



GGWNY POLICIES AND CODE OF CONDUCT

Grassroots Gardens WNY prides itself on the diverse group of committed gardeners that make up its network of 113 unique community and school gardens in Buffalo and Niagara Falls. The Garden Stewardship Practices were created to emphasize respect for all of our gardens. These policies and procedures were updated and created by GGWNY gardeners at Gardener's Committee meetings during the 2019 growing season.

***Please refer to *GLOSSARY* for GGWNY based definitions.**

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GARDEN STEWARDSHIP PRACTICES

GARDEN STEWARDSHIP

Community gardens and the lots they are on must be reasonably maintained meaning weeds are under control, raised beds are not neglected, grass is regularly mowed, and plants are regularly cared for - pruned, watered, and harvested (unless a natural prairie or habitat is desired.) Plants from the seedling order **MUST** be planted to prevent waste, and plants must not exceed lot boundaries. Each community garden decides together how to best utilize the growing space. However, if individual/family plots are included (as opposed to collective growing) they shall be laid out in an organized fashion to allow fair and equitable assignment. Plots should be visibly defined and easy to navigate around. Also, if individual plots are provided, there must be at least one community plot for public benefit/harvesting that is collectively maintained..

SHARING SURPLUS

Most gardens produce more food than needed. Gardeners are encouraged to harvest first, but communities play a large part in our gardens and might also pick produce. While this may be frustrating, know that your vegetable was used by someone in need. We recommend setting up a sidewalk farm stand – for neighbors and community members to grab what they might need – and/or designating beds open for community harvest. FeedmoreWNY is a local partner who also hosts a food pantry for community gardeners to drop-off extra produce to. Find a list of local Western New York Food Banks & Pantries using this link:

<https://www.foodbankwny.org/pantrymeal-locator/>.

Neighborhood gardens may **NOT** prevent any community members from harvesting public beds. Rather we encourage active gardeners to invite everyone in their community to volunteer some of their time in the garden assisting in opening the garden, maintenance, and closing the garden. Violation of this policy of open community harvest could result in gardener and/or garden probation (see *Garden & Gardener Probation*).

Please note, it is only acceptable to sell produce as a PERMITTED market garden with Grassroots Gardens WNY and the City of Buffalo. For more information, please contact the Community Garden Trainer or Executive Director of GGWNY.

GARDEN WORK DAYS

GGWNY works to coordinate spring and fall work days for opening up and closing down the gardens for the season, if requested. Lead Gardeners are encouraged to schedule regular workdays to keep up with the maintenance of the garden. For other events and/or activities related to your community garden please coordinate with your garden's Lead Gardener.

CLOSING THE GARDEN

By mid-November of each year, gardens are expected to be tidy with any non-winter gardening equipment, tools, or plants to be properly stored or maintained. Storage of bags containing leaves/garden debris (intended for composting) is acceptable but must be placed away from sight of the street. Please store away or cover furniture, trash, or other larger garden related items again out of sight of the street.

Community gardens are NOT responsible for sidewalk snow removal during the off season. If snow removal becomes an issue, please place a 311 request through the City of Buffalo's website (<http://www.buffalony.gov/463/Contact-311>) or the Buffalo 311 Mobile App. Gardeners' in Niagara Falls please contact The Niagara Falls Action Line online at <http://niagarafallsusa.org/citizen-action-line/>.

GARDEN MAINTENANCE REGULATIONS

GARDEN NEGLECT

Plots must be obviously worked and weeds controlled (unless a natural prairie or habitat is desired). Any abandoned or unworked gardens will be subject to a Garden Reminder (see *Garden & Gardener Conduct Policy*), which may lead to future decommissioning of the garden. We recommend scheduling volunteer workdays on a regular monthly or bi-weekly basis and creating a watering schedule to keep up with the maintenance of the garden. If you are struggling to maintain your garden, please do not hesitate to contact the Grassroots Gardens office **immediately**. Knowing you may need help sooner rather than later gives all of us time to strategize for the present and upcoming seasons.

TRASH

Each community garden should be free of garbage and gardening debris. A special event tote for existing community gardens can be placed through the Department of Sanitation. Gardens may add a garbage can(s) to maintain a litter free lot, if done the gardeners must take full responsibility for disposing of/ emptying the garbage can(s) in accordance with City of Buffalo and Niagara Falls trash regulations.

COMPOSTING

Compost containers are available through Erie County and/or can be built or purchased. Bins must be rodent-secure [**do not** overfill compost bins]. Compost piles are acceptable but must have a designated spot(s) not within sight from the street. All individual garden compost piles and bins must abide by the following regulations.

1. Bins must have a lid, be sealable, and/or gated to prevent wildlife from entering.
 - a. Rodents will not be able to climb into compost systems if there is a lid preventing their access.
2. Please refrain from depositing any of these items into garden compost bins: meats, oily/greasy foods, milk products, bread products, heavy inked/printed paper, and pet/human feces.
3. Please make sure to maintain a healthy compost chemical balance. Your compost should **not** be smelly. If smelly please refer to <https://www.growveg.com/guides/how-to-fix-common-compost-problems/> for a solution. If you cannot resolve the issue, please do not hesitate to contact GGWNY staff for help.

Any compost that is not following the items above may be subject to receive a Garden Reminder, requiring the community garden to reconstruct their compost system.

For compost education, please contact the GGWNY office at (716) 783-9653.

