



Community Gardening in Greater Vernon

Gardener Handbook

Updated 2016



Funding provided by the Job Creation Partnership



The Employment Program of British Columbia is funded by the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia.

Contacts

Gardeners are asked to contact the coordinator only in regards to the garden operations. Our other partner contacts are listed for your information.

Community Garden & Patchwork Farms Coordinator – _____

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WEBSITE INFO: <https://www.vernon.ca/parks-recreation/programs-schedules/community-garden>

Who Runs Community Gardens?

Community Garden is a broad term that is often used to describe a garden where people share a space to grow together. They can be informally organized, or formally administered by an organization. In Greater Vernon, there are a variety of gardens available, but there are only three that are currently part of a public community garden network.

The Community Garden Network is a partnership between Greater Vernon Parks, Recreation, and Culture, a community organization, and the gardener volunteers. Each plays a role. The Regional District helps with lease agreements with property owners, shares in the support of the coordination and site maintenance, provides registration access, and various other in-kind supports. Funds collected from allotment fees go back into covering the costs of operating the gardens.

The administration of community gardens is evolving, however, it is recognized that they provide valuable recreational opportunities, improve food security, and facilitate social integration and community development.

Garden/Farm Coordinator/Maintenance Agreement

In 2013, funds for a part-time coordinator and maintenance support were provided by the Regional District via Greater Vernon Parks Recreation and Culture, under whose mandate community gardening currently falls. An agreement was initiated with Kindale Developmental Association to administer these services. The coordinator position was merged with the Patchwork Farms coordinator position which Kindale helped fund. Additional funding for the 2014 and 2015 season was provided through the Job Creation Partnership, a program under the Employment Program of BC, funded by the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia.

In 2016, Kindale's coordination role is transitioning to the Food Action Society of the North Okanagan.

Routine maintenance of the common areas of the gardens is performed by individuals with disabilities who have completed the Modified Horticulture and Landscape Course at Okanagan College and who are receiving support from Kindale and/or WorkBC. They are paid a market-rate wage for this work.

Volunteers Needed

Local government is *not* responsible for the day to day management or operations of the gardens. A coordinator is being paid to provide the upper level management of the gardens. Recently there has been provision for maintenance support, however, there is still a need for each gardener to contribute to the general maintenance of their allotments and pathways, as well as help with other chores or tasks as needed and identified. Working with the coordinator, the gardeners can help keep the gardens well-managed so that they can continue to be offered in Greater Vernon.

More about the Gardens

The East Hill garden has about 40 allotments available to rent, at 5'x20', 10'x20' or 20'x20' in size. These are traditional garden beds and require maintenance and care.

The West Vernon garden consists of 50 - 4'x 8' raised garden boxed beds. Gardeners may acquire up to 2 beds per household, depending on overall demand for the beds.

Patchwork Farms was formed by a partnership of agencies wanting to provide an inclusive recreational opportunity for all members of the community. The farm shares a 2 acre site on Okanagan College property and operates 24 raised boxed beds and ½ acre of additional field crops. The garden is collectively farmed with the produce shared and/or provided to the public by donation. The farm partners began to offer educational/therapeutic programming at this beautiful location overlooking Kalamalka Lake.

Amenities provided at allotment gardens

Each gardener has access to a water, hoses, and tools for sharing. There is a storage shed at each site. Soil amendments are made available when possible, otherwise, each gardener is responsible for providing their own. Each garden has some composting ability, as well as seating and a portapotty. As funding becomes available, we will work on water storage systems to provide an alternative in case of interruptions in water services. A bulletin board is posted to keep gardeners informed and each gardener gets a key to the entry gate and tool shed. A portion of the allotment fees go towards an annual budget from which the gardens can purchase supplies, pay for water, or make needed repairs. Garden committees can make requests to the coordinator for anticipated needs.

GARDENER AGREEMENT – RULES AND REGULATIONS EXPLAINED

PLEASE READ THE AGREEMENT CAREFULLY AND THOROUGHLY

To ensure the smooth operation of Community Gardens, an agreement that outlines the expectations and rules for gardening is necessary. This agreement was a joint venture by Greater Vernon Parks Recreation and Culture, who added their “facility” agreement portion, and the committee, who researched best practices by other community gardens and came up with a set of rules. This helps to avoid conflicts and misunderstandings. For your benefit, some of the more common rules will be discussed here.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

From time to time, being the humans that we are, small conflicts will arise. Whenever possible, problems, concerns, questions not easily resolved can be brought to the attention of the garden coordinator. The garden coordinator will allow follow up with

compliance issues as needed. This will hopefully help all of us to avoid confrontations that may mar the friendly atmosphere at the garden and keep it a comfortable and enjoyable place to spend time together.

