

Patchen Community Square Bylaws

Revised - April 5, 2019

Name: Patchen Community Square

Location: 868 Putnam Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11221; corner of Patchen Avenue and Putnam Avenue.

Article I: Mission Statement

Open Hours: Saturdays 9am-7pm. Members with keys are allowed at any time and are encouraged to welcome the public when in the garden.

Mission: The mission of Patchen Community Square is to create a beautiful space in the heart of Bed-Stuy where all walks of life are welcome. This is a space for neighbors to congregate, feel safe, and be heard all while enjoying the benefits of greenery in an urban neighborhood.

We recognize that the act of reclaiming public land for community use is a political act, and as such we aim to be a space that facilitates activism for the oppressed in our community. This includes actively enforcing our safe space policy and rallying against racism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, ableism, ageism, and other forms of oppression.

General Garden Rules: If a member, neighbor, or visitor does not abide by any of the garden rules, there will be a verbal warning, and if there is a continued disturbance, that person will be asked to leave, no exceptions regardless of standing within the community garden. All members are responsible for their personal visitors.

1. Absolutely no yelling, no hostility, no insults, no physical altercations.
2. All good standing general and private plot members may plant and harvest from community beds.
3. Anyone under the age of 16 must be supervised.
4. Individual plots are off-limits to everyone except plot owner.
5. Household pets are not allowed in the garden and must be left outside the gate when entering the garden. (Visitors using service dogs are welcome, as long as the dogs remain harnessed while in the garden.)
6. General, private plot, and compost-only members in good standing may add food scraps to the active compost pile, as per the guidelines of the compost team. Composting is not open to the general public.

Article II: Membership

Membership: There are four different types of garden membership: general; private plot; lawn; and compost.

Members must be at least 16 years old, and all members under 18 should have their parent's permission to participate in the garden.

Members wishing to join as a family or a community organization may do so. One member must register as the primary contact. All member requirements for individuals will apply to the family unit or community organization, unless otherwise agreed upon by the admin team. One key will be allocated per family or group.

All members must agree to and abide by these bylaws and complete an orientation prior to receiving a key. Orientations are held in the garden every Saturday from 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM. (Other times can be arranged on an individual basis if necessary.)

General member: Individuals or families who want to be active within the garden and have a key have an annual fee of \$15 and are required to join a team. General members may vote, access to communal tools; and plant and harvest within communal areas.

Private plots: Plot holders have an annual membership fee of \$45 annually due May 1st and may vote; access communal tools; and plant and harvest within communal areas, in addition to control over their own raised plot. They are required to have something planted in their plot by May 1st; complete routine seasonal maintenance; and join both the watering team and a team of their choice. Individual plots are allocated as one plot per family.

Any garden members who no longer wants their plot should inform the steering committee, who will re-assign it. If planting has not been started by May 1st, the plot will be reassigned to a member on the waiting list, regardless of whether or not dues have been paid.

Garden plots are to be maintained throughout the year. If a member with a plot is going to be away, they must make arrangements with another member for maintenance of their plot during their absence. If a member does not maintain their plot and/or complete the required amount of service, the Mediation Committee will reach out to them to see if the issues can be resolved this season. Either way, should the same issues arise the following year, the member will forfeit their plot and it will be given to someone on the waiting list.

Lawn: Individuals or families who only want access to the garden to enjoy the open space but who are not able to plant or harvest within communal areas, use the compost system, or use the garden's tools. Lawn-only members have an annual membership fee of \$50 and are not required to join a team or volunteer in the garden.

Compost: Individuals or families who want access to compost and enjoy the open space but who are not able to plant or harvest within communal areas or use the garden's tools.

Compost-only members have an annual membership fee of \$100 and are not required to join a team or volunteer in the garden.

Admin Team: Individuals who are on the admin team, whether they have a plot or not, have an annual membership fee of \$45 annually and are required to join one additional team (but are not expected to hold a leadership position within the team).

Membership Dues: Dues must be paid by the first day of April for individual plot owners. If dues aren't paid on time, the admin team may assume that the non-paying member is no longer interested in maintaining an individual plot and the next person on the waiting list will be contacted. General member fees are collected on a rolling basis throughout the season. Any new members post-October 31 will be considered new members for the following season. All dues are non-refundable.

Any member who is on a fixed income or experiencing financial hardship may request to have the membership fee reduced or waived. This request must be made in writing for record-keeping purposes, either a hard copy to the admin team or by emailing patchensquare@gmail.com.

Service Requirements: Members of the community who are unable to complete work requirements due to disability or age-related infirmity are welcome to join the garden, and will be exempted from work requirements upon written request to the admin team.

