



Harpswell Community Garden Gardener Guidelines

Updated 2023

Harpswell Community Garden is a volunteer-run program of the Harpswell Recreation Department. We provide organic gardening opportunities for Harpswell residents at our Mitchell Field location and welcome gardeners from other nearby towns. Our committee sets the direction, leads our operations, and is active at the garden. Our volunteers include gardeners and other members of the community.

We are funded solely by grants, donations, and plot rental fees. We deeply appreciate the financial support we have received from Harpswell Heritage Land Trust's School & Community Garden Grant Program and from other donors and local businesses. We are grateful for the guidance we receive from Town administration.

Welcome to Harpswell Community Garden!

We're excited to have you as a member of our community. We offer a high quality, safe and accessible organic gardening space.

By participating in HCG, you're contributing to the success of our garden. In renting a plot, you acknowledge that you have read, understand, and will act consistently with these guidelines.

Your success and that of your fellow gardeners depends on good gardening practices, shared responsibility for using our resources, and general garden area maintenance. For example, weeds and disease know no boundaries and one affected plot will affect others.

When our guidelines are followed by all, the garden and its community will be fruitful. Additionally, participation in a group or individual orientation at the start of each season assures that everyone is up to date on changes at the garden.

We share tips and ideas for successful gardening on our webpage and Instagram. We use email or texts for time-sensitive updates.

Email: CommunityGarden@town.harpswell.me.us. Please add us to your contacts to get our emails!

Web: harpswell.maine.gov/community-garden

Instagram: [harpswellcommunitygarden](https://www.instagram.com/harpswellcommunitygarden)

Our hours are 8 am to sunset. If the gate is locked, you may park at the gate and walk down.

All Mitchell Field rules, including speed limits and parking, apply to garden members and visitors.

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YOUR PLOT

Maintenance

Please visit your plot each week to weed, water, and harvest. Neglected plots lead to weeds spreading to others' plots. You are responsible for keeping the pathways around the perimeter of your plot weed-free, unobstructed and level throughout the season.

The edges of your plot should measure as close to 10x10' or 10x15' as possible, leaving pathways about 36" wide. Gardeners should locate and "true-up" their plot edges at the beginning of the season.

Please be a good neighbor to your fellow gardeners:

- Place any structures (trellises, hoops, fences, edging) at least one foot inside plot edges.
- Do not allow plants to grow into or hang over the pathways.
- Place tall crops on the south side or center of plot to avoid shading neighbor's plots.
- Leave no trace - take all your trash with you each visit.
- Keep your weeds under control, especially before they go to seed or spread through roots.
- Monitor and control insects on your plot. Many insects are beneficial and are encouraged, but pest insects do not respect boundaries.

If you are unable to tend to your plot for any reason, ask a friend or a garden neighbor to look after it for you, including controlling weeds and harvesting. If you are unable to find a helper, please let us know. While we cannot handle weeding, volunteers may be able to harvest for donation to local food programs.

Wood chips

Wood chips are only for use on the pathways. After weeding path areas and removing soil from the path fabric, spread wood chips on the path. Please do not use any wood chips (including those purchased separately) anywhere within the perimeter of your plot. Chips will change the soil pH levels. If you want to have interior pathways in your plots, we suggest using marsh hay, step-stones, and/or regular weeding.

Organic gardening basics

- We only permit products with labels stating they are 100% organic and approved by OMRI. Non-organic fertilizers, additives, pesticides and herbicides are never permitted in our gardens. Please see details in "[Organic Garden Products](#)."
- Smoking and vaping are not allowed in or near the garden. Tobacco users must clean their hands prior to entering the garden; tobacco mosaic virus can be carried on people's hands.
- Wood that is pressure treated, painted or stained is not permitted in garden plots.
- Our website offers links to online resources for those who are new to organic gardening or are just interested in refreshing their knowledge.

Watering

Our solar powered water system does not replenish the storage tanks quickly or on cloudy days, so please be mindful of this while watering your plot.

Please use water efficiently, watering by hand directly onto the soil at the base of plants. We strongly advise watering only one time per week. By watering more deeply and less frequently, plants will develop healthy root systems and be less susceptible to diseases associated with light, frequent watering.

Completely close spigots when finished watering, and catch any final drops into a watering can. Report leaks or problems right away via email to: CommunityGarden@town.harpswell.me.us.

Unless you are trained in our water system, do not use or adjust any of the faucets associated with our pump and water storage setup. It's a complex system and expensive to repair.

Harvesting

As your produce matures, harvest on an ongoing basis. Certain plants (beans, leafy greens) will continue to produce well if regularly harvested. If you have too much of a crop (zucchini), consider donating it locally. Options include the Harpswell Sharing Tables (Wednesdays) and Mid Coast Hunger Prevention Program (Brunswick).

