

## Community Gardens

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### Issue

Describe Connecticut laws and recent legislation concerning community gardens.

### Summary

Community gardens are gardens in which both edible plants, such as fruits and vegetables, and nonedible plants, like flowers, are grown by and for members of the surrounding community.

The Connecticut General Statutes reference community gardens once—in the state’s environmental justice law ([CGS § 22a-20a](#), as amended by [PA 20-6, Sept. Sp. Sess.](#)). Specifically, the law lists support for community gardens as a mitigation activity that may be funded through a community environmental benefit agreement. A “community environmental benefit agreement” is a written agreement between an owner or developer of certain facilities to provide financial resources to mitigate the facility’s likely impacts. (OLR Report [2020-R-0286](#) summarizes the state’s environmental justice law.)

Additionally, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection administers an [Urban Green and Community Gardens Grant Program](#) through the Open Space and Watershed Acquisition Grant Program authorized under [CGS §§ 7-131d to 7-131k](#). This program funds developing or enhancing urban open spaces for public use and environmental education, which may include community gardens. Grants are prioritized based on greatest ability to benefit urban communities near population centers. Among other eligibility requirements, applicants must (1) be a municipality or a municipality partnering with a non-profit organization and (2) have funding available for half of the project’s cost. Projects must take place within the territorial limits of a “[Distressed Municipality](#),” as

designated by the Department of Economic and Community Development, or a “Targeted Investment Community,” which is a municipality with an enterprise zone (see [CGS § 32-222](#)).

Since 2009, there have been three bills concerning community gardens before the Connecticut legislature. The below table provides each bill’s year, number, last legislative action, and primary concept involved.

**Table: Connecticut Legislation Concerning Community Gardens, 2009-2020**

Year	Bill Number	Last Action	Primary Concept
2009	<a href="#">HB 5800</a>	Public Hearing with Environment Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• promote local food production by community gardening and backyard food production</li></ul>
2013	<a href="#">SB 15</a>	Change of reference to Appropriations Committee from Environment Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• establish an Office of Community Gardens</li></ul>
2015	<a href="#">HB 5471</a>	Referred to Environment Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• establish a food systems advisory council to, among other things, support urban farming and urban gardening programs</li></ul>

## Additional Information

The National Conference of State Legislature’s website provides relevant research on legislation and programs in other states. For information on state legislation concerning urban agriculture, see [Urban Agriculture State Legislation](#) (Aug. 20, 2019) (community gardens is a subset topic). For information on state community garden laws and programs, see [State Statutes and Programs Concerning Community Gardens](#) (Mar. 3, 2014).

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