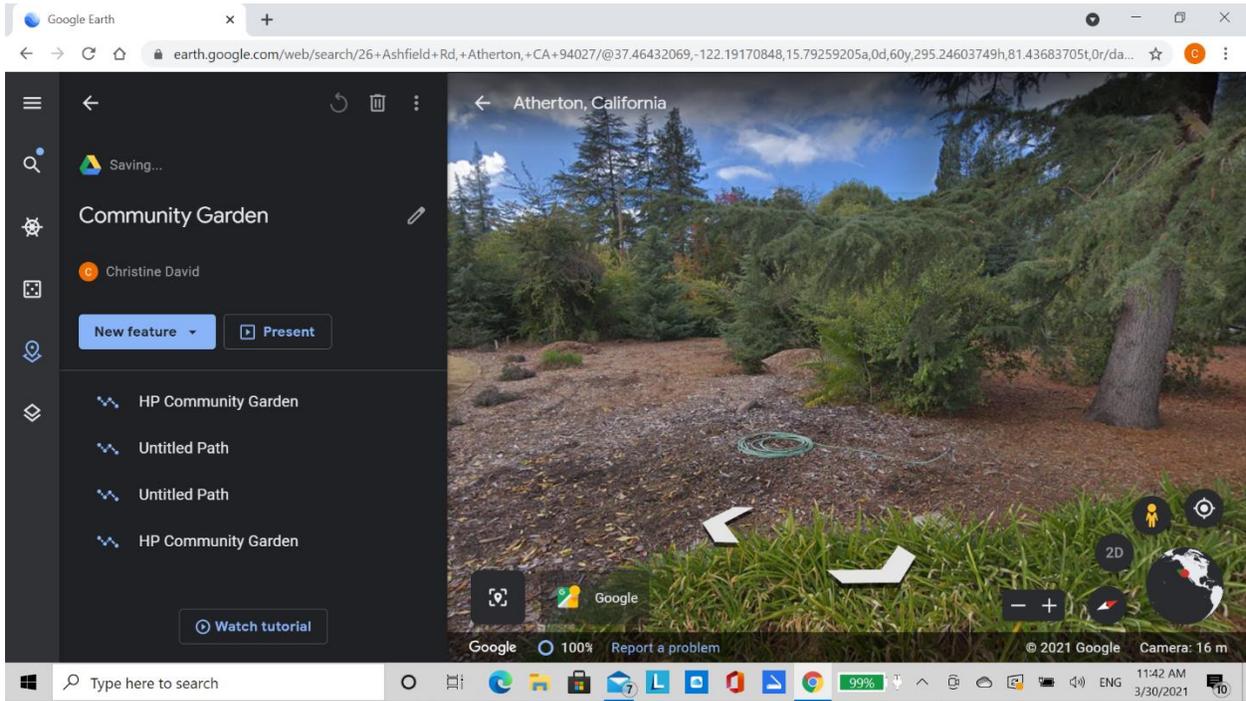
Proposed Community Garden:

Location:

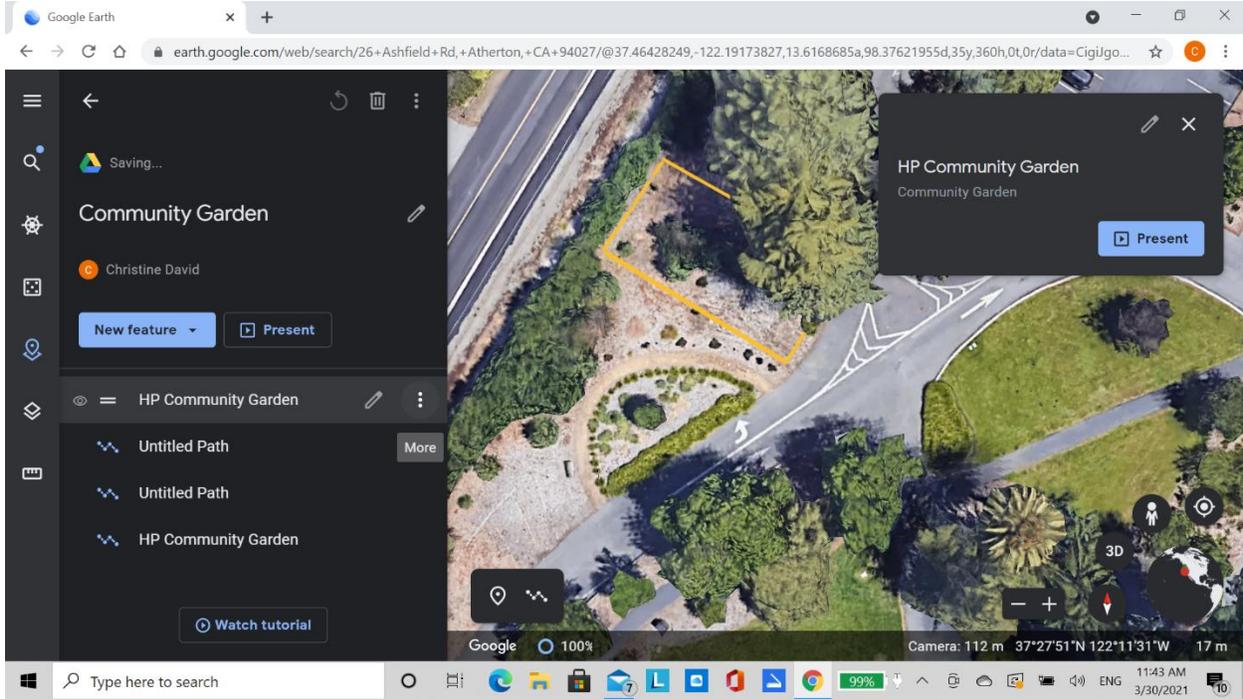
The Community Garden would be located within Atherton’s Holbrook-Palmer Park on the Watkins side of the park in a currently unused area of the park located in-between current vehicle entrance and exit locations to the right of the Iris walking garden and to the left of existing adult pine trees and convenient parking spaces offering optimal access to the community garden by its patrons. This parcel is ideally placed to offer full day sun, exposure ideal for gardens and growth. This parcel also has access to water through an existing spout. The area contains a few young trees and bushes that will need to be cleared. In it’s current state, this parcel exists directly next to an active driveway thus patron access should be considered from the side of the parcel facing existing parking spots, replacing the parking spot closest to the Community Garden with a loading/unloading zone only. Congestion issues could be avoided if enough parking spaces to the right or of this parcel were reserved through signage for Community Garden Patrons.

