

Improving community facilities and beautifying our suburb with a fun, welcoming and inclusive Community Garden

A Proposal for a Yarralumla Community Garden

An initiative supported by the Yarralumla Residents Association (YRA), the Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc (COGS) and Mr Daniel Harris-Pascal, professional garden designer, permaculturist and horticulturist.



TABLE OF CONENTS

1. Executive Summary	3
2. Background	4
2.1. The Yarralumla Community Garden Working Group (YCGWG)	4
2.2. The Yarralumla Community Garden (YCG) Concept	4
2.3. Acknowledgements	4
3. YCGWG - Our Vision, Mission and Goals	5
3.1. Our Vision	5
3.2. Mission and Goals	5
4. YCG Preferred Site – Advantages and Constraints	5
4.1. YCG Preferred Site	5
4.2. Advantages of the Preferred Site	6
4.3. Constraints of the Preferred Site	6
5. YCG Concept Design Elements	7
5.1. Concept Design	7
5.2. Desired Garden Elements:	7
5.3. Proposed Areas of Activity within the YCG:	8
6. Next Steps	9
7. Appendix 1: SeedHead Design - The Design Process	10
8. Appendix 2: Site Assessment Outcomes	11

1. Executive Summary

Yarralumla has an exciting opportunity to establish a focal point for the community, provide improved community facilities and beautify the suburb with a fun, welcoming and inclusive Community Garden for all ages.

In the last 10 years there has been increasing interest in food production in urban areas. Community gardens have become focal points for people and community groups in the Canberra region that are interested in food production, gardening and supporting one another.

Yarralumla Community Garden can provide:

- ✓ An increased sense of community
- ✓ A focal point as a Community Hub
- ✓ A place for new residents to connect with the community-local and international residents, children through to the elderly
- ✓ Increased sustainability of community
- ✓ Increased biodiversity
- ✓ Decreased heat effect
- ✓ Improved climate change adaptation
- ✓ The opportunity to maintain a sense of connection through times of transition
- ✓ Improved resilience through challenging events
- ✓ Enhanced community culture by building connections with local Embassies and High Commissions
- ✓ A community garden showcasing the best sustainable practices and permaculture principles
- ✓ An opportunity to connect with our Indigenous story
- ✓ A visually appealing and productive use for a currently bare block of land
- ✓ Protected green space in a rapidly developing suburb
- ✓ An opportunity and a space for community education

2. Background

2.1. The Yarralumla Community Garden Working Group (YCGWG)

The Yarralumla Community Garden Working Group (YCGWG) formed in early 2019 as the result of requests to the Yarralumla Residents Association that a community garden be developed in the suburb.

The YCGWG is made up of interested Yarralumla residents who want to move the project forwards; working with local residents and stakeholders towards the development of the Yarralumla Community Garden. The YCGWG took this onboard and also solicited suggestions and assistance from the Canberra Organic Growers Society (COGS) and other community gardens in the region.

Following initial expressions of interest, 30 Yarralumla residents put forward ideas and suggestions for the form and location of the garden. Following these initial discussions with interested residents and assistance from groups working in the community garden space, the working group has been meeting regularly to formalize the goals and vision for the garden, undertake a site assessment and develop an initial design proposal.

2.2. The Yarralumla Community Garden (YCG) Concept

The YCGWG feel that a community garden, as part of a larger 'Community Hub' concept, would create community spirit. There is a need for new community facilities to be developed and current community facilities to be protected with the current plan to densify the suburb. The planned development of the Yarralumla Brickworks, the CSIRO site and the light rail are three current examples of this issue.

The need to protect green space is increasing and will be invaluable to new townhouse and apartment occupants of these developments. We believe productive green space that serves to welcome new residents and create new community connections would be the ideal use for a vacant block.

This document represents this initial round of goal setting, site assessment and a "First-Step" Concept design.

Our next step will be to run our proposal past COGS, as they will be the umbrella organisation under which the garden plans to operate. COGS currently manage 12 community gardens across Canberra and are very experienced in this area.

Throughout this process, there will be extensive community consultation and opportunities for members of the Yarralumla community to express their views and contribute ideas. These opportunities for input will be available through email, website and community consultation.

