

SO YOU WANT TO START A GARDEN

FINDING & ACQUIRING LAND

To find out which type of land you have,

visit the Planning Department's [property map](#).

There are two types of land.

Private: Land owned by a private landlord

Public: Land owned by a government agency

If your land is private, it's time to negotiate with the landlord:

- Set goals, timelines, expenses/revenues, exit strategy.
- Put your agreement in writing.
- Schedule annual follow-up meetings to see if anything has changed.

If your land is public, each agency will have different guidelines. Fill out the new urban ag project app [here](#) and check-in with the Urban Ag Coordinator to get started!



Another public agency? Contact the [Urban Ag Coordinator](#)



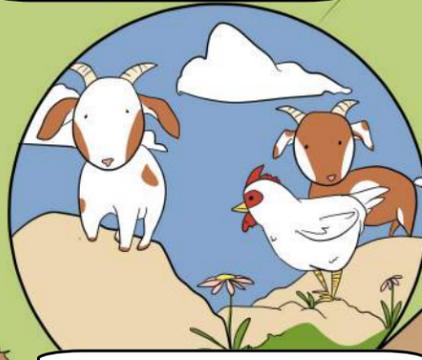
Sale or donation of food/horticulture products



Small farms less than one acre in size



Large farm in industrial zone



Animal husbandry on the farm

You will need a permit if your garden or farm will be the principal use of the site. Take a look at [these examples!](#)

You do NOT need a permit if your garden is not considered the principal use of the site.

Visit [SFPD environment](#) for more information.

It is important to make sure that your land is insured in case of an emergency. Read why [here](#).

Projects on your land may be eligible for grants from the City of San Francisco or other organizations.

Read more [here](#).

Make sure you're building community throughout the process. If you plan on working as a group, you might want to organize people around your land early on. This could include:

- Finding out who lives in your neighborhood
- Reaching out to the wider community
- meetings
- create a web site or flyers
- network and build connections
- Getting your neighbors involved
- word of mouth
- advertising

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

So you have your land... now what?
Here are some basic guidelines for planning,
designing and building your new garden.

PLAN & DESIGN

Compost is an important resource in your garden. You can make it yourself (learn how through free classes at [Garden for the Environment](#)), or get it free from [Urban Ag Resource Centers](#).

If making it yourself, compost areas must be set back at least 3 feet from dwelling units and decks.



SOIL & COMPOST

PLANTS & SEEDS

What you plant is just as important as your soil. Native plants do great in San Francisco because they are meant to be here. The flowers of native plants attract pollinators to your garden to help your plants thrive.

Pollinators and other beneficial bugs decrease the amount of pesticides you need to apply to your garden because the pests will be taken care of the natural way - by good bugs! Seeds can be found locally at [various nurseries and seed libraries](#).

Before growing food in your yard, it's important to know the quality of your soil. Soil is critical to your garden's health and how productive it will be. Be sure to accurately test for lead and other potential urban hazards before planting.

- [SFE nvironment soil testing guidelines](#)
- [SFDPH lead hazards](#)
- [SF Rec & Park soil & compost overview](#)



CONSTRUCTION

If you're planning to build anything, please note these examples where you must follow San Francisco Building Code (SFBC).

SFBC Section 106a.2 - Work exempt from permit: [the garden shed's] roof area may not exceed 100 square feet, and the shed may not be taller than eight feet from grade. Larger buildings require plans/drawings and a permit.

All urban farmers are encouraged to follow water efficient landscaping practices, wastewater pollution prevention practices, and, depending on the size of the garden, you may need to comply with specific requirements.

- Less than 1,000 square feet: No application or extra steps required.
- Greater than 1,000 square feet: see this ["How to comply"](#) chart
- Visit the [SFE nvironment](#) for conservation requirements
- Visit the [PUC](#) for more resources

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

IRRIGATION

Outdoor Kitchens:
Stoves, flames, firepits, gas lines, or venting all need a construction permit.

Fencing is also under [Department of Building Inspection](#) regulations.

Accessibility:
DBI also enforces disabled access regulations for the paths and areas open to the public - which would include any restrooms.

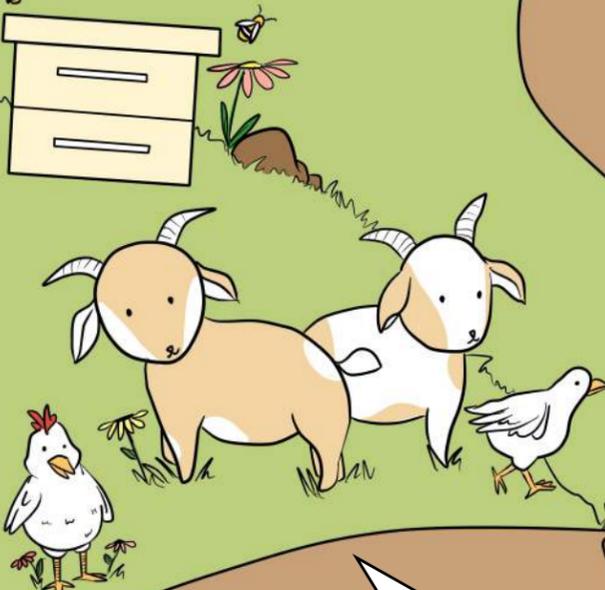
ADA/ Disability issues can be complex and require additional review.

DESIGN

Once you've thought through all of the components of your garden, consider creating a comprehensive project proposal including the following components:

- List community members, partner groups, and sponsors
- Create a sketch or layout of the garden
- Consider hiring a landscape architect to help plan and optimize the productivity of your garden - this step is not required, but could be useful if you have the resources

Visit [SFE nvironment](#) for more information on the required permits for keeping animals in your garden.



HARVESTING

Once you have all the produce, and have plans for your animals and their byproducts, what are you going to do with all of it?

Make sure you follow all the necessary regulations when selling or donating the food produced from your garden:

- All sales of food and plants from your yard must take place between 6am and 8pm.
- If you are selling at a farmers market, you need a "producers certificate".

Be sure that your original agreements still stand with any landlords or garden partners. Remember that this check-in should be on an annual basis, with renewed contracts in writing.

There are many options for what you can do with your produce...



Urban farms often donate food to food banks and shelters.



Cooperative farms divide the harvest among all the members of the cooperative.



Commercial farms sell produce*.

*Make sure the structure of the produce business is settled during the community organizing and design phases of building your farm. All users of the site will then be clear about the end goal before working in the garden and harvest season.

In addition to producing delicious, healthy, locally grown food, urban agriculture can also reduce the impact of climate change on our local communities. There are clear ecological benefits to urban gardens, including managing stormwater runoff and preventing floods during heavy rains; removing carbon from the atmosphere through carbon uptake of plants; and producing a natural habitat for urban species. In addition, the more urban spaces are turned into urban farms, the less food we need to import into our cities. This reduces the amount of fuel required to transport the food, thereby reducing our carbon footprint and improving air quality.

Urban agriculture also increases our disaster preparedness in the event of an emergency. Growing our own food throughout the city increases our self sufficiency. So while we can't yet grow enough food in San Francisco to feed the whole city, we could grow enough food to feed our city in the 48 or 72 hours that follow a disaster.

Now that's food for thought!

For any other questions about urban ag, contact the [Urban Agriculture Program Coordinator](#).

Thanks to Yolanda Manzone and Manon Fisher from the PUC and Lucy Liu for the graphic design!