Tewksbury Public Library Community Garden: Rules & Responsibilities

Mission Statement

The mission of the Tewksbury Public Library Community Garden is to provide a place for the community to grow, share and learn about gardening using organic, sustainable methods. The Tewksbury Public Library Community Garden aims to provide resources, programming and materials to support this mission. Gardening here is open to gardeners of all levels of experience.

General Responsibilities

Plot Rules
Generally, garden members who apply for one will maintain a single plot for themselves AND will maintain a community garden plot. In the case of plots untaken at the start of the season, a member may have more than one individual plot. This will be at the discretion of the Library and the Garden Coordinator. The library will always have the right to shift, move, or make other necessary plot modifications within the garden.

Library Provided Resources
The Library will provide the TPL Community Garden with property and water. The Library will hold meetings and programs related to the garden and will serve as a conduit for information and communication. The Library will also oversee maintenance of the area, including mowing of the perimeters of the garden and pest control.

Communication
Gardeners are responsible for maintaining a viable means of communicating with the TPL Community Garden Coordinator, through emails. If a member does not have an email, a phone number must be provided.

Fees and Funds
There are no monetary fees associated with the TPL Community Garden. However, if the group chooses to do so, donations might be collected by the group, or by approved fundraisers to support group purchases, tools or deliveries.

Unclaimed or Abandoned Plots
Unclaimed plots will be assigned by lottery, followed by first come first serve throughout the gardening season. Gardeners might be asked to maintain nearby unassigned or abandoned plots temporarily (by weeding,
planting or mulching) to prevent weeds from growing too large before new tenants can move in. Throughout the growing season, a plot very overgrown with weeds and appearing unplanted or untended will be considered abandoned and will be immediately reassigned. The TPL Community Garden will make no more than three attempts to notify gardeners in advance. The same applies to plots with significant fruit and produce rot.

**Plot Assignments**

- Gardeners must be over 18 years old, or signed up to garden with an accompanying adult.

- All gardeners and volunteers, whether or not they have a plot, must sign the Responsibility Agreement, Liability Waiver Release, and a CORI form (if 18 or over). These documents need to be turned into the library prior to the start of spring growing season (April 1, 2024).

- Plot requests need to be made annually and an application and waiver must be signed. Forms will be available by November 1st of each year for the next season. These early bird applications should be submitted by December 31st and gardeners will be notified of their plot assignments by early April. If possible, gardeners may keep the same plot from year to year.

- Applications for plots submitted after December 31st will be reviewed as they are received and plot assignments will be made dependent on availability. All applications must be received by April 1st. A waiting list will be maintained if needed. Any plot disputes will be handled by seniority, and then by a random draw if necessary.

**The Growing Season**

The expected commitment to the TPL Community Garden is from May 1st until November 1st. During this time period, gardeners with plots are expected to maintain both their own plot and their companion plot. Gardeners are allowed and encouraged to begin work in their plots prior to May 1st, however, the minimum commitment is as stated. At the end of the season, gardeners are expected to clear out their plots and prepare them for winter.

**Plot Maintenance and Expectations**

- Garden members will be expected to actively maintain their plots from May 1st until November 1st. This includes the garden plot, the walkways or paths, and other areas adjacent to their plots. Garden members are expected to groom, plant, maintain, weed, harvest and clean-up.

- All gardeners must commit to using organic methods at all times. No synthetic fertilizers will be used in the garden. Organic definitions vary, so please ask the TPL Community Garden coordinator for additional information.

- Garden members will not garden in a manner that might block the sun or the rain from reaching a neighbor’s plot, i.e. do not intentionally grow plants or have trellises higher than four feet.

- Gardeners will prevent weed growth over 12 inches.

- Plot markers will be provided and must remain readily visible.

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• Buckets, tarps, bags, trellis and tools should not be left unattended or unanchored in the plots. Containers should not be left to collect water in a manner that would attract mosquitoes.

• Avoid large plants, invasive or insidious plants, as well as most perennials.

• Never weed, trim the plants, or harvest produce from any other member’s garden for whatever reason without consent from either the garden member or the TPL Community Garden coordinator.

