Oak Park Community Garden

Parcel Construction Rules and Guidelines

(Last Updated – 2/27/2024)

Purpose

The purpose of the Oak Park Community Garden's Parcel Construction Rules and Guidelines Procedure is to provide the Parcel Gardener with information regarding constructions within their assigned parcel(s).

Overview

Our parcels measure 10 feet by 20 feet. The Community Garden, along with the Park District, provides and maintains parcel baseboards. Only the baseboards are **required** before starting any gardening. Additional construction within the parcel is not required, but recommended, to protect your plants from rodents (gophers, moles, rabbits, hares, squirrels, mice, and rats). For any additional construction, the parcel's gardener is responsible for all materials and labor for their endeavor.

Roles and Responsibilities

The **Community Garden,** in coordination with RSRPD (Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District), establishes the rules and provides the guidelines on parcel constructions and are detailed below.

The **Community Garden's Board** reviews, approves, manages, and enforces the construction according to published rules and guidelines (Oak Park Community Garden/Parcel Construction Rules and Guidelines).

The **Parcel Gardener** designs the construction, submits the request for approval, and upon approval is responsible for the cost, construction, and compliance to the Parcel Construction Rules and Guidelines.

No construction should begin prior to request review and approval by the Board.

- To protect from gophers and moles we recommend laying a layer of hardware cloth (wire) 10" to 12" underground beneath your parcel. Aviary wire or Poultry wire can also be used but are less effective (You want ½" gap. 1" is too wide and more subject to corrosion, ¼" is unnecessary and more expensive).
- To protect from rabbits/hares we recommend building a fence and gate around your parcel. Baseboards serve as the anchor for additional construction(s).
- To protect from squirrels, mice, and rats, we recommend enclosing your parcel or using raised-bed cages.
    - Alternatively, you might choose to build cages to protect from rodents.

High-Level Procedure

- Baseboards - Each parcel is provided with 4 baseboards…
- Underground - For protection against 'below the surface' rodents…
- Fencing/Gate - Prevents entry of rabbits/hares…

- Enclosure/Cover Structure - Total protection against rodents in general…
- Raised-bed cages - a less costly alternative or complement…
- Parcel construction designs...

Procedure

Baseboards (Parcel Improvement Form/Board pre-approval **not** required)

Each parcel is **provided** with 4 baseboards (2 - 10'x20'x10", 2 – 10'x10x10"). Baseboards may be replaced if conditions warrant (i.e.- extreme warping of the wood, considerable rot…) and the Park District can provide replacement boards. Contact the Garden Manager or other Board member to initiate the baseboard replacement process. Replacement baseboards may take up to several weeks to be delivered. Quality of the baseboards are dependent on the Park District.

Baseboards **must** be attached together by use of 4 metal brackets and screws and must remain within the allotted 10'x20' parcel ground. While the Community Garden may provide replacement baseboards the Parcel Gardener is responsible for its installation.

Underground (Parcel Improvement Form/Board pre-approval **not** required)

Not a necessity but recommended, as gophers and moles are known to be an issue. The objective is to bury a layer of wiring to present an obstacle for our underground rodents. Its installation entails digging down 10 to 12 inches and covering the entirety of the parcel's bottom with a protective layer of (1/2") Hardware Cloth. Aviary wire or even poultry wire can be used although the protection they offer is not as effective and tends to not last as long.

This is a labor-intensive task! Should you decide to proceed with this, experience shows it best to lay the underground wire in the parcel by sections (dig up one third, lay the wire, cover, repeat). For total protection, you should also attach the ground wire to the inside of the parcel's baseboards (therefore laying the underground wire in a U-shape - from baseboards down 10 to 12 inches, across the bottom of the parcel, and back up to the baseboards on the other side). For this operation the use of staples, vs screws or nails, is best.

Hardware/poultry/aviary wire comes in different lengths and widths. Generally, lengths can be as little as 5 feet to as much as rolls of 100 feet (or more). Widths can be 2 feet, 3 feet, 4 feet (or more). Remember to account not only for the 10' x 20' base of the parcel but the additional 12 to 18 inches depth and an additional few inches to provide some overlap between the lengths of the underground wiring.

