

Constitution for Nightingale Gardeners (NG)

Name of organisation

Nightingale Gardeners (NG)

Aims and objectives

The primary aim of the NG is to enable volunteer-led community gardening by adults in Nightingale Garden, within Nightingale Recreation Ground/Park. The NG is especially keen that the volunteer gardeners include adults of all ages and abilities.

Secondary aims, which can change over time, include

- To work closely with Cambridge City Council Streets and Open Spaces (SOS) to develop and maintain Nightingale Garden as a pleasant and interesting place for all park users to enjoy and in safety.
- To provide opportunities for children to enjoy Nightingale Garden in safety.
- To encourage biodiversity in Nightingale Garden and demonstrate this to park users.
- To garden in a way that is sustainable and demonstrate this to park users.
- To encourage and enable volunteers to register as individuals with SOS volunteers and work under their policies and procedures.

From time to time, the NG and wider Nightingale Garden-using community will choose to get involved with other local projects and can partner with other local community groups and gardeners. The NG can choose to plan for this and provide some suitable support.

The NG can be part of the Queen Edith's in Bloom local network, which is affiliated with the Royal Horticultural Association's (RHS') non-competitive It's Your Neighbourhood (IYN) scheme. It is also a member of the Federation of City Farms & Community Gardens and Project Dirt.

The NG will **NOT** be expected to recruit or support groups of people to meet at times other than NG's regular volunteer gardening sessions (currently on Sunday and Monday afternoons). This will be the responsibility of SOS to agree and schedule but, for practical reasons, these groups will need to collaborate with NG's garden volunteers.

Membership/constituency

The constituency of the NG is any park user.

Members of the NG can be anyone who defines themselves as a volunteer in the garden or joins the volunteers socially at its regular gardening sessions, on a reasonably regular basis.

Membership of the NG will be entirely optional and people can join and resign at any time.

A list of current Members' names will be held in the club hut. Names and preferred contact details of Members can be collected and held by NG Officers in such a way to enable communication with them but without sharing it with other parties, unless permission has been given first. This will be in accordance with current data protection legislation. Most communication with Members will be face-to-face or via the NG noticeboard.

Members will be expected and encouraged to contribute ideas and opinions to the NG. They can elect Officers of the NG. They can stand for election as officers of the NG, and they can get involved in any other aspects of the NG's work.

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Committee

A small committee of NG Officers will be elected by the Membership of the NG, including one or more Chairs, Treasurer and Secretary. These don't need to be the same people as the SOS-recognised garden co-ordinators, but they will need to work closely with them.

The **Chair(s)** will work with the other officers to schedule meetings, ensure any meetings move through the agenda smoothly and give people an opportunity to air their opinions.

The **Secretary** will prepare agendas and take notes at meetings for sharing with the rest of the NG. If there is no Membership lead, he/she will also keep records of Members. The Secretary can also be the same person who updates the garden website, manages the garden e-mail address and can be the primary contact with SOS.

Officers can hold their posts for as many years as they like, but the NG can choose to re-elect officers at any time at the AGM or an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM). A quorum for election will be the existing Officers and plus one Member. Members who can't attend the meeting can vote on paper in advance.

Other posts on the committee can follow the interests of the Membership. As examples only, they could include leads for arts, accessibility, catering, children, construction, events, first aid, fundraising, membership, publicity, schools liaison and sustainable gardening.

For practical purposes, the NG will limit the number of people on the Committee, for example to ten people. Members can attend any committee meeting, space allowing.

Most meetings will be held at Nightingale Garden, weather allowing.

Meetings

There will be an Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Members of the NG to elect Officers and a Committee. Notes will be taken and shared via a noticeboard in the club hut and on the garden website.

At least the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer will meet at least twice a year and can communicate by e-mail, text or phone in between. Notes will be taken and shared via a noticeboard in the club hut.

The officers of the NG will communicate with Members between meetings, including during the regular gardening sessions and using a noticeboard in the club hut.

Major decisions of the NG can be communicated to park users using noticeboards in the garden. Agreement from SOS will be sought by Officers before some decisions can be acted on.

Powers

The NG will work to ensure that the community gardeners can work safely, with suitable insurance and an up-to-date first aid kit.

The NG can apply for funding for small capital projects in the community garden, and for running costs for community gardening.

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The NG can receive donations, inherit assets from other groups, purchase and own assets kept in Nightingale Garden and elsewhere, and can loan, dispose of and sell these assets. They can also transfer assets to SOS for long-term responsibility and insurance cover.

The NG can fundraise for running costs for small-scale social activities in the garden, including at the regular gardening sessions.

The scope and ambition of the NG is expected to reflect the number of garden volunteers involved in the garden project and also the people who join in with small-scale social interactions in the regular gardening sessions.

Rules of Procedure

For practical purposes, there will be some small meetings and communications with just the NG Officers and with SOS staff, for example to plan meetings and respond to enquiries.

NG Officers will attempt to seek views before meetings from those who are unable to attend meetings.

Cambridge City Council owns the community garden and some of the assets such as the club hut, metal lean-to, water supply, picnic table and benches. It also has an overall responsibility for the garden. Some decisions made by the NG can be only advisory and some will need to be agreed with the primary contact in SOS, generally by e-mail. SOS will choose to have formal City Council-led consultations for some decisions.

It is likely that the aspirations of the Members will exceed the financial and human resources of the NG. No volunteer should feel under pressure to deliver the NG's aspirations beyond their capacity and interest.

Members of the NG are expected to be supportive of other Members and park users and work together to achieve the NG's aims.

Finances

There is a kitty tin in the club hut for informal cash donations. These will be recorded and can be used for some regular catering supplies and any excess used for general garden expenses. Garden users often bring biscuits and other food or contributions-in-kind to the garden, which won't be recorded. Larger non-cash donations (e.g. garden tools) will be recorded as assets of the NG and labelled where possible.

The NG will operate a bank account. This will be used to receive financial donations or grants and pay for insurance and garden expenses. The NG should aim to build some reserves for essential costs.

Members should not incur expenses for re-payment without prior agreement from at least one of the Officers.

Small re-payments for expenses can be made with a single signatory by cheque or direct bank transfer. Two signatures will be required for payment of larger amounts, with the limit to be decided by the NG.

No Members or Officers of the NG will be paid from the NG funds, except for expenses, and hard copy receipts will be required.

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The Treasurer will have financial responsibility for the NG, receive any monies, pay any bills, and share accounts at the AGM and on request. Original receipts will be stored by the Treasurer for at least five years.

Dissolution

The NG has been set up by volunteers and will aim to stay volunteer-led and run.

If it is not possible to recruit sufficient volunteers to run the Committee, the assets and responsibilities of the NG can be passed to another constituted group with similar aims or passed to SOS.

Amendments to Constitution

Amendments to the NGG Constitution can be made at an AGM or EGM, with a majority vote from Members.