

Community Garden Guidelines



Why bother?

When thoughtfully written, garden guidelines can provide crucial support for addressing gardener needs. By taking the time to create them, you are ensuring common understanding among everyone in your garden community.

Key & Common Ingredients

- ❖ **Garden plot upkeep/maintenance:**
Encourage gardeners to visit garden often and keep plot free of trash and low on weeds, as well as paths free of tools and debris.
- ❖ **Plant-by and Clean-up dates:**
Provide dates that gardens should be planted by at beginning of the season and cleaned-up at the end.
- ❖ **Fee or deposit:**
If garden has a fee, explain how much and when due.
- ❖ **Liability:**
To protect your group, you may want to include a *Release of Claims* agreement.
- ❖ **Volunteer requirements:**
Include number of hours, volunteer options, meetings to attend, etc.
- ❖ **Prohibited substances, materials, and actions:**
From non-organic fertilizers and pest-control, to alcohol and drugs, to non-biodegradable materials, to harvesting only from own plot.
- ❖ **Supervision:**
Of children, guests, and pets.
- ❖ **Materials, supplies, and services available:**
Examples—tools, water, compost piles, etc. Also include maintenance instructions.
- ❖ **Friendly suggestions:**
Such as—be respectful, get to know your garden neighbors, conserve water, be mindful of neighbors when planting tall crops, encourage celebration, etc.
- ❖ **Create your own:**
Rules will vary depending on the needs of each garden.

What's in a name?

Community garden guidelines go by a number of names: *Guidelines*, *Agreement*, *Rules & Regulations*, *Expectations*, *Commitment*, or *Pledge*.

A name can send a message. For example: *Rules* might convey strict enforcement, *Guidelines* could convey some flexibility, and *Agreement* may convey a commitment by all parties involved.

How do you make sure the guidelines are effective?

- ❖ Involve your garden community in developing guidelines.
- ❖ Include a signed agreement, either as a part of the guidelines or as a separate document.
- ❖ From the beginning, clarify consequences for not following guidelines and follow-up on enforcement.
- ❖ Communicate who gardeners should contact for various issues, ideas, needs, or questions.
- ❖ Keep your list simple and understandable.
- ❖ Provide translation where needed.
- ❖ Put the list up in a communal garden space for all to see.
- ❖ Provide gardeners with take-home copy of guidelines.
- ❖ *Support your gardeners to be successful and active participants.*

Vermont Community Garden Network