In the event that conflict arises because a gardener is not following the Gardener Agreement which is signed at Registration, then the Gardener may be asked by the Coordinator to relinquish their bed(s) and leave the garden. In this case, their registration fee may be forfeited.

EAST HILL GARDEN FENCE

Please enter the property through the gate and DO NOT climb the fence!

COMMUNICATION

PLEASE TAKE THE TIME TO CHECK THE BULLETIN BOARD AND CHECK YOUR EMAIL REGULARLY TO ENSURE YOU ARE AWARE OF NOTICES OR UPDATES.

Communication between the garden coordinator and each garden committee and gardeners is extremely important. For this reason, both email, and a bulletin board will ensure that information is transferred to everyone. Gardeners may also communicate with each other. A gardener list is posted at each allotment garden. If you do not have email, it is very important that you check for posted notices.

PARKING

East Hill

Designated parking is on the road allowance west of the property at 900 Shantz Road. A **limited number of parking spaces** are provided directly in front of the garden area (6 maximum – parallel). There are extra spaces on the road allowance just west of the garden. We also encourage you to walk, cycle, or use transit whenever you can as a more sustainable alternative to single occupancy vehicles. Please ***do not park*** in front of the neighbour to the East or the property owners on the west - at their request.

West Vernon

Gardeners are free to park in the parking lot at the Dorothy Alexander Centre. It is important to note that a swing gate is locked overnight. During school days, the gate is managed by the School District and is generally open mornings. On weekends and evenings the gate is managed by Vernon By-Law and/or facility users. As a backup, a nearby resident also manages the gate for gardeners. In the past, there have been

unfortunate incidents of gardeners being locked in. If you arrive and the gate is locked, please do not park in the lane way.

DOGS/PETS

The agreement states that **NO PETS** are to be brought to the garden. This was decided based on best practices of other community gardens, to reduce the risk of any possible damage or risk to the garden and gardeners, and to avoid a potential nuisance situation.

East Hill - You will notice that the property owner has a dog (Sidney) who is known to be aggressive. Please report any incidents to the garden representative committee and **keep your distance from the fence, particularly if you have children in your care.**

GUESTS/ACTIVITIES

You are welcome to bring your guests helpers to the garden. Guests and/or those sharing an allotment are expected to abide by the rules of the garden and should also be on the email/contact lists. Children must be supervised. Visitors are welcome to tour the garden when gardeners are present, provided that they are not making you feel unsafe in any way. If you notice any suspicious activity, please alert the garden coordinator and note any relevant details. **The Community Garden is not a public park, in that the sole activity is for gardening and related activities.**

Students/parents watering over the summer must provide evidence that they are sanctioned to do so. **Any other activities should receive the consent of the garden coordinator.**

TOOLS & HOSES

Tools and equipment that are the property of the Community Garden will be labelled or marked with lime green spray paint. These are for our shared use. There are also a number of donated tools. If you bring your own tools or hoses, we cannot guarantee that they will not be borrowed, lost, or broken. Therefore, we would suggest that any tools and hoses left at the garden be done with the understanding that others can use them, or take them home with you after use.

PERSONAL ITEMS AND EXTRA IMPLEMENTS

To avoid accumulation of extra “stuff” at the gardens, please do not bring items from home or donate them unless they are requested. Used tomato cages, buckets, plant pots, wood, wire or other implements should be taken home to be stored or discarded. Please do not garden/plant outside your allotment without prior permission or block pathways. Treated wood is prohibited.

SOIL AMMENDMENTS and MULCHING

Enriching your soil with compost and other natural amendments will improve your vegetable yields, prevent many pest infestations, and make for a more satisfying gardening experience. If you have a personal source, or have the means to purchase from a gardening centre, that may be an option. A bulk load could be cost-shared by those gardeners interested in receiving it this way. CURED or commercial PRODUCTS ONLY. No fresh manure is allowed. Please check with the coordinator before bringing in something from a casual source.

It is highly recommended that you mulch your crops. This reduces the need for more frequent watering, suppresses weed growth and amends the soil. Leaves make excellent mulch and they are free. Many gardeners picked up extra in the fall and spring through the curbside program. Straw, while harder to get, also makes a good mulch, as do pesticide-free grass clippings.

