

Sheldon Miller (Dunmore Rd) & Osborne Park (NE Crescent Heights) Community Garden Guidelines



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Why Community Gardens?

Community Food Connections Association (CFCA) is a non-profit organisation focused on local food security offering multiple programs and learning opportunities in the community. One of these programs, Community Gardens, aims to provide shared space for citizens to grow their own vegetables, thereby enhancing both physical and emotional well-being. Members can enjoy their summer with healthy activity and fresh produce, while building stronger ties amongst their families, gardening neighbours, and the community.

Ensuring an enjoyable gardening experience for all community garden members is the primary goal of these guidelines.

Roles + Responsibilities

As an organization, CFCA's role is to facilitate the operations of Community Gardens. The role of each Community Garden member is to steward their plot through the growing season and be responsible for the upkeep of their plot. In addition to this, each member is expected to assist in maintaining the community garden as a whole and communicating with other gardeners, or a Garden Administrator if need be, for any issues that must be addressed.

Community Garden Sites

As of 2024, there are two community gardens managed by CFCA: The Sheldon Miller Friendship Garden is situated on a site provided by Alberta Health Services (AHS) which is located on Dunmore Road behind AHS Community Health Services (2948 Dunmore Rd SE). There are plots available in two sizes - full plots of 15'x20' or new half plot sizes for the 2024 gardening season. There is an automated irrigation system at this site as well as hoses and spigots.

The new Osborne Park Garden location is provided by the City of Medicine Hat and is located behind the YMCA Child Development Centre in NE Crescent Heights (1707 7 Ave NE). As of 2024, there will be 20 raised beds (32" tall) for members, and water is available from hoses and spigots (no automated irrigation system). Both sites have tool sheds and nearby parking.

General Information

Plot Allocation + Fees

Gardeners apply for a plot by filling out the registration form and paying the required annual fee. At Sheldon Miller full plots are \$40, half are \$20. All plots at Osborne Park are 20\$. Gardeners will be notified when plots have been assigned.

Returning community garden members from the previous season will have priority registration until December 31st. See Annual Garden Schedule below for further details.

Annual Garden Schedule

Members will receive notice of orientation and general meeting by e-mail, mail or phone.

December 31	Last day for returning gardeners to register.
January 1 – February 15	Waiting list will be contacted and will have until February 15 th to register.
February 15 – April	Remaining plots will be open to the public, first come first serve.
Last week of April	Orientation meeting and plots staked (weather permitting). Gardeners are responsible for their plot from the date the plot is assigned.
May	Watering schedule confirmed and posted at each site. Water turned on and planting begins.
June 10	Deadline for planting. After this date any unplanted plots are assumed to be abandoned and will be reassigned to people on the waiting list. There will be no refund provided.
Late Sept - October	Water is turned off. Crops must be removed and any preparations for winter completed.

Hours

Both Community Garden sites are “open” to gardeners from dawn until dusk seven days a week during the growing season. The lock code is required to gain access to the gardens. Please avoid using the space outside of this period.

Bathroom

There are no bathrooms available at the community garden sites.

Parking + Bicycles

Park vehicles only in the designated locations. Avoid using staff parking during working hours of the nearby businesses. Bicycles can be parked inside the garden in the common area or locked up outside. CFCA is not responsible for any stolen bicycles or items taken from unlocked vehicles.

First-Aid + Emergency

A first-aid kit is available for gardeners’ use and is kept in the garden shed. If the kit is running low on supplies, please notify a Garden Administrator. In case of a medical emergency, call 911.

Water

Hoses and spigots for watering are available at both garden sites. The Sheldon Miller Garden also has an automated irrigation system and the watering schedule will be posted on the Bulletin Board at the site. CFCA does not determine when the water is turned on or off for the season at either garden site, or the automated sprinkler schedule. This is at the discretion of the landowner of each site.

For Sheldon Miller Gardeners, some plots receive more water than others from the sprinkler system. Gardeners are encouraged to regularly monitor their plots as they may require supplemental water to ensure adequate soil moisture.

