

Overview

The Urban Farmer & Gardener Assistance Mini-Grant Program from the New Castle Conservation District (NCCD) is designed to support and enhance new and existing urban farm and community garden projects in New Castle County, Delaware. "Urban Agriculture" is defined by the USDA National Agricultural Library as "taking the form of backyard, rooftop, and balcony gardening, community gardening in vacant lots and parks, roadside urban fringe agriculture, and livestock grazing in open space." NCCD will provide grants of up to \$5,000 to support projects such as community gardens, urban farms, greenhouses, or hydroponic operations growing fruits and vegetables that strengthen our local food system in New Castle County.

Eligibility

This program is open to 501(c)3 nonprofits, religious organizations, schools, municipalities, organized neighborhood associations, or for-profit businesses that want to start or maintain an urban farming or gardening project. Individuals are ineligible. The primary mission of the farm or garden should be to increase food access, food independence, community health, and/or general community wellbeing. As part of your application, organizations will need to clearly demonstrate the need of the community they intend to serve and detail the anticipated impacts.

This grant is for projects in New Castle County, Delaware only. Priority will be given to those who did not receive an NCCD Urban Farmer & Gardener Assistance Mini-Grant during the last two years.

Types of projects funded & how funds can be used

NCCD is looking to fund projects that will expand the production of local, community grown fruits and vegetables and improve access to healthy foods throughout underserved areas in New Castle County. Successful proposals for new projects will consider long-term sustainability for their project, and successful proposals for existing projects will detail how this grant will increase their capacity to serve their community.

Past grant funding has been used to construct raised beds, install compost systems, repair broken equipment, build a vertical growing wall, build a school garden, install a rain barrel system, install fencing, market program/community outreach, and to create vegetable gardens on unused land.

NCCD funds can be used to cover the purchase of gardening **tools** and **equipment**, including cold food storage, sinks to rinse produce, and rototillers; **building materials** for the construction of raised beds, sheds, fences, and other structures; **soil amendments** such as fertilizer and compost; **seeds and seedlings** to help get the garden started for the season; upgrading existing or installing new **irrigation systems**; **season-extending materials**, like hoop houses and greenhouses; and other **consumable items**. Requests for items not listed above will be reviewed and evaluated by the grant committee.

NCCD funds cannot be used to cover salaries or fringe benefits of employees; normal operating expenses such as utility bills or fuel; repayments of loans; vehicles; food and beverages; or indirect costs like transportation or administrative overhead.

**** NEW IN 2026 ****

Applications will be sorted and reviewed into three categories, based on the scale and scope of the request. Projects within the same category will be reviewed against one another and the top-ranking applications within each category will be selected for funding. Based on funding availability, some projects may be considered for partial funding. The three categories are:

1) Launch or Expansion – maximum award of \$5,000 per project

This category supports **new urban farm or community garden enterprises** or **major expansions to existing projects** that significantly increase production capacity, functionality, or long-term sustainability. Eligible projects may include supporting the establishment of a new growing site or the addition of substantial infrastructure to an existing site such as high tunnels, greenhouses, drip irrigation systems, sheds, fencing, or other core structures necessary to operate or scale an urban agriculture project. Proposals should clearly describe how the project will strengthen food production, improve access to fresh foods, and serve the needs of the intended community over time.

2) Infrastructure Improvement – maximum award of \$3,000 per project

This category is intended for existing farms or gardens **seeking to enhance, upgrade, or repair current infrastructure** in order to improve productivity, efficiency, safety, or accessibility. Projects may include replacing or repairing equipment, adding complementary infrastructure components, improving irrigation or storage systems, or making site improvements that allow the project to better serve its community. Proposals should demonstrate how the requested support will increase the project's capacity or improve its ongoing operations.

3) Garden and Farm Support – maximum award of \$1,000 per project

This category supports **ongoing and recurring project needs** that are essential to maintaining regular farm or garden operations. Eligible requests may include seeds and seedlings, tool replacement, sustainable soil amendments, and other consumable or periodically recurring materials necessary for seasonal production. Proposals should demonstrate how these investments will help sustain food production and continued community benefit throughout the growing season.

Proposal timeline

Submission deadline.....	March 5, 2026
Proposal review.....	March 6 - March 26, 2026
Final selection and notification of applicants.....	March 27, 2026
Grant contract signed and returned.....	April 3, 2026
2026 Grantee Program Overview Webinar.....	April 8, 2026
Grant funds expire.....	October 31, 2026
Final report due.....	November 23, 2026

If your project is funded

Grants are provided on a reimbursement basis. The applicant should have the financial capacity to pay the project costs upfront. NCCD will reimburse applicants following submission, review, and approval of all grant related expenses and invoices. Please note that all expenses must be made during the agreement period to be eligible for reimbursement. Any project related expenses incurred before the agreement is signed will not be reimbursed.