Proposed area within Holbrook-Palmer Park shown via Google Earth:

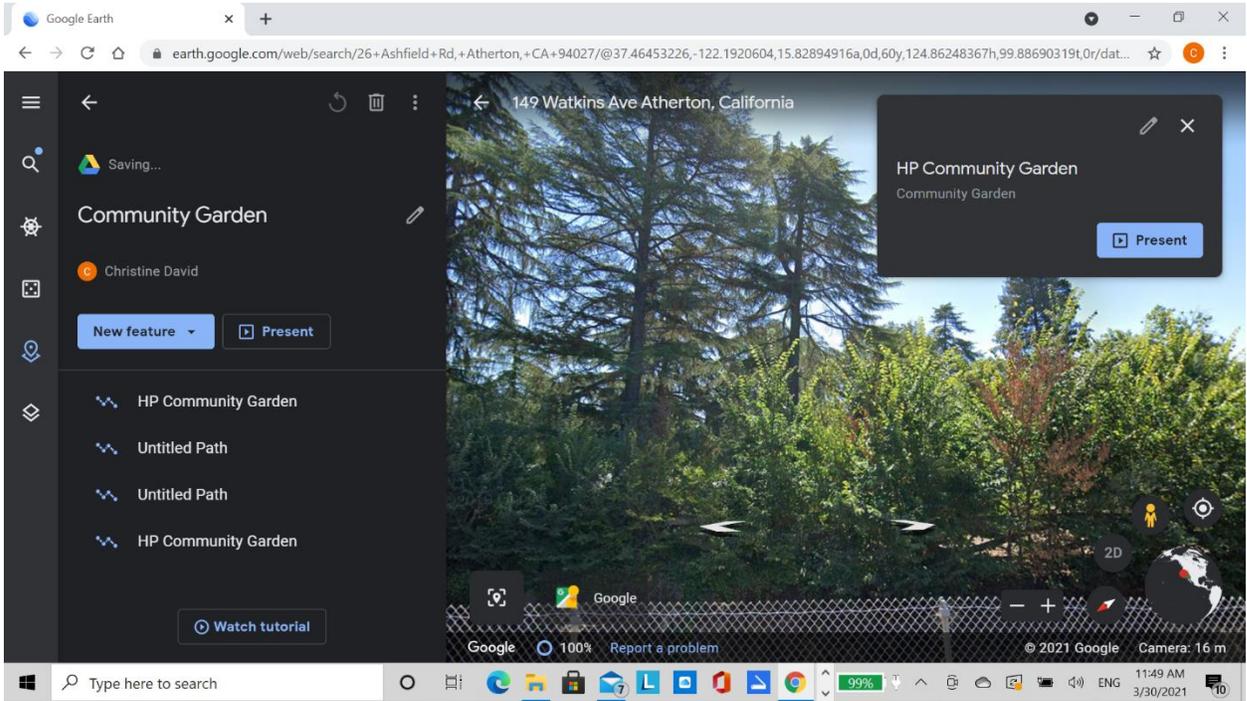
1. View of Proposed Space at Street level @ mid-point between vehicle entrance and exits facing Watkins