Fencing/Gate (Parcel Improvement Form/Board pre-approval **required**)

Fencing consists of post, rails, and fencing material (hardware cloth, poultry/aviary wire). The fence and gate will prevent entry of rabbits/hares which do enjoy self-serve/all you can eat organic salads, from time to time.

First, design and sketch out what your fence will look like. Consider fence height, post spacing, gate location, and materials. Walk the garden. Look at what others have done. If you are thinking of a different design than what you see through-out the garden, it's probably not compliant with the community garden's rules and regulations. Before starting any construction, you **must** submit the

required Parcel Amendment Request Form, with all the requested information, to the Oak Park Community Garden Board for their review and (hopefully) approval. Not following this rule **may** result in detrimental actions taken by the board (rules violation/request for removal).

All posts should be attached to the interior of the baseboards, preferably using appropriately sized screws (2 ½ to 3 inch). Screws should be driven from the baseboard inwards. This ensures screws do not protrude into the aisles/common areas as they present a safety issue. You could also use nails, but screws have proved to be a better choice. The baseboards and the posts are the foundation of your construction. The better you plan and execute this step, the better the results of the overall project. Recommend posts be placed, on average, every 5 feet. Don't forget to account for an entry gate. Of course, every post should level out with the other posts and should be well anchored. When establishing a height, consider the width of the fencing material (Hardware Cloth, poultry, or aviary wire). 3 ft. fencing material does not go well with a 4 ft. frame. This could minimize the amount of trimming on the fencing material. A couple of **rules** to follow.

- **Do not** use pressure treated wood. Additionally, **do not** use any paint, varnish, or other treatments/finishing products on the wood. This rule is in place as we are an organic garden.
- The height of the fence, as measured from the common area/pathway ground level, **cannot** exceed 48 inches in height. This includes the railings.
- Do not construct any shade structure or greenhouses or use black shade cloth or bird netting as a fencing material.

The wood rails, when used, run from post to post serving as a cap over the posts. 2 x 4's work best (unpressured, untreated) and should be fastened to the posts using appropriately sized screws. Again, you could also use nails, but screws have proved to be a better choice. The rails should be cut such that there is a post where 2 rails meet, using the posts as support to anchor the rails. Measure twice, cut once. Do not cap where the gate will be located.

*(An acceptable alternative to wood framing is the use of metallic garden stakes, bypassing the use of rails as well. You **cannot** build an enclosure/cover structure when using metallic garden stakes)*

For fencing material, ½" Hardware Cloth or even ½" Aviary Wire should be used. Any wider gap, as the 1" poultry wire, will keep the rabbits/hares out but only slow down mice/rats. When attaching the fencing material (to the wood frame) use, at a minimum, ½" staples. Attach the fencing material to the rails, the posts, and the baseboards. The preferred method is to attach the fencing material to the inside of the baseboards. This takes a little skill (with the tin snips), planning, and patience. To better secure the staples, recommend tapping them with a small hammer (tap-tap-tap). Consider the safety of passer-byers by not allowing anything to protrude outside the baseboard, including screws and fencing materials.

P.S. – There is no such thing as too many staples!

(If you use metallic garden stakes, the fencing material is attached to the poles by securing with ties)

Enclosure/Cover Structure (Parcel Improvement Form/Board pre-approval **required**)

For those over-achievers, more and more of our community garden members are choosing to enclose their parcels. This provides the highest degree of protection from rodents. These enclosures have

evolved from simple draping of bird netting, which is no longer an option, to extending the framework posts to the **maximum height allowable** (6 feet 6 inches) using cross beams and a complete wrapping of the upper portion in ½" aviary wire (sides and ceiling). It also will require the extension from a gate to a full door.