COMPOSTING

Composting at community gardens presents some challenges. We are still working out the best process for this and appreciate your understanding as we try different approaches. Composters not maintained or that become smelly must be tended or they will have to be removed.

West Vernon

Composting at West Vernon is very limited. There are some composters available for personal use, but we request that they do not block pathways and must be properly maintained. This includes mixing enough “brown” material with fresh garden waste. If you want to compost, you may purchase a standard compost bin of the type that is currently in the garden. There will be some space for these in the west field area. Please check with the coordinator first. Extra material must not be stored onsite.

East Hill

This year at East Hill, a team of gardeners improved the shared compost area. This is a place for weeds and some general garden waste that has been chopped up and cleared of string, plastic tags and other non compostables. Gardeners who want to compost may do so at their own allotments using a standard, black composter that they will need to provide. End of season composting will no longer accept corn stalks, sunflower stalks, or other large items. These must be disposed of by the gardener at their curbside pickup or not grown at all. We also encourage gardeners to compost their end of season disease-free garden waste directly in their beds by chopping it up and burying it thoroughly.

PERRENIALS and FLOWERS

Garden allotments are on temporary loan to gardeners and perennials present an issue when the gardener moves on and leaves behind a bed of herbs or strawberries, for example. You may grow them, but do be aware that should you discontinue gardening or if the site is not renewed, it will be your responsibility to remove them. Perennials left behind pose extra work and may not be welcomed by the next gardener. The same goes for garlic planted in the fall. Do not plant it in the fall unless you are sure of returning the following year.

Flowers are welcome additions to your allotments. Note that sunflowers, while very pleasing, are difficult to compost and remove. You may want to consider the smaller varieties. There are also some plants that are discouraged from being grown in community gardens. Please see the list at the end of the handbook.

OTHER FIXTURES

If you decide you would like to add trellises, other fixtures, or use lumber to frame your bed at East Hill, you must stay within your allotted space and be prepared to remove them and discard them yourself once you are done. They cannot block pathways. Homemade fixtures considered unsightly may be asked to be modified or removed. **Please be aware that treated wood products are prohibited.** Please check with the coordinator before making any modifications to your bed or allotment.

PATHWAYS

The maintenance of the pathways around your garden bed or box is your responsibility. If it's grass, it needs to be mowed or trimmed. Weeds should be pulled or cut before they seed. There are both motorized and non motorized mowers available at each garden, as well as weed trimmers. If you need help, you may bring a helper, or request support. There are volunteers willing to help those who are less able to do the more physical chores.

MAINTENANCE SUPPORT

A maintenance support worker will help with the mowing and trimming of the general outside areas. However, gardeners are expected to keep the garden in order and neat in appearance. If you see something that needs doing, please lend a hand. If you notice something in need of repair, let the coordinator know, or fix it if you can.

EQUIPMENT HANDLING/REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE

The motorized equipment at the gardens is there for your use, provided you are trained or have experience. Please consult the manuals for proper safety and handling if unsure. Safety glasses, long pants, and proper footwear are recommended at all times when using the equipment. Children are not permitted to use the motorized equipment.

Roto-tilling should only be done at East Hill by experienced tillers or professionals. Sometimes we do not have volunteers able to do it for you. We encourage you to manually turn your allotments when possible. Adding soil amendments each year will condition your soil, making it less likely to need tilling. We will also consider hiring a professional for a fee.

WATERING

Deep watering and mulching will reduce your watering needs and save time and water, while helping to establish a good root system for your plants. During heat waves you may have to water more often, but using mulch will significantly reduce this. Please avoid watering in the heat of the afternoon.

East Hill

At East Hill, the watering system uses an above ground agricultural system. There are several hose bibs and water pressure is high. This system is prone to leaks, so please report any seeping or spraying to the coordinator. In the event of a large leak or break, the water main is located in the front northwest corner. Turn the valve all the way off and notify the coordinator.

West Vernon

At West Vernon, the School District controls the underground system. It involves an irrigation “key” that attaches to the hose and must be fitted to the bib inside the irrigation boxes and turned to engage the water. It’s a little tricky and takes practice. Because the pipes are plastic, it’s important not to force the lever or a serious break could occur. The water main is located in a rectangular box inside the front gate to the right. Turn the valve until it shuts off and notify the coordinator.

