

Project Grow Community Gardens
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MEMBER HANDBOOK

Project Grow provides Ann Arbor-area residents with the space, know-how, and inspiration to grow their own fresh, organic food. Our gardens are located throughout the community so members can choose a site that's close to home.

Project Grow is a private, non-profit organization that relies on the support of our community for volunteer help, equipment donations, and funding.

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I. WHAT PROJECT GROW DOES AND HOW

Project Grow has been serving the Ann Arbor community as a private, non-profit organization since 1973. We identify under-developed land, arrange for its use and maintain it as part of our growing network of community gardens. Our Discovery gardens provide educational programming for children, seniors and the physically challenged. Project Grow also offers classes and workshops, most of them at no cost, to anyone who would like to learn more about organics, gardening, seeds, plants and harvesting. In addition, we sponsor an ongoing Organic gardening Certification course in partnership with Washtenaw Community College and develop programming for specific groups by request. We hold annual events as a catalyst for social interaction and community development and are always looking for ways to improve the quality of life for Ann Arbor residents through greening, gardening and homegrown, organic foods.

Project Grow is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors and day-to-day business and program management is carried out by a Managing Director. (Find out who we are at our website www.projectgrowgardens.org!) Board meetings are open to the public and held on the second Thursday of each month at 7p.m at the Leslie House, Leslie Science & Nature Center, 1831 Traver Rd. Project Grow belongs to you, the community. Help us make it better. Get involved!

Every community garden site has at least one Site Coordinator, who serves as a vital link between the gardeners and the organization. (Their names and contact info are listed on the website and on each site's addendum to this handbook.)

Volunteers play an *essential* role in fulfilling our mission, from garden support and management to special events planning and program facilitation. You can register to volunteer online at our website

www.projectgrowgardens.org or request an application be mailed to you by calling our office at 734.996.3169. We welcome both individuals and groups seeking a one-time community service experience as well as those who want to be involved in an ongoing way.

The fees we collect for plots only partially cover the costs of managing the gardens. Costs incurred by Project Grow include water, plowing and tools and equipment for each site, insurance, accounting, information technology, office utilities and supplies and the managing director's salary. We rely largely on donations of time and money by our members and supporters to keep Project Grow alive.

II. OPERATION OF THE GARDEN SITE

Each of Project Grow's garden sites has one or more Site Coordinators. A Site Coordinator is essentially a volunteer “manager” for the site during the growing season and is responsible for opening, operating and closing their garden site. They also function as “the eyes and ears” of the Managing Director at a garden site.

Site coordinator responsibilities include organizing and conducting the stake-out of the garden site in the spring, scheduling required work parties during the growing season, verifying the status of plots that appear to be abandoned, maintaining the appearance of the site by organizing mowing and trimming as needed, maintaining equipment and hoses in good repair, assuring that gardeners follow Project Grow guidelines, closing the garden site in the fall and alerting the Managing Director to any problems requiring administrative attention.

It is intended that the Site Coordinator be the first point of contact for gardeners. For this reason, it's usually the case that your Site Coordinator is a seasoned organic gardener and a long-time Project Grow participant. Whenever necessary, gardeners are encouraged to contact Project Grow's Director for help.

A Site Coordinator's Checklist

Before opening day:

- x Establish stake out date (this date will be determined by plowing date)
- x Email/phone/contact gardeners about hay, to set date for stake-out and recruit volunteers
- x Take orders for marsh hay deliveries
- x Order marsh hay from Kevin Ernst
- x Acquire materials needed for stake-out:
 - x Measuring tape
 - x Wooden stakes (available from
 - x Permanent markers for numbering stakes
 - x Mauls/hammers to set stakes
 - x Site map showing plot numbers and locations

Opening day:

- x Bring materials assembled for opening day
- x Measure stake locations using site map
- x Mark plot numbers on stakes
- x Send out notice that the gardens are officially open
- x Encourage gardeners to adhere to Project Grow garden policies

Timely opening of the garden site: stake out shall occur within 10 days of plowing for annual sites,

whenever possible, by May 1st; perennial sites shall be staked out and opened no later than May 1st.

Mid-Season:

- x Observe watering practices
- x Watch for water system leaks
- x Watch for unruly weed growth
- x Watch for signs of plot abandonment
- x Keep garden paths and perimeters mowed

Sites will be visited by the Director throughout the summer to determine if they are being maintained adequately and operated appropriately.

