

Gardeners Guidelines and Expectations 2025

River Valley Area Community Gardens, Incorporated

Welcome to the 2025 Gardening Season!

The Board of Directors of River Valley Area Community Gardens (RVACG), wants you to have a great and successful gardening experience. Please notify a Board member if you have questions.

The River Valley Area Community Gardens is a non-commercial community garden

Garden Plots: All plots are rented for a gardening year which runs from October 15 of the current year through October 14 of the coming year. Each plot must be used for the cultivation of vegetables, flowers, fruit, or herbs for personal use only. Gardeners may not sell produce. Excess produce may be shared with area food pantries, friends, school kitchens, nursing homes, etc. or placed in the Gardens Kiosk on Westmor Street.

Non-Permitted plants: Plants that are not permitted in plots are fruit trees, mulberry trees, grapes, raspberry shrubs, other fruit shrubs including but not limited to gooseberry, currant, elderberry, etc. Due to their aggressive behavior, mint, oregano and other spreading herbs should be kept planted in pots either sitting on the ground or the pot planted in it.

Expectations of Gardeners:

- Make a commitment to spend time at the Gardens. Seeds and plants will not take care of themselves.
- Be respectful of your fellow community gardeners. Each Gardener has a different gardening point of view. Discuss issues respectfully and bring any disputes or concerns to the Board of Directors where appropriate.
- **Plant inside** the boundaries of the plot. **Allow 1 foot on each plot border** to take into consideration the growth or spread of plants being planted so that they stay within the plot boundaries and the sides are easy to mow.
- Enter the plot of another gardener only when invited or permission is given.
- Manage weeds so that they do not flower and go to seed. The goal is to keep weeds under 6 inches with no seed heads.
- Keep the pathways free of hoses, tools, weeds, equipment, etc. so that they may be easily mowed and not pose a hindrance to walking.
- Email is the primary method of communication. Check it on a regular basis.
- Dogs are to be kept on a leash and out of the garden plots. All waste is to be picked up.

Responsibilities of the Board: The Board shall work with gardeners to ensure that they have a successful gardening season and provide educational opportunities to learn organic and sustainable gardening techniques and practices as well as the fundamentals of gardening.

Gardening resources and advice: Gardening is an-experiment and a learning experience that may yield mistakes and successes. Many of our Gardeners are seasoned veterans with lots of experience and knowledge. Doug Rouse, John Ingham and Emily Martorano are especially knowledgeable about vegetable gardening.

Registration: The registration process for all gardeners begins with completing the Application form and is complete when the plot rental fees are paid, and a plot number is assigned.

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Use of photos and recordings for publicity: Photographs, interviews, video recordings, other visual or auditory recordings or any other medium with a Gardener's picture or voice may be posted on the internet or on social media to publicize the Gardens and its programs. The Gardener has the right to opt out of this posting images.

Liability Waiver, Release, Indemnification and Acknowledgements

Awareness of Risk: The gardener understands that participating in the garden has a risk of injury, damage to personal property or death.

Assumption of Risk and Waiver and Release of Claims: The gardener agrees to assume the risk of harm even if the potential harm is caused by someone else. The gardener also agrees to waive any right to sue or attempt to collect money from the landowner, sponsor, their board members, employees, volunteers, or anyone acting on their behalf for any losses or damages resulting from death, injury, or property damage to the gardener, anyone else, or any property, that occurs while the gardener is in the garden.

Medical Care Waive: The gardener gives up any right to sue or otherwise attempt to collect money from the RVACG or the Village of Spring Green arising out of any first aid, treatment, or medical service, including the lack of such or timing of such, given in connection with participation in the garden. The gardener is not covered by or eligible for any insurance, health care, workers' compensation, or any other benefits maintained by the aforementioned parties.

Indemnification: The gardener is responsible for any damages or losses suffered by the sponsor or landowner that are caused by the gardener.

Work Days: Work days are days planned to provide time to prepare the Garden site for the season or the winter and to do tasks to maintain it.

Volunteer Hours: Gardeners are expected to contribute 2 hours per month. Work hours may be completed at scheduled events or on the gardener's own time and may be as simple as 30 minutes or less at a time. This may include work days, task force committees, mentoring new gardeners or Junior Gardeners, helping with the Busy Bees program, working fundraisers, serving on committees, serving on the Board of Directors, tending the garden of someone who is on vacation, ill, or other reason having difficulty watering or weeding on a regular basis, etc

Task Force Committees: Task force committees are specialized committees to allow Gardeners to volunteer hours in a group or individually. The Task forces include (1) Food Pantry, (2) Flowers /Perennials, Ornamentals and Fruit, (3) Grounds / Equipment / Irrigation, (4) Food Pantry, (5) Administration / Finance / Fundraising, Each task force may have subcommittees.

Organic Gardening Standards: The Garden practices organic gardening and sustainability techniques. Acceptable natural fertilizers include compost, composted manure, green manure, leaf mold, and worm castings.