Tools

Both gardens have a collection of garden tools stored on-site. A locked shed/chest is available for garden tool storage. Gardeners may donate tools for common use and these should be marked "Garden Club" to indicate that they are for shared use. Normal wear and tear of equipment is recognized. Any deliberate physical or destructive damage to property or equipment will be the financial responsibility of the gardeners. Please notify a Garden Administrator if a tool is damaged or missing.

Gardeners wishing to use and store their own garden tools at the garden do so at their own risk and should label these clearly. Try to avoid storing personal tools/supplies within the plot as this can become disorderly. These can be stored in the tool shed.

Guests

Family and friends of garden members are always welcome to visit the garden, but please ensure that young children are supervised to avoid damage to neighboring plots.

Prohibited Substances

Smoking, vaping and the consumption of alcohol are not permitted in the gardens. Gardeners are not permitted to grow cannabis in the community garden.

Pets

Pets are not allowed in the garden.

Plot Maintenance

General Expectations

Plots are to be well maintained and fairly weed-free throughout the growing season. Remember, the community garden is a shared space, and the state of one plot can greatly affect those surrounding it. Gardeners are encouraged to use safe methods to control weeds and pests (see below). Typically 2-4 hours each week is required to tend, tidy and harvest. If you are unable to commit the time required to maintain a plot through the entire growing season, please consider pairing up with another gardener or reconsider your application.

Failure to maintain a plot in a reasonable state will result in that member being ineligible to return the following year (barring unforeseen circumstances). In the case of a prolonged absence, gardeners must ensure that they ask another gardener, friend or family member to take care of their garden plot. It is also suggested that they communicate their situation with a Garden Administrator.

Paths + Common Areas

Maintenance of common spaces within the garden is the responsibility of all gardeners. All gardeners are expected to contribute to the weeding and picking up litter from the paths and are responsible for keeping their plants inside their plots. These areas must be kept free of weeds, debris, litter etc.

Weeds + Pests

It is in everyone's best interest to keep weeds and pests under control in the community gardens using the safest methods possible. Consider how weed/pest control measures will affect neighboring plants/gardeners, pollinators and the environment before taking action. An excellent way to prevent weeds is by applying several inches of organic mulch (leaves, woodchips, straw, etc) to cover bare soil and prevent any seeds lying dormant from germinating.

Once a weed or pest has been positively identified, manual control (hand pulling or hoeing weeds and squashing insects) is a good place to start. It is especially important to control weeds that spread underground by rhizomes as soon as possible, and weeds that produce many seeds before they get a chance to spread. See the Additional Resources section for information about weeds, pest identification and more.

Garden Waste

Healthy garden waste (thinned plants, pruned leaves, etc) can be taken home to be composted or placed in personal yard waste bins to be collected by the city. It can also be chopped and dropped on the surface of the soil as a mulch. At the end of the season, healthy plant material can be left to be tilled into the soil as organic matter (Sheldon Miller Garden only).

Diseased or insect infested plants must be immediately bagged and removed from the garden site to prevent spreading. The same goes for plants that have gone to seed and weeds that spread easily by cutting. If uncertain, remove from site.

All non-vegetative garbage must be taken home with the gardener. As of 2024, neither site has a compost station or garbage bins.

Structures

Gardeners can use structures to support and/or protect plants during the growing season so long as they are not permanent and do not exceed 5' in height. Items like stakes, trellises and other structures must be sturdy so they do not collapse or blow away (potentially damaging plants). Consider how structures/supports will affect garden neighbors. All supports and structures must be removed from site at the end of the growing season.

Plant Choice

The intention of the Community Gardens is for members to grow food, namely vegetables. Consider height and spread of plants at maturity before planting. Avoid encroaching on neighboring plots and paths by planting spreading things at least 1 foot away. Poisonous plants and cannabis are not allowed. Plants that produce many seeds that spread easily must be kept in check to avoid “seeding” neighboring plots.

For Sheldon Miller gardeners, avoid growing tall plants within 6 feet of the sprinkler heads as these will prevent even watering of the garden.

Perennial Plants

In the past, perennial plants were not permitted in the community gardens as they would interfere with the annual tilling. As tilling is optional at the Sheldon Miller garden, and does not take place at the Osborne Park garden, herbaceous (without woody stems) perennial food plants will be permitted at the community gardens, such as strawberries and rhubarb. Bare in mind, the limited watering window at the sites can also negatively affect perennials. Trees, shrubs and aggressively spreading perennials (like raspberries and sunchokes) are not permitted. Perennial plants should be avoided if the plot is to be tilled in the fall/spring.

