



Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy Community Organic Garden Rules & Guidelines

By signing the *Responsibility Agreement* on the registration form, you agree to the following rules and guidelines, set by the Garden Committee, to ensure success of the Community Organic Garden.

- **Park at the pole barn (only in non-reserved area) or along the road. Please do not park on the grass.** Do not drive out to the garden. (One exception: If you need to bring in a load of dirt or compost, please check first with the Garden Coordinator or SMLC staff to make sure that the farm lane to the east of the farm house is ok to drive on.)
- **Deadline for plot renewal is April 15.** All gardeners must fill out a new registration form for each year which can be found on the website. Email it to the Garden Coordinator or send it in to the SMLC office along with your donation.
- **Work your plot by Memorial Day.** Any plots that have not been actively worked will be reassigned.
- **Volunteer time for general maintenance.** All gardeners are encouraged to help maintain the garden by participating in community work days. Emails will be sent out periodically for tasks that need to be done. (example: Turning the compost pile, spreading woodchips, etc.)
- **Keep your soil healthy.** Mix well-composted organic material into your plot(s) to keep the soil's living ecology rich and active. You are encouraged to plant cover crops and use organic mulch.
- **Water your garden sparingly; water deeply, rather than many shallow waterings.** Water only at the base of plants using watering cans or buckets. No hoses are allowed in the garden. If you are the last to leave, please be sure to shut off the pump at the tool shed. Please be considerate of others when using water. Use a biodegradable mulch to retain soil moisture.
- **Organic gardens do not contain genetically modified organisms (GMOs).** Organic seeds and seedlings can be obtained from Downtown Home and Garden Center in Ann Arbor, English Gardens, the Ann Arbor Farmer's market, as well as from mail order sources.
- **Fertilizers and Soil Amendments:**
Use only products approved for organic gardens. Look for the "USDA Organic" label. Products of plant or animal origin such as compost, leaf mold, livestock manure, blood and bone meal, cover crops, fish emulsion, kelp meal, liquid seaweed, and commercial organic fertilizers are acceptable. Livestock manure must come from non-meat-eating animals and cannot come from dogs or cats. Natural mineral fertilizers, i.e. greensand, granite dust, and ground limestone are also acceptable. Gardeners are strongly urged to add as much organic material to your plot as possible. Adding compost, leaf mold, and manure will help to improve soil fertility. Synthetic fertilizers / amendments are prohibited. **If in doubt, ASK.**
- **Insect Control:**
Synthetic insecticides are prohibited. Look for the "USDA Organic" label. Preferred control methods are crop rotation, hand picking of insect pests, introduction of predator species and companion planting. **If in doubt, ASK.** Let the garden coordinator know if you have an insect infestation.
- **Disease Control:**
Maintaining healthy soil, choosing disease-resistant varieties (non-GMO), and removing diseased plants from the garden should control most problems. To prevent the spread of disease, diseased plants should not be put into the community compost pile. These plants should be bagged and removed from the site.
- **No dogs are allowed within the fenced garden area. Please respect fellow gardener's plots by staying on woodchip paths.**

- **Non-Acceptable Plants:**
The Community Organic Garden cannot allow plants with the following characteristics to be grown in any of the gardens.
 - Invasive species such as comfrey, all mints, Jerusalem artichoke, garlic mustard, tansy, purple loosestrife or ornamental grasses
 - Trees, bushes, or other woody perennials (small berry bushes under 4 feet tall are acceptable.)
 - Illegal or dangerous plants
- **Plot corners should be clearly marked with stakes.** Please leave stakes in place during the growing season.
- **Do not use "treated" lumber or concrete.** Creosoted, wolmanized or pressure-treated lumber as well as concrete contain arsenic or other toxic chemicals that can leach into the soil.
- **Keep your weeds down. Do not let them go to seed.** You can significantly reduce weeds by using a biodegradable mulch to cover the soil. The use of plastic, weed fabric and newspaper is prohibited. Cardboard (no plastic coating, remove tape & staples) can be used on your pathways with a layer of wood chips on top for weed suppression. Manual controls i.e. hoeing (behold the wonders of the stirrup hoe!), mulching, and hand weeding are recommended. If using grass clippings from home, they should not be treated or sprayed and should not be stored at the garden in bags. Leaves can be stored in paper leaf bags. Each gardener is responsible for keeping weeds down and spreading woodchips on the common pathways along their plots.
- **Keep your plot clean throughout the growing season.** You must remove rotten vegetables from your plot in a timely manner as they can provide a breeding ground for insects and diseases. Place organic matter in the compost pile. Remove all empty plant trays from your plot. Take trash home with you for disposal.
- **If you are going on vacation** let us know so that we do not think your plot is abandoned. Inform us if you have arranged for someone to tend your plot. Let us know if you would like someone to pick ripe vegetables while you are away.
- **Prepare your plot for winter by October 31.** Remove all of your spent vegetable plants from that season. Compost all debris, including weeds and spent fruit and vegetable plants. Fall is a good time to add a layer of compost to your plot and/or plant cover crops. Remove scraps of cardboard that have not broken down.
- **Collect seeds for sharing and planting next year and share ideas and knowledge with fellow gardeners.**
- **Attend SMLC and Garden Community events.** All gardeners are encouraged to attend garden potlucks and other special garden projects. All are also welcome and encouraged to attend other SMLC events such as nature tours, preserve cleanups and full-moon campfires.

In the spirit of the community garden, all gardeners are expected to work together to support these rules. In the event that it is observed that the rules are not being followed, the offender will be contacted by a member of the Garden Committee to correct the situation. Continued disregard of the rules will result in forfeiture of your plot. The Garden Committee will provide oversight and enforcement. Any gardener observing rule violations should contact a member of the Garden Committee. **Have fun gardening!**