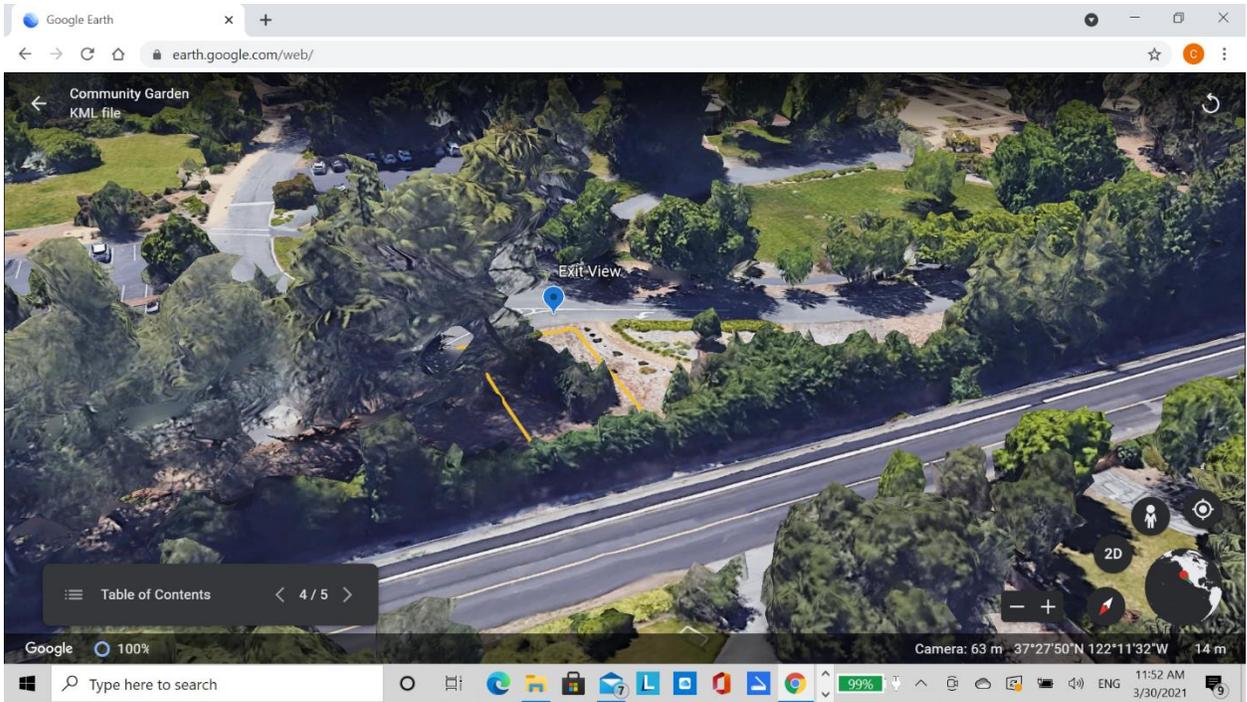
2. Overhead View of Proposed Area:



3. Walkway on Watkins facing proposed area for Community Garden



4. Overview View of proposed Community Garden from Watkins



Measurements of Proposed Area:

@ 30' West Facing x 55' North Facing x 30' East Facing x 55' South Facing

Ideas for Raised Beds within Proposed Area:

The proposed area would contain 8 of these 4' x 8' foot raised beds allowing for walking space in-between, paved with decomposed granite.

Example of plans and instructions on how to build your own 4'x 8' foot raised bed can be found below:

www.diypete.com/diy-raised-garden-bed/



Making a DIY raised garden bed is a fun and quick project you can easily tackle in a weekend. I built my raised garden bed project out of redwood because it withstands the outdoor elements well. The project cost was approximately \$220 including the wood, dirt, screws, and weed barrier.

ATTACHMENT 1

I built this to be at a height of 23 1/2 inches, which makes it so you can garden comfortably without having to get down on your knees at ground level. The wood frame can be made in a couple hours and consists of 2x6 and 2x4 boards. The main tools needed are a miter saw (or any type of saw), a [Kreg Jig](#) (affiliate link), and a drill.

Garden soil and top soil can be purchased at your local hardware store. However, you can typically save a few dollars by loading up your pickup truck with top soil from a local garden nursery. This project was done in collaboration with [BuildSomething.com](#). My complete tutorial and measurements for the [DIY raised garden bed can be found here](#). They have all sorts of free plans and DIY inspiration. I'd highly recommend checking out their site!



Gather wood (2x6 boards and 2x4 boards)



Assemble



Level and prepare for soil



Plant flowers and enjoy!



FREE Tutorial, Measurements, and detailed diagrams of the build can be found at Buildsomething.com. Have fun with the project and cheers from Montana! – Pete

Potential Cost:

My husband, Mike, recently hired our gardener to build 2 of these raised beds, complete with new soil, surrounded by smoothed gravel and the total cost was @\$1,000.00. If we built 8 raised beds instead, it would have costs @\$4,000.00. Add simple fencing and netting and these projects cost to build should come in at under \$10,000.00 given this example. Other expenses need to be considered including regular maintenance, water use, and other related overhead and expenses.

Potential Layout:

Given parcel measurements it should be possible to fit up to 8 of these 4" x 8" raised beds within this proposed space, arranging them in 2 rows of 4, providing ample room for working space alongside the beds.

