

Risk summary

Going outdoors and exercising are good for your physical and mental health. The risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus in outdoor settings like community gardens is lower than indoors. This includes the risk of human-to-human spread and from the risk from contaminated surfaces. Distancing is usually easier to maintain outdoors, there is more air circulation, and sunlight. Coronaviruses survive for less time on surfaces that are not smooth, and are killed in 60 minutes from UV sunlight.

Public health measures at community gardens

- Familiarize yourself with the public health measures that should be used in all settings to reduce the spread of COVID-19, including handwashing, wearing a mask, and maintaining a physical distance of at least 2 metres. A list of public health measures is available on [Timiskaming Health Unit's website](#).
- Respect any additional measures that have been put in place at your garden, such as capacity limits.
- Use your own garden gloves and bring them home to wash with soap and clean water after each use. Always wash your hands thoroughly immediately after taking off your gloves.
- Minimize the use of shared tools and clean or disinfect tools that are shared. Wash or sanitize your hands after touching shared tools.
- Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly under running potable water when preparing foods. Always wash your hands with soap and water before washing fruits and veggies and between handling different kinds of foods.

Additional information for community garden coordinators

Community garden coordinators should familiarize themselves with the workplace resources, guidance, safety plan, and signage. This information is available on the workplace and business page of [Timiskaming Health Unit's website](#).

Operations plan

- Develop an operations plan specific to each garden that includes COVID-19 prevention strategies. Take into account garden-specific factors such as the size of the gardens, the layout of the gardens, the proximity of plots to each other, the common areas and amenities on-site, and if there are special provisions or restrictions for gardeners at risk of contracting COVID-19. Landowners may want to view a copy of this plan to provide feedback and approval.
- Limit the number of people at each garden site to permit physical distancing. Consider limiting access to the garden if space requires. For example, you may schedule individual gardening times; permit access to gardeners to plant, maintain, and harvest food only; and/or restrict access to the public.
- Events at the garden should follow public health measures, including restrictions on gathering limits. Note that COVID-19 restrictions may change with short notice. Virtual events are the safest option.

Communication with gardeners

- Send a copy of the operations plan to all gardeners so they are familiar with the precautions that they will need to follow. Gardeners who do not wish to follow the operations plan may opt out of gardening this year.
- Update the list of current gardeners, staff, and volunteers, and track those who have agreed to follow the operations plan. Contact information may also help with contact tracing if there is a positive case of COVID-19.

- Provide information to gardeners so they are aware of steps they need to take to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Topics may include:
 - how to safely share gardening materials and tools;
 - how to clean and disinfect frequently-touched surfaces such as hoses, door/gate handles, and tools.

Signage and items at the garden

- If feasible, provide hand sanitizer or soap and water for handwashing and a disinfectant for cleaning frequently-touched surfaces. For more information, see Public Health Ontario's instructions for [Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings](#).
- Posters and other resources are available online at [THU's website](#). Note that the list of required signage on THU's website applies to indoor locations only. Currently, signage is not legally required in outdoor locations, but it is a good idea. Timiskaming Health Unit may be able to provide yard signs about public health measures to community garden coordinators upon request. The sign graphic is available [here](#). For inquiries about signage, please contact Rim Mouhaffel at Mouhaffelr@timiskaminghu.com or 705.567.9355 ext. 3276.
- Post clear, visible signage at all garden entrances reminding gardeners, staff, and volunteers about the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and where to seek assistance if they have symptoms.
- Place clear, visible signage throughout the garden, especially in locations where shared equipment or tools are located, reminding gardeners, staff, and volunteers of the requirements that must be followed to prevent spreading COVID-19.
- If you have decided to restrict access to the garden, post signage indicating who is permitted to enter.

Please call Timiskaming Health Unit at 705-647-4305 if you have any questions.