WEEDS & WORKBEES

As part of the gardener agreement, you have been asked to manage the weeds and area around your plot and prevent the spread of weeds to other allotments. In some cases this area would be exclusively yours to maintain and in others that area will be shared. It is recommended that you dig up the weeds when they are young before they go to seed. Then they can be composted. Once they take root, they are difficult to

impossible to remove successfully... We also have a number of general use areas. These also need to be kept trimmed and weed-free. Please take some time to help manage these areas.

From time to time work bees will be scheduled. Gardeners are expected to attend and/or provide some extra hours on their own if schedules conflict. Work bees are a great way to get to know your fellow gardeners and are important for keeping the gardens appealing for both the gardeners and the public.

UNATTENDED GARDENS

If gardens remain unattended or are in non compliance, a notice will be given to the gardener to clean it up. If this is not done in a timely manner, the garden will be dug under, or given to another garden to tend.

SMOKING

We would ask that any smokers or guests, **DO NOT SMOKE** within the garden area or inside the shed. Please be aware of fire risks in the hot dry portion of the season.

PESTICIDES

The Community Garden is a pesticide-free zone, so we do not permit the use of chemical herbicides or insecticides. Even some “natural” remedies can be harmful to beneficial insects, so please ensure you have adequate information about any such products and use with care. If you notice an infestation, there are reference books in our “library” where you can learn of the appropriate preventative and control measures. We realize that gardening organically means sharing a little with our natural friends. We do expect you to deal with pest infestations mechanically and/or preventatively i.e. physically remove eggs and pests, avoid planting susceptible crops, the like.

KEYS, WINTERIZING and RENEWAL

All keys must be turned in and garden allotments cleared before October 31st. Having this done by October 15th is very helpful to allow for planning. Generally, only one key per allotment is provided. Additional or lost keys will be provided or replaced at a cost of \$5. Please report lost keys right away.

At the end of season, when your allotments are cleared out, free of weeds, and prepared for the winter with a cover crop, leaves or cover of your choice, and your key has been turned in on time, you are eligible to renew your allotment for the next year. **You must notify the coordinator of your plans to return by October 15.** There will

be an **early registration** from **November to December 31** for returning gardeners after which, any allotments left will be open to new gardeners. **IMPORTANT** -If you fail to contact the garden representative about your renewal plans, haven't properly winterized your allotment, or don't register before January 1, your allotment will be made available to a new gardener.

ORIENTATION MEETING IN THE SPRING

All gardeners new and returning are expected to attend the gardener orientation meeting each spring in April. A notice with information will be provided to you when you register. At the orientation you will be assigned a key and instructions will be provided as per the agreement. It is also expected that you will sign up for your volunteer duties over the summer. With everyone helping and doing their part, we can expect the gardens to thrive and continue to provide this service well into the future.

JOIN THE GARDEN COMMITTEE!

We recognize that gardeners are mostly interested in gardening when they sign up for an allotment. However, there just isn't enough staffing to do all that is required. Garden committees need only meet as needed to plan out the supply needs for the season, organize work bees when needed, or enlist volunteers to take on a project that needs doing. They are a contact for the community garden coordinator and also help communicate information to the gardeners.

The committee takes on a little more leadership to keep an eye on things and ensure that the garden is running well for everyone. The coordinator is available for support and will respond to budget requests and other negotiations with the partner organizations as needed, so this year should be less onerous on everyone.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR EFFORTS AND HAVE A GREAT GARDENING SEASON!

FROM THE GARDENER AGREEMENT...