Security:

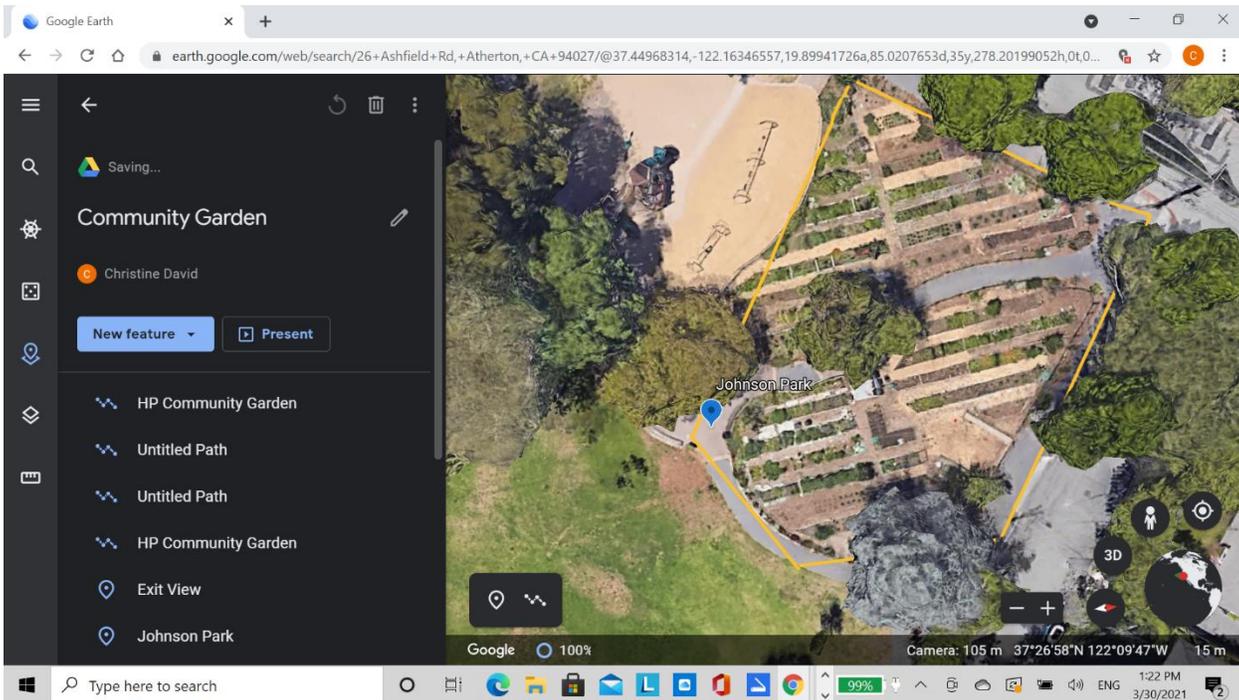
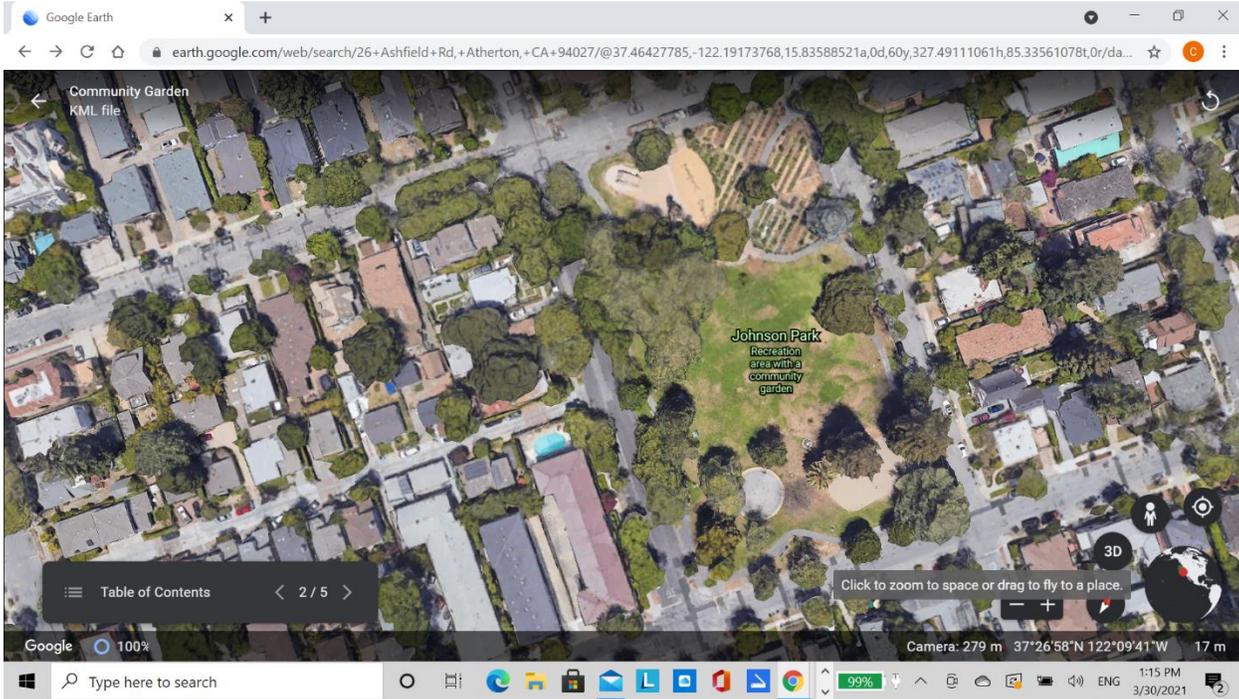
ATTACHMENT 1

