

The City of Columbia Parks and Recreation  
Community Garden Program  
Rules and Regulations

Welcome to the 5<sup>th</sup> year for our Community Garden. We will be assigning plots to returning gardeners starting in February and to new gardeners starting in March.

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**Gardening Courtesy and Communication**

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One of the main goals at the Community Garden is to work together next to each other in harmony. Please be courteous in all interactions, and work together to resolve any disagreements.

Contact your Garden Coordinator for guideline clarifications or plot delineations. The Garden Coordinator will check plots regularly to encourage productive use by gardeners.

E-mail is the primary method of communication for the Community Garden Program.

Gardeners must maintain a current email address and/or phone number on file with the Garden Coordinator at [jjwilliams@columbiasc.net](mailto:jjwilliams@columbiasc.net).

The Gardener is required to inform the Garden Coordinator of any changes to their contact information.

There will be an annual meeting to notify Gardeners of any changes made in how the Garden operates and to discuss any issues or concerns.

Gardeners should make arrangements for plot maintenance and notify the Coordinator if they will be away for more than two weeks.

It is the responsibility of the Gardener to make the Garden Coordinator aware of anything (i.e. health issues, family emergencies, temporary or permanent relocation) that will hinder his/her ability to maintain his/her garden plot.

Gardeners are required to notify the Garden Coordinator of the following: irrigation problems such as water leaks, graffiti, theft, vandalism, rule violations, and pest or disease problems.

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## Administration

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The gardening term runs from April 1<sup>st</sup> to February 29<sup>th</sup>. Gardeners must reapply each year for a garden plot.

5 feet by 20 feet garden plots are leased on a first come first served basis. The fee for each garden plot is \$20. Only one garden plot per residence is allowed.

Garden plots may not be transferred, leased to another party, given away, traded or sublet and fees will not be prorated or refunded.

Gardeners must sign an annual contract and agree to follow the Community Garden policies and procedures. Fees must be included with the application form.

Gardeners desiring to continue using the plot are required to complete the Community Garden Registration/Agreement Form and pay their annual registration fee by the registration deadline of February 29<sup>th</sup>. Plots will be assigned only after the Parks and Recreation Department has received the gardener's application and payment. Those who do not meet the registration/agreement deadline will automatically lose their assigned plot.

Gardeners who do not intend to continue gardening for any reason should promptly notify the Garden Coordinator in writing; so the plot may be reassigned to the next person on the waiting list.

Plots that are given up or revoked for non-compliance will be returned to the City of Columbia, for reassignment.

High demand means waiting lists for most gardens. If a plot is unavailable, the applicant will be placed on a waiting list and will be contacted only when a plot becomes available in a community garden in which you express interest. If your name is placed on a waiting list, you do not have to reapply each year. However, should your contact information change, remember to let this office know.

New Gardeners, regardless of date, must have their gardens planted within six weeks or their plot will be released back to the Park and Recreation Department for reassignment.

Plots are assigned to new applicants after all renewals have been received from current gardeners in good standing. You must renew by paying dues no later than February 29<sup>th</sup>, so gardens may be assigned in a timely fashion.

New Gardeners, regardless of date, must have their gardens planted within six weeks or their plot will be released back to the Park and Recreation Department for reassignment.

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### **Security and Missing Produce**

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The garden hours are from sunrise to sunset. Gardeners may not be within the gates of the community garden after dark.

Please call 911 for health emergencies.

Gardeners should not pick produce from another gardener's plot without permission from the garden plot owner. Notify the Garden Coordinator about any missing produce issues, vandalism or unauthorized activities.

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### **Gate Code**

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A Gate access code is provided to registered lessees of the garden.

Gardeners should contact the Garden Coordinator if assistance is required with the gate code.

For security purposes, gate access code is changed annually. Members will be notified of combination changes by e-mail only. It is extremely important to keep the access code confidential and safe.

The gate must be closed upon entering and leaving the community garden.

Please close the gate(s) behind you once you enter the garden and make sure the gate is securely locked when you exit the garden.

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### **Garden Rules**

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Gardeners will not make any permanent or aesthetic changes to the garden.

The community gardens are alcohol and smoke-free areas. Gardeners may not come into the Garden while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.

Gardeners may not carry, use, or store firearms in the Garden.

Loud radios, music, bringing a weapon on the premises and/or gambling are not allowed.

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### **What Constitutes a "Working Garden"**

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Weedy plots are subject to warning and cancellation.

Gardeners will maintain their plants within their plot boundaries and will trim any plants that extend into neighboring plots or into common areas.

Plots should not be consistently weedy, unattended or filled with debris. Gardeners are expected to spend at least 1 hour per week/at least once a week, on average, tending the plot during the growing seasons.

Each Gardener is responsible for weeding, cultivating and watering and must arrange for someone to maintain the garden plot if they are away for more than two weeks.

Gardeners are responsible for their own garden plot(s); including providing their own seeds, plants, fertilizer, and any tools. Compost is provided by the City when available and is not a regular service of the program.

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### **Plot Maintenance and Trash**

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Garbage cans are located within the community garden fence. Each gardener is responsible for their own trash removal (when they exit the garden) such as weeds, boxes, trays, bags, packets, and similar items.

Gardeners will maintain their plots and adjacent paths in a clean and neat fashion, promptly removing any weeds, overgrowth, or other waste from their plot.

