

COVID-19: Guidance for Community and Allotment Gardens

The COVID-19 pandemic is evolving rapidly, and this guidance is subject to change. Please visit the Huron Perth Public Health website (www.hp-ph.ca) regularly for updates and additional information. Subscribe to the coronavirus web page at www.hp-ph.ca/coronavirus to be notified by email when it is updated.

On April 25, 2020, the Ontario government amended the emergency order on outdoor recreational amenities to permit the use of allotment gardens and community gardens. The gardens must follow the guidance of the local Medical Officer of Health to operate safely and prevent the spread of COVID-19.

This fact sheet provides current guidance from Huron Perth Public Health under Dr. Miriam Klassen, Medical Officer of Health.

The role of community gardens

Community gardens provide spaces for residents to grow their own food, and offer many benefits to the physical, mental and social health of members. The gardens also promote a sense of community belonging.

Information for garden coordinators/managers

Before opening gardens, garden coordinators/managers must ensure the following guidelines are in place. They should inform all staff, volunteers, and members of these requirements prior to allowing access to the garden.

Garden access and use

- Use of the garden is permitted for planting, maintaining and harvesting food only
 - Events, programming, training, and group builds are prohibited
- Restrict access to staff, volunteers and registered members; non-members, visitors and pets are not permitted
- Update the list of current staff, volunteers, and registered members and track those who have agreed to participate under the COVID-19 guidelines
- Consider using a sign-in and sign-out system to track who is in the garden each day. This may assist with communication and close-contact tracing if necessary

Physical distancing

- Garden users must maintain a distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from other people (except for members of the same household)
- Restrict the number of people in the garden to ensure physical distancing and the limit on gathering can be maintained; consider setting a schedule
- When scheduling times, consider the space between plots and stagger accordingly to maximize the space between gardeners at the time of use
- Remove or tape off picnic tables and other structures meant for communal seating and gathering.

Hand hygiene

- If the garden has gate access consider leaving the gate open during operating hours so individuals do not have to handle or touch the gate to enter
- Instruct garden users to perform hand hygiene before entering and after leaving the garden site, and after handling common items like hoses
- Set up a hand hygiene station at the garden if possible
 - If hands are visibly soiled, handwashing with soap and water is preferred
 - If not available, alcohol-based hand sanitizer (70% alcohol content) can be used; the hands should be wiped of visible dirt before applying the hand sanitizer

Sharing equipment/tools and cleaning

- Ask volunteers and members to bring their own gardening tools if possible
- Instruct individuals who wear gardening gloves to launder them after each use
- Set up a schedule for cleaning and disinfecting equipment and tools using approved cleaners and disinfectants that are effective for COVID-19. At minimum, clean and disinfect equipment and tools at opening and closing of the garden each day and in between users.
- Provide instructions on cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces, such as gate handles, hoses, and tools.

Signage

- Post clear and visible signage at all garden entrances, and throughout the garden, including:
 - Only staff, designated volunteers, and members are permitted access to the garden
 - Reminders about the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and where to seek assistance if they have symptoms
 - A warning not to enter the garden if they are sick or have had close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19
 - Instructions on proper hand hygiene
 - Maintaining a distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from other people (except for members of the same household)
 - Not sharing food or personal items
 - Garden access will be revoked for anyone not following the rules

Information garden users during COVID-19

- Garden users should ensure that they are familiar with all rules and guidelines prior to accessing the garden
- Individuals must **not** attend the garden if they are sick. If sick, members should arrange to have someone tend their plot for them until they are feeling better.
- Perform hand hygiene before entering and after leaving the garden, and before and after handling common tools such as hoses or gates
 - Handwashing with soap and water is preferred when the hands are visibly dirty. If there is not a sink available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
 - Bring your own hand sanitizer if possible. Perform hand hygiene often.
 - Remember gloves are not a substitute for washing hands
- At all times maintain physical distancing of 2 metres (6 feet) between yourself and other gardeners
- Adhere to the garden schedule and do not attend the garden when it is not your scheduled time
- Avoid touching surfaces, such as gates if possible
- Bring your own garden tools if you have them, and clean and disinfect them after use
- Wash garden gloves after each use
- Do not bring pets to the garden with you
- Avoid touching your nose, mouth, eyes and face
- Place all trash in proper garbage receptacles, or take garbage with you to dispose of at home

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