

COVID-19: Safe Operating Requirements for Community Gardens

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](#) regularly for updates and additional information.

As of April 8, 2021 the province considers community gardens as community services and allows them to operate. This fact sheet 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.
- Prior to each time going to the garden, ensure each user completes a [COVID-19 symptom self-assessment](#).
- Encourage users to wear a face covering/mask, especially if there is a chance they may come within 2 metres of another person. Eye protection adds another layer of protection.
- The garden must have a [COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan](#) in place.
- Use a sign-in and sign-out system to track who is in the garden each day. This will assist with communication and close-contact tracing, if required.
- Community garden is for planting, maintaining and harvesting food only. Prohibit events/gatherings such as flower festivals, children's events and other programming, training, group builds, etc.
- Post signage reminding users of the rules, including 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.
- Capacity limit:
 - » Technically, there is no capacity limit for outdoor community gardens, as long as a minimum of 2 metres (6 ft.) can be maintained at all times between people who are not of the same household. However, it's recommended to limit the number of gardeners who can be at the garden 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.

Adapted from Windsor Essex County Health Unit