

2024 GARDENER'S GUIDE and RULES

Hatfield Community Garden

Billings Way, Hatfield MA

www.HatfieldCommunityGarden.com

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HATFIELD COMMUNITY GARDEN OVERVIEW

The Hatfield Community Garden (HCG), opened in Spring 2018, offers all Hatfield residents a place to grow organic vegetables, fruit and flowers, and a strong sense of community. It also helps preserve the agricultural value of the town-owned land, four (4) acres centrally located on Billings Way across from the Elementary School and the Hatfield Farm Museum. This project has been generously supported in part by the citizens of Hatfield through the Hatfield Community Preservation Fund.

As a community gardener, you can join a vibrant gardening and farming community with a powerful commitment to food access for all, and a rich history of care and stewardship for historic farmland. The Community Garden has several size plots available for lease to community members to grow food organically and sustainably.

CONTACTS

- Hatfield Community Garden mailbox at the Memorial Town Hall
- Email: HatfieldCommunityGarden@gmail.com
- Website: <https://www.hatfieldcommunitygarden.com/>
- Facebook Page https://www.facebook.com/hatfieldcommunitygarden/?ref=br_rs
- Facebook Discussion Group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/HatfieldCommunityGarden/>
- Instagram: [hatfieldcommunitygarden](https://www.instagram.com/hatfieldcommunitygarden)

ELIGIBILITY

The garden plots will be available to residents of Hatfield, and to Hatfield-based organizations, with a limit of two garden plots per household. The HCG Steering Committee will manage the use of the garden. After researching and visiting local area community gardens, the Steering Committee developed policies and procedures.

COMMUNITY GARDENER BENEFITS

- Use of a 20 ft. x 20 ft. full plot or a 10 ft. x 20 ft. half plot (up to two plots per household)
- Access to water from May through October
- Access to resources for free or purchase (e.g. wood chips, compost, plant starts, mulch)
- Access to the Garden Shed and communal tools and equipment
- Membership in a community of dedicated organic gardeners who are generous with support, advice and experience
- Rewarding community service opportunities and fun events

PLOT TYPES, PLOT FEES, VOLUNTEER HOURS

The fee structure is designed to ensure the garden will be affordable to all who wish to participate. Fees may be modified in future years, based on the HCG Steering Committee decision.

Current annual fees are:

- \$20 for a 20' by 20' plot
- \$15 for a 10' by 20' plot
- Discount of \$5 for seniors (over 65) or SNAP recipients
- A Scholarship to cover up to a whole plot fee, may be requested with registration

- Gardeners will also contribute three (3) volunteer hours during the season, per plot

PLOT USE

The Steering Committee reserves the right to reassign a plot after May 31st if the plot is not being worked and has been deemed abandoned during a plot check. Every attempt will be made to contact the gardener before taking this step.

GARDENERS AND VISITORS

There are two types of Gardeners. Every registered plot must have a Primary Gardener, and may have Additional Gardeners who contribute to its upkeep and to the Community Service requirements. The Primary Gardener accepts responsibility for the plot fees and inspections, and all other responsibilities described in this Guide, and is the primary contact for communications from the Steering Committee. Additional Gardeners will need to sign the liability waiver. Email HatfieldCommunityGarden@gmail.com if you wish to add Additional Gardeners after registration. Occasional visitors may work in a plot when invited by the Primary Gardener, but should not use major equipment from the shed. Please make sure everyone works safely!

COMMUNICATION

Every gardener should receive periodic Garden Bulletins during the garden season. This will come by email to most, but you can request a paper copy if you do not use email.

The Gardeners Facebook Group is a discussion group to ask questions about pests and practices, advertise usable items that other gardeners may want, look for someone to harvest your plot while you are out of town, and more. The announcement board, near the shed, is also used for communication.

Types of events and opportunities that will be announced and posted include:

- Group purchases of garden resources such as plant starts, compost, hay, and organic pest control
- Community work days
- Workshops on a variety of topics of interest to gardeners
- Events hosted by the Hatfield Community Garden that are open to the entire community

If you have suggestions, specific concerns or complaints about the garden, how it is managed, or the behavior of other gardeners, please communicate them directly to the Steering Committee by emailing HatfieldCommunityGarden@gmail.com.