The proposed area would be within our public park surrounded by 6' high fencing designed to see through while keeping unwanted pests out. Netting could be placed overhead prohibiting birds from enjoying the fruits of the garden. Surveillance could be added, if necessary, through park cameras. Fencing could be simply made with framed chicken wire with an arched, latched gate at the entrance. Example below:

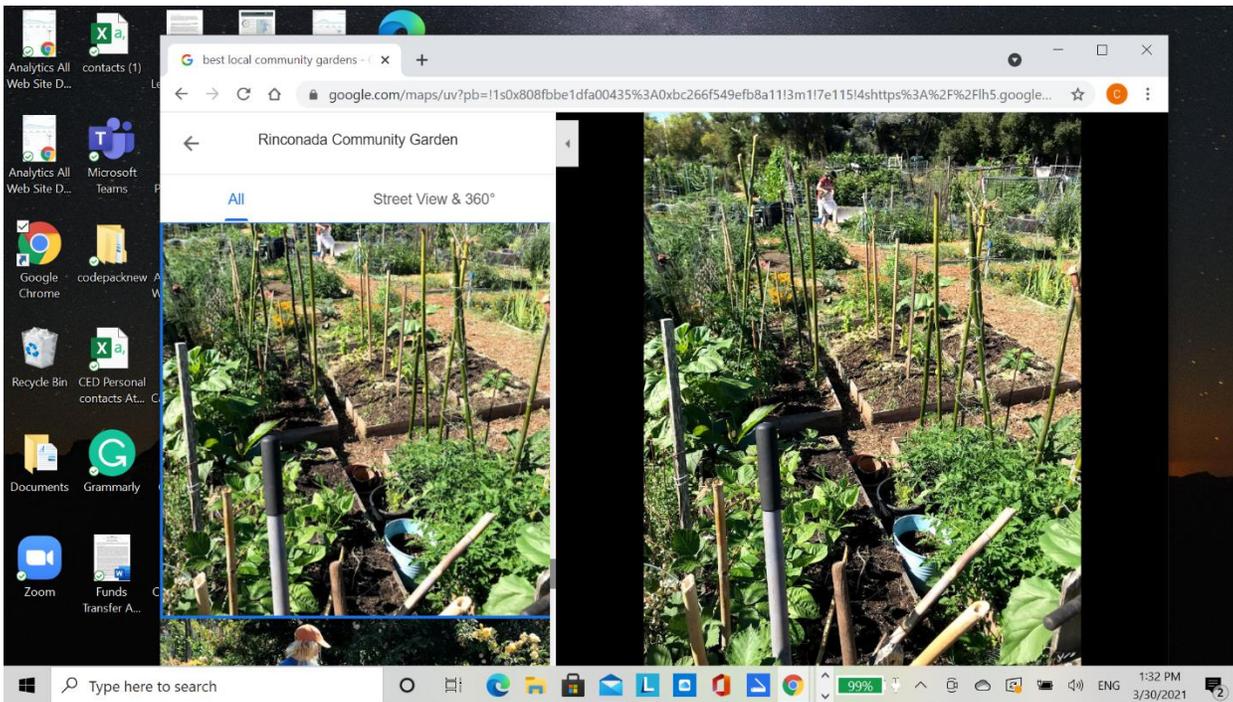
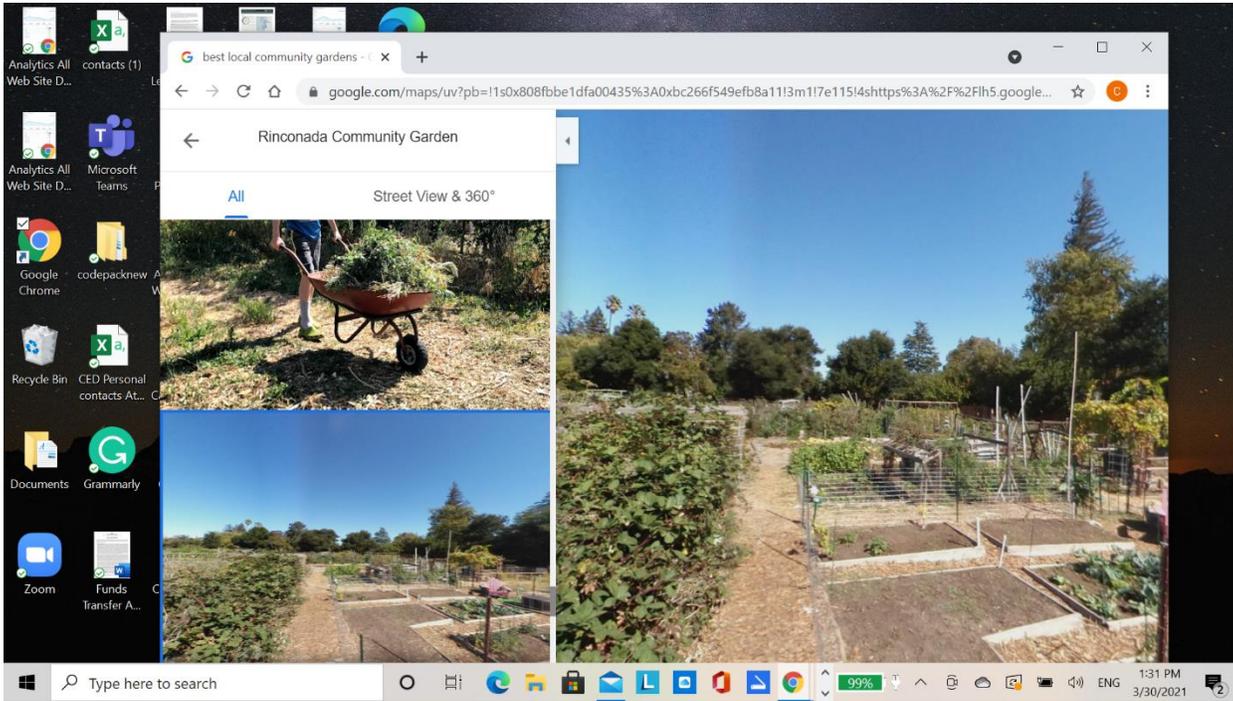