Before Closing Day

- x Set the date and time for final work party
- x Notify gardeners of closing date and time. Remind them of their responsibilities.
- x Recruit and notify volunteers to assist with closing
- x Assemble closing gear:
 - x Hedge shears
 - x Choppers
 - x Shovels
 - x Twine and/or masking tape
 - x Trash cans

Closing Day:

- x Contact gardeners who have clearly not begun closing their plots
- x Pull stakes and store for next year
- x Chop all material that hasn't been chopped adequately by gardeners
- x Pull fencing, stakes, and gear left by gardeners
- x Collect, drain, coil, tie up and store hoses
- x Properly dispose of trash
- x Clean up/organize storage sheds
- x Clean up/store garden equipment

Successful closing of annual gardens requires that the site be ready for fall plowing which is scheduled, weather-permitting, as soon as possible after the official organization-wide closing day set by Project Grow; all fencing, stakes, or other garden structures shall be removed from the growing area. All equipment shall be stored neatly, or off premises at sites which require it. Hoses are to be coiled, tied, labeled and returned to winter storage locations.

Perennial plots should have a neat appearance. All trash, partial bags of product and plastic containers (except storage bins and compost bins) must be removed.

III. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR GARDENING

Project Grow is committed to gardening in socially and environmentally responsible ways. All of our gardens are organic. Fertilizers and pest control measures which may be used in the organic plots are those which are accepted by major organic certification agencies such as the Organic Crop Improvement Association. Soil fertility is maintained by creating optimal conditions for biological activity through crop rotations and the addition of organic content along with judicious use of organic and natural mineral soil amendments.

Guidelines for permissible gardening practices are given below. If you have specific questions, please contact your Site Coordinator or, if you are in need of further assistance, call the Project Grow office at 996-3169.

Weed Control

Gardeners are expected to control weed growth in their plot. ***Herbicides of any kind are prohibited*** as they are hazardous to human health, may kill or damage desirable crops, drift into neighboring gardens, or persist in the soil. Hoeing, mulching, and hand weeding are recommended. We provide an opportunity for hay delivery at the beginning of each season. You will be contacted by your site coordinator asking if you'd like to place an order.

Insect Control

Synthetic insecticides are prohibited. Preferred control methods are crop rotation, hand picking of insect pests, introduction of predator species such as ladybugs or lacewings, companion planting, soil solarization, row cover and biological controls like *Bacillus thuringiensis*, a bacterium that controls cabbage worms. As a last resort, natural botanical pesticides such as rotenone and pyrethrum (that break down quickly and do not leave harmful residues in the soil) may be used.

Disease Control

Most problems can be controlled if you maintain a clean garden and a healthy soil, choose disease-resistant plant varieties, water judiciously, and remove diseased plants from the garden.

Fertilizers and Soil Amendments

Inorganic fertilizers (i.e. 5-1-5, Miracle Grow, etc.) are prohibited. Products of plant or animal origin, like compost, leaf mold, livestock manure, blood and bone meal, cover crops, fish emulsion, kelp meal, liquid seaweed, and commercial organic fertilizer blends are acceptable. Natural mineral fertilizers, such as greensand, granite dust, and ground limestone, are acceptable as well. Gardeners are strongly urged to add as much organic material (i.e. compost, leaf mold, and manure) as possible to their plots to maintain soil fertility.

Composting

While we strongly encourage composting, it can only be done in designated areas. Please check your site's addendum to this handbook for the composting policy and/or on-site composting location there.

Non-Acceptable Plants

Project Grow cannot allow plants with the following characteristics to be grown in any of the gardens:

- Invasive species, i.e. mint, comfrey, etc.
- Trees, bushes, or other woody perennials
- Illegal or dangerous plants

Your Garden's Site Coordinator

Your Site Coordinator is responsible for answering your gardening questions and scheduling and informing you of work parties, plow dates, closing day and its requirements, etc. Please let them know the best way to contact you and if your contact info changes.

The "Community" in Community Garden

The definition of the word community is 'a unified body of individuals'. Other ideas used to describe a

community are 'common interest', 'interaction', 'joint ownership' and 'social activity'. As a member of Project Grow Community Gardens you are expected to act as part of your garden sites community by getting to know your neighboring gardeners, being considerate of those neighbors by keeping weeds down in your plot, helping others with their garden if they are in need and asking for help when you need it and attending work parties to do your part in helping to maintain common areas. In a community garden, when one person does not do their part, others bear the work-load.

Tools and Equipment

Many sites supply a few gardening tools while some do not due to a lack of storage. Our tools are marked with a red handle and the name of Project Grow. Please notify your Site Coordinator or the Project Grow office when tools break.

