

COVID-19 Guidance for Community & Allotment Gardens

On April 25, 2020, the provincial government amended its Emergency Order to allow community and allotment gardens to operate. Community gardens exist on both City of Toronto and private property. Allotment gardens are permitted through the City of Toronto and are located on City property. In this document, garden member refers to gardeners at community gardens and allotment gardens.

As of April 30, 2020, there continues to be community spread of COVID-19. Toronto Public Health (TPH) has a role to protect the health of all residents, and public health measures are in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19. This document provides interim directions for community and allotment gardens to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 for individuals using these gardens. Any person that uses community or allotment gardens must do so in accordance with these directions. While it is recognized that these instructions will take effort on the part of garden members and managers, given the current spread of infection there is risk that needs to be managed by individuals participating in community and allotment gardens. It is important that garden members and managers commit to following these directions for their own health and to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to the general public.

The risk of severe illness from COVID-19 is greater in older adults, individuals with a weak immune system, and individuals with a pre-existing medical condition. Toronto Public Health strongly encourages residents who are at higher risk of contracting and becoming seriously ill from COVID-19 infection, such as those over the age of 70, to self-isolate, limit interaction with others, and to stay home as much as possible. If you are an older adult (aged 70+), an individual with a weak immune system, or an individual with a medical condition it is recommended that you **not** participate in community gardens.

Infection prevention and control measures to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 are as follows:

Reduce the risk of transmission

- Stay at home when you are ill.
- Practice [physical distancing](#), and maintain a two metre (six feet) distance from others when at the garden.
- Respect the provincial Emergency Order that prohibits social gatherings of more than five people when at the garden.

Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette

- Prior to entering or exiting the gardens, every person must [wash hands](#) with soap and warm water for at least 15 seconds. If warm water is not available, wash your hands with cold water and soap and then apply hand sanitizer.
- If hands are visibly soiled, handwashing with soap and water is preferred.
- If soap and water are not available, hands must be wiped clean before applying an alcohol-based [hand sanitizer](#).
- Cover your cough or sneeze into a tissue. Immediately throw the tissue in the garbage and wash your hands.

- If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve or arm.
- Avoid touching your face, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.

Declaration from garden manager and garden members

- Each garden manager and garden member must sign the [Toronto Public Health Community and Allotment Garden Declaration](#), which states that garden managers and members must adhere to the interim directions.
- Signed and dated declarations for all members of community gardens must be kept by community garden managers and must be made available to TPH upon request in order to investigate a positive case of COVID-19, should one be detected.
- Signed and dated declarations are required before a garden member can participate in an allotment garden in order to prevent the spread of infection.

Self-screening

- Every person visiting a garden must complete the [self-assessment for COVID-19](#) on the Ontario Ministry of Health website. If they do not pass the assessment they should not participate in community gardening until they pass the assessment and do not have symptoms of COVID-19. Gardeners can visit the [City's website](#) to determine if further care is required and to learn about assessment centres.
- All garden members and managers should be aware of symptoms of COVID-19, including:
 - fever
 - cough
 - difficulty breathing
 - muscle aches and tiredness
 - sore throat
 - headache
 - runny nose
 - new loss of taste or smell

Entrance Restrictions

- Anyone who is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 or has had close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 cannot enter a community or allotment garden.
- No visitors are permitted to community or allotment gardens.
- Access to the garden is only permitted to plant, maintain and harvest food. No events, training, or other programming is allowed.

Record Keeping

- Each community garden and allotment garden must maintain a sign-in and sign-out system to track who is in the garden each day. This will assist with contact tracing if required if someone develops COVID-19. This record needs to include:
 - Full name of person who visited the garden and contact information (phone number and email).
 - Date and time the person visited the garden.

- The garden manager must keep records of all people who entered the garden and make them available to TPH, upon request.
- Records must be able to be submitted to TPH electronically, if requested.

Cleaning and Disinfecting Requirements

- Thoroughly clean and disinfect high traffic areas, and frequently touched surfaces and objects (e.g. entrances/exits, tool sheds, water spigots and hoses, waste containers, and common areas).
- High touch surfaces and items in common areas must be cleaned and disinfected after each use.
- In general, regular household cleaners such as bleach, or alcohol-based solutions are acceptable.
- Review [Public Health Ontario's Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings document](#).

Equipment and Tools Requirements

- Avoid sharing tools and equipment, if possible.
- If you must share tools and equipment, disinfect after each use.
- Do not share gardening gloves.
- Gardening gloves should be laundered after each use.
- Gardening gloves are recommended as a way to maintain good hand hygiene while gardening.

Required Signage

- Post the [physical distancing poster](#) and [how to protect yourself poster](#) at all garden entrances, and at common areas, such as the tool shed and hose area.

Communications

- Community garden managers must:
 - provide information to garden members to ensure they are familiar with [symptoms of COVID-19](#)
 - create a schedule to minimize crowding at the garden
 - maintain an up-to-date list of members, including contact information
 - communicate with members frequently about these guidelines.

Gardeners who become ill while at the garden

- People who become ill with COVID-19 symptoms while at the garden should go home immediately, in a private vehicle if possible, and self-isolate. They should also review the City of Toronto [website](#) for more information about COVID-19.
- If a garden member or manager tests positive for COVID-19, TPH will follow-up with close contacts who may include other garden members. Other garden members who came in close contact with the infected member may also be required to self-isolate.

More information

For more information, visit our website at www.toronto.ca/COVID19 or call us at 416-338-7600.

References

- British Columbia (2020 March 24). *Protecting BC farmers and farm workers during the COVID-19 pandemic*. Retrieved from <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/covid-19-pho-guidance-farms-farm-workers.pdf>
- Toronto Public Health (2020). *2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) [Fact Sheet]*. City of Toronto. Retrieved from https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/8d59-Fact-Sheet_Novel-Coronavirus.pdf