We will welcome any feedback and comments from you regarding the design and ideas within and will use it to develop our "Second-Step" design, which we will submit to the ACT government for approval.

2.3. Acknowledgements

The YCGWG would like to acknowledge all of the participants who have contributed to the YCG project, from the initial seed idea, to the ongoing work and dedication moving this process forward. This includes:

- Yarralumla Residents Association
- Canberra Organic Growers Society i.e COGS
- Mr Daniel Harris-Pascal, who has contributed greatly to the concept, analysis and design
- The YCGWG

This document is a synthesis of everyone's work to date.

3. YCGWG - Our Vision, Mission and Goals

3.1. Our Vision

The core vision of the YCGWG is to improve community facilities and beautify our suburb with a fun, welcoming and inclusive Community Garden.

3.2. Mission and Goals

The mission of the YCGWG is to actively support the design, build and maintenance of a YCG.

Key goals of the YCG:

- provide a place to enjoy, sit and spend some time
- provide a place where best practice gardening and organic food production techniques can be demonstrated
- provide an oasis of productive plants and food
- have an undercover area
- provide an educational aspect to the community promoting contemporary sustainable ideas
- interact with local cafes and shops, perhaps swapping produce for coffee
- donate produce
- connect local history to current developments through the story of suburb development

4. YCG Preferred Site – Advantages and Constraints

4.1. YCG Preferred Site

During our initial community discussion about the preferred location for the Yarralumla Community Garden, many participants identified the urban open space at the corner of Loftus and Muller streets (**refer to Image 1 below, p.6**). Other sites were explored (Banks St, Uniting Church etc 6 in all) but were rejected by the government.

This area is central to the suburb and adjacent to associated community infrastructure including the Yarralumla tennis club, Yarralumla playground, Yarralumla sports ovals and the Yarralumla shops. It is also readily accessible by car, bike, bus and on foot.

Many participants saw the central location and potential connection to this infrastructure as desirable.

It is in an attractive location and has the opportunity to attract and involve broad sectors of the community. There are currently opportunities to improve the site and its amenities through discussion of the possible use of the YMCA hall with the current lease holder.