GARDENER REQUIREMENTS

Before beginning to garden, Gardeners agree to:

- Read and take responsibility for understanding and following the **Gardener's Guide and Rules**.
- Keep up-to-date with rule changes and to follow revised rules once they are communicated.
- Make all payments due in a timely manner.
- Contribute and record 3 hours of volunteer community service (see below) each season.
- Pass plot checks or remedy plan in June, July, September and October (see below).

PLOT CHECKS

Four plot checks identify abandoned plots and spot rule violations.

- JUNE - SPRING PLOT CHECK: To pass, plots must show clear evidence that someone has cleaned up, cultivated, weeded, and/or planted, or the plot will be deemed abandoned.
- JULY – EARLY SUMMER PLOT CHECK: To pass, plots must be at least 50% garden plants, with few or no weeds going to seed.
- SEPTEMBER – LATE SUMMER PLOT CHECK: To pass, plots must be at least 50% garden plants, with few or no weeds going to seed.
- OCTOBER– FALL PLOT CHECK: To pass, plots must be less than 50% weeds. Plot must also be tidied up for the winter. All items (fences, stakes, benches) must be removed or securely tied down. Plots must pass this plot check for gardeners to be eligible to pre-register for the same plot the following year.

If a plot fails, gardeners are notified within one week of the plot check. Gardeners must then respond with a plan to rectify the situation within one week of being notified, or face forfeiture of the plot and all plants and items in that plot. Gardeners are encouraged to reach out to a steering committee member, if they need support with their garden. The goal is for all to have a successful gardening experience!

Gardeners who are affected by persistent problems in nearby plots are encouraged to contact the Steering Committee. Gardeners with persistent violations risk forfeiture of their plots.

COMMUNITY SERVICE REQUIREMENTS

The Primary Gardener for each plot is responsible for making sure that the hours of community service work are completed per plot and reported to the Steering Committee. Community Service may be done by either the Primary Gardener or Additional Gardeners. If disability or illness makes completing the hours challenging, ask the Steering Committee about receiving credit for service performed by other gardeners.

- Community Service hours must be completed and reported by the end of the growing season.
- Gardeners who have not completed their community service hours may forfeit the opportunity to register the following season and may lose their plots.
- To report Community Service Hours, use the Community Service Hours Binder in the shed. Alternatively, you may send an email HatfieldCommunityGarden@gmail.com . Include the following information: Name, plot number(s), tasks, amount of time worked, who did the work, date that the work was done, and any issues that came up (broken tools or equipment, debris in paths, etc.).

COMMUNITY SERVICE OPTIONS

There are many ways to contribute to the common good while you complete your community service requirement. This season, gardeners were asked to sign up for a team, to ensure certain key tasks are taken care of throughout the season. These teams include, yet are not limited to:

- Weeding and maintenance of the Memorial Garden plot
- Mowing common areas, upkeep of paths, community plots

- Planning Events
- Maintaining the Bulletin Board
- Helping another gardener with planting, weeding
- Water spigot maintenance
- Path maintenance
- Maintaining the community compost
- Abutting farmer liaison

GARDEN RULES

The following rules have emerged from our experience and the advice of dozens of fellow gardeners. Please heed these rules and common sense practices.

IN YOUR PLOT

YOU MUST

- Maintain sufficient garden activity to comply with the plot check standards.
- Maintain visibility of plot stakes in each corner. Report missing or broken stakes.
- Remove weeds before they go to seed, and maintain weed control. Garden waste may be composted within a gardener's plot, or non-invasive weeds may be placed in the compost trenches. Any invasive weeds should be disposed of in the trash.
- Remove diseased plants and trash in a timely manner, and take them out of the community garden.
- Lay down and secure all structures and materials at the end of the season to prevent blowing around in the high winds that are typical in the winter. Remove structures and materials that cannot be secured.

YOU SHOULD

- Check with the Steering Committee if you are uncertain about what plants are allowed.
- Follow sustainable and organic practices, many of which are described later.
- Exercise good stewardship of common areas, the shed and shared tools and equipment.

YOU MAY

- Plant certain perennials, including blueberries, currants, gooseberries, and grapes. Grapes must be supported on trellises less than 6 feet high that don't shade other plots.
- Create small compost piles or in-ground composting systems. Note that composting in your plot may attract rodents and the Steering Committee may direct you to remove it if this arises.
- Use cold-frames if they have plastic or Plexiglas (not glass) covers.
- Use plastic sheeting for season extension, row covers or solarizing only with permission from the Steering Committee and provided the gardener has met all annual requirements.
- Garden after November 1, with permission of the Steering Committee.

