

COVID-19: Community Garden Safety Guidelines

As of April 25, 2020 the Government of Ontario declared community gardens as “an essential source of fresh food for some individuals and families, including those who face food insecurity”. The following guidelines outline how community gardens can operate safely under the current Emergency Orders. To protect health and safety, only community gardens that comply with these guidelines can operate.

Garden Access

- Gardens should only be accessed and used for the purpose of maintenance and planting, not for programming (e.g. events, training or work parties).
- Gardens must be **closed to the public** and accessed by **registered garden members**, official staff and volunteers only.
 - Post Signage provided by Health Unit/City of Thunder Bay for gardens.
- Have the **screening sign** for COVID-19 posted (available at www.tbdhu.com/stopgerms under “Screening”)
- Participants must follow these guidelines at all times. Garden coordinators should have a policy to determine what happens if guidelines are not followed.
 - If needed, there is a phone line available for reporting COVID-19 order violations in the Thunder Bay District: (807) 625-5900 or toll-free 1 (888) 294-6630
- Have an updated contact list
 - All garden members who will be active in 2020 must sign an agreement to abide by COVID-19 Community Garden Safety Guidelines
- Individuals should **not** enter the garden if they:
 - **Are not feeling well** and have symptoms that might be related to COVID-19
 - Are returning from **travel outside Northwestern Ontario**
 - Have been in **close contact with a confirmed case** of COVID-19

These individuals should self-isolate immediately and call Thunder Bay District Health Unit at 1 (807) 625-5900 or Toll-Free at 1 (888) 294-6630 to determine next steps. For a full list of symptoms, visit www.tbdhu.com/selfmonitoring#symptoms

- Have resources ready and/or posted as to where they should call
- Consider staggering the use of garden plots and creating a **schedule**. For example, users of even numbered plots can visit on even numbered days and users of odd numbered plots can visit on odd numbered day, provided a 2 metre distance between individuals can be maintained.

Physical Distancing

- Maintain a distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from other people (except housemates) at all times.
- Place physical reminders/signage in the garden to demonstrate what 2 metres (6 feet) looks like (e.g. lay tape/markers)
- Limit the number of gardeners in a space to ensure physical distancing can be maintained, if required. Consider determining the maximum number of people in the garden at one time for physical distancing to be maintained and inform gardeners about the maximum number.
- Children should only be brought to garden on an as-needed basis. Children should be supervised and follow all guidelines.
- No pets are allowed. Garden members can bring service animals.
- Gardeners should plan ahead, use gardening techniques that reduce labour, and minimize the number of trips they make to the garden. For example:
 - Use mulch to reduce the need for watering and weeding.
 - Row covers can control pest invasions when people are not in the garden as frequently to monitor pest activity.
- Remove or tape off any picnic tables and other structures meant for communal seating and gathering.

Hand Hygiene

- Provide **handwashing stations** and/or hand **sanitizer**. Anyone entering the gardens should wash their hands before entering and upon leaving.
 - Visibly dirty hands should be washed first before using a hand sanitizer.
 - Sanitizer should be at least 60% alcohol.
- If handwashing sink is not available, handwashing stations should include:
 - A) Potable water in a jug, with a spout
 - B) A bucket for grey water collection, placed under the water jug
 - C) Liquid soap in a pump dispenser
 - D) Paper towels
 - For an example of a handwashing station see page 10 of the [Special Events Guide](#)
- Post sign instructing/reminding individuals to wash hands before and after handling common items like hoses, gates etc.
- Avoid touching one's face, particularly nose, mouth and eyes.

Cleaning/Disinfecting

- Gardeners should consider bringing their own tools and garden gloves to avoid sharing items. Gloves should be washed after each use.
- Shared items should be cleaned and disinfected before and after each use. These include:
 - Bins/buckets
 - Shared tools
 - Doorknobs

- Gates/ fences
- Locks
- Water spigots
- **Cleaners:** Break down grease and remove organic material from the surface. If the surface is visibly dirty, use a cleaner first before using disinfectants.
- **Disinfectants:** Have chemicals that kill most germs. Use a disinfectant after the surface has been cleaned. Note that disinfectants should not be used on food preparation surfaces or other items that will come in contact with food.
- For information on cleaning and disinfecting products and their use, visit www.tbdhu.com/stopgerms and look under the *Environmental Cleaning* tab.
- If the garden has gate access, consider leaving the gate open during hours of operation so individuals do not have to handle or touch the gate to enter.
- Launder clothes that were used when gardening after gardening.

Additional Considerations

- **Equity:** Gardens may consider how they can prioritize garden access to people who are facing specific barriers to food/income access. For example, they may have a separate, prioritized wait list for people facing barriers to food access.
- Have a dedicated decision maker (e.g. lead garden coordinator). Have a plan in place in the event the designated decision maker needs to self-isolate (e.g. have a co-leader).

Contact Information

For more information or details about these guidelines please email Vincent Ng (vincent.ng@tbdhu.com) and Ivan Ho (ivan.ho@tbdhu.com).