POLICY STATEMENT

The Rural City of Murray Bridge recognises that developing social infrastructure is an important requirement to build a sense of community and to grow a strong and vibrant community.

The Rural City of Murray Bridge Spring Garden Competition is a mechanism to support, encourage and strengthen individuals and groups. It will encourage individuals to come together and get involved in the development of green spaces within their environments.

Private and community gardens provide spaces where people can create attractive areas and ambience around their homes and also within their streets and neighbourhoods.

OBJECTIVES

The aim of the Spring Garden Competition is to support and encourage the residents of the Rural City of Murray Bridge to achieve excellence and innovation in their gardening practices and to recognise the energy and enthusiasm put into local gardens and reward this dedication with recognition as an award recipient.

SCOPE

The Spring Garden Competition represents a commitment by Council to support the efforts made by individual residents and community groups to foster community capacity building and sustainable communities.

PRINCIPLES

The Spring Garden Competition will be held annually with judging generally held in September.

Spring Garden Competition Categories

- **Mayor’s Award**
  This will be awarded to the garden which achieves the highest overall points as allocated by the judging panel.

- **Mayor’s Encouragement Award(s)**
  This will be awarded to a garden where there is obvious enthusiasm, eagerness to learn new techniques and gardening strategies and clear improvements to the previous landscape.

- **Best Environmentally Sustainable Garden**
  This award will be presented to the garden judged as being most sustainable, incorporating the following: maintenance with a minimal environmental footprint, use of locally-sourced or recycled materials, demonstrated low-level water requirements through plant choice,
mulching and collection of rainwater, growing and/or propagating own plants and produce, composting and exhibiting overall good environmental practices.

- **Best Senior’s Garden**
  This category is open to residents aged over 65 years where the entrant has personally established and maintained their own garden. This can include private homes, retirement villages and nursing homes; pot gardens will be considered.

- **Best Community Garden**
  Entries for this category must have a high level of contribution and collaboration from community volunteers working together to plan and manage the garden. Entrants should demonstrate knowledge of the area with plans to improve and enhance the space for the public. Practices of community engagement and participation are highly valued in this category. Entries where maintenance of the garden/park is assisted by the Rural City of Murray Bridge are still eligible for consideration but will be weighed against other entries.

- **Best Small Garden**
  Gardens entered into this category are considered to cover an area less than 1200 square metres. This can include, but is not limited to, pot gardens, balconies, and terraces.

- **Best Large Garden**
  Gardens entered into this category are considered to cover an area greater than 1200 square metres. This can include the whole garden or a part of it.

- **Best Native Garden**
  Entries in this category must consist of a significant proportion of Australian Native plants, and should provide habitats and food sources to encourage native fauna. Exclusion of environmental weeds will also be taken into consideration.

- **Best School Garden**
  For this category, ‘school’ is defined as any educational institution including preschools, childcare, primary schools, secondary colleges, special schools, TAFEs and higher education sites. Entries in this category must demonstrate that the garden has predominantly resulted from the work of the students, with a connection between the garden and knowledge gained in the classroom an advantage. The garden can be of any variety.

- **Best Business Garden**
  Gardens in this category can be of any size, and include places of worship, hospitals, industrial properties, businesses, nursing homes, retail premises and hotels. The gardens can be of any variety.

**Eligibility Criteria**
Applicants must reside in the Rural City of Murray Bridge local government area.

Only one application will be accepted per individual or group per category.

Applications must be consistent with the stated aim of the Spring Garden Competition and will be judged upon the following criteria:

- Presentation, general appearance, layout and design.
- Plantings - use of colour, form and composition, variety and repetition, year-round interest and scent.
- Environmental consideration - reduced water use, moisture retention strategies, recycling and reuse. Minimal pesticide and chemical use and plant selection.
- Natural environment - encouraging wildlife (provide a habitat or food source for local native fauna), use of native and local plant species and free of declared or environmental weeds.
- Creativity, innovation and passion
  - Is the garden creative, innovative or original?
  - Does the garden reflect the Rural City of Murray Bridge’s unique environment?
  - Does it reflect the effort, enthusiasm and knowledge of the gardener(s)?

**Applications not considered eligible for the Spring Garden Competition**
Applications not considered eligible for the Spring Garden Competition include:
SPRING GARDEN COMPETITION GUIDELINES

- Gardens belonging to Selection Panel members, Sponsors, Elected Members, Council Staff or their immediate families.
- Gardens which are nominated, but whose owner does not wish to participate in the competition.

Assessment of Applications
Details of the Rural City of Murray Bridge Spring Garden Competition will be made available to the community by:

- An advertisement placed in the Murray Valley Standard newspaper advertising the Spring Garden Competition.
- An advertisement placed on the Electronic Notice Board advertising the Spring Garden Competition.
- Details of the Rural City of Murray Bridge Garden Competition will be available for download on Council’s website utilising the “Let’s Talk” branding.
- Posters advertising the Spring Garden Competition will be displayed at the Local Government Centre and Library.

Final judging will be carried out by a formal Selection Panel, consisting of:

- Up to two Elected Members
- A member of the community (e.g. local Garden Club)
- A Council Staff member

The Selection Panel will nominate winners based on the eligibility criteria.

Terms and Conditions
All prizes are awarded at the discretion of the Selection Panel, whose decision will be final and no correspondence will be entered into.

Judges can offer advice and suggestions regarding the appropriateness of the selection of category entry but it will be probity of the category entrant to the category that has been entered.

The winners of the awards for each category cannot win the same category prize for two consecutive years.

Local businesses will be approached to sponsor the prizes for the Spring Garden Competition. First prize will be awarded for each category.

Garden owners agree to allow their gardens to be photographed by a nominated person from the Rural City of Murray Bridge. Photographs may be reproduced in Rural City of Murray Bridge promotional material to be used by Council at its discretion.

If requested, a successful applicant will also be available or willing to make a representative available for publicity purposes either in the local media or in a Council publication or other promotional material.

By entering the competition applicants agree to allow the Selection Panel access to view their garden during business hours, upon appointment.

Applicants will be required to submit a completed Spring Garden Competition Application Form by the due date. Application forms will be made available from Council’s website.

Entry to the Rural City of Murray Bridge Spring Garden Competition is free.

Multiple category entries are not permitted.
SPRING GARDEN COMPETITION GUIDELINES

Personal information collected is held and used by Council under the provisions of the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act, 1998.

Spring Garden Competition Sponsorship
Sponsorship will be sought for the competition prizes, with benefits including:

- Prominent publicity in all promotional material such as brochures, advertising, banners, posters etc. This includes a link to the sponsors website from Council’s website throughout the competition
- Sponsors name and logo on one or more of the nominated categories
- Acknowledgement of sponsors and participation at the awards event