

BC BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION COMMITTEE

A joint committee with members representing
AIBC, EGBC, BOABC

File No: 18-0155

INTERPRETATION

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Interpretation Date: January 18, 2022

Building Code Edition: BC Building Code 2018, Book I: General

Subject: Horticulture as it applies to a Farm Building

Keywords: Farm building, agriculture, horticulture

Building Code Reference(s): Division A, 1.4.1.2. – definition of farm building

Question(s):

1. Would the description “the practice of growing fruits vegetables, flowers or ornamental plants (horticulture)” be accepted as falling within or being equal to the description of “farming” within the definition of *farm building* in the BC Building Code (BCBC)?
2. Would those lands upon which the practice of horticulture is carried out be sufficient to consider that land to be devoted to farming?

Interpretation:

1. Yes – Provided that it can be shown to the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) that the proposed horticultural practice is supporting an appropriate agricultural use.

The term *farm building*, is associated with the specific definition in Division A, Article 1.4.1.2. in the BCBC as follows:

“Farm building means a building or part thereof that does not contain a residential occupancy and that is associated with and located on land devoted to the practice of farming, and used essentially for the housing of equipment or livestock, or the production, storage or processing of agricultural and horticultural produce or feeds.

(See Note A-1.4.1.2.(1).)”

While the term “horticulture” is not defined in the building code, it is has long been associated with farming, and the production of horticultural produce is included in the definition of *farm building*. Horticulture is generally defined by various sources as “the art or practice of garden cultivation and management” which most AHJ are likely to accept as being “essentially [for] the production, storage or processing of agricultural and horticultural produce”.

Further to this, various examples of buildings associated with horticulture are identified in examples associated note to the definition of *farm building* in A-1.4.1.2.(1) (excerpt below) or in other examples within the National Farm Code.



Patrick Shek, P.Eng., CP, FEC, Committee Chair

The views expressed are the consensus of the joint committee with members representing AIBC, EGBC and BOABC, which form the BC Building Code Interpretation Committee. The Building and Safety Standards Branch, Province of BC and the City of Vancouver participate in the committee's proceedings with respect to interpretations of the BC Building Code. The purpose of the committee is to encourage uniform province wide interpretation of the BC Building Code. These views should not be considered as the official interpretation of legislated requirements based on the BC Building Code, as final responsibility for an interpretation rests with the local *Authority Having Jurisdiction*. The views of the joint committee should not be construed as legal advice.

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“Farm Building

Farm buildings as defined in Article 1.4.1.2. include, but are not limited to, produce storage and packing facilities, livestock and poultry housing, milking centres, manure storage facilities, grain bins, silos, feed preparation centres, farm workshops, greenhouses, farm retail centres, and horse riding, exercise and training facilities. Farm buildings may be classed as low or high human occupancy, depending on the occupant load [...]”

However, it is up to the owner or designers to demonstrate to the AHJ that the use and design of the specific building is required or meaningfully connected with the stated agricultural purpose (e.g. cultivation of the soil to provide food or other products).

2. No – A horticultural use alone is not sufficient to consider the building a *farm building*.

The term *farm building*, included above, identifies three key criteria to establish that a structure is a *farm building*, being that:

1. The *building* does not contain a *residential occupancy*,
2. The *building* be used for the practice of farming, and
3. The land on which the *building* is located be devoted to the practice of farming.

The first two criteria, are dependent upon the specifics of the design and intended use of the building. As previously discussed, it is up to the owner and designers to demonstrate to the AHJ that the intended use and the design of the building will support an agricultural purpose.

The third essential requirement, that the building be located on land devoted to the practice of farming, is not typically under the control of the owner or designers. As previously identified in Interpretation 18-0038, the use of land may be controlled by governmental entities such as the Agricultural Land Commission or through regulations such as zoning bylaw.

In most jurisdictions, land that is not controlled by zoning regulations or reserved solely for agricultural use may be used or repurposed for uses that are inconsistent with an agricultural purpose or include a majority of other buildings whose use is not associated with agriculture. This would not be consistent with the basic assumptions of the National Farm Building Code, whose special requirements are “...based on the low human occupant load, and remote location of typical farm structures or special nature of the structures involved.” (ref.: page v., National Farm Building Code (1995)). Therefore, the additional requirement for the land to be dedicated to farming through legal statute, protection status, or other equivalent restriction is required.

ⁱ **Horticulture:** NOUN The art or practice of garden cultivation and management.

Origin: Late 17th century from Latin hortus ‘garden’, on the pattern of agriculture.

Web reference: <https://www.lexico.com/definition/horticulture> (retrieved 2021Nov14)



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