YOU MAY NOT

- Plant genetically modified (GMO) plants and seeds
- Plant bramble fruits such as blackberries and raspberries

- Plant mint, bugleweed, goutweed and related invasive plants (unless they're contained in a pot)
- Plant marijuana
- Use synthetic fertilizers, or any pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides that do not have a seal from OMRI (Organic Material Review Institute) or are not clearly labeled "organic."
- Use pressure treated wood and railroad ties; flame weeders; glass, including bottles and ornaments
- Create permanent structures. For safety and to prevent winter damage, gardeners may be asked to remove structures at the season's end.
- Create trenches or paths deeper than 12 inches (with the exception of the community compost area)
- Water with soaker hoses, sprinklers, or drip lines.
- Leave tools and equipment from the Hatfield Community Garden Shed in your plot

PATHS AND COMMON AREAS

- DO keep the full width of paths abutting your plot mowed (when applicable).
- DO NOT plant or maintain anything that spreads beyond the boundaries of your plot.
- DO NOT leave anything (dirt, weeds, wood chips, soil, rocks, plants, fencing, tools, stakes) outside plot boundaries or in other common areas.

SHED

- Lock the shed when you leave it (unless someone else is using it as you leave).
- Do not leave the shed unlocked while gardening, or involved in other garden activities.
- Clean off and return all tools to their proper place in the shed.
- Lock the shed if you notice that it is unlocked and not in use.

PLOTS THAT ARE NOT YOURS

Do not enter, leave items in, or harvest food from another person's plot without permission.

YOUR WASTE AND EXTRA STUFF

- DO NOT put diseased plants, kitchen scraps, trash, or any waste material in the weed trenches or in any common area.
- DO NOT assume that someone else will want what you do not; if you can't find someone who agrees to take your leftover items, pack them out of the garden.
- Do NOT leave things on picnic tables.
- DO NOT store or place personal items or any items that are not the property of Hatfield Community Garden in the shed or in other common areas.

PARKING

- DO park in the grassy lot abutting the cemetery and community garden land.
- DO park in the school parking lot after school hours or over the summer.
- DO NOT park in elementary school parking areas when school is in session.

CHILDREN, GUESTS AND DOGS

- Children are welcome in the garden, and must be supervised at all times.
- Guests must follow all garden rules and are the responsibility of their host.

- Dogs are not allowed in the garden area.

WILDLIFE

- Traps or poisons of any kind are not allowed. Use only organic and non-lethal methods to repel rodents and other pests.
- If ground-nesting birds nest in your plot, notify the Steering Committee. Do not work in your plot until the birds have fledged.
- Respect wildlife in and around the Garden. Do not harass or remove wildlife.

NOISE

- Amplified music is not permitted except during certain special events. Use headphones.
- Per Hatfield's law regarding public land, gardeners are permitted in the garden from dawn to dusk, otherwise police will take notice.
- Keep cell phones and conversations to a reasonable volume.

TOBACCO

Do not smoke or use tobacco products in or around the garden.

GETTING ALONG WITH OTHER GARDENERS

For the most part our gardeners consistently demonstrate a high level of respect for the garden and other gardeners, but sometimes people make mistakes. Issues that may come up include boundary and shade disputes, dogs off leash, children running through other's plots, noise, littering, leaving tools out, leaving the shed unlocked, and so on.

While it is your job as a gardener to respect the rules, it is not your job to enforce them. If a neighboring gardener is doing something that negatively impacts you, the best approach may be to have a conversation with your neighbor about your concern. One practice that can be helpful is to assume good intent, and then communicate and clarify. If you see a problem, you are welcome to contact the Steering Committee with your concerns.

Finally, while it is tempting to give gardening advice if it seems that someone is making a mistake, resist the urge unless they ask for input and advice. New gardeners especially may feel watched or judged even when feedback is given with the best intentions. Recognize that people have different styles of gardening. Respecting different styles and methods helps create a welcoming environment and builds community.

We urge you to offer a community workshop if you have wisdom and experience to share.

