

COVID-19: Safe Operating Requirements for Community Gardens

Revised June 23, 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic is evolving rapidly, and this guidance is subject to change. Please visit the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit (LGLDHU) website (<https://healthunit.org/coronavirus/>) regularly for updates and additional information.

On April 25th the government of Ontario lifted restrictions, allowing community gardens to operate following the guidance of the local Medical Officer of Health. This memo provides current guidance provided by the LGLDHU under Dr. Paula Stewart, Medical Officer of Health.

The Role of Community Gardens:

Community gardens play an important role in our food system, providing spaces for residents to increase their access to healthy foods. In addition, gardens promote a sense of community belonging and an opportunity for residents to be physically active.

For Municipalities, Community Organizations & Garden Coordinators:

Before opening gardens, municipalities, community organizations and garden coordinators must ensure the following are in place:

- Post signage indicating that only garden members/owners are able to access the garden.
- Inform all garden users and plot owners of guidelines prior to allowing access to the garden.
- Update the list of current registered members, staff and volunteers, and track those who have agreed to participate under these guidelines.
- Consider using a sign-in and sign-out system to track who is in the garden each day. This may assist with communication and close-contact tracing, if required.
- Community garden is for planting, maintaining and harvesting food only. Prohibit events such as flower festivals, children's events and other programming, training, group builds, etc.
- Post signage reminding users of the rules, including no more than 10 people at a time, no sharing of food or personal items and physical distancing requirements.
- Instruct garden users and plot owners to wash their hands before entering and after leaving the garden site.
- Limit garden access to no more than a total of 10 people at one time. This can be achieved by communicating a work schedule to garden users and plot owners.
- When scheduling times, consider the space between plots and stagger accordingly to maximize the space between gardeners at the time of use. Ensure physical distancing of 2 metres (6 ft.) can be maintained for people who are not of the same household.
- Remove or tape off picnic tables and other structures meant for communal seating and gathering.
- 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.

- Do not provide shared tools; instead ask that volunteers or plot owners bring their own tools. If this is not possible, assign tools to each person.
- Provide hand sanitizer or hand washing station at garden, if possible. Sanitizer should be at least 60% alcohol.
- Set up a sanitizing schedule for equipment, tools and other common surfaces using disinfectants and cleaners. Health Canada has created a list of disinfectants that are safe and effective against the virus (<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/list.html>)
 - » At minimum clean at opening and closing
 - » Post signs instructing/reminding individuals to wash hands before and after handling common items like hoses, gates etc.
- Revoke access of any member not following the rules set out for garden safety.

COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines for All Community Gardeners (add link) may be printed and distributed to all members.

Adapted from Windsor Essex County Health Unit



For more information, please call **1-800-660-5853**
or visit our website at www.healthunit.org