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Commercial fertilizers, pesticides or other soil amendments, -must be approved by the National Organic Program (NOP), which is administered by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Look for the following graphics on the labels of approved garden chemicals



Organic Materials Review Institute

Midwest Organic Services Association

US Dept of Ag Agriculture Marketing Service National Organic Program

Temporary absence(s) due to vacation, illness, etc: Gardeners who are unable to care for their plot/s due to vacation, illness, or some other event shall be responsible for finding someone to care for their plot until their return or they may contact the Superintendent to discuss arrangements for caring it.

Abandoned plots: Plots are considered abandoned if they haven't been tended in 4 weeks.

Plot Forfeitures and Transfers: If a gardener gives up the plot before the end of the season, the Gardener must contact the Superintendent or the Registrar. Refunds may be given until May 1.

Renewal of Registration: Gardeners who wish to continue their gardening experience in the coming year need to complete an application form by October 1 of the current gardening year. Gardeners Guidelines are reviewed annually and gardener input is encouraged.

Tall Plants and Trellises: Tall plants such as sweet corn or pole beans or trellises should be placed where they will not shade neighboring plots. Trellises must be sturdy and reinforced so they do not fall into a neighbors' plot.

Plastic seedling packs: Plastic seedling packs or pots and starter trays are recyclable and are given to the RVHS Ag Department. Please place them in the designated tote in the Gardeners Shed.

Compost: Composted manure is provided. Gardeners may add their own compost.

Mulch. Mulch is a proactive way to prevent weeds.

Biodegradable mulch such as composted, leaves, straw, and hay are acceptable and encouraged. Bales of straw / marsh hay are provided by the Gardens.

Newspapers, (**but not** glossy sheets) and non-glossy cardboard may be laid in garden rows as a weed inhibitor and topped with 6 to 10 inches mulch. Shipping tape should be removed.

All non-organic mulch such as plastic or fabric sheets must be removed by Closing Day if the plot is to be tilled in the fall or spring. Carpet, stone and wood mulch are not allowed in garden plots

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Pathways and Plot Boundaries: All pathways are to be kept clear of tools, hoses, garden equipment, weed piles and other obstacles.

- Gardeners should plant within their plot boundaries
- Plants growing into pathways may be mowed.
- The boundaries of individual plots are marked with posts which should not be removed.
- When planting, **allow a foot on all boundaries** for walking, plant overgrowth, and mowing.

Weeds: Spring Green Village ordinance 300.6 states that all weeds and grasses are to be kept under 6 inches. A list of noxious weeds designated by the Village of Spring Green is posted in the Gardeners Shed.

Weeds should be placed into the designated location for composting or each Gardener may keep a compost pile in their plot. Weeds in a plastic bag in the plot are acceptable. Gardeners may take their weeds to the dump located on Kennedy Rd.

Out of Control Weeds: Gardeners whose weeds are out of control will be contacted by a Board member.

- The Gardener will have 2 weeks to get weeds under control. The Board member may offer to organize a volunteer group to help the gardener get weeds under control.
- If the Gardener does not get weeds under control in that time, the Gardener will be contacted a second time and given 1 week to get weeds under control. Failure to do so may result in the plot being mowed. Any viable produce will be left for harvest.
- The Gardener may be asked to reduce the size of the plot until they demonstrate that they can keep the weeds in their plot under control.

Equipment: A tiller, mulching push mower, wheelbarrow, and wagons are provided for Gardener use. Please return equipment to the storage area. Equipment should not leave the garden site.

Please notify Doug or Marlon (or put a note on bulletin board in the shed) if the gas cans are empty.

The Gardens provides some equipment that gardeners may borrow for the season, i.e. stakes, mesh, tomato cages, trellising equipment. Equipment should be returned to the equipment area at the end of the season. Gardeners who are planning on long term gardening may provide their own equipment and leave it in their plots during the off season.

Tools: RVACG Garden tools and watering cans should be returned to the shed and not kept in individual plots or removed from the garden.

Irrigation system: Irrigation ports are available by section of plots. The Gardens will provide one hose and one nozzle per irrigation post. Gardeners may provide their own hoses and watering equipment.

Drip irrigation installation is permitted. Doug Rouse is available for consultation on installing drip irrigation systems.

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Prohibited Activities: The Garden is located on land owned by the Village of Spring Green. Village ordinances prohibit target shooting, and open fires. The Gardens prohibits alcoholic consumption on-site when operating equipment. Gardeners are encouraged to smoke in the picnic area for fire safety purposes.

Fences: Gardeners may fence their plots. Gardeners who install fences accept the responsibility of keeping weeds in the fence row under control.

Gardeners storage shed: A locked storage shed contains community tools for gardeners to use. The combination will be given to each primary gardener.

Waste receptacles: Please do not litter. Any garbage or recyclable waste should be placed into the appropriate receptacles. The wind blows down the prairie so please pick up garbage that may have blown in or around the Garden.

Car parking: Parking is available along both Westmor Street and Locust Drive. Gardeners may drive only on the north side of the site and on the driveway in the southern area of the site. Driving to plots should only be done if the gardener has a physical limitation, or if delivering items to a plot or harvesting from their plot.

Orchard: Gardeners may partake of community fruits and vegetables in season i.e. strawberries, raspberries, rhubarb, cherries and apples. Please pick moderately to share with other gardeners