



PUBLIC HEALTH MEMO

COVID-19

COVID-19: Guidance for Community Gardens

The COVID-19 pandemic is evolving rapidly, and this guidance is subject to change. Please visit the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit website (www.wechu.org) regularly for updates and additional information. To subscribe for timely and relevant email updates please, subscribe through the wechu.org website.

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 WECHU under Dr. Wajid Ahmed, Medical Officer of Health.

The role of community gardens:

Community gardens play an important role in our food system. They provide spaces for residents to grow their own food, and therefore help to increase their access to healthy foods. Gardens promote a sense of community belonging and an opportunity for residents to be physically active.

For Garden Coordinators and Garden Managers:

Before opening gardens, garden coordinators and garden managers must ensure the following are in place:

- Post signage that only garden members/owners are able to access the garden.
 - Signage should warn anyone sick not to enter.
- Inform all garden users and plot owners of guidelines prior to allowing access to the garden.
- Limit garden activities to only those essential for food production. No workshops, events, recreational activities, etc., allowed.
- Limit garden access to reduce the amount of people present at one time. Communicate a work schedule to garden users and plot owners. Keeping a record of the schedule will also be helpful if a positive case is identified.
 - When scheduling times, ensure physical distancing of 2 metres can be maintained between gardeners at all times.
- Post signage reminding users of the rules, no sharing of food or personal items, and physical distancing requirements. Signage should be posted throughout the space.
- Provide hand sanitizer or a hand washing station at garden if possible. Sanitizer should be at least 60% alcohol.
 - Instruct garden users and plot owners to wash their hands before entering and after leaving the garden site.
- 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.

Set up a sanitizing schedule for equipment and tools using approved [disinfectant and cleaners](#) that are effective for [COVID-19](#):

- At minimum, clean at opening and closing.



- Post sign 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.

Public Health Guidelines for use of community gardens during COVID-19:

- Garden users and plot owners should ensure that they are familiar with all rules and guidelines prior to accessing the garden.
- Individuals should **not** attend the garden if they are sick. If sick, plot owners should arrange to have someone tend their plot for them until they are feeling better.
- Adhere to the garden schedule. Do not attend the garden when it is not your scheduled time.
- At all times maintain physical distancing of 2 metres between yourself and other gardeners.
- Wash hands with soap and water before and after handling common tools, such as hoses or gates, and before and after gardening.
 - If there is not a sink available, bring alcohol based hand sanitizer and sanitize hands regularly.
 - Remember gloves are not a substitute for washing hands.
 - Avoid touching your nose, mouth, eyes and face.
- Bring your own garden tools and sanitize them after use.
- Avoid touching shared surfaces, such as gates and doorknobs. If you have to touch these surfaces, wash your hands before and after.
- Wash garden gloves after each use.
- Do not bring pets to the garden with you.
- Place all trash in proper garbage receptacle or take garbage with you to dispose of at home.

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 Windsor-Essex County Health Unit website (www.wechu.org) for more information about COVID-19, including getting tested.
- Encourage members and visitors to download the COVID Alert app, so they can be notified directly if they have been in close contact with someone who was contagious with COVID-19.

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