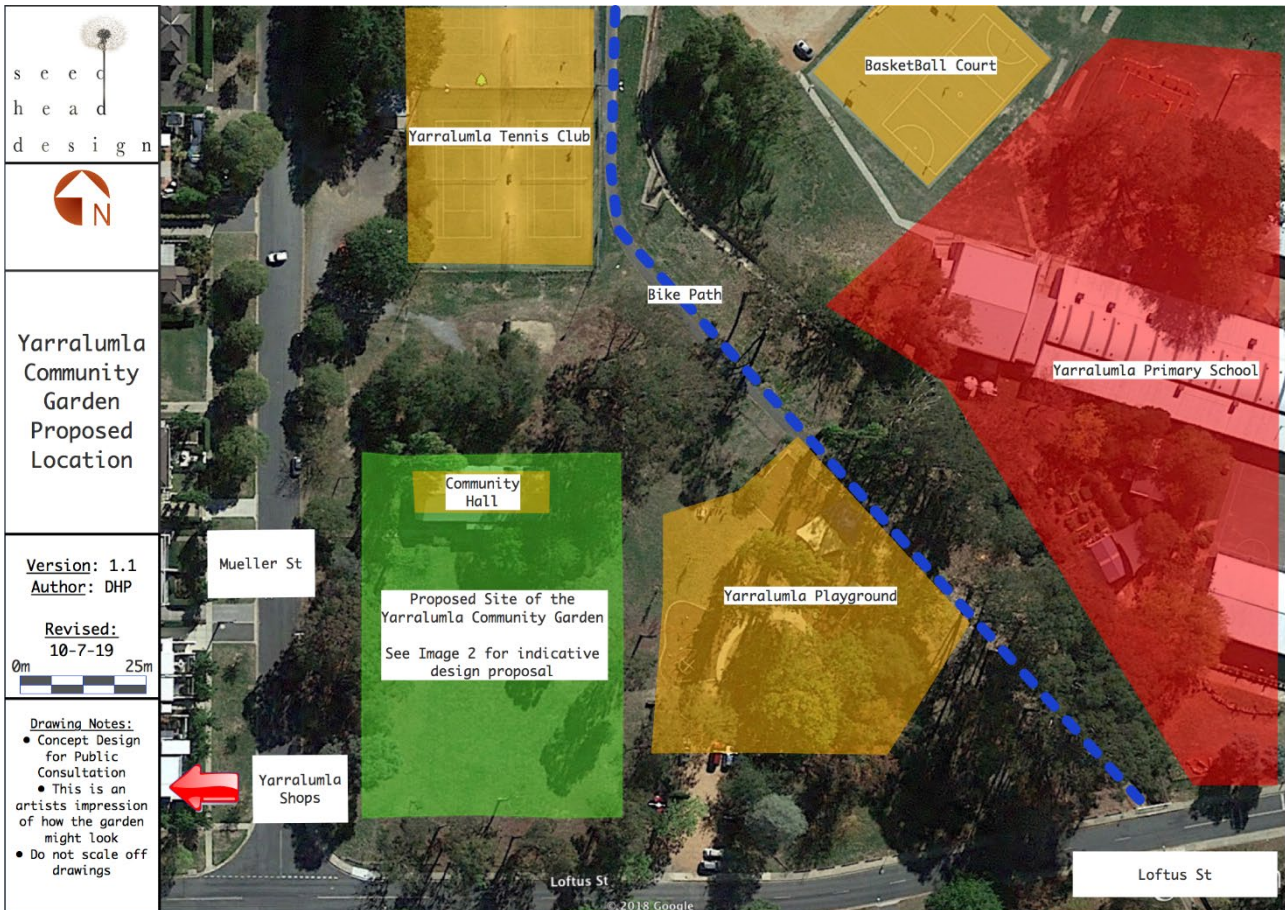


Image 1: Proposed site for the Yarralumla Community Garden, corner Loftus and Mueller Streets

4.2. Advantages of the Preferred Site

Advantages of the Mueller/Loftus Site for a YCG include:

- ✓ Municipal water supply
- ✓ Building / Shed space available
- ✓ Central to the suburb
- ✓ Accessible parking
- ✓ Close to the shops
- ✓ Connected to the local playground
- ✓ Accessible by car, bike, bus, foot
- ✓ Building allows rainwater harvesting
- ✓ Potential to partner with the YMCA
- ✓ Flat and open to the sun

4.3. Constraints of the Preferred Site

While the Loftus / Mueller site was identified as the ideal location for the Yarralumla Community Garden, it has some constraints that need to be considered in the design process.

Early participants and the working group generated the following list of things that would need to be considered when developing a concept design for Yarralumla Community Garden:

- Lacking shade and seating
- Vandalism / security concerns – fencing requirement
- Finances are limited
- Unknown soil quality
- Special consideration of the interests of the immediate neighbours
- Volunteer work force
- Wildlife - birds and possums

5. YCG Concept Design Elements

5.1. Concept Design

Following the site assessments, and a review of our goals and objectives some simple concept designs have been developed for the site. These convey our ideas about what we envisage the Yarralumla Community Garden will include.

We would like your comments and feedback about this initial concept design. Following discussion and feedback this concept design will be modified, reviewed and then submitted to the ACT government as we work towards getting the garden approved.

While we have suggested a whole site design, we have also suggested an implementation plan that will allow us to develop the site as time and resources permit. This will allow the garden to develop in stages and as one phase was completed, the next could begin.

