



Renfrew County and District Health Unit

COVID-19 FACTSHEET

Community Gardens - Safe Operating Requirements for Gardeners & Coordinators

On April 25, 2020, the province of Ontario announced that community gardens are now permitted to open following the guidance of Renfrew County and District's Medical Officer of Health. Renfrew County and District Health Unit provides the following requirements, incorporating instructions from the Ontario Ministry of Health on the safe use of community gardens.

Until further notice, community gardens are **not** a recreational space or place for social gatherings. Their purpose is solely for planting, maintenance, and harvesting food only. In-person events such as work bees, children's events, workshops or potlucks are not allowed. If guidelines change with respect to provincially mandated physical distancing guidelines, those guidelines will also apply.

This factsheet provides specific guidance for gardeners and for garden coordinators as both groups play a role in creating safe spaces for community gardening.

Under the Emergency Order, only gardens with the capacity to meet the public health requirements for community garden use are permitted to operate.

1) Directives for Gardeners

All garden users and plot owners should read and agree to follow these practices prior to using the garden. Please confirm your membership and current contact information with your community garden coordinator, and your agreement to follow the requirements.

Entrance Restrictions

Each gardener must self-screen prior to entering the garden. Review the "[Should I Enter the Garden?](#)" signage posted at the garden entrance for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Do the COVID-19 [self-assessment](#) tool daily. DO NOT come to the garden if you:

- Have a fever, new or worsening cough, difficulty breathing or other symptoms of illness
- Have had close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19
- Have been asked to self-isolate due to travel or close contact with someone who is ill with respiratory symptoms
- No guests are allowed in the community garden.
- Children can only be in the garden as necessary, and must follow all physical distancing (e.g., using a stroller or baby carrier) and hygiene recommendations.
- No pets are allowed. Service animals must be leashed, wearing service vest or identification, and may not be in direct contact with the edibles.

Source: Ontario Ministry of Health COVID-19 Advice to Public Health Units regarding Community Gardens. Adapted from KFL&A Public Health, Sustain Ontario, Durham Region Health Department, Windsor Essex County Health, and Hastings Prince Edward Public Health. **Current as of June 17, 2020.**



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COVID-19 FACTSHEET

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Physical Distancing

- Everyone must always **stay 2 metres or 6 feet apart** (unless gardening with members of the same household).
- **A maximum of 10 people are allowed in the garden at any given time provided physical distancing can be maintained.**
- Avoid gathering in or around the garden.
- Keep trips to and time spent at the garden to a minimum. Follow the garden schedule and only go when it is your scheduled time.
- Sign-in before and sign-out after using the garden to help public health contact gardeners in case another gardener becomes ill.

Cleaning and Disinfection

Hand hygiene is key to preventing the spread of COVID-19.

- Wash hands with soap and water before and after handling common equipment such as hoses or gates, and before and after gardening, entering or leaving the site.
 - If there is not a sink available, bring hand wipes to remove dirt, followed by alcohol-based hand sanitizer (containing at least 70% alcohol). Do this often.
 - Gloves are not a substitute for washing hands.
 - Avoid touching your nose, mouth, eyes and face.
- Wearing a personal mask is a recommended precaution to protect others from the spread of droplets from breathing, talking, coughing, sneezing, etc.
 - Wash hands before putting the mask on.
 - Don't share personal masks with others. Wash reusable masks after each use.
 - Dispose of single-use masks and gloves in a lined (garbage bag) trash bin only.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with your sleeve or a tissue, then immediately throw the tissue in the garbage and wash your hands.
- Bring your own garden tools, equipment, gardening gloves, and disinfecting products and take these items with you when you leave.
 - [Clean and sanitize](#) tools after use, following the manufacturer's instructions.
 - Each gardener must wear their own pair of gloves, and launder after use.
 - Speak with the garden coordinator if bringing your own tools is not an option.
 - Place all trash in a lined trash bin. If one is not available, gardeners must take trash with them to dispose of at home.

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COVID-19 FACTSHEET

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2) Directives for Garden Coordinators

Before opening gardens, garden coordinators must ensure the following are in place to protect gardeners and reduce the spread of COVID-19. Use the [COVID-19 Action Plan Template for Opening of Community Gardens](#) to decide how you will meet the necessary public health requirements for your garden layout, number of plots, amenities on site, etc.