Other Community Garden Examples:

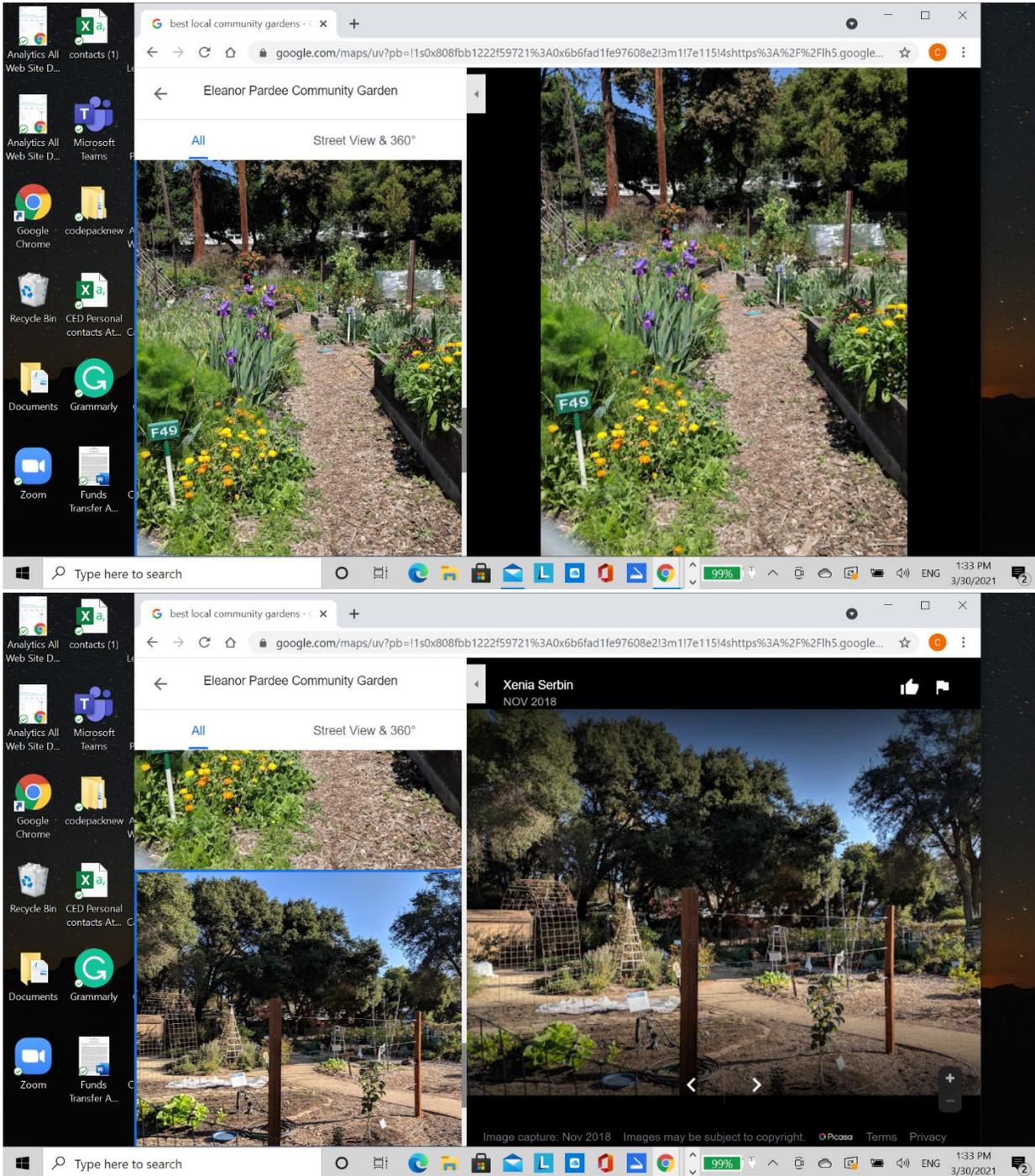
A. Johnson Park, 200 Kipling, Palo Alto



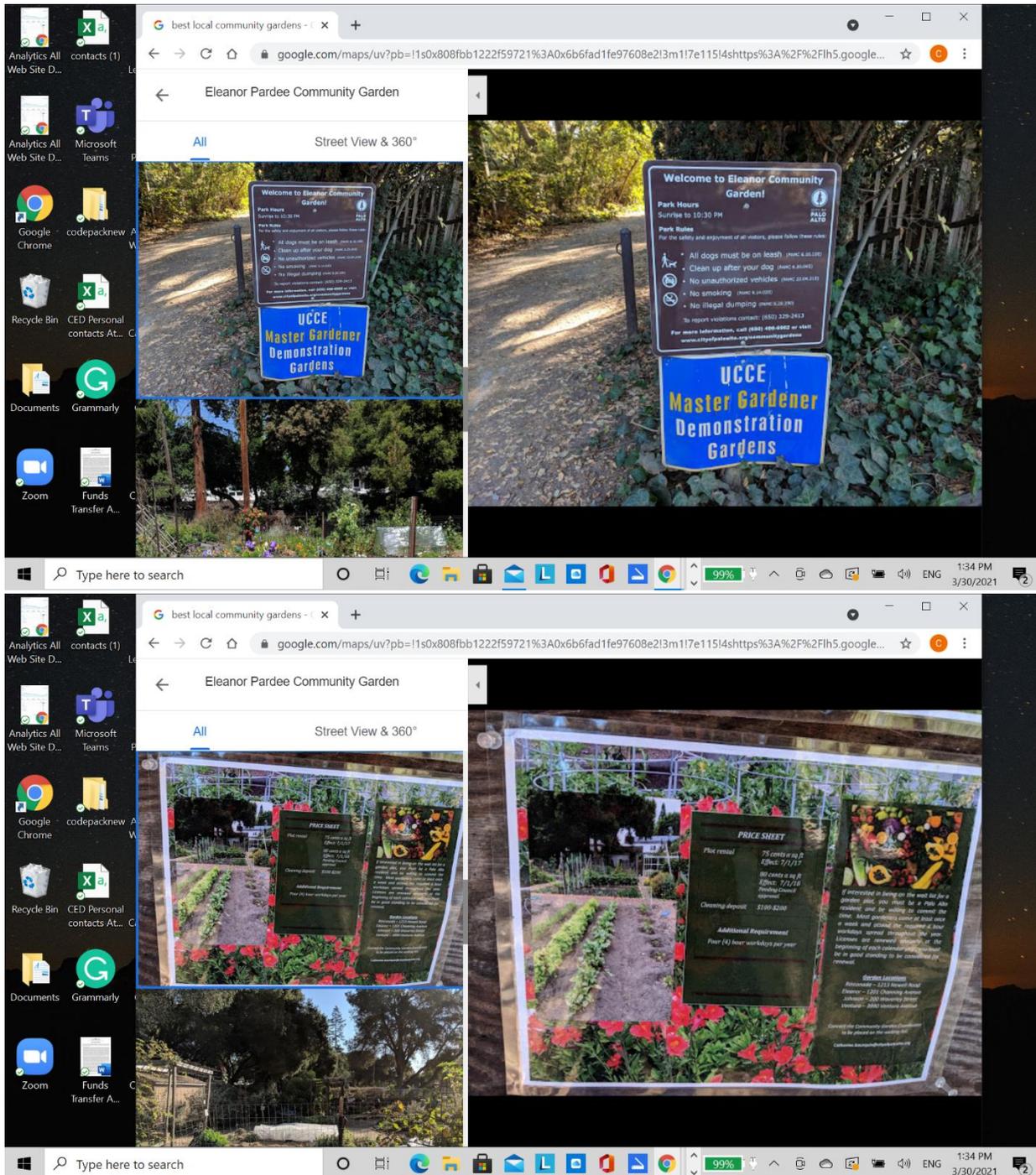
B. Rinconada Community Garden, Palo Alto



C. Eleanor Pardee Community Garden, Palo Alto



D. Examples of Signage containing Rules and Guidelines:



Recent Article from Home and Garden Design, Spring 2021 edition, about growing a Community Vegetable Garden:

GARDEN TIPS

Grow an edible garden just like the one at Gamble Garden

STAFF SHARE THEIR SPRING GARDENING TECHNIQUES

by Gamble Garden staff

No matter the size of the gardening space, nearly anyone can grow an edible garden. If space is tight, there are many varieties meant for small-space gardening that are a bit smaller in size but still produce lots of fruit.