5.2. Desired Garden Elements:

Desired garden elements include:

- ✓ Tool storage / Equipment Shed
- ✓ Water tanks
- ✓ Propagation Area
- ✓ Social area – Community Meeting Space
- ✓ Outdoor Kitchen
- ✓ Herb Garden
- ✓ Seating
- ✓ Flowers
- ✓ Composting
- ✓ Shade structures
- ✓ Native Gardens
- ✓ Trellis & Arbors / Vertical Gardening
- ✓ Individual Plots
- ✓ Community Plots
- ✓ Mulch and Soil Storage
- ✓ Fencing

- ✓ Community Orchard
- ✓ Anti-Aviary
- ✓ Signage
- ✓ Local embassy involvement

5.3. Proposed Areas of Activity within the YCG:

Proposed areas of activity include (**Refer Image 2 below, p.9**):

1. Community Meeting / Social Space / People area (Shady)
2. Individual Garden Plots (For Rent)
3. Communal Garden Beds
4. Plant Propagation area
5. Outdoor kitchen
6. Native planting area
7. Community Orchard / Anti-Aviary area
8. Kids Garden / Sensory Garden
9. Service area (material delivery and storage) and Pathways (Access)
10. Composting, Worm farm and Mulch area
11. Windbreaks, Borders and Fencing
12. Art, Sculpture and Signage
13. Water – harvesting, storage, irrigation, taps