Gardeners will promptly harvest edible plants.

Gardeners are strongly encouraged to cover their plot(s) with straw or mulch as an excellent method of weed control and water conservation.

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### **Pathway Maintenance**

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Each gardener is responsible for the maintenance of the paths surrounding their plot(s), promptly removing any weeds, overgrowth, and other waste from their plot. To prevent damage and tripping hazards, water hoses used by gardeners MUST be recoiled and stored against the garden plot in a neat manner after use.

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## Growing Seasons

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Existing Gardeners are to keep their gardens planted and maintained year-round.

The spring growing season is March through May, the summer growing season is June through August, the fall growing season is September through October and the winter growing season is October to March.

All summer annual crops should be pulled out of plots and properly disposed of at the end of their production. Perennial crops and some annual winter hardy crops may be over-wintered, but should be maintained.

It is not acceptable to allow quantities of produce to be come over ripe and rot.

Gardeners are asked to donate their over abundant produce to charities of their choosing. If the gardeners cannot harvest their produce, it is their responsibility to notify the Garden Coordinator.

All produce picked while you are away will be donated. If it is determined that a plot is neglected with over ripe vegetables present, it will be by the discretion of the Garden Coordinator that produce CAN AND WILL be picked from these plot(s) and donated.

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## What to Grow/Plant

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Gardeners may plant vegetables, fruits, herbs and flowers. Gardeners may not maintain plantings or plant-supporting structures that impede the security of the garden or impede adjacent gardeners' access to sunlight by the nature of their height, material or density. Do not plant trees or shrubs.

Gardeners may not grow any plants or add any structures above 4 feet in height. No large structures, trees, or large collections of non-plant items are allowed.

Growing or using illegal substances within the garden is strictly prohibited. Violators will be expelled from the program immediately with no refund of fees and local authorities will be notified.

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## Getting Started

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The gardening term runs from April 1<sup>st</sup> to February 29<sup>th</sup>. Plots must be planted by May 15th and kept planted, free of weeds, and harvested all year long. Plots that are not planted by the planting deadline are assumed abandoned and will be forfeited without a refund to the next available person on the waiting list.

Gardens in an uncared for condition by June 15th will be cleared, released back to the City, and reassigned to the next available person on the waiting list.

The May 15 deadline exists to motivate our gardeners to show that they are going to use the garden plot, and not waste it. The minimum requirements of "getting started" include:

- Weeding, planting
- Working some of the soil in preparation for planting
- Harvesting of crops, if appropriate
- Pathway clean-up / maintenance

By June 15, there should be marked progress towards a productive garden, which includes:

- At least ½ the plot(s) worked
- Removal of remaining weeds
- Establishing and caring for plants
- Continued pathway maintenance

By July 1, there should be continual gardening activity, and the whole plot / paths weeded and the path maintenance completed. If the Garden Coordinator observes that there is no activity, the plot owner will be notified by email / phone call. There needs to be a response from the garden owner within 10 days from the initial contact from the Garden Coordinator. If no response then the plot can be forfeited and reassigned to others.

The Gardener will then receive a Notice of Forfeiture and the plot will be released back to the City. Plantings will be removed and any remaining edible produce will be donated to charity.

After loss of plot, the Gardener will be allowed to reapply for another plot ONLY after one (1) year has passed, and ONLY at the Garden Coordinator's discretion.

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### **Notification of Abandoned /Under-Worked Garden Plot(s)**

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1. Garden Coordinator calls the gardener to set date for work to be done by the gardener.
2. If the gardener does not meet agreed-upon date, gardener will receive a 5-day notice to clean up garden or lose the plot(s).
3. If gardener does not respond, gardener will receive a cancellation letter/email, and the plot(s) will be offered to and re-assigned to another gardener.

Annual crops should be harvested and the plants cleaned up with all the garden debris placed on the curbside on trash day.

At the end of the each growing season, all dead plants and weeds must be cleared, boxed, and placed on the curbside on trash day.

Garden plots should be clean and perennial herbs /winter gardeners/should be planted by October 31.

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### **Water Availability**

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Each Gardener is responsible for watering his or her own plot. Gardeners will not overwater their plants or leave a hose unattended. Gardeners are responsible shutting the water off after use.

During winter months, water will be turned off when temperatures reach below 32° to avoid bursting pipes. Once freezing temperatures are no longer a factor, the water will be turned back on. Please report any leaks to Parks and Recreation Department.

If there is a major break in the garden's irrigation line, turn off the water at the control box and notify the Garden Coordinator.

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### **Steps to Organize a Garden Workday**

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If you would like to organize a garden workday, talk to other gardeners to gauge their interest and tasks you would like to accomplish. If enough people are interested, email the Community Garden Coordinator with the details.

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### **Dogs in the Garden**

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Except for service dogs, no pets of any kind are allowed in the garden.

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**Commitment and Liability Waiver**

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I have read the Community Garden Rules and Regulations and Pledge and understand that failure to follow these Community Garden Rules and Regulations will result in the loss of gardening privileges. I also understand the City of Columbia and its agents accept no liability for incidents, which occur while engaged in program activities. A Community Garden Land Use Release must be on file with the City's Parks and Recreation Department prior to any land use. Rules and regulations are subject to annual review and revision.

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**Primary Gardener****Plot #**

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**Date**

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**Garden Coordinator**

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**Date**