

COVID-19: Safe Operating Recommendations for Community Gardens



On April 25, 2020 the Government of Ontario lifted certain COVID-19 restrictions, allowing the use of allotment gardens and community gardens to operate following the guidance of the City of Hamilton's Medical Officer of Health.

Community gardens are now considered essential. As essential, they do not have to limit themselves to gatherings of 5 people or less. However, all community gardens and gardeners must continue to practice physical distancing and follow the safe operating guidelines below.

ENTRANCE RESTRICTIONS

- Prohibit access to anyone who is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 or has had close contact with a confirmed case. Individuals exhibiting symptoms possibly due to COVID-19 infection while at the garden are to leave the garden and contact their family doctor or Public Health Services.
- Restrict access to registered members, staff, and volunteers. Non-members and visitors should not be permitted to enter.
- Permit access to plant, maintain and harvest food only. Prohibit events such as flower festivals, children's events and other programming, training, group builds, etc.

SIGNAGE REQUIREMENTS

- Place clear, visible signage at all garden entrances reminding registered members, staff and volunteers about the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and where to seek assistance if they have symptoms.
- Place clear, visible signage throughout the garden – especially locations where shared equipment, tools, etc. are located – reminding registered members, staff and volunteers of the requirements that must be followed when using the garden to prevent the transmission of COVID-19.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Limit the number of gardeners in a space to ensure physical distancing can be maintained.

- Everyone in the garden must always maintain physical distancing of 6 feet or 2 metres (unless gardening with members of the same household).
- To ensure physical distancing is possible, each community garden should determine the maximum number of people permitted in the garden at one time. It is recommended that a garden schedule be developed to control the number of people permitted in the garden at once.
- Closing and/or blocking off all non-essential amenities such as picnic tables and benches.
- No guests are allowed in the community garden and social events should be cancelled to discourage any gathering.
- Children should only be brought to garden on an as-needed basis and should be instructed to follow these physical distancing and hygiene recommendations except when gardening with close family members.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

- If possible, provide a place for gardeners to wash their hands. If the handwashing station is in a bathroom, the bathroom needs to be equipped with water under pressure, liquid hand soap, and paper towels. Bathrooms are required to be cleaned at least twice daily, or as needed.
- Encourage gardeners to bring hand sanitizer with them when gardening. If hands are visibly soiled, hand washing is recommended in place of hand sanitizer.
- Members are asked to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before entering and after leaving the garden, and after using shared tools, if feasible.
- All high touch surfaces such as faucet handles, spigots, shed locks/handles, gate locks should be cleaned and disinfected twice daily.

ADDITIONAL SAFE OPERATING RECOMMENDATIONS

- Prior to visiting the garden, gardeners should complete the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 [self-assessment tool](#) and follow the instructions provided. Anyone who is feeling unwell should not visit the garden.
- Some operators may wish to conduct active screening of all visitors to the garden prior to entry. This would involve asking questions about: COVID-19 symptoms, travel history, and if they have come into contact with any ill individuals. A sample screening tool is posted on the Ministry of Health [webpage](#).
- Gardens should use a sign-in and sign-out system or implement another way to track who is in the garden each day. This may assist with Public Health follow-up with gardeners if required or other necessary measures.
- Gardeners can choose to wear a non-medical mask, as an additional way of covering the mouth and nose to prevent respiratory droplets from contaminating others or landing on surfaces. This does not replace proven measures like physical distancing and proper hand hygiene. More information on the use of non-medical masks and face coverings can be found on the [Public Health Agency of Canada webpage](#).

Consider removing shared tools and gloves and encouraging 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 their hands after using shared tools.
- ▶ If cleaning tools, be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- ▶ Each gardener must wear their own pair of gloves.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Guidance on how to safely use a community garden during the COVID-19 pandemic is available on Sustain Ontario's [website](#).

Refer to Public Health Ontario [website](#) for fact sheets on how to self isolate, complete a self assessment, physical distancing, how to wash your hands and cleaning & disinfection.

These guidelines apply to community and allotment gardens across the City of Hamilton. Please visit www.hamilton.ca/coronavirus regularly for COVID-19 updates and additional information on protecting yourself and others.