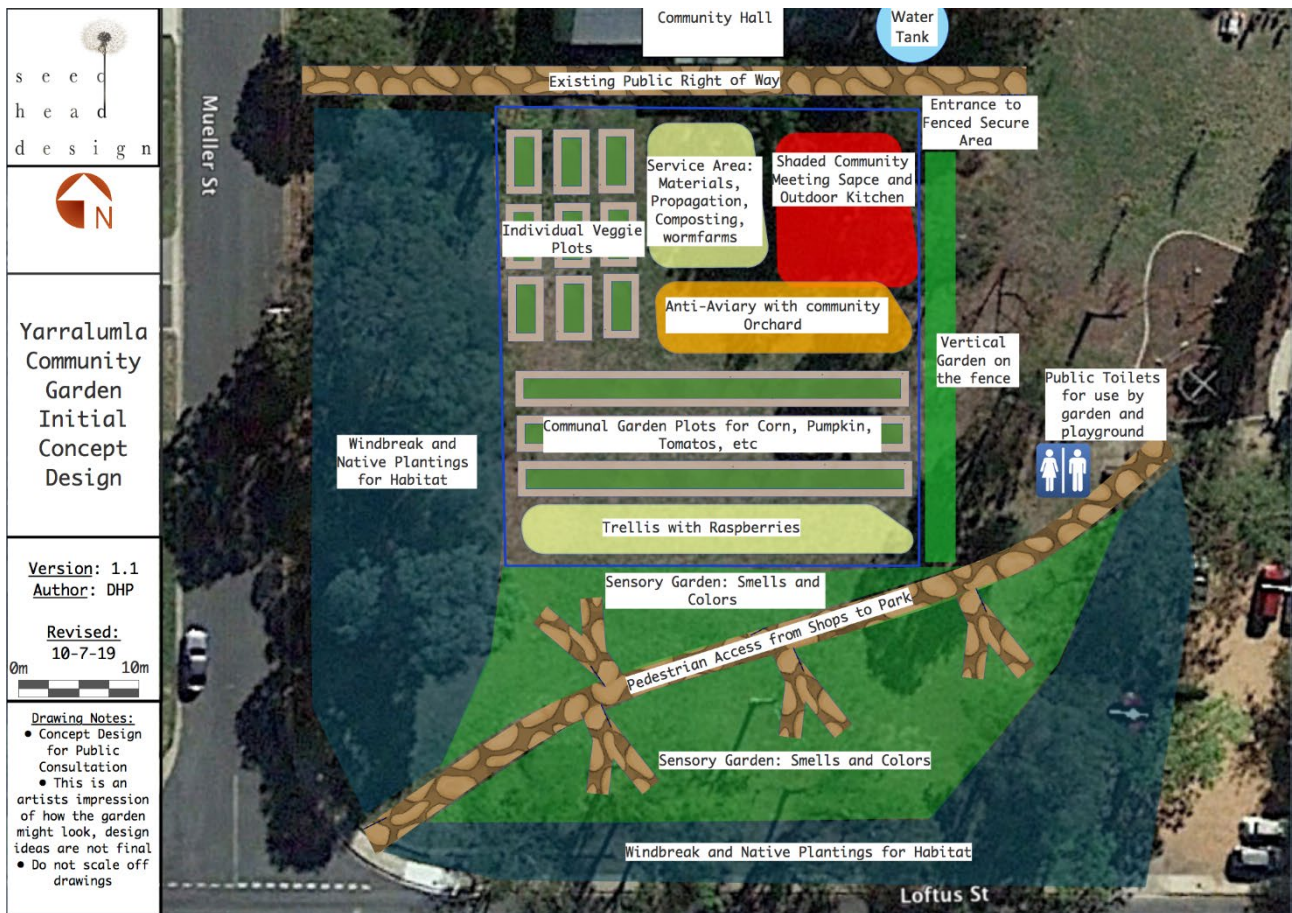


Image 2: Indicative YCG Design

6. Next Steps

We are now engaging in extensive community consultation and are keen to hear your feedback on our proposed concept design.

We will be conducting community consultation through a letterbox drop and access to an online survey.

It is also possible to email us at communitygarden@yarralumlaresidents.org.au with your comments.

We will alert you to each of these as they become available.

Appendix 1: SeedHead Design - The Design Process

Mr Daniel Harris-Pascal runs SeedHead Design, an organisation that undertakes design projects with expertise in Landscapes, Ecological Systems, Agriculture, Agro-forestry, Urban Homesteading and Forest Gardens.

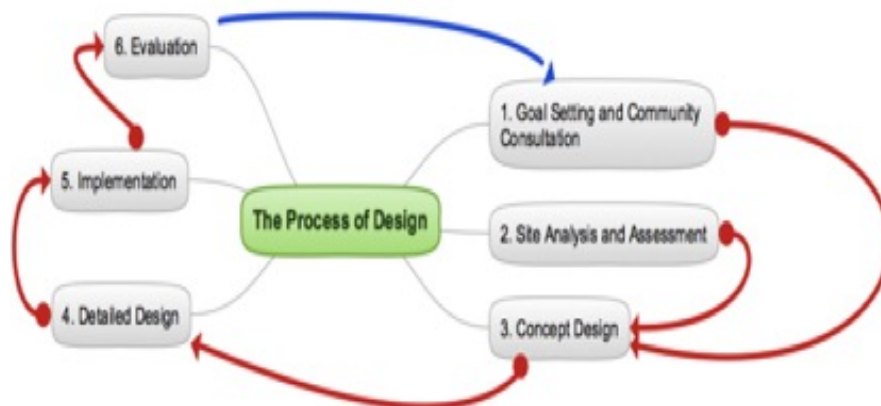
SeedHead Design has worked with a number of community groups to facilitate the design process and build collaborative designs that connect a group's goals and objectives with their site to develop robust concept designs.

Seedhead utilizes a design process that moves through six steps:

- Defining goals and objectives
- Undertaking Site Analysis
- Defining a Concept Design
- Defining a Detailed Design
- Undertaking Implementation
- Evaluation of the design

As design is a process, following evaluation of the process, the design cycle can begin again with the additional information and lessons learned from the initial design cycle.

This design is not static and it is hoped that as the early phases of this design are implemented that they are evaluated so that another design cycle can take place.



Appendix 2: Site Assessment Outcomes

Following a consideration of our goals and the advantages and constraints of the site, we undertook a site assessment to inform our design. We noted the site conditions, working from the aspects of the site that are the most difficult to change towards those which are easier to change. A summary of the outcome of this process is listed below and provides a clear picture of the site conditions, which our design, and any variations to it, should consider.

1a. Regulatory Climate

- The proposed site is part of a larger area, part of Yarralumla, Section 53, Block 13
- This site is zoned PRZ1: Urban Open Space
- The total block is 10494m² and includes the playground, open space where the community garden is proposed and the area between the hall and the tennis courts
- The playground car park and existing hall are not a part of this block
- Our proposed site for the community garden would have a smaller footprint of between 2000 – 3000m²
- This smaller section may need to be divided from the larger block to give the community garden tenure over the site
- There is a public right-of-way access path between Mueller St and the playground that runs between the proposed site and the community hall
- Yarralumla Community Garden will need a formal structure and decision-making framework to move forward. This may be provided through the Canberra Organic Growers Society (COGS) model. Under the COGS framework, the garden will need to be operated in accordance with the COGS Constitution and COGS garden rules (see link below). A Garden Convenor and a Local Garden Committee would be appointed by the YCG members and the garden would operate in accordance with COGS organic growing principles (see link below)
<http://www.cogs.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/COGS-Constitution-2016.pdf>

