



# 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](http://www.wechu.org)) regularly for updates and additional information. To subscribe for timely and relevant email updates please subscribe through the [wechu.org](http://wechu.org) website.

On April 25<sup>th</sup> 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, providing spaces for residents to grow their own food, increasing their access to healthy foods. Not only as a contributor to food security, 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.
- Inform all garden users and plot owners of guidelines prior to allowing access to the garden.
- Post signage reminding users of the rules, including no more than five persons 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 5 persons at one time. This can be achieved by communicating a work schedule to garden users and plot owners.
  - Work schedule must ensure that physical distancing can be met and limit on social gathering can be met
- 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.
- When scheduling times, consider the space between plots and stagger accordingly to maximize the space between gardeners at the time of use and ensure physical distancing of 2 metres can be maintained.



- Do not provide shared tools, instead ask that volunteers or plot owners bring their own tools, or 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 70% alcohol.
- 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.
- 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.
- At all times maintain physical distancing of 2 metres between yourself and other gardeners.
- Adhere to the garden schedule and do not attend the garden when it is not your scheduled time.
- Avoid touching surfaces such as gates and doorknobs if not necessary and clean hands.
- Bring your own garden tools and sanitize them after use.
- Do not bring pets to the garden with you.
- Avoid touching your nose, mouth, eyes and face.
- Place all trash in proper garbage receptacle or take garbage with you to dispose of at home.

\*\*Document Version 1: April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020

References:

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