COVID-19: Guidance for Community Garden Coordinators

June 1, 2020

The Province has designated community gardens as essential food and agriculture service providers during the COVID-19 response. This includes shared gardens that are on public, private and school district land.

This document provides guidance for community garden coordinators to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 and maintain a safe and healthy environment for garden users (e.g. garden members, students and volunteers). It outlines infection prevention and control measures to implement, including access and use, physical distancing and enhanced hygiene. Garden coordinators play a key role in implementing the measures detailed in this document, as well as any other relevant recommendations and orders from the Provincial Health Officer.

Guidance for Garden Coordinators

Each garden is expected to have a garden access plan outlining how infection prevention and control measures will be implemented.

- Check with your local government. They may have a standard garden access plan for all gardens to use.
- If a standard plan is not in place, work with members of your community garden to develop an access plan.

Garden coordinators are responsible for communicating the garden access plan to all garden users (including members, students and volunteers). Once communicated to garden users, keep the garden access plan on hand for reference as needed.

Garden access plans should include three sections that address (1) access and use; (2) physical distancing; and (3) enhanced hygiene.

Access and Use

- Gardens are to be used by registered garden members and official staff/volunteers only.
  - Visitors should not be allowed at this time, including members of the public. Post signage advising visitors to not enter the community garden area.
  - Proxies may be used if people are temporarily unable to tend to their plot (e.g. due to self-isolation) given they are aware of the garden access plan and understand the necessary protocols.
- Gardens must not be visited or used by people who are sick OR travelled outside Canada in the last 14 days OR were identified as a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case or outbreak.
  - Post signage at the entrance to the garden notifying users not to enter if they may be sick.
• Garden users who are sick, including but not limited to experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, should be advised to stay home. Garden users can check their symptoms using the BC COVID-19 Self Assessment Tool. The BCCDC has more information on symptoms and self-isolation.
• Post signage at the garden entrance to promote what COVID-19 prevention measures should be practiced.
• In-person educational programs may only be provided if measures detailed in this document can be maintained. Consider online educational training as an alternative.
• If a small group of people needs to gather to support a project, ensure the measures detailed in this document can be maintained throughout the project.

Physical Distancing

• Modify the garden environment to ensure garden users can practice physical distancing (i.e. maintaining a distance of 2 metres between people). Consider high traffic areas (e.g. sheds, water fixtures) and post signs as reminders for physical distancing.
• Direct traffic in one direction through the garden with the use of chalk or tape markings on the ground, ropes, barriers or other markers as required. For example, if there are two exits, consider designating one for entry and the other for exit.
• If garden plots are close together (less than 2 metres) or physical distancing is difficult to maintain, assign a garden access schedule to garden users identifying when they can access the garden (i.e. which days of the week and time of day). Do not schedule two people to be working on plots next to each other at the same time unless they live in the same household.
• Advise garden users to limit family groups to ideally 1-2 people per household at a time.
• Advise parents/caregivers they are responsible for ensuring their children maintain 2 metres of physical distance from other garden users.

Enhanced Hygiene

• Provide a handwashing station and/or access to an alcohol-based hand rub at the entrance to the garden. Anyone using the garden should wash their hands or use alcohol-based hand rub before entering and upon leaving the garden. Post information on how to wash hands and use alcohol-based hand rubs properly by the handwashing station.
• Garden users should cough or sneeze into their elbow sleeve or a tissue. They should then throw away used tissues and immediately perform hand hygiene.
• Ask garden users to bring their own tools to avoid sharing (whenever possible) and ensure they are taken home after each use.
• If communal tools are used, they should be cleaned and disinfected at least twice daily. Disinfecting wipes or a disinfecting solution may be used.
• Identify common touchpoints/surfaces such as water spigots, door knobs, railings, and consider ways to reduce contact or determine a plan for them to be cleaned and disinfected more frequently (e.g. at least twice daily).
• Fresh fruits and vegetables should be washed or scrubbed under cold, running, potable tap water prior to being eaten.
• Additional information on cleaning and disinfecting is available from the BCCDC.

Guidance for Community Gardens in School Settings

• Work with the school district or independent school authority to determine the facility access that may be needed (e.g. water supply, tool shed access, etc.). Follow all infection prevention and control measures outlined by the school district or independent school authority.
• If a school garden is not currently being maintained, garden coordinators can work with the school district/independent school authority to find community organizations or groups that may be interested in managing the school garden until the school can use it again.
• Review COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 School Settings to support the implementation of key infection prevention and control practices being used in this setting.

Sharing Produce from Community Gardens

• Develop a plan to prevent COVID-19 transmission if any seeds, seedlings or harvested food is being delivered to others. Include procedures to ensure:
  o Persons who are sick are not involved in any way. Anyone who is sick should stay home.
  o Persons involved in deliveries practice physical distancing, hand washing/use of alcohol-based hand rub and cough or sneeze into a tissue or their elbow.
  o Contactless deliveries:
    ▪ Contact clients before leaving the produce or items at the door to confirm they are available to receive them. When the item is left at the door, knock, ring or alert the client, then step back 2 metres or leave. Use soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub after handling items and after touching common surfaces (doorbells, gates, etc.).
• Consider ways to provide new garden space to people who may be facing barriers to food access whenever possible. This could include:
  o Maintaining a separate waiting list for people facing barriers to food access
  o Connecting with gardeners not using their plot this year to ask if it may be reallocated to someone on the waiting list for the season
  o Coordinating donations of food grown to community food programs
  o Donating food grown in open plots to community food programs
  o Sharing food grown with garden members who are not able to garden this season due to illness or need to self-isolate
  o Opening up school gardens not currently being used as part of school programming to provide additional garden space for the community
Resources

- Refer to the BCCDC website for further information on COVID-19.