

Growing fruits and vegetables on the boulevard in front of your house

The City of Toronto allows residents to plant fruit and vegetable gardens in the municipal boulevard adjoining their homes subject to entering into an encroachment agreement with the City.

An encroachment agreement is provided to a resident after City staff inspect the location of the proposed plantings, and determine that it is in a safe location -- posing no obstacle to vehicle or pedestrian traffic, and that it does not interfere with sidewalks, driveway access or public utilities.

This situation is similar to when a resident applies for a fence or retaining wall.

At the present time, Transportation Services staff is governed by the bylaws and policies enacted by the former municipalities of East York, Etobicoke, North York, Toronto, Scarborough and Metropolitan Toronto. This legislation was enacted by the former municipalities many years before amalgamation. With the exception of the former City of York where vegetable/fruit gardens are allowed under the category of ". . . other vegetation" described in Chapter 1004, Article 6 of the York Municipal Code, all of the former municipalities do not expressly permit vegetable or fruit gardens on public boulevards without an encroachment agreement. A work plan is in place to harmonize many of these 'legacy' statutes, and these revisions will allow vegetable/fruit gardens provided that they do not create a hazard to pedestrians or vehicle traffic.

While there are positive aspects to having fruits and vegetables growing on boulevards, there are also some potential risks that need to be addressed. Transportation Services is working with Toronto Public Health to determine the health risks associated with having fruit/vegetable gardens located close to the travelled portion of the road, and if there are certain locations where these gardens should be prohibited due to excessive exposure to chemicals associated with road maintenance and vehicle operations.