Gardeners looking to grow other perennial plants might consider contributing to the Food Forest, which is an edible garden focusing on perennial food plants located adjacent to the Sheldon Miller garden.

Community Contribution + Compliance + Contacts

Sharing Space

The garden should be a safe place for the community, children and other gardeners. Do not bring anything that will compromise the safety of the garden. Verbal harassment or offensive remarks towards gardeners, staff, committee members and/or landowners will result in immediate dismissal from the garden. No refund will be provided.

Garden members can harvest from their own plots, not those of other members, unless permission has been granted. If a member notices that a neighboring plot needs to be harvested, they are encouraged to contact the plot owner to inform them. **"If you didn't plant it, don't pick it!"** If a member notices insects, disease or other issues, the best practice is to inform the affected plot's owner first. A membership list will be given to all gardeners who have given consent at the beginning of the growing season.

Sometimes life happens. When a plot looks messy or has issues, avoid making assumptions about why that may be. Remember, this is a community garden space that is only made better by members helping one another. Try to find out what is going on or if another plot owner needs help before reporting any issues. Consider offering advice or assistance to community garden members who may be new to growing or need a little extra help.

Volunteering

There may be opportunities throughout the growing season to contribute to the overall success of the Community Garden. Work parties are organized to deal with forfeit plots, paths, shared space maintenance, and other things. If members are interested in volunteering, or if they have suggestions for a work party, contact the Garden Program Coordinator (see contact information below). Announcements of volunteer opportunities will also be included in the Growing Gardeners Newsletter.

Failure to Comply

Garden members who fail to comply with these guidelines will receive an email notice regarding Lack of Plot Upkeep from a Garden Administrator. Any plots that are not planted, or which have become unruly by June 10th, will be forfeit with no refund provided unless a Garden Administrator has been contacted with an explanation. This policy exists to allow other gardeners on the waitlist the opportunity to make use of unused plots within the growing season. Any produce from forfeit plots will be redistributed in the community.

Garden members may report plots that are not being properly maintained to a Garden Administrator after they have attempted to reach out to their owner directly. CFCA staff and volunteers are not the garden police.

Other Issues: Watering, vandalism or safety issues should be reported as soon as possible to a Garden Administrator.

Contact Information

Community Garden Administrators

Shawna Cooney (AHS)
403-502-8249, shawna.cooney@ahs.ca

Rita Aman (AHS)
403-502-8224, rita.aman@ahs.ca

Genevieve Mathieu (CFCA Community Garden Coordinator)
cfcagarden@gmail.com

Alison Van Dyke (CFCA Food Security Coordinator)
403-502-6096, communityfoodconnections@gmail.com

Additional Resources

CFCA's [Growing Gardeners Newsletter](#) is a monthly publication that aims to support gardeners of all experience levels in Medicine Hat and area. Back issues can be found on the CFCA Website (www.foodconnections.ca/garden). Current issues will be emailed to members each month.

The [Growing Gardeners Education Program](#) is CFCA's free garden club for new and experienced gardeners alike. It runs throughout the growing season and covers different relevant topics and hands-on learning each session. To find out more, email the Garden Program Coordinator (see Contact Information above).

Weed Seedling Identification Guide (Montana State University)

<https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2079/2015/06/Weed-Seedling-Identificaiton-Guide-Montana-Ext.pdf>

Identification Guide for Alberta Invasive Plants (Wheatland County Agricultural Department)

https://www.edmonton.ca/public-files/assets/document?path=pdf/weed_identification_book.pdf

Disease and Pests of Vegetable Crops in Canada

(The Canadian Phytopathological Society and the Entomological Society of Canada)

<https://phytopath.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Diseases-and-Pests-of-Vegetable-Crops-in-Canada.pdf>

Backyard Pest Management: Pests of Vegetables (Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development)

https://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/%24Department/deptdocs.nsf/all/ipd14865/%24FILE/BackyardPestMgmt_vegetables.pdf

Master Gardeners Association of Alberta

<https://mgaab.org>