Once you have completed the fencing you can extend the posts with brackets and screws. The post extensions should be composed of 2 x 2s, as it must be strong enough to hold the weight of the additional aviary wire. Follow-up by connecting all the posts together (capping) as you did with the initial fence railings. Complete the framing by placing rails and cross beams as support for the aviary wire along the top (ceiling), else the aviary wire will sag. Once the upper- framing is complete (posts, rails, and cross beams) attach, and/or drape, the aviary wire along the sides and ceiling, using staples where possible. As there are many possible approaches to this step, we recommend you look at other enclosed parcels and pick the approach that best suits you. The aviary wire should be attached to the frame, using staples, where-ever possible. To be an effective deterrent, you will need to close any gaps to prevent rodents from entering your parcel. In addition to overlaying the aviary wire, some 3 to 6 inches, make sure that you obstruct any possible passage by tying down the layers (of aviary wire). Any gap left behind, and I mean any, will be exploited by the rodents.

Some **rules** to follow:

- **Maximum height**, as measured from common area/pathway ground level, is 6 feet and 6 inches
- **Do not use** pressure treated wood. Additionally, **do not use** any paint, varnish, or other treatments/finishing products on the wood.
- **Only** ½ inch aviary wire can be used above the height of the base frame (48 inches)
- Deer or plastic netting **cannot** be used anywhere

Raised-Bed Cages (Parcel Improvement Form/Board pre-approval **not** required)

Raised-bed cages can be an 'easier' and less costly alternative to the above parcel construction, or they can be used in addition. Cages are effective enclosures which, when filled with soil, serve as smaller planting beds. Cage constructions vary. You can model after several different gardener approaches.

Raised-bed cages consist of a lower section, where the soil resides, and the upper section, which offers protection from most rodents and allows gardener access to the soil and crops within it. Cages may differ in dimension and style. Dimension depends on its intended use, while style is a matter of personal choice. However, most cages follow a basic approach.

For the lower section place a tier of 4 slats of wood (recommend 2x4's or 2x6's) in a square or rectangular fashion using screws (recommended) or nails. A tier will offer 3 ½ inches or 5 ½ inches of depth (which may not be enough). Add one, two, or three more tiers depending on the depth you want and the dimensions of the wood you use. If planting roots (carrots, potatoes, beets…) you will do better with more depth. Secure the different tiers by attaching to a couple of wood slats that run the depth of the lower section. Once you have completed the lower section's frame, attach a layer of hardware cloth (recommended), aviary or poultry wire on the outside of to the bottom of the lowest tier, which will be just above ground level of your parcel. This prevents entry below by ground moles and gophers.

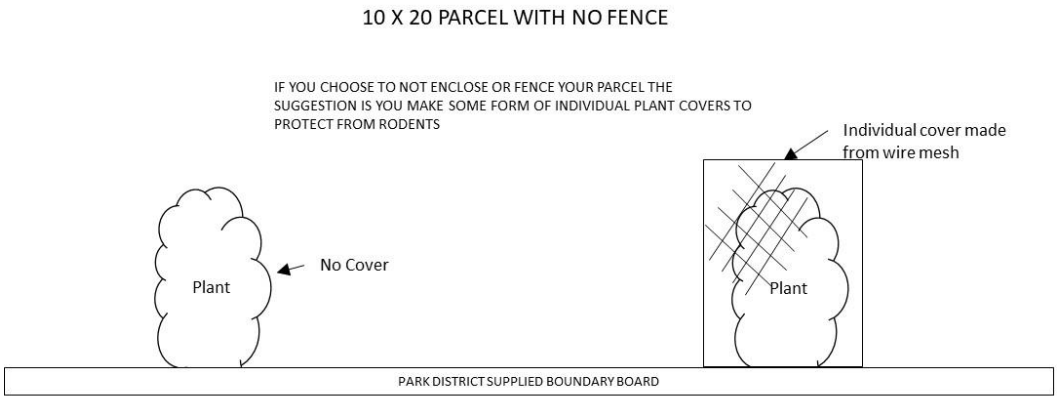
For the upper section, build a frame which includes a point of entry for access to the lower section. Wrap all 5 sides of the upper section with either Hardware Cloth or Aviary Wire. Poultry wire will not do as the wire's 1 inch gap will not prevent rats or mice from accessing the vegetables growing in the raised-bed cages. Strongly recommend you examine existing raised-bed cages before proceeding with the construction of your raised-bed cage.

