

Heritage Farm FAQ

Q: Is the Heritage Garden closing as many have stated?

A: No, the Heritage Garden is not closing, and residents will continue to have the opportunity to garden. As shared in our December communication to gardeners, the Heritage Garden is entering a new chapter as we transition from a community garden to a community farm. The farm concept will be focused on community-based gardening as opposed to individual plots and raised beds, which limits participation. It will offer experiences for all ages, all abilities and all demographics. And it is in line with the developer's original vision of a communal space surrounded by nature where residents can dig in and get their hands dirty and "take care of the land."

Q: What is the primary reason for the change?

A: The current model is not consistent with LARMAC facility operations and serves less than 1% of Ladera residents. All amenities in Ladera Ranch, including the community gardens, are funded by homeowner assessments. Although gardeners are charged a nominal fee when they sign up for a raised bed or plot, the annual \$20 and \$60 garden plot fees do not come close to covering the costs associated with operating and maintaining the gardens. This means that the remaining expenses like fencing replacement, access control, irrigation, pest control, etc. are being subsidized by homeowners who don't even have access to the amenity. LARMAC doesn't limit access to pools, parks, playgrounds, the skate park, or dog park, yet it has done so with the gardens. By transitioning to a community farm model, LARMAC is aligning the garden's use and access policies with those of other amenities - serving the greater population of Ladera residents.

Q: With so many open plots and beds, why not fill those if community involvement is a primary reason for the change?

A: Great question. Historically, all the plots (76) and beds (18) have been occupied by residents. Despite this, both gardens have maintained waitlists over the years. More recently, efforts to fill open plots/beds have not been made as discussions on the future of the garden have been in question. LARMAC did not feel that it was fair to invite new plot/bed holders with uncertainty.

Q: Why are we transitioning to a farm after all these years?

A: The LARMAC Board continually evaluates how Ladera's amenities are being utilized by the community. This ongoing evaluation often leads to improvements and/or modifications to an amenity or a facility with a goal of better serving the community as a whole. Examples of this include:

- Mission Hills Park – Converted an aging putting green to a 9-hole mini golf course and added additional features to the park, including a giant chess board, corn hole and gaga ball.
- Covenant Hills Club Outdoor Space – Modified and improved the outdoor space to make the more usable for larger gatherings and events.
- Terramor Aquatic Park – Added reservable cabanas, a snack bar and outdoor games while eliminating the small splash pad which was under-utilized. We are also currently in the process of changing out the entire structure, which will be a completely different design with different features targeting a wider age demographic.
- Wagsdale Dog Park – We removed the large gathering area in the center of the park which included two large pergolas, concrete pad and benches. We filled this area in with turfgrass and added seating under the existing trees and along the perimeter while also adding a walking DG walking path around the perimeter of the dog park.

For every one of these improvement projects, there was some level of resistance from homeowners; however, these projects were done for the entire community, rather than a few residents.

Q: Will this have an impact on homeowner assessments?

A: When a facility or amenity is improved, LARMAC typically takes on some additional or increased expenses – either by way of operating expenses or reserve expenses, which are funded by homeowner assessments. The Garden Transition Project is no different. Homeowner assessments are affected by a variety of factors. We are still very much in the planning and design stage of this improvement project, so we do not know what the upfront cost or ongoing costs will be. We have some estimated ranges but it's dependent on what the final design and layout looks like. This will all be determined in the next few months as we firm up design plans. That said, the fiscal year 2026 budget contains \$27k in forecasted farm revenue and \$100k in forecasted farm expenses. This equates to \$10.08 per home, per year, or \$0.84 per month.

This project is in line with similar improvement projects made at places like Mission Hills Park, Covenant Hills and Oak Knoll Village Clubs, Terramor Aquatic Park, and Wagsdale Park, just to name a few. These improvement projects all have a few things in common – they modernized an aging facility, they were designed with a goal of attracting more of our residents, met a specific need that has been lacking at the facility, and they created an improved overall experience for our residents.

The Board remains fully committed to evaluating all facilities and amenities to ensure they continue to meet the needs of our community and align with LARMAC's mission, which is “to manage and maintain Ladera Ranch as one of Orange County's premier master-planned communities.”

As our community celebrates its 25-year anniversary, Ladera Ranch remains a highly desirable place to live and continues to see rising property values. A 2024 case study determined that Ladera homes sales are on a price line that is 12.2% higher than surrounding homes – primarily in Mission Viejo and Rancho Santa Margarita. So much goes into property values but we know that aesthetics and amenities play a significant role, which is precisely why the Board places such a large emphasis on improving our aging amenities – a proven way to reinvest in our community.

Q: I understand that individual garden plots are going away; will I still have the opportunity to garden?

A: Yes, absolutely! In fact, a key contributing factor for this change is to provide additional Ladera residents with an opportunity to garden.

Q: Will current gardeners have an opportunity to be involved in the transition process?

A: Yes, a survey was published to the residents in January, which remains open. If you have not yet completed the survey, we encourage you to do so. This survey is intended to gather feedback from current gardeners as well as members of the community who have not been part of the garden but have an interest in gardening. In addition to this survey, LARMAC also formed a task force made up of five (5) homeowners/residents to assist in the transition process. Amongst other functions, the Task Force will review and discuss the survey results, meet with Farmscape representatives, participate in a field trip to [Esencia Farm](#) in Rancho Mission Viejo and serve in an advisory capacity.

Q: How many residents will the farm serve?

A: This shared farm experience will offer countless opportunities to enrich the lives of residents. Whether you're passionate about gardening and growing fresh produce, have limited time or plenty of it, you can participate at your own pace. If you're eager to learn something new, or teach your children about plants and sustainability, experienced professionals will be there to guide you. If you want to meet new people

and connect with neighbors, volunteering and social events like culinary events and produce distributions will be available to you. And if you just want to eat some delicious organic food grown in your “backyard”, that’s possible as well. A communal farm touches many aspects of community living no matter your age, abilities or interests.

Q: What will the farm look like? Will membership be required?

A: That is still to be determined as we are still in the planning phase. Preliminary discussions, and they’re just that, include row crops, herbs, fruit trees/orchard, raised beds, California natives, a gathering space, area for children, etc. While we still don’t know what exactly it will look like, we are modeling it after what has been successful in RMV. To learn more about RMV’s farm program, visit [Esencia Farm](#). Be sure to watch the 5 minute video - [Flourish: RMV Farms & Wellness on the Ranch – Episode 1 video](#).

Yes, a membership will be required for the Resident Farmer Program. However, as stated above, this farm will serve far more community members than those that choose to participate in the Resident Farmer Program.

Q: Where can I find updates on the transition process?

A: You found the FAQ, so you are on the right track! For additional information and updates, please visit (and bookmark) the following pages on LaderaLife.com:

- [Announcement](#)
- [Heritage Garden](#)

Q: Where is LARMAC in the transition process?

A: On April 9, 2025, the Board approved a phase 2 consulting contract with Farmscape that will focus on farm layout and design, which is expected to be a multi-week process.