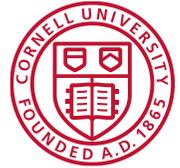


Cornell Cooperative Extension

Cornell Garden-Based Learning



COVID-19 Guidance on Community Gardens

Text Adapted from NYC Parks Department GreenThumb Guidance, Best Management Practices for UPick Farms (<https://greenthumb.nycgovparks.org/>, <https://smallfarms.cornell.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Cornell-U-Pick-Best-Practices-COVID-19.pdf>)

Facts about the SARS-CoV-2 Virus that Causes COVID-19:

- The virus is transmitted person to person through respiratory droplets, which is why 6-foot physical distancing is so important.
- There is no evidence that the virus can be transmitted by food.
- It can persist on surfaces for between 24-72 hours which is why sanitation of commonly touched surfaces is important.
- Risks of infection from touching surfaces can be significantly reduced by avoiding touching the face, frequent handwashing, or use of hand sanitizers.
- Cloth face coverings reduce spreading of the virus by those who may be infected but are not showing symptoms and should be used in addition to physical distance and hand hygiene.

The World Health Organization has declared the COVID-19 disease, known as the coronavirus, a pandemic. At Cornell Garden-Based Learning, the health and safety of the public and our partners is always our top concern. In compliance with Governor Cuomo's recent executive orders **we are providing best management practices to private community gardens, as gardening and landscaping are essential activities across the state. For public community gardens, please consult local governments' guidelines on accessibility to these spaces.** Due to the relatively small spaces in most gardens and the difficulty in achieving safe social distancing of 6 feet or more, we recommend **gardens stay closed to the general public that are not garden members.** We realize that this will be disappointing to some, but it is necessary to help protect public health. Below are best management practices to help garden groups support their members safely:

- **Garden Access:** Access should be limited to garden members only, and only for garden maintenance and season preparation that is absolutely necessary. Gardens should remain closed to the public, and member gardeners should keep garden gates closed while working in gardens.
- **Events and Gatherings:** All public events in community gardens or on public parks property are prohibited. In addition, all in-person meetings, activities, and gatherings

Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities

Diversity and Inclusion are a part of Cornell University's heritage. We are a recognized employer and educator valuing AA/EEO, Protected Veterans, and Individuals with Disabilities.

of garden groups are prohibited. Large projects that require many hands must be postponed, based on Governor Cuomo's Executive Order.

- **Social Distancing:** Community Garden members working in gardens should always observe safe social distancing by keeping at 6 feet between all people
- **Staggering Access:** Garden groups should make best efforts to stagger access to gardens to minimize the number of members inside at the same time. Limit community garden member access to one at a time, if possible. Allocating plots by garden members and eliminating communal garden plots is a best practice to reduce contact.
- **Disinfecting surfaces:** Gardeners should regularly disinfect all communal tools and surfaces, and where possible gardeners should aim to use only their personal tools. Disinfection guidelines can be found on the [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov) website. If possible provide gardeners with the materials to disinfect communal tools at the garden site. Two guides to disinfecting tools and surfaces can be found here:
<https://extension.unh.edu/blog/guide-csa-farmers-amid-covid-19>;
<https://smallfarms.cornell.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Cornell-U-Pick-Best-Practices-COVID-19.pdf>
- **Seeds, Plants & Produce:** If a community garden provides seeds to the public, direct ship seeds to their members' homes to reduce needing contact. When using or donating produce, follow Extension guidance on food safety found here:
<https://instituteforfoodsafety.cornell.edu/coronavirus-covid-19/food-industry-resources/>
- **Review Current COVID-19 Information:** Gardeners should review current information and guidelines on COVID-19 on the [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov) and [NYSDOH](https://www.nysdoh.gov) webpage, especially with regard to populations at risk.
- **Wearing Face Maskers:** Remind garden members to wear cloth face coverings, as per NY COVID-19 guidance dated April 17, 2020: <https://on.ny.gov/2yyPqej>
 - Anyone who is over age two and able to medically tolerate a face covering must cover their nose and mouth with a mask or cloth face covering when in a public.
 - <https://bit.ly/34YQHHy>
 - <https://bit.ly/34VUCFe>
- **Best Communication Strategies:** Develop a communication strategy to inform community garden members about new COVID-19 practices:
 - Eliminate any entertainment and picnicking activities to reduce congregating.
 - Provide additional handwashing and hand sanitizing opportunities for members.
 - Post signs to emphasize physical distancing and hand sanitation.
 - Train your garden members on new COVID-19 procedures and policies.
 - Communicate that members should not come to the community garden if they are displaying symptoms of COVID-19 or any contagious illness (e.g., fever, vomiting, diarrhea, coughing, fatigue, body aches), or have come in contact with someone who has.

- Consider setting up a garden volunteer schedule to reduce too many garden members in the space.
- Post signs at the garden entry:
 - Customers who have symptoms or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 should not enter for picking.
 - Share “Stop the Spread.”
 - <https://on.ny.gov/3bH6gXj>
 - <https://bit.ly/2RYLhqN>
 - <https://bit.ly/2XWBUMf>

Thank you in advance for your close attention to New York COVID-19 social distancing guidelines. We encourage you to continue to take all necessary steps to help keep yourself safe during this challenging time. You can learn more, including how to help stop the spread of the coronavirus, on the [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov) webpage.

For additional resources on healthy gardening practices, educational videos, materials and gardening supplies as well as guidance on donating produce during COVID-19, please see:

- Safe Soil Guidance: <http://blogs.cornell.edu/healthypoils/>
- Beginning Gardening Guides: gardening.cals.cornell.edu

References:



Centers for Disease Control. (2020, April 1) <https://www.cdc.gov/>

Cornell Small Farms Program. (2020, June 1). <https://smallfarms.cornell.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Cornell-U-Pick-Best-Practices-COVID-19.pdf>

Institute for Food Safety at Cornell University. (2020, April 1) Food Industry Resource. <https://instituteforfoodsafety.cornell.edu/coronavirus-covid-19/food-industry-resources/>

New York City Parks Green Thumb Program. (2020, March 21). GreenThumb’s News: Important Service Changes. https://greenthumb.nycgovparks.org/news.html?news_id=468

New York State Department of Health. (2020, April 1). <https://www.health.ny.gov/>

University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension. (2020, March 20). Guide for CSA Farmers amid COVID 19. <https://extension.unh.edu/blog/guide-csa-farmers-amid-covid-19>

Published/Updated: 6/1/2020

Author: Adapted by Ashley Helmholdt

Reviewer: Sharon Bachman, Hannah Shayler, Jonathan Russell-Anelli