In the spring, Palo Alto's non-profit Gamble Garden grows tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, squash, beans, carrots and beets at its 2.5-acre site. Edible flowers such as marigolds and nasturtiums are also planted in the beds.

Soil Preparation

Preparing your soil is at the base of any successful garden. Palo Alto soil is naturally very clay-like, so in our beds, we amend with compost (we use Wheeler Farms compost and vegetable blend from Lyngso). In both our ground and raised beds, we lightly mix our top soil with fertilizer (we use Down to Earth all-purpose blend) and worm castings. If you don't have these amendments, it's fine to use compost, but these additional boosters will really make a difference in your production.

- After planting, Gamble uses a liquid sea/kelp fertilizer mixed with water, every two to four weeks.

Site Selection

Sun exposure should be at least four hours and ideally six to eight ("full sun"). Some edibles can take less than four hours, like parsley, cilantro, kale, lettuce —although they'll do best in sunnier locations.

Soil Temperatures

Some plants can take colder temperatures (like kale, broccoli, chard, cabbage, cauliflower, herbs like cilantro, parsley) and can be planted outdoors now as transplants. Most spring/summer edibles need warmth, especially root vegetables that do best directly sowed, so wait to plant outdoors until there are consistent soil temps of 60 degrees F. Raised beds allow for planting sooner than in-ground planting since the soil temperatures will be warmer.

- Don't sow that entire seed packet all at once. Succession planting lets you extend the planting season by growing several crops at different intervals.

Planting

When removing plants from pots, lightly loosen the soil, especially if they are pot-bound (the roots have overgrown the pot size.) As a rule, it is best to plant to where the soil level meets the plant.

Pinching

"Pinch" plants like peas and beans when they are 6 to 12 inches tall to promote bushier wider growth that will increase production. Pinching means to cut the tip right above a node (points on the plant where new leaves grow from) on the main stem.

Water

Water plants on a regular basis, which does not mean every day, but on a consistent schedule, in the early morning or late afternoon. Younger plants need water more often, especially seedlings/transplants. Once plants are established, they can get less water and further away from the actual plant. Do not get foliage/leaves wet especially for tomatoes. Doing so will increase the chances of disease.

Weeding

Be vigilant about weeding, especially around the base of the stem so that your plants don't compete with the weeds for nutrients, water, sun and space.

Mulch

Using 2-3 inches of mulch prevents weeds and protects the topsoil from evaporation, reducing watering. Examples of mulch are compost, chopped-up leaves, straw (not hay or alfalfa which have seed heads aka more weeds).

Pests

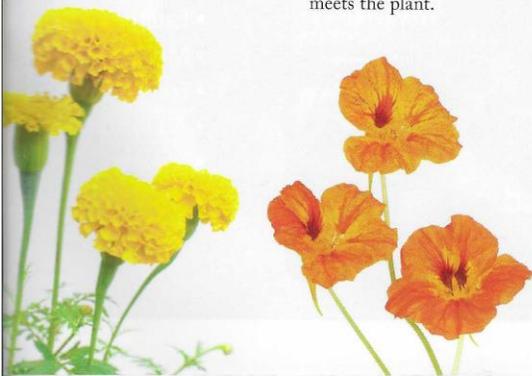
It's best to take preventative measures against pests such as

rodents, bugs, birds and snails/slugs — like adding bird netting or hardware cloth to protect plants. Make sure your garden has airflow so that topsoil is not too wet to create a space for slugs/snails.

Harvest

Plant care also includes regular harvesting. For appropriate plants, pick leafy greens and fruit often to prolong the harvest season, so that the plant knows to keep producing more of the leaves or fruit, instead of putting energy into setting seed and dying off.

Gamble Garden historic home and garden is located at 1431 Waverley St., Palo Alto. For more information, go to gamblegarden.org. 



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Items for Committee Discussion:

- Selection of Management Style (Owned and Managed by Community Groups Vs. Owned and Managed by the Town of Atherton)
- Placement of Proper Access Point to the garden
- Security (Free Access Vs. Exclusive Use)
- Users (Residents and Non-Residents Vs. Sponsored Groups)
- Signage
- Consideration of Watering Design per raised bed
- Rules, Guidelines and Fee Structure for participants
- Provisions for Waiting List Priority
- Inclusion in Atherton's Official Website/Database as a relevant group managing it's information and communication between participants
- Regular Maintenance by staff
- Regular Maintenance by groups/participants
- Trellises
- Fencing
- General Etiquette

Notes: