

Equitable Water Access for Urban Growers

Chicago Growers Application Guide



neighborspace



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Introduction

There are over 75 urban farms and 650 community and school gardens throughout Chicago that provide tremendous social, health, and economic value to our communities by:

- Increasing access to healthy food.
- Creating jobs and supporting local economies.
- Providing educational programming for youth and adults.
- Cultivating biodiverse green space and mitigating the impacts of climate change.
- Fostering healthier, safer, and more resilient communities.
- Building a more equitable Chicago.

The following **Equitable Water Access for Urban Growers Resource Guide** was created to provide community organizations with the necessary information and resources to:

- 1) Consider options for water access and determine the most appropriate method for your growing site(s).
- 2) Receive tailored technical support.
- 3) Navigate the Department of Water Management's updated hydrant permit application process (if applicable).

Technical Support

- Technical Assistance Request Form: [Fill out the following survey](#) to indicate your growing operation's current water and land access needs. This is the easiest and most comprehensive way to notify our organizations about the support you need.
- Office Hours: [Sign up for office hours](#) so you can connect with support staff, ask questions, and receive navigational support.
- DWM-specific Inquiries: For any DWM-specific inquiries, email watermanagement@cityofchicago.org
- Survey: Advocates for Urban Agriculture & Chicago Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights have released a survey in order to better understand the full range of water and land access needs for Chicagoland urban growers. [Click here to fill out the survey](#) (approximately 20 minutes). The first 60 respondents will receive a \$25 gift card to Seed Savers Exchange.

Options for Water Access

There are four main options for securing water access at your farm/garden on a permanent or seasonal basis: **1) New, Dedicated Water Line 2) Private, existing water source 3) Rain Barrel/Tote Water Collection 4) Hydrant Permit (seasonal only)**

1. New, Dedicated Water Lines:

It is recommended that urban gardens and farms establish a permanent water service when growing sites have the financial ability and land security to do so. A permanent water service better protects the city's drinking water supply and is a more reliable and practical source of water. Permanent water lines can be installed by a licensed plumber, who will obtain the proper permits and materials for this work. The cost for the installation, permitting, water unit, RPZ system, and security features (including cage and cement base, permit fees, and future shut off fees) costs on average between \$30,000-40,000. Due to this high cost, installation of a permanent water line should be considered only when an operation has long term land security and the ability to support the cost. If your site is interested in installing a permanent water line, please contact info@auachicago.org or info@neighbor-space.org.

2. Private, Existing Water Sources

Private water sources (such as a hose run from your neighbor's house) is often the easiest and simplest way to get water to your site. As a best practice, if you want to use water from a private, existing water source, AUA & NeighborSpace recommend working with the property owner to create a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). An MOU is a non-binding agreement that should outline the nature of the agreement and include relevant information — cost, length of agreement, amount of water usage, etc. including costs. (See sample M.O.U. language in appendix.)

3. Rain Barrels/Totes

Using a rain barrel or tote to collect water for your site is a great way to use nature's resources. If you have access to a downspout, or if you simply use a catchment system to store water from another source, you can provide your site with water on a limited basis. Please note that water collected in rain barrels or IBC totes should not be used to water edible crops or wash produce during post harvest handling, unless properly treated. **If you would like to acquire a free rain barrel(s) or IBC tote(s) for your growing site, [fill out the technical assistance form](#).**

4. City Chicago Hydrant Use Permits (HUP) permits

The primary use of fire hydrants is to fight fires. They are designed to provide a large flow of water in emergency situations. Their design makes them inappropriate for almost all other uses. Open fire hydrants provide a near-direct connection to City water mains and can place extreme stress on the water supply system.

Contaminants that are introduced into a fire hydrant can be spread quickly through a wide area. Unauthorized use has caused neighborhood water pressure and City-wide emergencies. Operation of fire hydrants by persons other than trained firefighters and Water Department personnel can also cause damage that leaves these life-saving devices disabled and unavailable for fighting fires.

Hydrants may be used on a limited basis for watering gardens when no other water sources are available. Water from hydrants is not potable and should not be used for cooking, drinking or final washing of produce. While certain use of fire hydrants are expressly prohibited (including, but not limited to, cleaning streets, recreational activities and potable use), proper instruction and certification of these hydrants provides an important public benefit to community gardens and farms. The beginning application portal for community gardens and farms to request a hydrant permit is here: <http://hup.buildinganewchicago.org/#/home>.

Re-Certification

While there is no renewal of a prior year's permit, if you already went through the hydrant permit application process in 2020, you will not be required to meet for an on-site inspection with a DWM plumber. Please note that you will still need to provide insurance, your RPZ recertification, and payment for the water fee based on square footage under irrigation. For sites with an originally tested RPZ unit, bulk recertification day(s) will be scheduled this Spring.

Hydrant Permit Application Process

**periodic updates may be made based on changes to the Hydrant Use Permit (HUP) policy.*

In June 2020, the Department of Water Management established an updated [Hydrant Permit Policy](#). Some of the key changes to the new policy include:

- **Water Rate:** A base rate of \$117.81/year applicable to both urban farms and gardens. The base rate is applicable to operations with less than 3,000 square feet of

irrigated space. It is an added \$50.68 for each additional 3,000 square feet of irrigated space. *(Ex: Garden with 10,000 sq ft. of irrigated space pays \$269.85/year)*
Note: Water rates adjust for inflation each year on June 1.

- **RPZ (Reduced Pressure Zone) Valve Certification:** Sites must acquire a certified RPZ valve (see appendix for photo). RPZ valves protect the City's water by preventing backflow from contaminating the water supply. Original backflow tests must be witnessed by a DMW Plumbing Inspector. For RPZ recertification, no DWM PI is required to be on site. Recertification is required on an annual basis and proper documentation must be submitted as part of your application. You can acquire an RPZ valve at no cost by filling out the [technical assistance form](#).
- **Legal & Insurance Requirements:** The new application requires each growing operation to submit a [Temporary Hydrant and Water Use Agreement](#) with relevant form(s) of insurance

Application Steps

1. Read & Review Application Guide (this document)
2. Complete technical assistance forms and survey (see page 3)
3. Identify/Prepare the following information:
 - a. Permission to Operate Farm/Garden on Land
 - b. Closest Hydrant(s)
 - c. Custodian Cap - Does the closest hydrant have a custodian cap?
 - d. Square footage of site that requires irrigation, including space between beds.
 - e. Hydrant Policy Agreement (see appendix for template)
4. [Complete the Online Application](#)
5. DWM Site Visit
6. Acquire and certify your RPZ Valve with your plumbing contractor. Receive hydrant cap and key (if needed)
7. Submit RPZ Certification, Insurance Documentation, and Legal Agreement to DWM.
8. Submit payment and receive seasonal hydrant permit.

1. **Read and Review Application Guide:** Before you submit your online application, please read and review this entire document. Our hope is to prevent growers who are not eligible for a hydrant permit from expending time, energy, and resources on this process
2. **Complete Technical Assistance Forms & Survey:** Fill out the [technical assistance request form](#) and [office hours request form](#) to connect with AUA &

NeighborSpace staff and get tailored technical support. Additionally, Advocates for Urban Agriculture & Chicago Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights have released a survey in order to better understand the full range of water and land access needs relevant to Chicagoland urban growers. [Click here to fill out the survey](#) (approximately 20 minutes). The first 60 respondents will receive a \$25 gift card to Seed Savers Exchange.

3. Identify the Following Information

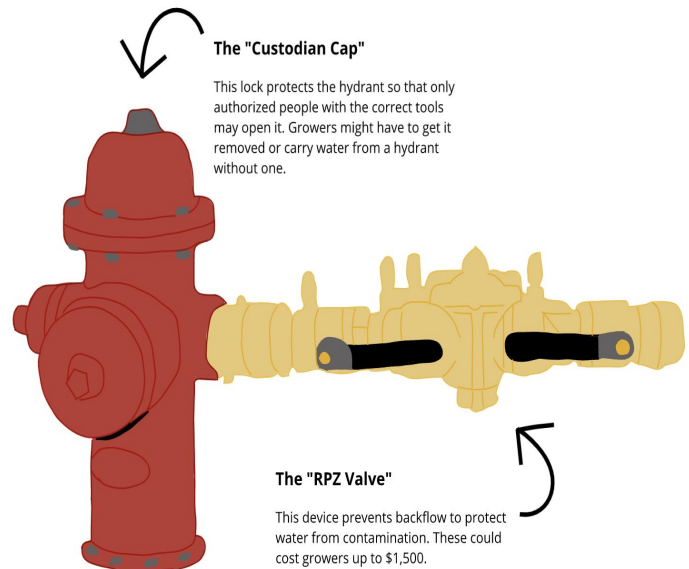
- a. Land Use Permission: Confirm that you are legally allowed to farm/garden at your site. No garden/farm should apply for a hydrant use permit if they do not have a legal right of entry.
- If you are growing on land that is **privately owned or owned by a land trust, such as NeighborSpace**, you will need permission from the land owner to operate ([See example of a Land Use MOU](#) from Sustainable Economies Law Center)
 - If you are growing on land that is **currently owned by the City of Chicago** and were given approval to proceed by your alder, you will need a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (and possibly a Phase II depending on results of the Phase I) to obtain a Right of Entry Agreement from the Department of Assets, Information & Services that provides you with temporary permission, up to a maximum of 180 days, to operate on this land. For use extending beyond 180 days, approval of a lease agreement by the City Council is needed
 - and applicants are encouraged to begin the environmental review process in July of any given year to ensure that a lease agreement can be approved by the following April.
 - If you are growing with **permission on CHA (Chicago Housing Authority), CDOT (Chicago Department of Transportation), or CPD (Chicago Parks District)** and have confirmation of ongoing permission to farm/garden in the space, you should have a letter of permission from the proper authority.
- b. Identify Hydrant Location: Once you have confirmed and obtained documented permission to operate a farm/garden on your land, **identify**



the location of the hydrant closest to your garden that you intend to use. Upload an image of the hydrant as a digital file to be turned in with your application.

- c. Custodian Cap: A custodian cap may already be placed on the hydrant you hope to use. These caps are used to prevent illegal tapping of hydrants. These caps are put on for a variety of reasons related to misuse. If there is a cap on the hydrant you hope to use, we recommend identifying another hydrant to use (if possible).

If you need a custodian cap removed, please notify us immediately by completing [the technical assistance form](#).



If the closest hydrant is across the street, running hoses across a street will likely require an occupancy permit from the Chicago Department of Transportation. In this case, reach out to Bryan Gallardo from CDOT, who will assist you in securing a permit. He can be reached at 1-312-744-4652.

- d. Square Footage: Calculate the square footage of your site that requires irrigation from the hydrant. You can use google maps to assist you in calculating the square footage. By left clicking on the map, you can trace the square footage of your garden. Take a screenshot of this square footage and keep track of the footage, rounded down to the nearest 100.

There may be circumstances in which only half of a garden is used to grow, while the other half is used for non-agricultural purposes. When possible, use google maps to correctly identify this disparity.

DWM is aware that many gardens use raised beds; while technically, the space between the beds is not growing space, the whole area is considered a growing area. Please do not calculate bed by bed.

- e. Policy Agreement: Each operation will need to submit a [policy agreement](#) that states your operation's agreement to follow all General Hydrant Use rules.

4. Complete the Online Application

[Visit this site](#) to access the online application. As part of the application, you will need to:

- a) Indicate that you are a community garden/urban farm
- b) Thoroughly read and agree to rules for urban farms and community gardens. (See Appendix, Policy Agreement Template).
- c) Applicant Information: Information about your farm/garden and the main point of contact.
- d) Hydrant Use Information: For hydrant use start date, you can select as early as April 1. For hydrant use end date, you can select up to November 1. Apply the hydrant location, square footage, and custodian cap information gathered during step 3. When you enter your square footage, the application will automatically calculate the cost for seasonal use of the hydrant. The current rate is \$117.81 for the first 3000 square feet, and an additional \$50.68 for each additional 3,000 square feet. You will not be required to pay until the final stage of the application process.

5. DWM Site Visit

After completing Step 1 of the online application, a DWM plumbing inspector will schedule a site visit with you to confirm the hydrant location, square footage, and possible removal of a custodian cap.

If you would like an AUA or NeighborSpace representative to be present for this site visit, please reach out to the following contact:

- **NeighborSpace**: If you are a NeighborSpace farm/garden, email info@neighbor-space.org
- **Advocates for Urban Agriculture**: If you are an independent farm/garden operating on city or privately owned land, email info@auachicago.org.

After conducting the site visit, the DWM plumbing inspector will confirm information with the Department of Water Management legal team and contact you to move to the next step in the application process.

6. Acquire and certify your RPZ Valve. Receive hydrant cap and key (if needed)

- a. Certification of RPZ Unit



To certify your RPZ unit, you will need to purchase a qualified $\frac{3}{4}$ inch RPZ valve and have it certified by a licensed and bonded plumber with a DWM inspector present. If you already have an RPZ and need it certified/re-certified, reach out to an AUA or NeighborSpace contact so you can get your RPZ certified during a scheduled bulk testing date. Please note that DWM Plumbing inspectors only need to be present for original tests/certifications, not recertifications.



Once your RPZ is tested and certified by a plumber and DWM plumbing inspector, your plumbing contractor should provide you with a “Test Sheet” that you will later submit as part of the application process.

- b. Expiration: After getting an RPZ tested and certified, all hydrant permits will expire on November 1st on an annual basis. Please keep this in mind if you were planning to use hydrant water beyond November 1, as you will need to recertify before November 1 to continue using water after that date.

- c. Hydrant Caps (Fittings)

Hydrant Caps are necessary to be able to access water from a hydrant. A standard City of Chicago hydrant has a $4\frac{1}{2}$ " opening. In order to connect a $\frac{3}{4}$ " hose to a hydrant, you will likely need two different hydrant caps. The fittings pictured on the right provide the appropriate gauge to reduce the $4\frac{1}{2}$ " hydrant opening to a standard $\frac{3}{4}$ " hose and RPZ valve. The fittings featured are a $4\frac{1}{2}$ " to $2\frac{1}{2}$ " and a second fitting further reducing water flow from $2\frac{1}{2}$ " to $\frac{3}{4}$ ".



- d. Hydrant Key

A hydrant key is needed to open the hydrant so water can begin flowing from the hydrant through your RPZ valve and hoses.



If you need an RPZ unit, hydrant caps, or a key, please notify us immediately by completing [the technical assistance form](#). AUA can provide all eligible farms/gardens with this equipment at no cost in 2021.

7. Submit RPZ Certification, Legal Agreement & Insurance to DWM

- a. **RPZ Certification Test Sheet:** You will receive an [RPZ certification test sheet](#) from the plumbing contractor (not the DWM plumbing inspector). We recommend making a copy or taking a photo of this document for your own records.
- b. **Legal Agreement:** This document is currently being updated. A new copy will be attached to this application guide as soon as it is finalized. In the meantime, please review the [Temporary Hydrant and Water Use Agreement](#) to familiarize yourself with the agreement.
- c. **Insurance:** All farms and gardens will need to obtain a [certificate of General Liability Insurance](#), naming the Department of Water as additional insured. During 2021, we are piloting support for a select number of farms and gardens that need insurance purchased for them.

Please note, depending on the activity of your farm/garden, you may be required to submit other relevant forms of insurance. Please see page 4 of the Temporary Hydrant and Water Use Agreement for a list of required insurance forms. Additionally, if you have permission from a landowner to operate a farm/garden on the land, they may already have General Liability insurance.

If you are an unincorporated group that does not have General Liability Insurance, you have the option to purchase insurance as a social club through the US Liability Insurance Company through [Brunswick Companies](#). The cost of annual insurance is approximately \$700-800, but will decrease over time if there are no incidents. To see if you are eligible, follow these [instructions](#) to obtain an FEIN number from the IRS by registering as a social club.

- d. **Submission of Documentation:** The RPZ test sheet is currently required to be submitted as part of the online application process (this may change in coming weeks). The completed legal agreement and copies of insurance should all be submitted to Carmela Moretti at Carmela.Moretti@cityofchicago.org

If you need support securing insurance, your RPZ certification, or reviewing legal agreement, be sure to fill out the following [technical assistance form](#)

8. Submit Payment and Receive Hydrant Permit: You can submit your water payment at one of the following [regional payment centers](#). Your payment will be based on the square footage calculation determined during your DWM site visit.

Once you make your payment for your seasonal hydrant permit, you should receive your hydrant use permit via email. Be sure to keep a printed copy of your hydrant use permit on site at all times.

Appendix Documents

Technical Assistance

- [Technical Assistance Request Form](#)
- [Office Hours Request Form](#)
- [Water and Land Access Survey](#)

Hydrant Use

- [Hydrant Permit Policy](#)
- [Online Application](#)
- [RPZ Photo](#)
- [RPZ Original Test Sheet](#)
- [RPZ Recertification Test](#)
- [Custodian Cap Photo](#)

Legal Documents/MOU's

- [Policy Agreement Template](#) (for sites agreeing to hydrant usage rules)
- [Example MOU](#)
- [Temporary Hydrant and Water Use Agreement](#)

Insurance

- [Example Insurance Certificate](#), properly naming CDWM additionally insured
- [Obtaining FEIN Number](#) (for unincorporated groups/social clubs)
- [Brunswick Companies](#) (potential insurer for unincorporated groups)

Payment

- [Regional payment centers](#)

Pilot Program Partners

[Advocates for Urban Agriculture](#)

[NeighborSpace](#)

[Chicago Food Policy Action Council](#)

[Chicago Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights](#)