Some rules to follow, inclusive of those already stated in this procedure:

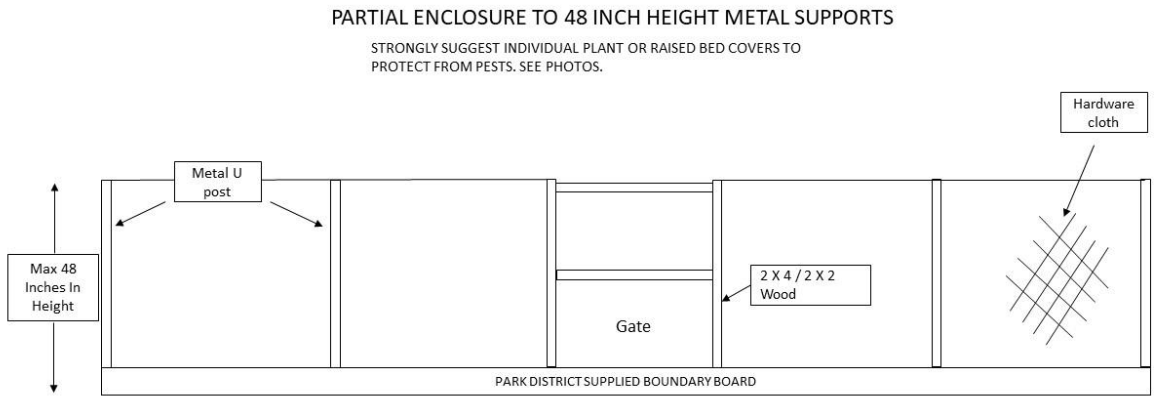
- Trellises, supports, or cages cannot exceed six feet in height
- Trellises, supports, or cages cannot cast shade on neighboring parcels

Parcel Construction Designs

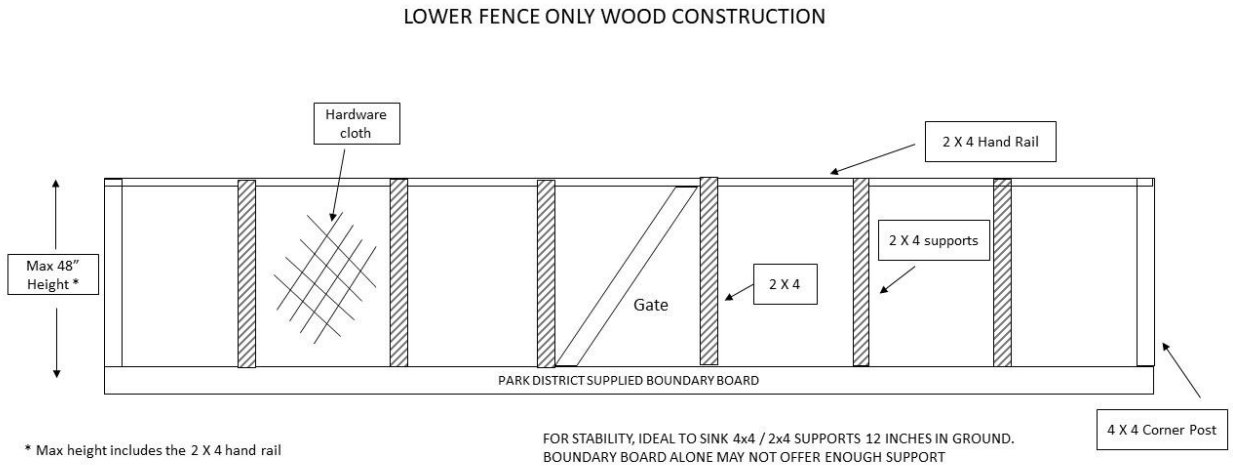
<u>10 x 20 Parcel with no fence</u>



10 x 20 Parcel lower fence / metal supports



10 x 20 Parcel lower fence / wood construction



10 x 20 Parcel full enclosure