Meetings: Meetings are to be held monthly during gardening season. Although attendance is not mandatory, attendance is strongly encouraged as new proposals and rules will be discussed and voted upon. Admin members and team leaders are required to attend all meetings. When team leaders are unable to attend, they must notify the rest of their team at least one week prior to the meeting so that someone else from the team can attend in their place. Meetings will be planned at least two weeks in advance in order to give sufficient notice to all members.

Gardening Practices: We adhere to organic gardening practices and endeavor to use only non-toxic cleaning products, fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides in the garden. No chemical insecticides or rodenticides may be used. Pressure-treated lumber is not to be used in the construction of garden beds. Any wood sealant must be labeled as food-safe.

Members must keep their plots free of weeds, diseased plants, insect-infested plants, and over-ripe vegetables. Diseased and infected plants must be removed from the garden and disposed of properly in garbage cans, not in compost bins.

Trees and shrubs are not to be planted in beds. Any trellis or large structure that exceeds 6 ft or that may block pathways or sun should be discussed with the admin team prior to installation.

Supplies: There are a limited amount of tools and supplies on hand so all supplies and tools are to remain within the garden at all times unless permission is requested from the admin team.

The garden will try to provide soil annually for individual plots however this is not promised and all gardeners should be prepared to purchase all necessary items for their own plots.

Trash and Recycling: All trash and recycling is to be sorted and deposited into the trash cans and recycling bins (in clear bags for recycling and black ones for garbage). Once full, bags should be removed from the cans and placed on the curb for pickup, or beside the cans if not on a pickup day, and new bags should be placed in the bins.

All bagged trash and recycling should be placed on the curb directly outside the garden's entrance on Putnam Avenue for pickup after 5pm on the nights before pick up days. Trash pickup is Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings and recycling pickup is on Friday mornings.

Any member who notices that trash has not been picked up by DSNY on schedule is to contact 311 and make a complaint.

Revoking Beds or Membership: Beds and garden membership should only be revoked when members do not meet the requirements stated in the bylaws. A member who has not maintained their plot or participated in their team(s) may lose the plot, though they may remain a general member. The Mediation Committee will be involved in any and all situations leading to plot or membership revocation.

Article III: Organization

Team Structure: All members are required to contribute to the upkeep and operations of the garden. The work of the garden is accomplished via a team structure, and everyone will join at least one team upon becoming a garden member.

Teams members are first accountable to each other, and the team is in turn accountable to the garden. Each team will agree upon a leader who is responsible for organizing team members to complete the team's tasks, spearhead new initiatives, and help to resolve disputes before going to the admin team and/or mediation committee. The team leader will also represent the team at general meetings, and make sure that messages from the admin team are communicated to team members.

1. **Compost:** Responsible for maintaining and educating members about compost. The compost team may also create proposals for changes to the compost system, for consideration by the general membership.
2. **Watering:** Responsible for regularly watering all the communal areas including the lawn, surrounding plantings, and community beds, and to fill up the water barrels. Members should not water individual beds without explicit permission to do so. (All private plot members are automatically part of the watering team).

3. **Open Hours:** Responsible for opening the garden, putting out our sign, and welcoming community members (telling them about the garden and offering membership materials to those who are interested in joining).
4. **Events:** Responsible for organizing garden events and helping other members run events. Each team member is responsible for creating at least one event during the season (with support from the team).
5. **Groundskeeping:** Responsible for general garden upkeep like weeding, pruning, mowing the lawn, sweeping the sidewalk, taking out the trash, etc. When needed, this team is responsible for organizing work days to tackle larger tasks that need more hands.
6. **Community Beds:** Responsible for planting and maintaining the community beds.
7. **Uprooting Racism:** Responsible for introducing ideas and organizing events to facilitate work against racism and other forms of oppression.

Administrative (“Admin”) Team: In order to maintain order, ensure a good experience for garden members and the community, and comply with Green Thumb rules, the garden has a leadership structure, with elected officers, as outlined below. To ensure a diversity of voices and to actively combat discrimination of all kinds, one member of the admin team must also be a member of the Patchen Avenue Block Association.

1. **Lead Organizers (2 people):** These individuals are responsible for leading the garden holistically so everything runs smoothly. They are expected to: help prioritize garden initiatives; keep tabs on projects and events happening within the garden throughout the season; be the GreenThumb contacts and be responsible for making sure all GreenThumb license requirements are met; lead meetings; help with membership intake; lead member orientations; assist and advise in any and all projects; and be generally available for member questions/comments. They are also responsible for being named on the bank account, in addition to the treasurer, for accountability purposes.
2. **Treasurer (1 person):** One of the three members named on the bank account, along with the two Lead Organizers. Responsible for: keeping an up-to-date ledger of all funds and reporting on garden finances at each meeting; making cash deposits at the bank; providing reimbursements for supplies as approved by steering committee. Reimbursements are to be paid during monthly meetings, or otherwise organized between the treasurer and member being reimbursed. The treasurer is to submit a detailed report of the balance and expenditures at the beginning and end of each season.
3. **Communications(2 people):** Responsible for: taking meeting notes; welcoming new members online and getting them set up with the Google group; assisting with social media and website maintenance as needed; and helping to create and distribute

outreach materials. This person should be good at written communication, comfortable with organizational tools such as Google Groups and Google Drive, and have some familiarity with social media and website upkeep.

