

COVID-19 Best Practices for Harpswell Community Garden

Dear Gardeners,

In order to support the community-wide effort to mitigate the transmission of the COVID-19 virus, the HCG committee has drawn up the following guidelines. We've tried to address ways to keep the garden as safe as possible but cannot eliminate all risks; everyone will need to be personally vigilant. Always take precautions and do not assume everyone else has followed these guidelines.

Basics

Maintain at least a 6-foot distance between yourself and other gardeners at all times.

Bring a mask to wear when others are in the garden.

When in doubt, stay home. Please do not come to the garden if you are showing symptoms or someone you've been in contact with is sick.

No more than 10 people in the garden – including all children except infants. If there are more than this amount when you arrive, please wait until someone has left or return later. Rarely are there over a half dozen people at any given time, but the number could be higher during the beginning of the growing season.

Normally we welcome visitors but must restrict entry to gardeners and their household members for now.

If you see consistently more people, please let the coordinator know so we can draw up with a plan to give everyone a fair opportunity to spend time in the garden. Also feel free to pass on instances of failure to follow guidelines.

Children

We love having kids involved in the garden but please make sure they understand the distancing measures.

The play structure is off limits at this time; do not allow children to use it.

Tools and Other Garden Equipment

For as long as COVID-19 precautions must be taken, we are asking that you bring your own tools and watering cans as much as possible. Do not share them with others, or leave in the garden.

Please take your tools, trash and other items home when done for the day.

Communal Tools: essential shared tools such as the garden cart: use disinfectant to thoroughly wipe down handles before and after use. (This is particularly difficult with wooden handled tools)

Disinfection

Please bring sanitizing wipes or a disinfectant to the garden and wipe down whatever you touch. Soap, alcohol and bleach are the best agents to kill the virus.

We will try to provide a simple hand-washing station with a spigotted water container and bottle of Dr. Bronner's soap.

In the meantime, bring your own hand-washing station: a ziplock bag or other container with very soapy water and a washcloth or nailbrush inside. Makes hand washing very easy anywhere you are.

According to the CDC a bleach spray or solution may be used to disinfect surfaces, but the concentration is higher for COVID-19 than for everyday sanitation: 5 tablespoons bleach per gallon of water or 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water. Keep solution in a dark cool place. Water and bleach solutions start losing potency after 24hrs, so small fresh batches made daily is always best practice.

Gloves

Whether you wear disposable or garden gloves to avoid picking up germs from gates, spigots, etc you must still disinfect those surfaces after use. The outside of your glove can transmit diseases from one surface to another, including transmitting the disease to yourself and others. Wearing gloves is encouraged as they reduce hand/mouth transmission.

The Good News

COVID-19 is not a food-borne illness. It is extremely unlikely that someone will catch it through eating. The virus is most likely to cause illness through respiratory transmission, not eating. The routes of exposure to be concerned about include: Being in very close proximity to other people, or coming in contact with high touch surfaces (gate latches, padlocks, spigots, tool handles, tools, etc) and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

Plan Ahead

Be prepared for the possibility that there may be limited access to the garden or gardeners may be sick at critical times in the future. Mulch now to prevent weeds and reduce soil moisture loss. Use row covers for insect control when feasible. Stay ahead of seasonal tasks.

Volunteer Work and Hours

We will not be holding normal Work Days this season, but instead will create an online list where gardeners can sign up for specific tasks that need to be done.

Volunteer hours will not be recorded in the garden shed log book: we are looking into an online option. In the meantime please email them to Judith Stanton at jws77@me.com.

Protocols for volunteer handling of Common Good Garden produce destined for food pantry and hunger prevention programs will be provided in a separate document.

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