1b. Environmental Climate

- Hot summers and cold winters
- Frost and hail are present
- Hot winds from the West and North and cold winds from the East and South
- Variable rainfall and there are long periods without rain
- Lots of sunshine and the sun is quite intense
- A temperate climate with four defined seasons

2. Form of the Landscape

- Elevation of ~700m above sea level
- A high, plains area in the Brindabella mountains near Kosciuszko alpine area
- The site is situated on a former floodplain of a small creek catchment that has been turned into a drain, and the area no longer floods
- The site is within an urban environment which is undergoing urban infill.
- The site is flat
- No rocks are apparent on the site or in the soil

3. Water

- ~600mm annual average rainfall
- 200mm minimum rainfall and a 1000mm maximum rainfall
- Rainfall is variable and unevenly distributed
- The site does not receive run-off due to the surrounding gutters along the road
- The site presently runs off toward the North-East down to the creek and playground
- A simple drain might be needed to control water flowing to the playground
- Soil improvements due to gardening may mean that more water infiltrates and less runs off
- Mains water is currently available at the hall on site
- Rain could be harvested from the hall roof to reduce costs for gardeners
- Drip irrigation is desirable as it allows for more efficient water use
- Drinking water is available at the hall on site

4. Access and Circulation

- The site is easy to access and central to the suburb
- Parking is available on Mueller St, at the playground, near the tennis club and near the sports ovals
- The site has both bus and bike access
- Could bike racks be constructed to allow bike parking?
- The site currently has open access; the site can be accessed from all sides
- There is no defined access on site
- Gated access is desirable to secure an inner zone with protected plants and infrastructure
- Vehicular access will be required for materials delivery
- Pedestrian, wheelchair and wheelbarrow access is desired
- Connecting meandering paths will link the site together
- Root-like paths could be constructed.
- Primary paths – vehicles, Secondary paths - wheelchair/wheelbarrow, Tertiary paths – walking
- The space should be accessible to children and school groups and could potentially link up the shops and the playground with an inviting path to walk along
- There is a public Right-Of-Way access between Mueller St and the playground via a path to the South of the community hall
- Would a protected, fenced zone close to the hall interfere with this access?
- Could this access be shifted if required to allow a more inviting path for the public

5. Vegetation and Wildlife

- Possums are an issue as they eat fruit trees and veggies
- Foxes, kangaroos, rabbits, cats and dogs are present on site and in the area
- The site is in a clearing close to Yarralumla playground and a creek lined with big gumtrees.
- A mix of trees are planted along the borders of Loftus and Mueller Streets
- The trees reduce the usable area for productive gardening, due to shading and competition for water.
- Could these be incorporated into the design with pathways or seating?
- Do these trees provide a windbreak?

- Could windbreaks be improved?
- Birds, cockatoos and parrots are present on site
- Habitat creation will be required for beneficial birds and insects
- A protected and aesthetic “Anti-Aviary” would prevent losses of fruit and crops to cockatoos
- Poultry are desired on site because they are an easy way to compost and build the soil
- Bees and bee forage are desired
- Are worms present in the soil?
- Will pests (slugs, snails, aphids) be an issue?
- There are several street trees around the site’s border and in adjacent areas

6. Microclimates

- Some wind protection exists on site
- Is the garden in the wind wash zone of the hall?
- The site is generally open
- There is some shade around edges
- Shade is being cast by the hall
- Vertical garden space will be available on the fence
- The site lacks a diversity of microclimates
- Modified microclimates (Shady, cool) are desired