Grants require a dollar-for-dollar match. If applicants cannot provide a dollar-for-dollar match, in-kind contributions of eligible staff/volunteer hours, donated use of equipment or space, and donated supplies, equipment, building, or land will be counted towards the total match. Grantees must **record volunteer/staff time and document all donations** for the match to be eligible. Name of volunteer/staff, number of hours, a description of the tasks completed, and a physical signature must be included on the provided documentation. The federal rate (as of January 2026) of \$34.79 per volunteer hour will be applied. The contribution for donations of use of equipment or space, where the title is retained by the donor, will be valued at the fair rental rate. Donated supplies, equipment, buildings, and land are valued at the market value at the time of donation. Any contributions made before the agreement is signed will not be eligible to qualify for matching contributions.

Reporting requirements. Grantees will have check-ins with the Urban Agriculture Coordinator during the duration of the grant (May-September). The type and frequency of those check-ins will be determined by the category of the project.

- **Launch or Expansion:** In-person check-ins every month through the project duration
- **Infrastructure Improvements:** In-person check-ins every other month throughout the project (3-4 total) with phone/virtual check-ins in-between
- **Garden and Farm Support:** Two in-person check-ins (one at the beginning and one at the end) with monthly email/phone check-ins in between, unless otherwise requested

NCCD also requires a narrative report at the end of the grant period detailing how the grant funds were used in combination with all receipts that are to be reimbursed up to the total of the award. Reports must also provide proof of match, which can include but are not limited to: receipts, volunteer logs, other sponsorship letters, or donation agreements. This report will be due by November 23, 2026, but grantees can submit their narrative reports as soon as their projects are complete

How to apply

Fill out and submit your application. Applications must be submitted either online or in person by Thursday, March 5, 2026 at 4:30pm. Applications can be sent to Urban Agriculture Coordinator, Madison Walter at Madison.Walter@delaware.gov. In person applications can be dropped off to Administrative Specialist Liz Hook at the New Castle Conservation District office, 2430 Old County Road, Newark DE 19702.

Questions. If you have any questions while filling out your application, you can contact Madison Walter by email at Madison.Walter@delaware.gov or by phone at (302) 365-8983.

Attach required materials. Your application will not be considered complete without the following items. Include a **letter of support** from the organization's leader who will commit to supporting the project. If the project is to be completed on property not owned or leased by the applying organization, an additional letter of support must be submitted by the property's controlling organization. The official letterhead and a physical signature must be present on the letter of support. A **budget document** must be included with your application. Part 1 should be an annual budget for the farm/garden that includes a general list of expenses and costs. Part 2 should detail the expenses that are a part of this grant request (including required match). These budgets should be well researched and should include as much information as possible. Please review the last page of this document for a sample budget. If applicable, include no more than **three photos** of the site or project area you are trying to change through this grant. Please note the following requirements:

- Save images as .jpg or .png
- New projects should provide existing space photos
- Any photos with people in them must have a photo release form signed

Sample Annual Budget (Green Hill's Community Garden)

Item	Quantity	Price/ Unit	Total Price
Seed packages	20	\$3.00/packet	\$60.00
Soil amendments	5	\$9.00/bag	\$45.00
Weed Barrier	1	\$25.00/roll	\$25.00
		Total:	\$130.00

Sample Project Budget w/ Match (Infrastructure Improvements)

Item	Quantity	Price / unit	Total	Requested Funds	Match	Anticipated Match Provider
Lumber (2'X6'X8')	60	\$16.50	\$990.00	\$495.00	\$495	Green Hill
Replacement Fencing (4'X50')	3	\$75.00	\$225.00	\$225.00		
Weed barrier	4	\$25.00/roll	\$100.00	\$100.00		
Mulch (for walkway)	45	\$6.00	\$270.00	\$170.00	\$100	XYZ Garden
Flexible Tubing for Low Tunnels	100 hoops	\$55.95/set of 25	\$223.80	\$223.80		
6mil UV Resistant Plastic Sheeting	10	\$18.00/roll	\$180.00	\$180.00		
Hardware	Lump sum	\$120.00	\$120.00	\$120.00		
Topsoil	8 bags	\$34.50	\$276.00		\$276	Green Hill
Landscape spikes	A bag	\$62.00	\$62.00	\$62.00		
Landscape ties (8ft)	15	\$24.95	\$374.25	\$374.25		
Hose timer	1	\$38.00	\$38.00	\$38.00		
Soaker hoses	3	\$15.00	\$45.00	\$45.00		
Volunteer Hours	31	\$34.79/hour	\$1078.49		\$1043.70	Green Hill
Rental of Miter Saw	1	\$250.00/day	\$250.00		\$250	ABC Hardware
		Total:	\$4,197.75	\$2,033.05	\$2,049.49	

Amount Requested in Grant: \$2,033.05 Match (through in-kind and dollar for dollar): \$2,049.49