

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, 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.

Q: Why does the Board make a change like this without a community vote – isn't that required?

A: The Board is elected by the Members of the community to make decisions on behalf of the Members. This process is fully detailed in LARMAC's governing documents. These decisions include changes to the common area or an amenity. To assist the Board in this process, a great deal of information is gathered before making a significant change.

Q: Why wasn't this discussed in Open Session Meeting?

A: As shared at the January 11, 2025 Open Session Board Meeting, certain aspects of board business, such as contractual agreements, member discipline, and personnel matters, are appropriately held in closed session. Discussions about the Heritage Garden first started because of member discipline and personnel matters. From there, it was assigned to the Facilities Committee, a committee of the board. The Farmscape contract was approved at the November 11, 2024 Executive Session and appropriately disclosed in the Executive Session Summary and Committee Liaison reports that followed in Open Session.

Q: What is primary reason for the change?

A: 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 rest – expenses like fencing replacement, access control, irrigation, pest control, etc. are being subsidized by homeowners who don't even have access to the amenity. The current model is broken and serves less than 1% of Ladera residents. LARMAC doesn't limit access to pools, parks, playgrounds, the skate park, or dog park, yet it has with the gardens. By changing 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, we have also historically had a waitlist. 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 the 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 community as a whole rather than the few.

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: What about all the expenses that I put into the garden; will I be reimbursed?

A: The garden model over the past 20+ years has been built on individual gardener preferences – what to grow, how to setup/design the plot, how much money to invest, etc. As shared, the nominal fee hasn't come close to covering the annual expenses associated with operating the Heritage Garden. While LARMAC will not be issuing any reimbursements, as shared in the December communication, current gardeners may continue to enjoy the garden through May 31, 2025 at no cost.

Q: Why is LARMAC making this change during growing season?

A: There is never a perfect time for a change like this. By providing six months' notice and waiving the upcoming renewal fee, we've aimed to give current plot holders the time and flexibility to make their own decisions about planting new crops, cleaning out items, etc. June 1, 2025 is also the beginning of LARMAC's fiscal year, which is important as budgeting must be considered as LARMAC transitions from garden to farm.

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

A: Yes, as shared in the December communication, a survey will go out to the community in January 2025. 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 will also be forming 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.