• Dispose of fallen vegetation in the compost bins quickly.

• Preserve the integrity of the organic compost bins. Never put diseased or infected plants in the compost bins. Use the trash for these plants so as not to spread the disease.

• Do not drive through the garden area or perimeter without permission. Long term parking on the grass is not permitted at any time. Vehicles may be driven up to the garden to drop off heavy items, but must be immediately moved back to the main parking lot of the library.

• Pets are not allowed in the garden.

**Member and Volunteer Work Expectations**

• To qualify for an individual plot, everyone **MUST AGREE** to volunteer time helping with the Community plots.

• Members are **REQUIRED** to attend at least half of the scheduled group work days (dates will to be decided upon and handed out prior to the beginning of the season) as well as giving at least one (1) hour of their time weekly to any of the tasks listed below.

• Members who have been granted an individual plot **will be matched with a Community plot** that will be theirs to also care for during the season. The community plot must be maintained with watering and weeding by the assigned member.

**Tasks and Volunteer Opportunities**

*Community Garden Plots*
Every member who has an individual plot will also be assigned a community plot to water, weed and otherwise maintain. However, more plots exist than will be matched individually, so volunteers may weed, water, edge, and so forth any of the community plots, particularly if they are unclaimed.

*Watering and Hoses*
Maintain area around the water spigot, maintain hoses, keep hoses out of mowing area and plots, assist with watering the community garden if needed, and help water other gardeners’ gardens when special assistance is requested.

*Compost*
A compost schedule will be devised and gardeners will take turns turning the compost over in bin one, moving composted materials to the second bin when ready and to the third when ready for garden use. A pitchfork and shovel are available for use in the shed.
**Weeding**
Pull weeds from both your own plot and the community garden plots regularly. Be sure to also weed the paths around your plot and around the community plots. No weeds should be allowed to grow more than 12 inches in height or should be allowed to go to seed anywhere in the garden.

**Pests**
Plants in your own plot and in the community plots should be monitored for damage from pests. If an infestation or any damage is noticed, members should make it a point to email the Coordinator or the group at large to inform of the menace so steps can be taken to treat the pests organically.

**Community Market and/or Library Sale Cart**
Some produce from the community plots will be harvested weekly and may be brought to be sold at the local Community Market (if operational) or may be placed for sale in the lobby of the Library. Members may be responsible for helping to harvest and transport produce to the market or lobby and set it up for sale. If at the market, members can volunteer to help set up the booth, sell the produce, and take down the booth. The self-serve honor cart in the lobby requires setting up of the produce, providing a price list, and taking down of the produce at the end of the sale period. At any time of using the sale cart, library staff must be made aware of the cart’s being put out.

**Other Opportunities**
The TPL Community Garden may offer additional opportunities to volunteer time, such as growing seedlings for sale or use in the garden, or participating in other events like plant sales or helping staff informational booths at various local fairs. We may also be offering educational programs at the garden for patrons of the library, which includes opportunities to give garden tours or offer other information about gardening.

**General Overview**

According to the National Gardening Association, the number of American households growing their own food in home and community gardens has increased significantly in the last five years. Sustainability, food literacy and a trend toward eating organic foods have all influenced this shift. When these three things are paired with education, outreach and giving back to the community a perfect recipe for library programming is born. This is the vision for the Tewksbury Library Community Garden.

The aim of the Tewksbury Library Community Garden is to transform the resources we have, unused land and knowledge, into an educational and community service opportunity open to all members of the community. The garden will be a place where people of all ages and backgrounds can learn about growing and harvesting food, volunteerism, composting, maintaining open spaces, and what it means to develop a sense of stewardship for the community at large.

Private plots will be available to library card holders on a first-come, first-served basis. Individuals with a private plot are free to plant any vegetables, fruit, or flowers they would like. All private plots will be maintained exclusively by the families or individuals who “own” those plots for the growing season.

Communal plots will be maintained collectively by a group of dedicated volunteers and will exclusively grow hardy vegetables that are easily transportable such as broccoli, onions, squashes, beans, etc. All food harvested from the communal plots will be given out at Community Pantry distribution days or sold at the town Community Market or library sale cart.