OPERATION OF WATER SPIGOTS

The main water spigot and the two extension spigots use petcock valves to control water flow. These valves are somewhat fragile, so it's important to use them carefully. If you are unsure how to operate them, ask for a demonstration.

On the main water spigot, there is a metal pump handle at the top. Lifting this up allows water to flow to two tubing lines on the main spigot. On each of these lines, and on each of the two extension spigots, there is an inline petcock valve. The petcocks have two positions. When the handle is aligned parallel with the tubing, water flows through. When it is perpendicular, water does not go through. These valves

only turn 90 degrees (a quarter turn.) No firm or tightening pressure is required, and you may break the valve if you use too much pressure.

At the main pump, one line can be used to fill your watering cans if there is no hose attached to it, and the other line goes into the ground and leads to the two extension spigots in the center path of the garden. If there is a hose attached to the main pump, this means that Bardwell Farm is using the line. Do not disconnect the hose and do not shut down the pump handle. Instead, go to one of the extension spigots to fill your watering can.

- Remember that the petcock valve turn only 90 degrees. Don't turn them more than 90 degrees. They do NOT require force to turn.
- If the Bardwell Farm hose is attached, please do not disturb it.
- If the Bardwell Farm hose is *not* attached, the pump handle should be down when you arrive, and you will need to raise it for your use.
- If you raise the pump handle, make sure you lower it when you are finished with your watering.
- The petcocks at the extension spigots should be left in the perpendicular position so that water does not escape when the main pump handle is raised again.
- If multiple gardeners are using the water, please coordinate with them before you leave the garden. Either secure the water yourself, or speak to another person who may be still using the water so that they know you are leaving and they are responsible for shutting off the water.

ORGANIC AND SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

“Organic agriculture is an ecological production management system that promotes and enhances biodiversity, biological cycles and soil biological activity... The primary goal of organic agriculture is to optimize the health and productivity of interdependent communities of soil life, plants, animals and people.” *USDA National Organic Standards Board, 1995.*

Please refer to the information below for recommended practices in your plot. There are many other sources of information on organic gardening available; ask a member of the Steering Committee if you have questions.

SOIL

- Use only organic soil amendments and organic plant fertilizers including: compost, aged, composted animal manure, alfalfa meal, blood meal, bone meal, kelp, seaweed, fish emulsion, rock phosphate, wood ashes, granite or feldspar dust or other materials generally approved for organic gardens; or other commercially available organic amendments that carry an OMRI seal (Organic Material Review Institute) or is clearly labeled “organic.” If there is any doubt, please check with the Steering Committee.
- Do not use synthetic fertilizers, or inorganic (chemical) pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides.
- Use low- or no-till methods, though you may double dig or use a rototiller.

CONTROL INSECT PESTS NATURALLY

- Remove harmful insects by hand.

- Use organic insect traps, row covers, biodegradable soaps, BT ([bacillus thuringiensis](#)), diatomaceous earth, chitin, etc.
- Employ good hygiene such as pruning to prevent conditions for fungal outbreak.
- Attract pollinators and beneficial insects.

CONTROL WEEDS ORGANICALLY

- Hand pull, hoe or cultivate.
- Mulch with materials that rot.
- Plant cover crops.
- Apply corn gluten meal.
- Gardeners are encouraged to mulch with the weeds removed from their plots. This conserves water, reduces weed germination, and returns vital nutrients to the soil.
- Control weeds before they go to seed.
- Prevent your plants and weeds from spreading outside your plot.
- Do not use flame weeders (killing weeds with fire);
- Do not use non-organic herbicides.

SEEDS AND PLANTS

- Use healthy, preferably organic, untreated seeds and starts.
- Choose disease-resistant crop varieties when they are available.
- Do not use genetically modified seeds or plants (GMOs).
- Promptly remove and dispose of sick plants by putting them in trash bags and taking them out of the garden to avoid spreading the disease to other plots.
- Do not compost diseased plants in your plot or in community garden waste piles. Put diseased plants in trash bags, pack them out and dispose of them as trash.

WATER CONSERVATION

- Water is kindly provided by the Town of Hatfield free of charge, please be mindful!
- Water established plants only during dry weeks, when the previous week's rainfall was less than one inch.
- When watering, direct the water to the base of plants to minimize water loss.
- Use mulch to retain moisture and prevent weeds.

WELCOME! ENJOY THIS COMMUNITY GARDEN EXPERIENCE!