

COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR COMMUNITY GARDENS

A community garden has either individual or shared plots of land or garden beds on private or public land that community members can use to grow fresh fruits and vegetables. This guidance document is for municipal staff, volunteers and garden users to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19, while using a shared garden space.

DO THE FOLLOWING TO HELP STOP THE SPREAD OF COVID-19:

Entrance Restrictions

- Ensure access is limited to registered members, staff and volunteers. Non-members and visitors should not be permitted to enter.
- Gardens are for planting, maintaining and harvesting food only. No events such as flower festivals, children's events and other programming, training or group builds are allowed.

Screening

- [Put up screening signs](#) at all entrances and ensure everyone self-screens before coming into the garden.
- Anyone displaying symptoms (i.e. fever, cough, difficulty breathing, muscle aches, fatigue, headache, sore throat, runny nose) or who has come into contact with someone who has shown symptoms, must not come into the garden.

Hand Hygiene

- Where possible provide handwashing and/or alcohol-based hand sanitizer supplies for everyone to wash and sanitize their hands.
- Post [handwashing](#) and [hand sanitizing](#) posters in areas that can be clearly seen from the garden.
- Everyone should wash their hands with soap and water frequently or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol) before entering and after leaving the garden, after using shared tools, and before and after each change of gloves. If hands are visibly soiled, handwashing with soap and water is preferred. If not available, hands must be wiped clean before applying alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- If it is not possible to have alcohol-based hand sanitizer available at the garden, ask gardeners to bring their own.
- If providing hand soap and alcohol-based hand sanitizer, ensure dispensers are checked regularly and are kept full.

Cough Hygiene

- Reduce the spread of COVID-19 by posting [Cover Your Cough](#) posters in locations where they can be clearly seen around the garden (e.g. cough or sneeze into your sleeve or a tissue and not your hands, followed by hand hygiene).
- Everyone should avoid touching their face, specifically the eyes, nose, and mouth.

Physical Distancing

- Limit and monitor access to the garden to ensure that [physical distancing](#) is maintained.
- Consider developing a schedule to facilitate equal access and limit the number of gardeners at any one time, to ensure physical distancing can be maintained. Post the schedule at the garden.
- Children should only be brought to the garden on an as-needed basis and should be told to follow physical distancing and hand and cough hygiene.
- Close and/or block off all non-essential facilities such as picnic tables and benches.

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Tools and Tool Sharing

- As often as possible, remove shared tools and ask gardeners to bring their own.
- Provide instructions regarding how to safely share garden materials.
- If removing shared tools is not possible, gardeners are to wear their own gloves when using shared tools or wash their hands after using shared tools. Launder gloves after each use.
- Shared tools, spigots, and other shared surfaces (e.g. handles, locks, railings, etc.) must be [cleaned and disinfected](#) before and after each use.
- Make sanitizer available to clean and disinfect tools (household disinfectant or 4 tsp bleach/litre water).
- Remove dirt and organic matter from the surface of the tools before cleaning and disinfecting, and follow the manufacturer's cleaning instructions.

Enforcement

- Each garden must follow local by-laws and provincial emergency measures. The number of gardeners in the garden is up to municipalities to determine based on the size of the garden.

Supporting Each Other and Our Community

We understand that this is a challenging time but public health measures like this are needed to limit the spread of COVID-19 in our community. We thank you for the service that you provide to our community.

Please contact the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit if you have any questions at 1-877-721-7520, Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

April 29, 2020