



Renfrew County and District Health Unit

COVID-19 Guidance for Safe Community Gardening

As of April 8, 2021 the province considers community gardens as community services and allows them to operate under strict health and safety guidelines. Gardens are for planting, maintenance and harvesting food only. Currently, they are not a recreational space or a place for any social gathering (e.g., children's events, workshops).

This document outlines the current guidance provided by RCDHU under Dr. Robert Cushman, Acting Medical Officer of Health. Municipalities, community organizations and garden coordinators must ensure all requirements are in place prior to opening. **Please ensure all garden users and plot owners are familiar with and agree to follow all requirements before becoming members of the community garden.**

Note: The COVID-19 pandemic is evolving rapidly. The following guidance is subject to change. Please visit the Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) [website](#) regularly for updates.

New this year:

- Provincial requirement to produce a [COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan](#) outlining measures and controls put in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Post in a visible location for all garden members to review. You can use the *COVID-19 Safety Plan Template for Opening Community Gardens* as a guide to writing the plan for your garden.
- The total number of people in the garden at one time should not exceed 50% capacity of the area. See Section 2. Physical Distancing.

1. Self-Screen Before Visiting the Garden. Stay Home if Indicated.

- **Prohibit access to anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 or close contact with a confirmed case. Each garden user must complete the COVID-19 [self-assessment](#) tool before every visit and follow the direction provided.**
- Post the "[Should I Enter the Garden?](#)" signage at the garden entrance.
- Post signage that the garden is closed to the public.
- Children can only be in the garden as necessary and must follow all physical distancing and hand 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.



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2. Ensure Physical Distancing

- **Limit the total number of people in the garden at any one time to ensure a physical distance of at least 2 metres can be maintained from every other person and not exceed 50% capacity of the area.**
 - Set the maximum capacity limit by taking the total square metres of the area accessible to the public and dividing the number by 8 and rounding the result down to the nearest whole number.
 - **Post the maximum capacity limit at the garden entrance.**
 - Consider the space and the number of plots available, as well as the distance between plots.
 - Consider numbering plots and have members assigned to odd/even numbered plots come on different days.
- Make a schedule to let gardeners know when they can safely tend to their plot.
 - Consider the space between plots and stagger times to maximize the space between gardeners.
- Remove or tape-off picnic tables and other structures meant for communal seating.

3. Use Masks and Personal Protective Equipment

- **Wear a tight-fitting mask when it is difficult to maintain physical distancing of 2 metres between members of different households.**
 - Wash hands before putting the mask on.
 - Do not share personal masks with others. Wash reusable masks after each use.
 - Dispose of single-use masks and gloves in a lined trash bin only.
 - **Masks do not replace the need for physical distancing and hand hygiene.** For example, if members are lined up for watering, masks should be worn if waiting in line, and physical distancing should be maintained.
- It is recommended that children (over the age of two years) wear masks if they are unable to maintain a 2-metre distance from those other than their caregiver or household member.
- PPE that protects the eyes (e.g., face shield, goggles) is recommended when people may come within 2 metres of another person who is not wearing a mask.



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4. Practice and Promote Hand Hygiene

- **Wash or sanitize your hands before entering and after leaving the garden, before or after touching your face, and before and after handling common equipment such as hoses, latches, gates.**
- If possible, municipalities/organizers should have handwashing and/or hand sanitizer stations throughout the garden. Ensure hand hygiene supplies are well stocked.
 - If there is not a handwashing station, have gardeners bring hand wipes to remove visible soil and dirt, followed by alcohol-based hand sanitizer (containing at least 70% alcohol).
 - Choose a hand sanitizer approved for sale by [Health Canada](#) (that has a DIN or NPN).
- Gloves are not a substitute for washing hands. Never share gloves.
- Avoid touching your nose, mouth, eyes, and face.
- Bring your own garden tools, equipment, gardening gloves, and disinfecting products, and take these items with you when you leave.
 - 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.

5. Clean and Disinfect Equipment and High Touch Surfaces

- Share *Cleaning and Disinfection in Your Community Garden* and orient gardeners to the correct steps for cleaning and sanitizing tools and surfaces.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., the concentration, the application method, the contact time).
- Set up a sanitizing schedule for equipment and tools:
 - All shared tools and hard surfaces such as latches to garden gates, door handles to garden sheds, wheelbarrow handles, compost bins, planting tables, and hand tools **must be disinfected before and after each use.**
 - Bleach solution can be used but requires surfaces to be cleaned with soap and water first to remove soil and dirt.



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6. Post Required Signage

- **Post clear, visible signage at all entrances, and at common areas** reminding members, staff and volunteers about the garden requirements.
- **Signage to post:**
 - a. Garden entrance – Maximum number persons allowed in the garden at a time (50% capacity)
 - b. ["Should I Enter the Community Garden"](#) instructing those with symptoms or who have had contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 to not enter the garden
 - c. No sharing of food or personal items (e.g., gloves)
 - d. [Physical distancing](#)
 - e. Garden access for members only
 - f. [Cleaning and Disinfecting in Your Community Garden](#)
 - g. [How to wash your hands](#) and [How to use hand sanitizer](#)
 - h. [My Mask Protects You](#)

7. Communicate with Garden Users

- Make members aware of [COVID-19 symptoms](#).
- Make members aware of the health and safety requirements.
- Maintain an up-to-date list of members, including contact information. Use the ["Tracking Tool for Community Garden Coordinators"](#) to confirm membership prior to opening.
- Set up a schedule so gardeners know when to attend the garden based on the posted maximum numbers allowed.
- Have a sign-in/sign-out sheet to track who uses the garden. Include name, date, time in and time out for contact tracing, if needed.
- Communicate with members frequently about the guidelines.



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8. Monitor Compliance

- Monitor operation of the gardens to ensure all members are following the regulatory requirements and public health measures necessary to stop the spread of COVID-19. It is important that everyone is safe and respectful in the gardens.
 - Garden organizers are to limit access for a garden member that is unwilling to follow the requirements above.
- To 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](#)
- [Cleaning and Disinfecting in Your Community Garden](#)

Information

- Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020 [Ontario Regulation 82/20](#)
- [Ministry Guidance on Health and Safety for Community Garden Sector during COVID-19](#)
- [Public Health Ontario](#)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada](#)

For more information or to speak with a Public Health Inspector, please call Renfrew County and District Health Unit at 613-732-3629.

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, Peterborough Public Health, Sustain Ontario, Peel Public Health, Windsor Essex County Health, and Hastings Prince Edward Public Health. **Updated April 21, 2021.**