Putting your garden to bed

Clearing all plant material (including weeds) and structures from your bed is necessary to limit weeds and disease in the following year. Please remove all by October 31, or two weeks after the first killing frost. If returning to the same bed, you may request permission to leave perennials (after removing seed heads) and well-secured structures.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES

HCG is a small community garden, yet it requires the same maintenance of shared spaces and infrastructure as one with many gardeners. Our success depends on everyone (gardeners and non-gardener volunteers) chipping in to tend our perimeter paths, lawn area, compost bins, etc. We expect every gardener to contribute a minimum of 6 hours on these common tasks.

If you would like to take on a special project or ongoing activity, please let us know. And if you can contribute more than the minimum 6 hours, please do so. Your generosity of time is much appreciated.

We periodically schedule work days and you may volunteer at other points during the season. We can help match gardeners' time and talents to our needs.

Please record your service hours in the log book in the garden shed or email us. This data is very important when we apply for grants, as it provides evidence of community engagement in our mission.

CHILDREN AND PETS

We welcome and encourage children to participate in the garden community. Please keep a close eye on children and don't let them onto neighboring plots. A sandbox and play structure are available to children who visit with gardeners.

Well-behaved dogs are welcome at the garden, but must be leashed at all times and may not be within the plot area.

SHARED RESOURCES

Garden shed

Each plot holder is given the combination to the shed door. In addition to gardening tools, there is a small first aid kit and log book in the shed. Please lock the shed when you leave.

Hand tools, wheelbarrows, etc. are available for your use while at the garden. Please share tools if others are gardening while you're there. Avoid digging with forks or spades near plot/path borders, as we have irrigation lines buried just a few inches deep. A hand trowel is a better tool for those areas.

If you use any tools, please clean all soil and debris off and dry them before returning to the shed. Soil and/or moisture will quickly lead to rusty tools.

If you will be using the tractor, you must first sign a waiver at Town Office; be sure to also fill in the log (in its own tab in the volunteer log book). If the spare fuel is low, please notify us right away so it can be replenished.

Organic compost

The soils throughout our gardens are in excellent condition based on 2023 soil testing. We have a small amount of organic compost available. If you wish to use any, limit your use to no greater than one level wheelbarrow load per plot, and use it as a "dressing" for your plants. Gardeners who take more than their share will be asked to return it from their plots.

Compost bins and weed pile

Only healthy (non-diseased) plant matter is allowed in the compost bins and weed pile. Please bag and remove any diseased plants/clipping for disposal with your home trash. Diseased plants in our compost lead to more disease in future years. Separate your weeds from healthy and diseased plants as you work in your plot, with one pile for each category.

- The compost bin on the right side of the 3-bin system is for healthy garden plants/clippings and vegetable/herb scraps only (no compost from outside the garden, and no animal matter).
- All weeds go on the pile to the right of the compost bin, NOT in the compost.
- As noted above, anything that is diseased must be bagged and removed for trash disposal.

Herb and perennial beds

Our garden includes common beds where we grow herbs, asparagus, rhubarb, garlic and fruit. These are shared for our gardeners' enjoyment. Please take only what you can personally use, leaving more for other gardeners. We provide specific information when produce is ready and ask that you harvest according to our guidance to keep the perennials healthy and productive. When you're harvesting from these beds, please also take a moment to remove some weeds.

FORFEITURE

If guidelines are not followed or a plot is unused or neglected, the gardener will be asked to correct the problem. We may be able to suggest resources to help maintain plots. Failure to correct a problem could lead to forfeiture of the plot without refund.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Online gardening information

While there are many sites with gardening tips, we urge you to use those that rely on the latest scientific information and best practices. Our website lists a selection of sites we find helpful.

Organic garden products

To maintain the organic integrity of Harpswell Community Garden, use only organic products. If you are unsure about the best approach, please contact us for advice. Photos are helpful, whether it's an insect or a plant.

Acceptable products

- BT, M Track, MVP
- Messenger
- NEEM
- Insecticidal soaps
- Pyrethrum
- Summer Oil
- Seaweed/fish preparations
- Garlic, hot pepper, "kitchen" mixes
- PRO GRO fertilizer
- Diatomaceous earth
- Serenade
- Spinosad
- Sulfur
- Wood ash
- Manures (non carnivorous)
- Rock powders (lime, rock phosphate, greensand, granite dust)

Note: liquids may ONLY be applied by hand-held trigger spray bottle or hand painted on.

The following are examples of products that are not permitted (including in transplants).

- *Miracle Gro, Miracid, Peters, unless 100% organic formulations*
- *5-10-5, 5-10-10 and variations*
- *Rotenone*
- *Sevin*
- *Diazonin*
- *Malathion*
- *Methoxychlor*
- *Pyrethrin*
- *Slug bait with metaldehyde*
- *Sabadilla*
- *Copper*
- *Chemical formulations*