

**Board of Health Policy Regulations for Urban Agriculture  
in Somerville**

**Definitions:**

Agriculture, Urban (Urban Agriculture): An umbrella term that describes a range of food growing practices that may include the keeping of chickens and/or bees, but does not include other livestock.

Aquaponics: The cultivation of fish and plants together in a constructed, re-circulating ecosystem utilizing natural bacterial cycles to convert fish waste to plant nutrients.

Composting: The natural degradation of organic material, such as yard and food waste, into soil.

Farm: The cultivation and tillage of the soil, the production, planting, caring for, treating, growing and harvesting of any agricultural, aquaculture, floricultural or horticultural commodities, the keeping and raising of hens and/or honey bees, sales subject to compliance of local, state, and federal regulations. Farming shall include aquaponic and hydroponic farms.

Farm/Greenhouse, commercial: the primary use of a lot is commercial urban agriculture.

Farm/Greenhouse, Community: Urban agriculture or greenhouse operated by a non-profit agency

Farm, roof: Urban agriculture on a roof of a principal residential or accessory structure.

Farm, yard: Urban agriculture on a residential yard.

Gardens: A planned space, set aside for the display, cultivation, and enjoyment of plants including vegetables, flowers, and fruits for private/personal use.

Garden, community: Gardens operated by the City of Somerville with a primary purpose of providing space for members of the community to grow plants for beautification, education, and recreation for personal use. Sales, processing and storage of plants or plant products are prohibited on-site.

Garden, home/yard: An accessory use on a residential lot to grow plants for consumption, beautification, or recreation for personal use. The Ownership, care and control is the responsibility of a resident of the dwelling on the lot. Sales are prohibited.

Greenhouse: A structure, primarily of transparent material, in which temperature and humidity can be controlled for the cultivation or protection of plants or other agricultural products. All greenhouse structures are subject to setback and building code requirements.

Hydroponic: The cultivation of plants in nutrient solution rather than soil.

1. *Yard/Roof Farms* shall be subject to the following ONLY if fresh produce is for sale:
  - a. Only fresh, un-cut, and unprocessed produce grown on the premises may be sold on-site.
  - b. Soil sampling and testing is required prior to any sales. Results must be clearly posted for buyers review.

- c. Property owners shall take reasonable measures to ensure that yards remain free of tall weeds, grasses, and rotting fruits and vegetables.
2. *Community garden* shall be subject to the following:
  - a. Mechanized equipment similar in scale to that designed for household use shall be permitted. Use of larger mechanized farm equipment is generally prohibited; provided, however, that during the initial preparation of the site, heavy equipment may be used to prepare the land/soil between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m, Monday – Saturday.
  - b. Any equipment or supplies needed for garden operations shall be enclosed or otherwise screened from the street and any adjacent residential uses.
3. *Community Farm/Greenhouse* shall be subject to the following:
  - a. Annual soil sampling and testing required for all sales. Results must be clearly posted for buyers review.
  - b. Only fresh, un-cut, and unprocessed produce grown on the premises may be sold on-site.
  - c. Mechanized equipment similar in scale to that designed for household use shall be permitted. Use of larger mechanized farm equipment is generally prohibited; provided, however, that during the initial preparation of the site, heavy equipment may be used to prepare the land/soil between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. Monday – Saturday.
  - d. Any equipment or supplies needed for garden operations shall be enclosed or otherwise screened from the street and any adjacent residential uses.
4. Massachusetts Department of Public Health Food Protection Program states that the sale of unprocessed produce, farm fresh eggs and unprocessed honey may be sold without permits (see policy standards for beekeeping and chicken keeping).
5. *Sale of produce, honey, and eggs.* Farmstands shall be allowed subject to the following:
  - a. Allowed as a temporary use provided that such temporary farmstand shall only sell
    - fresh, uncut up products grown on site
    - honey harvested from site hives
    - eggs produced onsite.
  - b. Produce grown for retail sales must have an annual soil sample testing with results posted at point of sale.
6. Composting must be done in a rodent-proof composter.