

Boulevard Gardening

The City of Victoria supports boulevard gardening as a means of creating healthy and diverse ecosystems, beautifying urban streets, and improving local food security. Please read this factsheet alongside the City of Victoria's [Boulevard Gardening Guidelines](#), which is more fulsome. If you live in a municipality other than Victoria, different rules and recommendations for gardening on boulevards will apply, so do some careful research.

What is a boulevard? Why garden on it?

A boulevard is the grassy strip between a property and the street that is owned by a municipality. Most boulevards are between the sidewalk and street, but not always, and they often feature grass and boulevard trees.

Gardening on boulevards is a fantastic way to increase neighbourhood biodiversity, meet your neighbours and create community, and garden on public land when you might not have access to private land. Boulevard gardens create beautiful urban streetscapes, create habitat for pollinators and birds, and are easy to begin, with just a few easy steps.

Before you start gardening a boulevard:

- Get permission to boulevard garden from the adjacent property owner. E.g. if you rent, gain permission from the person who owns your home or building or if you are eyeing up your neighbours boulevard, get their permission.
- Confirm the location of underground utilities and ensure no utility company objects to the gardening. Do this by calling BC One Call, or submitting an online form (www.bconecall.bc.ca). Follow any requests they have and note how deep utilities are. Hand tools only!
- Notify the City of Victoria's Parks department of



your boulevard gardening plans. parks@victoria.ca or 250.361.0600.

- *Let neighbours of the boulevard know about your plans, get them on board and build community!*

Things to remember

- Boulevards are public corridors for buried utilities. These may need to be accessed or maintained and you may or may not receive advanced notice. This means your garden might get dug up at some point!
- Keep utility covers clear of plants and soil. Work crews must be able to easily locate and access them.
- Boulevard trees are an important part of the city's urban forest, and the City maintains them (e.g. pruning). Do your part to keep the trees healthy by keeping compost or mulch from contacting existing tree trunks as moisture against bark causes it to rot, threatening the health of the tree.

Design Requirements (see drawing on next page of sample design)

- If your street has no sidewalk, access along the boulevard for pedestrians must be provided. If parking is permitted, you must provide a pathway of at least 60cm for people to open and close car doors and get in and out.



- Garden beds should be no longer than 8m without a pathway between the street and sidewalk for pedestrians to move through.
- You must maintain a 1.5m clearance around bus shelters, fire hydrants, utility poles and other permanent structures.
- Where sightlines (e.g. someone backing out of their driveway) might be a concern, keep plants 1m and shorter.
- Keep plants lower than 60cm near intersections
- Permanent structures are not allowed (e.g. in ground irrigation), while temporary ornaments and structures are allowed if they are easily moveable and set back from roads, sidewalks, permanent structures (see Boulevard Gardening Guidelines)
- Be a good neighbour, keep sidewalks clear of tools and plant debris when you are working in your garden.
- Start your garden by sheet mulching! Check out CEC factsheet #7 for details.

A Note on Soil Quality

- As with other land in the city, it is possible contaminants exist on the boulevard. Consider getting a soil contaminants test if you are concerned about historical land use or live along a very busy road. You can get these tests done at a local lab, or through the Compost Education Centre's Healing City Soils program. Also, read over Factsheet #11, #12 & #19 for more info on this topic.
- Generally, soil health is important for the health of the plant! Add compost yearly to your boulevard garden, mulch with leaves in the fall, and take some CEC workshops on composting and gardening to brush up on soil stewardship techniques.

And one last special note!

This factsheet does not take the place of the [Boulevard Gardening Guidelines](#), or related bylaws (i.e. [s.103A\(10\) and \(11\) of the streets & traffic bylaws](#).) Note that the City reserves the right to re-occupy the boulevards at any time and for any reason without notice to you or payment of any compensation to you.

And extra specially

If you're interested in establishing a boulevard garden or stewarding an existing one and need some help getting going, get in touch with CEC: sitemgr@compost.bc.ca

Gardening tips on your Boulevard

- Choose plants that will be good companions to your boulevard tree if you have one. Do some research.
- Where will you get water from for your boulevard? Consider your water source, if you intend to water your boulevard. How far away is the closest hose bib, do you have permission to use it if you are not the adjacent property owner and is the hose long enough?
- Drought tolerant plants, native plants and perennials will all require less water and maintenance
- Food plants can increase your families food security, feed pollinators, and also be beautiful, boulevards can be great places for foods—do think about who you might be sharing with (e.g. deer, neighbours)
- Ensure plants do not hang over onto the sidewalk or onto the street, keep things tidy and trimmed!
- Don't plant trees. There are some exceptions for dwarf fruit trees, on certain conditions, refer to the BGGs.



Sample Boulevard Garden Design (not to scale)



Important Considerations and Guidelines from City of Victoria

1. Keep utility covers clear of plants and left exposed
2. Maintain a 1.5m clearance around fire hydrants
3. Raised garden beds must be shorter than 45cm. Provide a 1m wide path between raised beds and other temporary structures and ornaments.
4. Stake plants that are vulnerable to falling over (ie. Sunflowers).
5. Keep city boulevard tree trunks free of mounded material at the base. Do not plant trees, with the exception of dwarf fruit trees under certain circumstances (see Boulevard Garden Guidelines).
6. If parking is permitted, maintain a path of 60cm wide along the curb and ensure garden areas are no longer than 8m. To aid with mobility consider woodchips or gravel for pathways.
7. Garden art and ornaments should be easily and temporarily moved.
8. Aim to create a waterwise garden with drought tolerant plants.



1216 North Park St.
 Victoria, BC V8T 1C9
 250-386-9676
 info@compost.bc.ca
 www.compost.bc.ca
 Wednesday - Saturday
 10am-4pm

