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# TITLE 190 – GENERAL MANUAL

## Part 415 – NRCS People’s Garden Policy

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### 415.0 Purpose

This part establishes policy concerning the role of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in the establishment and use of NRCS People’s Gardens and guides the NRCS contribution to the collaborative process of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) People’s Gardens.

### 415.1 References

The NRCS authorities for the policies and procedures contained in this part are as follows:

1. The Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act.
2. Title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985.

### 415.2 Background

- A. The Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovate Production (OUAIP) provides primary leadership for national policy concerning the People’s Garden initiative. As a participant of the national People’s Garden initiative, NRCS interprets and implements national policy to operate within the NRCS mission and authorities.
- B. The People’s Garden initiative enables USDA employees to –
  1. Establish People’s Gardens at USDA facilities worldwide.
  2. Help communities create People’s Gardens.
  3. Revive existing gardens to meet the purposes of the USDA People’s Garden initiative.

### 415.3 Policy

- A. People’s Gardens must meet the following criteria:
  1. **Join** the People’s Garden community by registering a garden at [www.usda.gov/peoples-garden](http://www.usda.gov/peoples-garden).
  2. **Grow** the garden using sustainable practices that benefit people and wildlife.
  3. **Teach** about gardening and resilient, local food systems.
- B. The intent is that these gardens result from a collaborative process among NRCS, other USDA agencies, conservation districts, and other partners. The gardens must be accessible to the public.

### 415.4 Responsibilities

- A. Chief of NRCS

The Chief provides national leadership for all policy decisions relating to NRCS participation in the People’s Garden initiative.

B. Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) Business Center External Affairs Division

1. Promotes NRCS participation in the People's Garden initiative.
2. Supports the Chief's and Administration's priorities and activities in relation to the People's Garden initiative.
3. Informs the OUAIP of local or national events involving the People's Garden initiative that may be suitable for Department-level participation.

C. Regional Conservationists

The Regional Conservationists support the People's Garden initiative in the four regions.

D. Director, OUAIP

1. Ensures that all People's Garden initiative activities comply with NRCS policies.
2. Encourages participation in the People's Garden initiative.
3. Assigns a staff member to serve as the NRCS People's Garden Initiative Program Coordinator in the National Headquarters (NHQ).

E. People's Garden Initiative Program Coordinator

1. Provides expertise and support for the People's Garden initiative, based in the OUAIP.
2. Liaises between NRCS and the OUAIP Director regarding the People's Garden initiative.
3. Attends all relevant meetings concerning the People's Garden initiative.
4. Maintains a directory of all NRCS points of contact (POCs) for the initiative.
5. Coordinates initiative efforts with offices under NHQ leadership, such as national technology support centers.
6. Leads teleconferences with state POCs to provide and receive updates concerning the initiative.
7. Provides information to, and answer inquiries from, NRCS NHQ, state employees, and the public.
8. Sends relevant information to state POCs, as needed.
9. Ensures the People's Garden database ([www.usda.gov/peoples-garden](http://www.usda.gov/peoples-garden)) is updated at least quarterly.
10. Builds partnerships at the national level to further the implementation of the People's Garden initiative.
11. Ensures the appropriate NRCS employees are aware of key events and information concerning the People's Garden initiative.
12. Updates the internal NRCS list of People's Gardens with NRCS improvement quarterly with information received from state POCs.

F. USDA Headquarters People's Garden Farm Manager

1. Manages the plantings at the People's Garden at USDA Headquarters.
2. Coordinates volunteers to maintain the People's Garden at USDA Headquarters.
3. Coordinates events at the People's Garden at USDA Headquarters.
4. Conducts outreach to local stakeholders in the D.C. area about the People's Garden initiative.

G. State Conservationists

1. Ensure that all People's Garden initiative activities in respective states comply with NRCS policies and authorities.
2. Encourage participation in the People's Garden initiative.
3. Provide quality assurance of People's Gardens.
4. Select a state POC.
5. Determine funding sources for garden needs established by NRCS staffs.

