



LOS ALAMOS

Community Services Department  
Standard Operating Procedures

## North Mesa Community Garden Plots

**Division/Area:** Parks and Open Space  
**Version:** 2024  
**Approved Date:** February 8, 2024  
**Approved by:** Cory Styron, Community Services Director

### Purpose

This procedure defines the Rules and Regulations providing uniform guidelines for the development, utilization, rental agreements and use of the North Mesa Community Garden Plots.

### Responsibility

The Parks Superintendent is responsible for the implementation and management of these procedures.

### Administrative Procedures

1. The Community Services Department leases 33 Community Garden Plots at the North Mesa near the Horse Stables, which are available to the residents and employees of Los Alamos County.
2. Interested gardeners must sign up for a plot annually by completing a Garden Use Agreement and paying the appropriate rental fee.
3. Garden Plot meeting may be held in mid to late February to discuss any issues with the Garden Plots and to remind the users that their water overage fees must be paid to renew their plots in March.
4. Users will be limited to one (1) plot.
5. The transfer of any plot must be approved by the Parks Superintendent or designee.
6. The initial payment for the use of a garden plot is outlined in Policy 1735 – Use and Rental of County Land and Facilities (fees are tax inclusive and are used to offset the cost of water).

### Maintenance

1. Garden plots should be cultivated March through October each year. If plots are not cultivated for at least three months during the above stated timeline, the Agreement will be terminated, and the plot will be made available to other Users.
2. Remove weeds from your plot and the lot perimeter monthly. It is your responsibility to dispose of the vegetation.

3. Trash that is brought in should be taken out (such as bags, food wrappings, etc.)
4. If you are not able to tend to your garden for more than 14 days due to illness or travel, please notify the Parks and Open Space Division, 101 Camino Entrada, Building 5, Los Alamos, NM 87544 or by phone (505) 662-8159.
5. Use of the premises shall be for the non-profit cultivation of vegetables, fruits, and other crops. The cultivation of vegetation or crops illegal under applicable federal or state laws or regulation, or County Ordinances is prohibited.
6. Should the County be required to clean the lot, the User shall be billed for staff hours and materials used to clean the lot and may not be leased plots in the future.
7. **The County will provide refuse bins twice a year for a two (2) week period for lot cleanup. Outside of these timeframes, Users are responsible for removing waste from the garden lots and disposing of it properly.** Waste may be disposed of at the Eco Station, 3701 E Jemez Rd, Los Alamos, NM 87544. For hours of operation, call [\(505\) 662-8163](tel:5056628163).
8. All annual plant material and extensions must be removed from the garden plot by November 30.
9. If seasonal extension materials are used, they must be adequately secured to prevent blowing in windy conditions.
  - a. Examples of season extension material include row covers, tarps and plastic sheeting and walls of water.
  - b. Covers may not exceed the height of the garden fence.
10. **Pets are not allowed in the community garden, unless permitted by the American with Disabilities Act.**

### **Prohibited Practices**

1. Chemical pesticides (including fungicides, herbicides weed killers and insecticides) are prohibited. Only organic practices and material may be used.

### **Water Use and Meter Readings**

1. Water is turned on to the garden plots mid-April or early May (weather depending). Before the water is turned on, an initial reading is taken of the water meters for the new season.
2. After this, monthly readings are taken of the water meters and sent to the Garden Plot Users for them to keep track of their water usage. They are allowed a certain number of gallons of water per plot depending on plot size for the season before they are charged a water overage fee.
3. At the end of the season in October, a final water meter reading is taken after the water is shut off and water overage letters are sent out letting the garden plot users that have overages know how much they went over and how much they owe.
4. **Users are liable for any overage in water costs that exceed their seasonal allowance. Should the User not pay the overage cost by December 31, the Agreement will be terminated, and the plot will be made available to other users.**
5. Users are responsible for securing their designated water spigots, preferably with a protective hose bibb lock.

### **Renewal Procedure:**

1. Review and update the 'Community Garden Use Agreement', Rules and Regulations, and Renewal Cover letter by February 1 of each calendar year.
  - a. Allow at least 2 additional months to this time frame if there are changes which require the review and approval by the Department Director or County Attorney.
2. After the annual garden plot meeting with designated parks staff and lot users is held and questions are addressed, Garden Plot Agreements are sent out to the current garden plot users that are up to date on their water overage payments.
3. Agreements are sent out via email through DocuSign to the email addresses we have on file in our spreadsheet and once they have signed are routed through DocuSign for signature by the Parks' Superintendent (or designee), Attorney's office and then the County Manager's Office. Once the agreements have been completed and returned then the licensee can come in to pay at the Aquatic Center or mail in their payment. Garden Plot Rules and Regulations and Lot Map are sent out through a separate email to the Garden Plot Users to their email addresses we have on file.
4. Once the document is completely signed it will be automatically emailed back to all the signers on the document and anyone else who has been set to "Receive a Copy".
5. All agreements and payments are due by March 31<sup>st</sup>, or the garden plot will be considered vacant and offered to the next person on the waiting list first, and subsequently to other current plot holders who are listed on the waiting list.
6. Update plot holders list with current information from the agreement (address, phone, email, etc.)
7. When payment is made enter paid date, receipt number, and check number/credit card authorization/cash on the spreadsheet/list.
8. Issue receipt for payment.

### **Waitlist Process**

All residents and employees of Los Alamos County wishing to be added to the Garden Plot waitlist may contact the Parks Division at (505) 662-8159 or send an email to: [parks@lacnm.us](mailto:parks@lacnm.us) with their contact information (name, contact phone number, and email). All interested parties will be notified via email and phone call when a Garden Plot becomes available.

### **Procedure:**

- 1) Staff will add patrons to the waitlist when requested by email or phone call.
- 2) As time permits, staff will call those on the waitlist to ensure they still want to be considered if a plot becomes available.
- 3) If a plot becomes available, staff will notify patrons and they will have 48 hours to contact staff with an accept or decline. Once accepted, patrons will have 72 hours to return the agreement with payment of fees.

### **The following will result in a patron being removed from the waitlist:**

- 1) Inability to reach the patron by phone or email after two (2) separate attempts.
- 2) Staff is unable to reach the patron.
  - a. Email is returned undeliverable.

- b. Phone mailbox is full, or phone number is disconnected.
- 3) No response from the patron within 48 hours, after two attempts to contact by phone and/or email.
- 4) If the patron declines or passes on the lot they will be removed from the waitlist.
- 5) If the patron does not contact or return the Garden Plot agreement within 72 hours they will be removed from the list.

### **Plot Termination**

1. Participants will be notified via certified mail, email and regular mail for non-compliance with community garden rules. A 30-day period will be allowed for lease to bring the garden lot into compliance.
2. Failure to bring the community garden lot into comply with rules and procedures will result in a second letter and final notice of noncompliance that the agreement is being terminated.
3. Failure to comply with rules and procedures will result in termination of rental agreement.
4. No refunds of community garden fees will be issued if the agreement is terminated.

### **Reference Documents**

-  Garden Plot User Agreement
-  Water Usage Spreadsheet