

COVID-19 Guidelines for Community Gardens

COVID-19 is a virus that is easily transmitted in the community. For information on the virus, please visit regionofwaterloo.ca/COVID19

Community gardens provide a unique opportunity for individuals and families to grow a variety of fruits and vegetables that are an important part of a healthy diet. COVID-19 presents some challenges for the 2020 growing season and the following guidelines provide direction to ensure all gardeners minimize their risk of exposure to the virus while at the garden.

For garden coordinators/organizers

- It is advised that all gardens only be accessed by the members of the garden or the individuals who are assigned a plot in the garden.
- Signs must be posted at all entrances to the garden to identify that it is closed to the general public.
- Gardeners should be on-site only for the planting and maintenance of the garden and should not engage in other social activities or gatherings.
- Create a gardening schedule to ensure that physical distancing, 2 metres between gardeners, can be maintained.
 - Gardeners bringing other family members or children with them must ensure they are able to keep a 2 metres between their family and other gardeners.
- Good hand hygiene is key to fighting COVID-19. Community gardens must provide hand washing stations and/or hand sanitizer that is easily accessible to gardeners.
- It is also recommended that all gardeners sign an agreement to follow the physical distancing and sanitary practices as described below. It is up to the garden coordinators/organizers how they wish to secure and document signed agreements.

For gardeners

- Prior to visiting your garden plot, you should use the [COVID-19 self assessment tool](#) to ensure you do not have any symptoms present and/or requirement to self-isolate at home.
 - Note that older adults, individuals with underlying medical conditions (e.g., heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases), and individuals with compromised immune systems from a medical condition or treatment (e.g., chemotherapy) are more vulnerable to COVID-19.
- Any one who is unwell should not visit the garden
 - Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 or concerned they have been exposed to COVID-19 should not visit the garden and should seek testing at an assessment centre. See the [assessment centres webpage](#) for more details.
- Clean your hands when entering and exiting the garden
 - Bring hot soapy water in a thermos or hand sanitizer for their personal use at the garden.
- Physical distancing must be maintained at all times. This means you must keep 2 metres between yourself and other gardeners.
- Bring your own tools where possible and not share tools with other gardeners. If using gardening gloves, the gloves must be washed after each use. Do not share gloves.

Sharing gardening tools

- If garden tools must be shared, gardeners must clean their hands before use, wear gloves while using them and ensure the tool is properly cleaned and disinfected after use.
- All shared tools and hard surfaces such as latches to garden gates, door handles to garden sheds, compost bins, planting tables, and hand tools must be disinfected before and after each use.

Disinfecting hard surfaces, tools

- Disinfectants/disinfectant wipes
 - Can be used after the surfaces have been cleaned and free from visible soil
 - Have an 8-digit drug identification number (DIN) approved by [Health Canada](#)
- Bleach solution can be used, but requires surfaces to be cleaned and requires at least 1 minute of contact time. [Health Canada](#) recommends:
 - Diluted bleach prepared according to the instructions on the label or in a ratio of
 - 1 teaspoon (5 mL) per cup (250 mL) or
 - 4 teaspoons (20 mL) per litre (1000 mL)
 - Assuming bleach is 5 per cent sodium hypochlorite (household bleach can vary in strength)
 - Bleach solution gets weaker in heat and sun and a new solution should be re-mixed at least twice a day.
- Disinfectants, household cleaners, and bleach are meant to be used to clean surfaces. Never use these products on the skin or internally (e.g. by swallowing or injecting these products) as this could cause serious harm. Read and follow manufacturer's instructions for safe use (e.g., wear gloves and use in well-ventilated area).

Enforcement

- Garden coordinators must ensure appropriate signage is in place to remind individuals of the policies and procedures of the community garden during COVID-19.
- Community gardens may be monitored and strict adherence to the recommendations is required. Gardeners who do not follow the recommendations will be asked to leave the garden, or may face fines for non-compliance under the Ontario Emergency Measures Orders and Regulations.
 - Local municipal by-law can be contacted regarding non-compliance and enforcement of the legislation.

Additional resources

- [Public Health Agency of Canada](#)
 - [Hard surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers \(COVID-19\)](#)
 - [List of approved disinfectants](#)
- [Province of Ontario – COVID-19](#)
- [Public Health Ontario – COVID-19 Public Resources](#)
- [Sustain Ontario – Recommendations for Ontario Community Gardens](#)