



Information & Rules for Community Gardens in Somerville during COVID-19 PANDEMIC
City of Somerville Public Space & Urban Forestry Department &
Somerville Conservation Commission
April 9, 2020

The goal of the City of Somerville at this time is to stop the spread of COVID19. Given the anticipated surge in cases that is predicted, the City does not recommend anyone leave their home unless it is necessary. As a community we need to make adjustments to our normal schedules and postpone some activities to be part of and support this community response. While many community gardens remain open, the situation may change requiring all community gardens to close, in which case access to all gardens would be shut off to everyone. This action may happen quickly, so gardeners should be aware of this when deciding whether or not to begin your garden this year. We cannot predict the dangers of this pandemic and need to respond in ways that are protective of human health. Thank you for understanding the severity of the current situation and for helping to keep our community healthy.

The City understands the importance of parks, natural areas and community gardens during this difficult time; however, all decisions must put public health first. Given that all playgrounds and athletic courts are closed, **community gardens with access through these spaces are closed.** No one is allowed to go into a closed park. This means that there are gardeners who are unable to garden their assigned plots this season. These are referred to in this document as “displaced gardeners.”

City Gardens that are currently closed include:

- Morse-Kelley
- Osgood
- Walnut Street
- Albion
- Allen Street (closed for construction)
- Chuckie Harris Park

There are gardens, including the Tufts Community Garden and the Avon Street Garden, that are not owned by the City of Somerville. The owners of these gardens may decide to close them for many different reasons without notifying the City.

The City of Somerville’s Public Space and Urban Forestry Department and the Conservation Commission have formulated the following rules for 2020 Community Gardens:

1. Garden Coordinators should create a gardening schedule that ensures there will only be **one individual, or household who share a plot, gardening there at a time.** Please practice social distancing at all times, even outside. Gardeners should be especially aware that other public

spaces are closed due to the potential for gathering and spreading COVID-19. If gardeners are gathering in community gardens, they will be closed.

2. Shared tools are not allowed, even community garden tools, and be mindful of hoses, gates and locks that may be touched by many.
3. Do NOT touch your face while gardening and wash your hands with soap and water as soon as possible. You should always follow [CDC guidelines](#). We encourage everyone to follow [the CDC's recommendation to wear clean masks or face coverings in public](#).
4. Given that each person has a different comfort level with the health risks of leaving their home, gardeners who chose not to garden this year will not lose their plot nor will they be charged a fee. Garden Coordinators should make their best effort to get in touch with the gardeners and, if contact cannot be made, the Coordinator should take steps to maintain the plot to not impact other plots (such as covering the plot to suppress weeds or soliciting other gardeners to weed the plot), but should NOT otherwise reassign the plot to others without their explicit permission (see #5). This gardener could be sick and unable to respond to emails/calls.
5. Garden Coordinators should not give away plots, even temporarily, unless they receive written permission from the current gardener assigned to the plot to do so. Garden Coordinators, with this written permission, may allow "displaced gardeners" from another community garden to temporarily garden the plot. This temporarily "displaced gardener" should pay any fees associated with the plot they are using. It must be clear to all "displaced gardeners" that they will return to their regular assigned plots next year. Not all "displaced gardeners" will be able to be accommodated in the currently open gardens. Garden Coordinators should work together to find a fair way of doing this.
6. New gardeners from the wait list should not be given plots at this time. We know how substantial the wait list is, but we do not want to introduce additional gardeners at a time of public emergency.

You can find rules for the use of Somerville open spaces during COVID-19 here:

<https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/ospcd/psuf/public-space>.

All gardeners are invited to attend the next Somerville Conservation Commission virtual meeting on April 28th at 7pm. Public notice and link to the meeting will be posted on the City's website.

Please direct any questions to the City of Somerville's Conservation Agent, Malik Drayton, mdrayton@somervillema.gov.

Thank you for working with us to stop the spread of COVID 19.