## H. State POCs

1. Liaise between state staff and the People's Garden Initiative Program Coordinator in the OUAIP.
2. Attend teleconferences arranged by the OUAIP.
3. Promote the People's Garden initiative and encourage staff to participate at the local level.
4. Build partnerships at the state and local level to further the implementation of the initiative.
5. Provide information to, and answer inquiries from, NRCS NHQ, FPAC state employees, and the public.
6. Ensure state information is updated in the People's Garden database at least quarterly.
7. Provide information to the People's Garden initiative coordinated in the OUAIP concerning updates for the internal NRCS list of People's Gardens with NRCS involvement.
8. Ensure the appropriate NRCS employees are aware of key events and information concerning the People's Garden initiative.

## 415.5 People's Garden Initiative Requirements

### A. The People's Garden must:

1. Include an educational component including one or more of the following:
  - a. Signage located on the garden premises explaining components of the garden (Note: All signage must be compliant with the terms of the lease arrangement for the specific NRCS office).
  - b. A brochure located in an outdoor receptacle, nearby building, or on a garden's website explaining the People's Garden initiative.
  - c. Scheduled tours, classes, or workshops given by one of the partners who helped to establish the People's Garden.
  - d. Other educational activities determined appropriate by NRCS staff.
2. Be a collaborative effort with one or more of the following potential partners:
  - a. Other USDA agencies.
  - b. Conservation districts.
  - c. Schools.
  - d. Community organizations.
  - e. Other partners as determined by OUAIP.
3. Demonstrate principles of best conservation including but not limited to standards defined in the Field Office Technical Guide.
4. Include such vegetation as determined by NRCS:
  - a. Produce.
  - b. Flowers.
  - c. Shrubs and berry bushes/vines.
  - d. Cover crops.
  - e. Other vegetation.
5. Be accessible to the public in such locations as:
  - a. Public property.
  - b. Government-owned property.
  - c. Government-leased property with landowner approval.
  - d. Schools.
  - e. Places of worship.

- f. Land owned or leased by the resource conservation and development council.
  - g. Other locations that provide for public access as determined by NRCS.
6. Benefit the community by providing one or more of the following:
- a. Conservation and climate-smart agriculture demonstrations.
  - b. Storm water control or water quality improvement.
  - c. Soil protection from erosion.
  - d. Habitat for wildlife, including pollinators.
  - e. The following may also be included:
    - (1) Gardening demonstrations.
    - (2) Food for those in need.
    - (3) Other benefits as determined by NRCS.
- B. Responsibilities of potential partners may include:
- 1. Assisting in garden maintenance.
  - 2. Providing materials for gardens.
  - 3. Providing locations for gardens.
  - 4. Coordinating educational outreach efforts.
  - 5. Recruiting volunteers to maintain the garden.
  - 6. Other efforts as determined by NRCS.
- C. Time and Attendance Policy
- 1. Voluntary efforts toward the initiative are encouraged.
  - 2. If work to further the initiative aligns directly with an employee's position description, the employee may continue with work as usual on regular time with supervisor awareness and approval.
  - 3. If work to further the initiative does not fit within and employee's position description, the following apply.
    - a. To supplement the volunteer hours that employees contribute and to assist in sustaining the garden over time, supervisors may grant up to **40 (forty) hours of regular time per fiscal year to work on the initiative.**
    - b. Work towards the People's Garden initiative may not interfere with the duties and responsibilities outlined in the employee's position description.
    - c. Regular time hours to further the People's Garden initiative must be completed within each employee's regular tour of duty.
    - d. Credit or compensatory time may not be earned for People's Garden initiative activities.
- D. Use of NRCS Resources
- 1. NRCS offices are authorized to purchase supplies (e.g., seeds, plants, signs, soil) provided such supplies are directly related to People's Garden activities. Funds to purchase supplies typically come from office or state budgets.
  - 2. NRCS offices are authorized to use equipment (e.g., vehicles, tractors, hand tools) associated with People's Garden activities.
  - 3. The purchase of supplies and use of equipment will follow local guidance from the State Conservationist or director of the office.
  - 4. NRCS should use the technical knowledge of staff and volunteers to carry out the intent of the People's Garden initiative.

- E. All harvested produce grown in a People's Garden must be donated to one or more of the following types of organizations:
1. 501(c)3.
  2. 501(c)4.
  3. Schools.
  4. Food kitchens.
  5. Food pantries.
  6. Other organizations as determined by NRCS.