COVID-19 Guidance for Community & Allotment Gardens

This document provides interim directions for managers and participants (i.e. garden member/gardeners) of community and allotment gardens to help reduce the risk of COVID-19. Any person that uses community or allotment gardens must do so in accordance with these directions. 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. Review COVID-19 Guidance for Community Agencies for more information.

The aim and purpose of this document is to assist individuals and businesses with information related to the Ontario Government’s reopening framework as well as Toronto Public Health requirements to reduce the spread of COVID-19. It is important to know that breaches of some of these directions will constitute offences under provincial regulations or other public health legal requirements. While we aim to provide relevant and timely information, no guarantee can be given as to the accuracy or completeness of any information provided. This guidance is not intended to nor does it provide legal advice and should not be relied upon or treated as legal advice. Users seeking legal advice should consult with a qualified legal professional.

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 (TPH) strongly encourages residents who are at higher risk of contracting and becoming seriously ill from COVID-19 infection to limit interaction with others, stay home as much as possible and take additional precautions.

Reduce the risk of transmission

- Stay at home when you are ill even if symptoms are mild.
- Keep at least a two metre (six feet) distance from those you don’t live with.
- The person responsible for a place of business or facility that is open to the public shall limit the number of members of the public in the place of business or facility so that:
  - members of the public are able to maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from every other person in the business or facility; and
  - the total number of members of the public in the business or facility at any one time does not exceed 50 per cent capacity.
    - This can be calculated taking the total square metres of area accessible to the public, dividing that number by 8 and rounding the result down to the nearest whole number.
Organized public events or social gatherings cannot exceed 5 people outdoors. See COVID-19 Guidance for Indoor & Outdoor Events & Gatherings for more information.

Wear a mask in indoor public spaces, and outdoors when it is difficult to maintain physical distancing.

**Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette**

- Prior to entering or exiting the gardens, every person must wash or sanitize their hands.
- If hands are visibly soiled, handwashing with soap and water is preferred. If soap and water are not available, wipe hands clean before applying hand sanitizer (70 to 90% alcohol concentration).
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue. Immediately throw the tissue in the garbage and clean 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, dated and returned 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.
- Allotment garden permit holders must keep a log of all garden visits. The log must be made available to TPH upon request to support COVID-19 contact tracing, if necessary.

**Self-screening**

- Every person must self-screen for COVID-19 (also available in other languages) before visiting the garden.
- All garden members and managers should be aware of symptoms of COVID-19.
Entrance Restrictions
- Anyone who answers YES to any of the screening questions should stay home and not attend the community gardening.
- 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.

Cleaning and Disinfecting Requirements
- High touch surfaces and items in common areas must be cleaned and disinfected after each use by the user.
- In general, most common household disinfectants such as bleach, or alcohol-based solutions will kill the virus that causes COVID-19.
- 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, clean and disinfect after each use.
- Do not share gardening gloves.
- Gardening gloves should be laundered after each use.
- Wash or sanitize your hands before putting on and after taking off gardening gloves.

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:
  o Provide information to garden members to ensure they are familiar with COVID-19 symptoms.
  o Where required to ensure physical distancing, create a schedule to minimize crowding at the garden and to keep attendance records to assist with contact tracing, if someone develops COVID-19.
  o Maintain an up-to-date list of members, including contact information.
  o 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 and self-isolate. They should also review the City of Toronto website for more information about COVID-19, including getting tested.

- Toronto Public Health (TPH) will help individuals with COVID-19 to identify who is a close contact.
  - If the person who tested positive is unsure who they interacted with at the garden, they should notify the garden manager or permit contact of the dates they visited the garden while contagious. Garden managers/permit contacts should communicate potential risk to other garden members, as appropriate. See Managing COVID-19 in the Workplace for more information on contact tracing.

- Encourage members 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.

Other resources

Ministry Guidance on Health and Safety for Community Garden Sector during COVID-19
Guidance for Employers on Preventing COVID-19 in the Workplace

More information

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

References
