

## **COVID- 19: Guidance for Allotment Gardens**

On April 8, 2021, the provincial government reinstated its state of emergency and provincewide stay-at-home order to interrupt transmission of COVID-19. Under the order, community and allotment gardens can continue to operate. A limited number of allotment gardens are available on Town property.

Town of St. Marys has a duty to protect the health of all residents, and public health measures are in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19. This document provides directions for allotment gardens to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 for individuals using these spaces. Any person that uses allotment gardens must do so in accordance with these directions to mitigate risk and reduce the potential spread of infection.

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. The Town of St. Marys encourages residents who are at higher risk of contracting and becoming seriously ill from COVID-19 infection and who have not yet received their full COVID-19 vaccination, including those 70 and older, to self-isolate, limit interaction with others, and to stay home as much as possible. Other risk factors for COVID-19 include a weakened immune system and should be considered if you choose to develop an allotment garden.

### **Infection prevention and control measures to help reduce the risk of COVID-19**

- Stay at home when you are ill.
- Practice physical distancing, and maintain a two metre (six feet) distance from others when at the garden.
- Respect the provincial Emergency Order that prohibits social gatherings of more than five people when at the garden.

### **Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette**

- Prior to entering or exiting the gardens, every person must wash hands with soap and warm water for at least 15 seconds. If warm water is not available, wash your hands with cold water and soap and then apply hand sanitizer.
- If soap and water are not available, hands must be wiped clean before applying an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cover your cough or sneeze into a tissue. Immediately throw the tissue in the garbage and wash 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 allotment garden members**

Each garden member must sign the Town of St. Marys Health Community Allotment Garden Declaration, which states that members must adhere to the interim directions. Signed and dated declarations for all members of Allotment gardens will be kept by the Town and must be made available to Huron Perth District Health Unit 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.

## Self-screening

Every person visiting a garden is encouraged to complete the [self-assessment for COVID-19](#) on the Ontario Ministry of Health website. If you do not pass the assessment, you should not participate in community gardening.

All garden members should be aware of symptoms of COVID-19, including: fever, dry cough, difficulty breathing, muscle aches and tiredness, sore throat, headache, runny nose and new loss of taste or smell.

## Entrance restrictions

- Anyone who is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 or has had close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 cannot enter allotment garden.
- No visitors are permitted in 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. 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, disinfect after each use.
- Do not share gardening gloves. Gardening gloves should be laundered after each use. Gardening gloves are recommended as a way to maintain good hand hygiene while gardening.

## 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 Huron Perth District Health Unit's website for more information about COVID-19.

If a garden member or manager tests positive for COVID-19, Huron Perth District Health Unit will follow-up with close contacts who may include other garden members. Other garden members who came in close contact with the infected member may also be required to self-isolate.

For more information, visit our website at [www.townofstmarys.on.ca](http://www.townofstmarys.on.ca) or call us at 519-284-3272.

### References:

British Columbia (2020 March 24). Protecting BC farmers and farm workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Retrieved from <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/officeof-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/covid-19-pho-guidance-farms-farm-workers.pdf>

Toronto Public Health (2020). 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) [Fact Sheet]. City of Toronto. Retrieved from [https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/8d59-Fact-Sheet\\_Novel-Coronavirus.pdf](https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/8d59-Fact-Sheet_Novel-Coronavirus.pdf)