7. Building and Infrastructure

- The YMCA hall may be useful for water and sewerage connections and perhaps rainwater run-off depending on what the YMCA decide to do with it in the future.
- Fencing is desired to protect the community garden
- This could be installed to secure a main area or the entire space could be fenced
- Partial fencing may allow more connection with the playground and local community
- Signage is desired and will help to involve the community
- Signage can provide information about what goes on in the garden
- Electricity, water and toilet facilities are available at the hall
- An outdoor kitchen space is desired
- Paths are desired
- Shade structures are desired
- Seating and tables are desired
- A seating circle or meeting space are desired

8. Zones of Use

- The site is within a residential area
- The site is urban open space adjacent to lots of community infrastructure which is frequently utilized by the local community
- The site is unsecure, and some fencing is desired to protect the garden
- The desired footprint of the community garden is between 2000-3000m²
- Material depot and driveway are necessary to accommodate deliveries
- A social space is desired
- A community meeting space is desired
- Storage for both tools and equipment is desired
- Could we group plants by water requirements?
- A community orchard is desired

- Could this include an “Anti-Aviary” to exclude cockatoos that might eat the fruit
 - A beneficial native plant zone that will provide habitat for beneficial fauna is desired
 - Multicultural gardens could be built demonstrating other cultures’ gardens, this could be a possible link to the embassies in the neighbourhood
 - A Kids zone is desired
 - This could provide a link between the playground and the community garden and include beautiful plants and plants that smell great
 - A composting space is desired
 - A propagation space is desired
 - An outdoor kitchen is desired
- Possible zones of use include:
 - Community Meeting Space
 - Outdoor Kitchen
 - Native Garden
 - Kids Garden
 - Community Garden Beds
 - Community Composting and Worm Farm Area (similar to the Hackett Composting Collective)
 - Rented Individual Garden Plots
 - Flowers and Sensory Gardens

9. Soils

- Some soil is present on site
- Its condition is unknown and soil testing will be required as a part of the site assessment
- More soil? is desired
- Compost and worm-farms are desired
- Could collect organic waste from surrounding town houses
- Leaf litter is a possible input
- Soils on site are well drained
- Mulch will be required for the garden to cover the soil in some areas

10. Aesthetics

- Current aesthetics:
 - Raw
 - Empty
 - Open
 - Nice Trees
 - View of Playground
 - Community Hall looks abandoned

Desired aesthetics

- Aesthetically pleasing
- Sensory Gardens for Kids

- o Sustaining
- o Gathering and Inclusive
- o Oasis
- o Meander
- o Resourceful
- o Blend with the natural environment
- o Sympathetic to the neighborhood
- o Inviting
- o Paintings and art
- o Plantings and flowers
- o Living fences
- o Living / Screened containers
- o Youth friendly
- o Inspiring
- o Aromatic
- o Communal
- o Productive

11. Funding

- o ACT Community Garden Grants
- o The supplies from the old CSIRO site
- o Embassy participation
- o Garden membership
- o Community
- o Fundraising
- o The kindness of strangers i.e. donors
- o Rental income from any allotments
- o Running workshops and courses

Appendix 3: Yarralumla's century long tradition of collective gardening



Yarralumla Nursery, 1921-35. NAA A3560

The Yarralumla Community Garden is keen to build upon a long and distinguished local tradition of collective gardening.

Starting from **1913**, **Yarralumla Nursery** and its two offspring (Westbourne Woods arboretum and Weston Park) made Canberra into a “garden city”. It supplied planting stock for Canberra’s parks, streets and residential blocks, and provided public park amenities for the Canberra community. Yarralumla Nursery’s planting lists included plants useful for shade and shelter, food and fodder, as well as being beautiful and ornamental.

The arboretum also played a fundamental role in the establishment during **1926** of the first tertiary education institution in the new Federal Capital, the **Australian Forestry School**. Decision makers considered proximity to Westbourne Woods essential for the practical training of Australia’s first forestry officers. Set within mature forest plantings of Westbourne Woods arboretum, the Forestry School became the national epicenter for tree experimentation and training. Across five decades, the school’s Latinised crest *Mihi Cura Futuri* encouraged more than 500 graduates to believe that to Australia’s caretakers of trees “is entrusted the future”.

Finally, from **1975** to the present day, **the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation’s (CSIRO)** division of Forest Research acquired and expanded Yarralumla’s forestry precinct.