

Improving access to fresh fruit by supporting people to grow fruit trees in public places.

The opportunity – [the problem, opportunity and response](#)

The Fruit Tree Guardian Programme was set up to enable the planting and care of fruit trees in public places, schools and childcare centres to provide easy access to fresh healthy fruit.

This project was established to overcome barriers that hamper the planting and care of fruit trees in public places such as:



- Ongoing maintenance that fruit trees require.
- Limited Council capacity and skill to care for fruit trees.
- Often there is interest, but not the skills in the community to care for fruit trees.
- The need for a formalised process and support network for tree planting and care.
- The need to have more than one person responsible for each fruit tree.
- The initial purchase price of fruit trees for residents.

The Guardian programme coordinates the planting and education of residents so more fruit trees can be grown throughout the city and enjoyed by the community.

How it works – [practical implementation details](#)

Wellington City Council works with the Sustainability Trust to plant around 100 fruit trees around the city. People apply to be a fruit tree guardian and nominate a site/s which they would like to plant and care for a fruit tree, these are generally in public parks and schools. Each site has at least two and up to five guardians to ensure that if one guardian leaves the other will still care for the trees. Sites are assessed by criteria such as shelter, overhead power lines and community access and successful guardians are notified. Guardians receive their trees and a care booklet at a Guardian workshop where they are taught how to plant, care for and prune their trees. There is a Facebook page where guardians share images of their trees, get seasonal updates and ask for guidance with things like pruning, tree damage etc.

Resourcing – [funding and support](#)

Wellington City Council funds the Sustainability Trust to administrate, run two guardian workshops, buy fruit trees and create the resources required to support the planting of approximately 100 fruit trees a year. This is included as part of broader contract funding.

For the first three years of the programme the fruit trees were planted by volunteers, the care workshops now teach the guardians how to plant their trees.

Achievements – [key successes, benefits, results or outcomes](#)

- 364 fruit trees growing in public spaces throughout the city

- 135 guardians taking responsibility for the fruit trees
- The establishment of the annual training workshops at The Sustainability Trust
- Online application form and clear Council processes to become a guardian
- As most of the trees are in neighbourhoods or schools – people are connecting with others in their community and together learning how to care for their fruit trees.

Our challenges – *practical considerations when implementing the project*

- Wellington's wind and hills mean that many sites are not suitable to grow fruit trees and people who would be great fruit tree guardians are turned down due to the site.
- Council land has many land use designations which can make the site selection process time consuming for the administrator of the programme.
- Some guardians move or lose interest in their trees and there is no method for new guardians for existing trees to be found.
- Mowing around the trees is an issue some council mowers get too close and ringbark trees – others won't go near and a large patch of land remains unmown.

Moving forward *what we've learnt and how we will change going forward*

- Running the Fruit tree Guardian programme has upskilled the Sustainability Trust (our eco-centre) and this and other fruit tree, vegetable growing programmes are now run by the centre.
- The success of guardian trees often encourages people to be active in another edible projects such as plant fruit trees at home and getting their kids active in gardening
- All these trees are mapped and in time a map of the fruit trees will be made public.

Lessons for others *your advice to others setting this up, what would you do differently*

- The education of fruit tree guardians is important to the success of the fruit trees growing a community of support around the trees. This programme was initially set up without the care workshops and with the fruit trees planted by volunteers with guardians regularly notified of workshops run at the local community gardens, this was time consuming and many of the trees suffered from a lack of care.
- If you are planting on council land, get clarity on what land designations trees can be planted on. ie reserve, district plan, road reserve etc and stick to this to reduce future issues.
- Work with the appropriate council units, in our case the programme is run by community services with support from Parks, Sport and Recreation and funding support from the Tree team.
- Any methods which connect guardians and enable the sharing of expertise and experience keeps up guardian's enthusiasm and continued care for the trees. Finding easy ways to do this such as a Facebook page really makes a difference. We also have a guardian database and send out seasonal information on what to do for your trees in a quarterly email.

For more information:

Contact: Sustainability Trust customercare@sustaintrust.org.nz

Website:

<https://wellington.govt.nz/services/environment-and-waste/environment/urban-agriculture/our-fruit-tree-capital/fruit-tree-guardians>

Additional information to help Fruit tree guardians fruit tree selection:

<https://wellington.govt.nz/services/environment-and-waste/environment/urban-agriculture/our-fruit-tree-capital/growing-fruit-trees>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=wellington%20fruit%20tree%20guardians>