We supply hoses at every site. Please do not discard hoses unless the Site Coordinator has deemed them irreparable. They are expensive and a leak or damaged connection can be easily repaired.

Gardeners are expected to use Project Grow equipment and hoses with care and to return them to their proper location when they have finished using them.

Water

The cost of water is included in your plot fee and is furnished at every garden site. Watering of garden plots should never be unattended; hose timers are prohibited. Only hand-held hose attachments are permitted. Please conserve water by mulching well. Contact your Site Coordinator or the Project Grow office immediately if you discover a leak or a water problem.

Closing Your Garden Plot

Every gardener is expected to clean up their plot at the end of the gardening season. Even perennial plots must be put to rest for the winter. Project Grow will notify gardeners of the exact date each year but it is generally the middle of October. See below for a closing checklist but don't forget to check your site's addendum to this handbook for site-specific requirements by landowners.

End of Season Closing Checklist

Annual Plots

- x Remove all fencing, cages, stakes, string, plastics and all other non-organic material from your garden and take them home with you. Do not place any material in sheds or anywhere around the garden without permission from your site coordinator. Please leave the numbered marker stakes, put in by Project Grow in the spring to identify your plot, in place.
- x Remove rock borders and large rocks and put them in designated rock piles.
- x Remove all tomatoes and diseased or once infected materials from your plot and discard at home.
- x Pull out all plants that have tough stalks or long vines, such as sunflowers, corn, pumpkin, etc, and cut them into 12-inch pieces. These can be spread around your site, to be plowed under later in the fall. Similarly, chop all non-infected plant materials into 12-inch pieces and spread around your plot. Please do not leave them in piles or throw them outside the garden perimeter.
- x If you have un-used bales of hay, spread them around too, to facilitate plowing.

On closing day, all annual plots should be ready for plowing.

Perennial Plots

- x Pull out dead annuals and weeds or cut them to the ground.

- x Remove all tomatoes and diseased or once infected materials from your plot and discard at home.
- x Cut non-infected plant materials into 12 inch pieces to compost in your plot, at home or spread on your garden.
- x Remove all stakes, trellises, tomato cages, etc. that are not in use and take them with you.
- x Remove all bottled liquids, fertilizers, soil supplements, etc. and take them home with you.
- x Clean up and weed pathways within and around your plot.
- x Help your Site Coordinator and fellow gardeners to ready common areas for over-wintering.
- x Please do not leave tools on site through the winter.

On closing day, all perennial plots should be free from all non-organic materials that are not in use and have a neat appearance.

IV. POLICIES

Project Grow does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, or any other status protected by law or regulation.

Plot Sizes

Full plot size is approximately 750 sq.ft.. Half-sized plots are approximately 375 sq.ft. Discovery Garden beds are 24 sq.ft. Not all sizes are available at all gardens. Please check our website, www.projectgrowgardens.org for pricing.

Perennial Gardens are in high demand. Those with interest in obtaining a perennial plot will be put on a waiting list and notified when one becomes available on a first come first serve basis.

Returning gardeners have from January 2nd until March 15th each year to reserve the plot they gardened the previous season. You must fill out an application and pay for your plot by March 15th to reserve your plot for the upcoming season. After that time, plots will be assigned to new gardeners.

New gardeners who have applied and paid for plots will be assigned to plots at their preferred garden site on a first come first serve basis after March 15th.

Subsidized garden applications are available on our website or from the Project Grow office. Please call 734.996.3169 if you need a paper application mailed to you. Project Grow wants to make gardening available to everyone, regardless of income but be aware that the number of scholarships varies from year to year depending on the amount of funds received from our sponsors. Low income scholarships will be given on a first come first serve basis.

Refund/Cancellation Policy

Plot registration fees minus a \$5 processing fee will be refunded for cancellations prior to May 15th. No refunds will be given after May 15th.

Abandoned Plots

Plots that have not been seriously worked by June 1st or are overgrown with weeds taller than 18" at any point in the season will be considered abandoned and will be reassigned or solarized until the end of the gardening season. Contact your site coordinator or the office if you are having problems getting started or if you have to abandon your plot. Failure to do so will result in forfeiture of your right to

garden with Project Grow in the future.

Chemical Use will result in immediate expulsion from the garden and forfeiture of your right to garden with Project Grow in the future.

Member Handbook Disclaimer: The information in this handbook is subject to change at any time. If you are viewing a print copy of this handbook please remember; Because we cannot print and distribute this handbook every time a change is made, the current version of these guidelines and policies will exist on our website www.projectgrowgardens.org