Section 3 – User's Obligations

- 1) **IMPORTANT** I agree to register for and attend a gardener orientation meeting at the start of each season.
- 2) I agree to volunteer 12 hours towards the general operation and maintenance of the garden in addition to the time spent managing my own garden.
- 3) I agree that the garden is primarily for vegetable growing, however, I am welcome to include flowers.
- 4) I understand that I must supply my own seeds, soil amendments (above what will be donated), tools, edging or other garden implements.
- 5) I understand that my allotment will be tilled for the first year of use, but thereafter I am responsible for its maintenance.
- 6) I agree to have something planted in the garden by June 1st and keep it watered and maintained for the entire growing season.
- 7) I agree to keep weeds in and about my allotment from going to seed and trim and maintain the pathways surrounding my plot.
- 8) I will not plant tall crops or place trellises where they would shade a neighbouring plot or allow plants to grow over the pathways.
- 9) I will not use any chemical pesticides (herbicides, insecticides) or chemical fertilizers on my garden.
- 10) I will monitor, report, and address any pest infestations immediately using non-toxic alternative pest control.
- 11) I will pick only my crops, unless permission is granted by the plot user.
- 12) I will not plant invasive species in the garden or surrounding area (note this can include some herbs and flowers)
- 13) I will not bring pets to the garden.
- 14) I will be responsible for the supervision of any children, youth or guests that I bring to the garden and have ensured that anyone sharing my garden responsibilities is aware of the rules of use.
- 15) I understand that the sole activity to be undertaken at the site is vegetable gardening. Any other activities must receive prior permission from the Garden Representative.
- 16) I understand that I must respect the privacy of the property owner and limit my activities to the designated garden area.
- 17) I will make efforts to keep noise to a minimum, including musical devices and avoid any such behaviour thought to be a nuisance.
- 18) I will use only my own tools and supplies with the exception of tools marked and provided for shared use and will put them away after use.
- 19) I will keep my garden area neat, and will not accumulate tools, waste, buckets, or other implements that may obstruct or detract from the garden esthetics.
- 20) I will treat my fellow gardeners with courtesy and respect.
- 21) I will report any concerns, conflicts, or damage promptly to the Garden Representative.
- 22) I agree to adhere to the watering schedule and methods determined by the Garden Committee and will take responsibility for watering my own crops, and/or prearrange a reciprocal agreement with a fellow gardener or with a personal acquaintance if I am away.
- 23) I will use the compost bin for depositing garden waste generated on-site and follow the directions for disposal of seedy weeds and other materials.
- 24) I agree to adhere to the hours of operation from approximately dawn to dusk. I will not remain on the site after dark.
- 25) I agree to adhere to the designated parking areas and follow the directions for loading/unloading zones.
- 26) I agree to have my plot winterized (debris cleared) before Oct. 31.
- 27) I will notify the garden coordinator by **October 15th** if I plan to return to the same plot the following spring (dates may be subject to change).
- 28) I understand that there is **NO SMOKING** in the garden area and alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs are not permitted to be brought to, consumed, or dispensed at the Community Garden at any time.
- 29) I understand that I may not transfer or assign my allotment to any other persons or group without prior consent and approval of the Garden Representative.
- 30) I understand that use of any garden equipment or tools, both motorized and non-motorized comes at my own risk.
- 31) I agree to allow the use of any photos for publicity purposes.
- 32) I agree to share my contact information with my fellow gardeners
- 33) I understand that failure to adhere to any part of this gardener/user agreement will be grounds for forfeiting the continued use of my allotment.

Community Garden Plant list

Favoured Plants

Most annual vegetables and/or flowers are accepted at community gardens. There are a few exceptions to note below.

Tall, stalky plants

Gardeners are discouraged from planting tall, stalky plants and plants that shade and/or form seed heads. Most are difficult to compost or form seed heads that can reseed and spread.

- Corn
- Amaranth
- Quinoa
- Orach
- Sunflowers

This is particularly valid for West Vernon garden. East Hill gardeners who choose to grow corn or sunflowers must adequately break them up and take them home to compost or put out to curbside. Sunflowers are enjoyed by many, so consider smaller varieties over the giant ones.

Vine Crops

Gardeners are discouraged from planting vine crops like squash and cucumbers at West Vernon unless they are trellised upward and are not allowed to sprawl in the pathways. Gardeners at East Hill must also ensure that sprawling vines do not disrupt pathway movement for others.

Perennials

Perennials are not generally encouraged because gardeners leave them behind making someone else responsible for them. Some herbs and fruits like strawberries and mint can become invasive. These must be carefully controlled or not planted at all.

Poisonous plants

There are many common varieties of plants and flowers that are safe to consume and many that have poisonous parts or can cause contact dermatitis. Please be sure to research this carefully before planting or consuming them. Here is a list for your information:

<http://homecooking.about.com/library/weekly/blflowers.htm>

Other invasives

Some common medicinal herbs/plants or flowers can be highly invasive and sometimes toxic to humans or domestic ruminants. For example: Milk Thistle is considered an alien invasive species and if allowed to go wild could be disastrous to the native ecosystems. Please do not plant anything new until you have thoroughly researched the implications it may have in this regard. Any such plantings discovered may have to be removed without notice.

Community Garden Maps

West Vernon Community Garden