Physical Distancing

- Post signage that the garden is closed to the public. Only staff, garden members, and volunteers can access it. If there is no fence or gate, monitor to make sure crowding doesn't occur.
- Each person must always maintain a distance of 2 metres (6 feet), unless from the same household. **A maximum of 5 people are allowed in the garden at any given time.** Make a schedule to let gardeners know when they can safely tend to their plot.
- When scheduling times, consider the space between plots and stagger accordingly to maximize the space between gardeners at the time of use and ensure that the 2 metres (6 feet) distances can be maintained.
- Remove or tape-off picnic tables and other structures meant for communal seating and gathering.
- Make a garden plan showing the configuration of the garden, plot layouts, spacing changes because of physical distancing, etc. Share with members.

Infection Control: Cleaning and Disinfection

- If possible, provide a hand washing station and/or hand sanitizer at the garden, with signage on how to wash hands properly, or how to use hand sanitizer correctly.
 - Sanitizer should be at least 70% alcohol.
 - Ask gardeners to bring hand wipes and hand sanitizer with them when gardening.
 - If hands are visibly soiled, handwashing with soap and water is preferred, but hand sanitizer can be effective provided grime and dirt is removed from hands first.



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COVID-19 FACTSHEET

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- Instruct garden users and plot owners to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before entering and after leaving the garden site, as well as before and after using shared equipment (e.g., garden hose, wheel barrow).
- Post signage at the garden entrance(s) and spaces where shared equipment is held.
 - [How to Wash Your Hands](#)
 - [How to Use Hand Sanitizer](#)
 - [Physical Distancing](#)
 - [Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings](#)

Tools and Equipment

- Remove shared tools and gloves and encourage gardeners to bring their own.
 - If removing shared tools is not possible, gardeners are to wear their own gloves when using shared tools or wash/sanitize their hands after using shared tools.
 - When cleaning tools, be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Set up a sanitizing schedule for equipment and tools using approved disinfectant and cleaners that are effective for COVID-19:
 - Clean equipment and high-touch surfaces such as water taps and hoses, locks, and gates at opening and closing.
 - Post signage instructing individuals to wash hands before and after handling common items like hoses, gates etc.
 - If needed, have a system where used dirty tools are dropped off in one area for cleaning, and clean disinfected tools picked up in another. A designated person must clean and disinfect tools.
- Make up a system to minimize touching of shared surfaces such as shed doors such as assigning one person to open at the start of the day, and another to lock up.
- Post signage and provide resources to gardeners so they know the steps they must take to safely use tools, how to clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, hand hygiene, and other requirements.
- Garden coordinators may wish to have a scheduled rotation of members to perform site maintenance duties.

Source: Ontario Ministry of Health COVID-19 Advice to Public Health Units regarding Community Gardens. Adapted from KFL&A Public Health, Sustain Ontario, Durham Region Health Department, Windsor Essex County Health, and Hastings Prince Edward Public Health. **Current as of June 17, 2020.**



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COVID-19 FACTSHEET

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Signage and Communication

- Inform all garden users and plot owners of the requirements prior to allowing access to the garden. Use the ["Tracking Tool for Community Garden Coordinators"](#) to **update contact information and confirm membership prior to opening.**
- Have a **sign-in/sign-out sheet to track who uses the garden.** Include name, date, time in and time out to help public health with communication and contact tracing, if needed.
- Post clear, visible signage throughout the garden reminding users of the requirements that must be followed when using the garden, the number of persons allowed in the garden at a time, no sharing of food or personal items, physical distancing, how to safely share garden tools, how to clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- Post the ["Should I Enter the Community Garden"](#) signage instructing those with symptoms or who have had contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 to not enter the garden. Advise garden users to monitor their health and do the [self-assessment](#) each day. Direct members to stay home if they are sick and contact the Renfrew County and District Health Unit COVID-19 Intake Line at 613-735-8654 for a COVID-19 risk assessment.

Compliance

- Review the requirements with members, users, and volunteers, explaining they must be followed in order to have continued access to the garden. To help you track those who have agreed to participate under COVID-19 requirements consider using the [Tracking Tool for Community Garden Coordinators](#).

Renfrew County and District Health Unit Resources for Community Gardens

- [COVID-19: Action Plan for Opening of Community Gardens](#)
- [Tracking Tool for Community Garden Coordinators: COVID-19 Requirements](#)
- [Should I Enter the Community Garden? Signage](#)

Information

- [Sustain Ontario - COVID-19 Recommendations for Community Gardens](#)
- [Public Health Ontario](#)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada](#)

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Carolyn Froats-Emond, RD at 1-800-267-1097 or 613-735-8654, ext. 517. Thank you for all you do to promote community gardens and support garden safety.

Source: Ontario Ministry of Health COVID-19 Advice to Public Health Units regarding Community Gardens. Adapted from KFL&A Public Health, Sustain Ontario, Durham Region Health Department, Windsor Essex County Health, and Hastings Prince Edward Public Health. **Current as of June 17, 2020.**