

Keeping each other safe in the community garden

We all have a role to play to stop the spread of infection and keep ourselves and each other safe. In order for community gardens to open, Strathcona County has developed Operating Guidelines included with the License Agreement. Each gardener must commit to following these Operational Guidelines, including any amendments to these guidelines, during any period of time when COVID-19 is active or a continuing concern. If the Alberta Chief Medical Officer, Alberta Health Services (AHS) or the Government of Alberta issue more stringent directions or orders than what appears in these Operational Guidelines, those directions or orders must be followed. Refer to the [Government of Alberta](#) and [Alberta Health Services](#) (AHS) websites for information on these requirements and for updates.

Strathcona County will notify garden leaders when the group can begin gardening, based on receipt of the signed License Agreement.

As the situation with COVID-19 is changing rapidly, and although our current plan is to open community gardens, this may change based on guidance from Alberta Health Services.

COVID-19 Operating Guidelines for Community Gardens (the “Guidelines”) and additional resources

Cleaning and disinfecting

- All gardeners should adopt the following practices:
 - Wash your hands before and after you visit the garden
 - Bring hand sanitizer (minimum 60% alcohol)
 - Do not touch your face
- Common touch (i.e. water spigots) points are to be identified and disinfected BEFORE AND AFTER USE.
 - Bring and use your own cleaner to disinfect common touch points
 - For disinfecting, use a sanitizing solution of either 75% or higher alcohol-based product or bleach at a concentration of 20ml/4 teaspoons per litre. Diluted bleach has a shelf life of 24 hours, mix a fresh batch every day
- Bring and use your own tools and disinfect them after each use; avoid sharing tools
 - Be sure to remove all dirt and organic matter from the surface of tools before sanitizing. Make sure tools dry before sanitizing or the sanitizer will be diluted
- Use cloth gloves and wash after each use. Latex gloves do not replace proper sanitation practices

Stay home if sick

- Refer to Alberta Health Services if you are unwell, for information on self-assessment, testing and how to isolate safely
- According to AHS, if you have symptoms including fever, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, sore throat or runny nose, you MUST [self-isolate](#) for 10 days after the onset of [symptoms](#) and until your symptoms have resolved (whichever is longer)

Physical distancing

- Gardeners MUST maintain physical distancing at all times while in the community garden and non-surgical mask use is an optional measure in addition to physical distancing.
- All garden-led programming such as group work bees and garden workshops are suspended at this time to maintain physical distancing
- Except for members from the same household, maintain a distance of at least six feet from other people at all times
- Leave the garden and come back at a different time if you cannot maintain physical distancing with others
- A schedule may be needed to manage gathering based on size of the garden. Garden leaders will work with their group to determine if a schedule should be arranged. Consider the following when creating a schedule to maintain physical distance in the garden:
 - Plots can be numbered and odd/even numbered plots may be asked to come on different days
 - Consider busy times of the year when more people may want to be in the garden, such as seeding
 - Online scheduling can be used if garden members all have access to internet and computers. If not, then static rules need to be put in place that can be communicated to people over the phone
 - Be confident to monitor and adapt over time; as we move ideas into routines, we may need to make adjustments
 - Some gardeners may not feel safe working alone in a garden space. If so, they are not required to work alone but still must ensure physical distancing between people from different households
- Gardens are to be accessed by registered members only; don't bring guests to the garden
- Parents or guardians who bring children to the garden are responsible for supervising the children, including ensuring that the children comply with physical distancing, and for following the Guidelines and sanitizing common surfaces children touch

Garden Planning

- Plan ahead to limit the number of trips, interactions and time you spend in the garden
- Garden leaders will work with the garden group to plan safely - that includes a plan for physical distancing, cleaning touch points and ensuring all garden members follow the Guidelines
- Garden leaders will provide the plan to all gardeners
- Each community garden must have a minimum of two garden leaders or one leader and a back-up leader

License Agreement:

- The License Agreement is signed each year by the garden leader and returned to Strathcona County. This document must be signed and returned to staff prior to the garden opening and should be shared with all members (electronically). Contact Strathcona County if you are not able to print or upload a signed document
- Strathcona County will notify the garden leader on receipt of this document and the garden leader will inform the gardeners when an opening date is provided
- The County has the right to terminate the License Agreement if the garden group fails to meet any of the obligations listed under the License Agreement
- An amendment to the License Agreement was made in 2020 to reflect the impacts of COVID-19 on the community gardens:

“The Collective [i.e. the garden group] must advise its gardening members of the COVID-19 Operating Guidelines for Community Gardens (the “Guidelines”), either provide each member with a copy of the Guidelines or direct each member to where the member may access a copy of the Guidelines, and request written confirmation from each member that they have read, fully understand and agree to abide by the Guidelines. If the County is satisfied, at its sole discretion, that one or more members of the Collective has failed to comply with the Guidelines, the County may suspend or terminate this License immediately, with or without notice to the Collective.”

Communication

- Together, the garden group can work on implementing these new Guidelines. Everyone has an important role to play in providing feedback, asking questions and ensuring all members are following the Guidelines to keep everyone safe
- Garden leaders will:
 - Create a plan for how they will communicate with garden members
 - Have a general conversation (online/phone) with their members to identify any challenges to meeting these Guidelines and work together to create solutions
 - Suspend all in-person meetings
 - Email a copy of the Guidelines and License Agreement to all members

Enforcement

- COVID-19 public health orders are enforceable by law. Refer to Alberta Health Services for information on how to submit a complaint. If gardeners violate public health orders, they may be subject to a fine. If you are concerned someone is not following public health orders, you can submit a complaint to AHS Public Health Inspectors [online](#) or calling 1-833-415-9179
- Everyone is responsible for following these Guidelines and helping to keep each other accountable:
 - Report any concerns to the garden leader
 - Remind other gardeners of the importance of following the Guidelines
- Garden leaders will:
 - Ensure all garden members review and follow the operating Guidelines and License Agreement
 - Follow-up with any complaints that a member is not following the Guidelines.
 - Document any concerns
 - Revoke the member's garden plot allotment if, on more than one occasion they do not follow the Guidelines; and reallocate their plot
- All garden sites will be monitored by Strathcona County and Public Health Officers. Failure to follow the Guidelines and License Agreement may result in the suspension or termination of the community garden License Agreement

Website resources

- alberta.ca/covid19
- albertahealthservices.ca
- strathcona.ca/covid19

Further questions:

Transportation and Agriculture Services

780-417-7100

communitygarden@strathcona.ca