4. **Community Organizer (1 person):** Responsible for helping garden membership maximize their capacity to achieve their goals, and to ensure the continuity of the garden as a community resource. Specific areas of focus include: supporting current garden leadership and cultivating new leaders to create a more equitable garden; facilitating member participation and community engagement through clear communication and solid organizational infrastructure; and helping the garden manifest values of inclusion and community-building with mindfulness, accountability, and action around issues of oppression that affect garden members and the greater community.

Mediation Committee (3 people + alternate): Three individuals and an alternate who are responsible for leading any mediation needs, i.e. problems between a member and the general garden; a member and another member; a member with the steering committee; the garden with the surrounding community. The mediation committee will organize a meeting with the person(s) involved to discuss and try to work out any issues. If problems are not solved through mediation, the committee will make recommendations to the board to solve the problem, including the revocation of membership if applicable.

The alternate will step in if a mediator is away or unavailable, or if a mediator is personally involved in the situation being brought before the committee and therefore cannot serve as an impartial mediator. In order to maintain impartiality, this committee is not a part of the admin team nor are members of the mediation committee able to simultaneously be part of the admin team.

Bylaw Amendments: If a garden member has an issue or concern that could be resolved by a change in the bylaws, they are encouraged to bring this up in a garden meeting for discussion. They may also begin a preliminary discussion of the idea in the Google group. Once the proposal is formalized, the exact wording of the proposed change or amendment, as well as the current bylaw, would be circulated. The issue would then be voted upon at the next meeting, as per the voting procedures described below.

Voting Procedure: In order for garden activities or bylaw changes to be approved, there must be a voting process with a 2/3 margin of approval of those in attendance, if a quorum is present. A quorum is a majority of the garden members in good standing. If a majority of garden members in good standing are not present at the meeting, then no change will take place. The proposal may be re-introduced at any subsequent meeting at which a quorum is present. Similarly, if an issue is rejected, there will be an opportunity to revise and revisit at next garden meeting.

While all voting will take place in the garden meetings, effort will be made for garden members who would like to participate but are not present due to other scheduling conflicts. However,

since decisions will be informed by conversation and deliberation and consensus will often form during the meeting, absentee or proxy voting is discouraged.

Article IV: Events

Patchen Community Square seeks to be an accessible community space. All members and neighbors are welcome to reserve time in the garden for events. Please note that the garden will remain open to garden members and the public during these events. Any events for which there is a fee will be decided on a case by case basis by the admin team, with some percentage of the fee charged coming back to the garden.

Reservations must be requested by contacting the admin team at least 2 weeks in advance. Times are available on a first-come, first-served basis with only one event at a time. Attendance is limited to 50 and events must end before sundown. Cleanup is the responsibility of the individual who booked the event and the garden must be left as it was found, or better. All attendees must be made aware of garden rules, which are posted in both the garden and on our website and respect them. Guests who do not abide by those rules may be asked to leave. As always, please be courteous to our garden's neighbors; events should respect NYC noise code. All trash and recycling should be sorted and deposited into the trash cans and recycling bins, or neatly bagged (in clear bags for recycling and black ones for garbage) beside them, if full.

Member Events: Members must notify others in advance if they are having gatherings of more than 12 people. If a member is unsure of exactly how many people will be coming, but it's a close count, please inform the group via email as this helps with planning and will be entered into the calendar.

Non-Member Events: Non-members are also welcome to have gatherings in the garden. A written agreement is to be signed by the individual before the space is reserved for their event. There is no charge to have events in the garden but a suggested donation of \$10-\$50 will contribute toward the upkeep of the garden. Non-members will need to coordinate with the admin team to reserve space. A volunteer member will open/close the space and follow up at the end time to ensure that materials are cleaned up and that everything is looking good. If the garden rules aren't respected during the event, the individual or group that booked the event will not be able to reserve space in the future.

Revised May 20, 2014 by Alison Iven, to reflect changes approved May 5, 2014.

Revised August 1, 2015 by Alison Iven, to reflect proposed changes from June 23, 2015 meeting

Revised March 10, 2017 by Alison Iven, to reflect proposed changes from March 1, 2017 meeting

Revised June 7, 2018 by Alison Iven, to reflect proposed changes from June 6, 2018 and May 2, 2018 meetings

Revised April 5, 2019 by Alison Iven to reflect proposed changes from April 3, 2019 meeting.