Interpreting codes and policies to understand what is and is not permitted in a typical community garden can be confusing; therefore, as a service to our gardeners, we have compiled this information in a simplified format below.

**Land:**

Gardens are an acceptable use on properties in all zoning districts (i.e., residential, commercial, manufacturing, apartment). Reference city code chapters 3332 and 3333.

The city’s Land Bank holds vacant parcels until they are able to be purchased for development or use as a side yard. Meanwhile, these parcels can be leased for $10 per year to groups wishing to establish a community garden. Contact the Land Bank at 645-LAND for more information.

- While the city cannot guarantee that garden leases will continue indefinitely, it is the general practice that parcels being used for gardens are not listed for sale and every effort will be made to ensure gardens do not need to be relocated without cause.
- The safety of the soil for growing cannot be guaranteed by the city; therefore, the use of raised beds is recommended, but not required.
- As an alternative to leasing property from the city, some Land Bank properties can be purchased for gardening. Applicable garden properties would be sold for fair market value. The property owner would then be responsible for paying taxes, insurance, and other related fees.

**Water:**

The city is unable to provide free water service to gardens due to city code. Reference charter section 122 and code chapter 1105 & 1109.

If access to an outdoor water spigot is available, the property owner can install an auxiliary meter in order to avoid paying sewer fees. Contact 645-8276 for more information.

Use of water storage systems such as cisterns and rain barrels is allowed. However, these items are considered to be structures and therefore must adhere to city code (reference item 6 below). Ensure mosquitoes are not able to enter and breed in the water storage system to prevent health risks and nuisance complaints.

**Composting:**

Composting is allowed as long as material being composted was generated onsite. Your garden site should not accept food scraps from any outside source as doing would be required to be located in a manufacturing district, obtain permission from the city, as well as a permit from the state. Reference city code: 3303.03, 3389.034, 3332.039, 3332.34, 3333.31, 4703.01 and Ohio Administrative Code: 3745-27-03.

- Bins, boxes, or other large items installed to accommodate composting are considered to be structures and therefore must adhere to city code (reference Item 6 below).
- Take care in managing compost to avoid nuisance complaints.
Much like a garage sale, occasional sales of unprocessed fruits and vegetables are allowed to take place on the community garden site without the need for any permits. Reference city code: 3390.02 and Columbus health code: 255.02

Regular or permanent sales of unprocessed fruits and vegetables are allowed only in manufacturing or commercial districts. Reference city code: 3351.03, 3363.01

Parking is required for regular or permanent sales. Reference city code: 3312.49

Regular sales of any processed foods require approval from the Ohio Department of Agriculture and must obtain a retail food establishment license. Food will be subject to inspection at the sale location by Columbus Public Health. Depending on where and how the food is prepared, additional licenses and rules apply. Please thoroughly research these policies before proceeding with sale of processed foods. Reference Ohio revised code: 3717.22, 3717.22(B)(3), 3715.01(A)(20) and 3715.023, Ohio Administrative Code: 901:3-20-04 and 901.3-20, City code: 3332.37 and 3333.34.