PATH MAINTENANCE

Pathways between raised beds and around ground beds should be clear, weed-free and well mulched or mowed. As we work to make our gardens more accessible for everyone, we encourage you to reference “*A Guide for Making All Community Gardens Accessible for All*”

Members” for ideas on how you can make your community garden accessible for every member of your community.

WEEDS

There are many weeds in the community gardens and learning to co-exist as a gardener is something we all face throughout the season. Weeds compete with other plants in your garden and can quickly become invasive if left to seed. Please make sure weeds are maintained and under control (unless a native habitat or prairie is desired.) Straw, mulch, and woodchips are some examples of covers for raised beds to reduce weeds and maintain soil moisture. **Organic only Herbicides, insecticides and fertilizers**, anything made from synthetic chemicals are **NOT** permitted in **any** GGWNY gardens.

Please be mindful when weeding as some weeds can be used for medicinal purposes. To prevent miscommunication between gardeners we suggest labeling weeds gardeners would like to preserve for medicinal or other purposes.

ACCESSORY GARDEN STRUCTURES

Only non-permanent structures that do not exceed 8’ x 6’ x 10’ [feet] (excluding fences around the border of the plot) are permitted in the City of Buffalo and City of Niagara Falls gardens.

WATER & HOSES

Use of water from the City of Buffalo hydrants is permitted with a hydrant permit. Drip systems and timers are encouraged. Keep hydrants in the “off” position when not in use. Continuous pressure from being left in the “on” position for timers and other devices leads to the rapid breakdown of the hydrants and their internal parts. Please **DO NOT** use a hydrant with a yellow cap. **DO** operate with a proper Reduced Pressure Zone (RPZ) backflow meter. If you need a hydrant permit, please contact the Grassroots Gardens office at the start of the season. We will provide one hydrant adapter and wrench for each new garden; however, if lost or stolen, the garden will need to pay the replacement cost for these items (approximately \$45).

TOOLS

Basic tools and wheelbarrows are generally kept on site at the gardens for everyone’s use. Please place any tools you use back in your garden’s shed or tool box and lock everything up at night. GGWNY is not responsible for any personal tools, etc.

GGWNY Tool Garage (located at 389 Broadway St. Buffalo, NY 14204) provides gardening tools for all community gardeners to borrow. Lead gardeners may contact the GGWNY office for the tool garage code and for training from our Operations Assistant on how to utilize the tool borrowing system.

As respectful gardeners, we cherish our community tools, we use them carefully, we leave them better than before we used them, and we put them away for safekeeping before we leave the garden.

- Please use each tool for its intended purpose.
- Clean tools when you are finished using them.

- Put each tool in its proper storage slot before you leave.
- If needed, ask other gardeners about the correct use of tools.
- If you see a tool being misused, kindly offer assistance.
- If a tool needs repair or attention, please let your lead gardener or GGWNY staff know.
- Please ensure the garage door is securely closed before you leave the GGWNY office if staff are not present.

GARDEN BORDERS, FENCES, AND GATES

Garden borders may be implemented at all gardens. The use of natural materials - i.e. stones, trees, flowers - is permitted, but the material of choice must be agreed upon by the majority of community gardeners in said garden.

Fences will be permitted on a very limited, case-by-case basis. If you believe a fence is absolutely needed to prevent vandalism, littering, illegal loitering, or neighborhood disputes please contact GGWNY Executive Director and the Community Garden Trainer. You will also need to form a community petition and approach the Gardener's Committee with said petition. The petition will be discussed at the next upcoming Gardener's Committee meeting.

- If your garden has been granted permission to have a fence, at least two points of access must be provided. Fencing material and installation methods must be approved by GGWNY and City of Buffalo (if public land lease) but are the sole responsibility of the community gardeners. Gates are permitted at points of access, but **locks are not permitted**, and the gates must be operable by all people, regardless of ability. Gates should be designed in a way that makes the garden feel open to the public.

GARDEN & GARDENER CONDUCT POLICY

NOT ALLOWED IN THE GARDENS

Permanent structures larger than 8'x6'x10' [feet] (length x width x height), fences (unless grandfathered in or approval from GGWNY Garden Committee and Board), marijuana cultivation, pressure treated wood, smoking, selling produce for profit without GGWNY staff permission (fundraising for community garden and/or parent nonprofit is acceptable), unleashed pets, and unsupervised children (under the age of 17).

Community Gardeners shall not:

1. Steal from, damage, or misuse any Grassroots Garden WNY community garden, equipment, and features.
2. Smoking and chewing tobacco - or products containing tobacco - are **NOT** permitted in any of the community or school gardens. **Tobacco carries the Tobacco Mosaic Virus which is harmful to all plants.*
3. Commit harassment of any person including:
 - a. Lays a hand upon, shoves, strikes, excludes, or threatens another gardener, staff or community member.
 - b. Engages in obscene gestures, objectionable demonstrations.
 - c. Uses foul language (swearing) or abusive verbal attack upon any fellow gardener.
 - d. Harassment based on race, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, culture, and/or abilities.
4. Bring any weapons including firearms into the gardens. Garden knives and legal blades are acceptable. This prohibition does not apply to police officers carrying service weapons in accordance with their department's policies.
5. Possess, use, grow, or sell illegal drugs in or around the gardens.
6. Fail to leave any portion of the gardens immediately upon being told by a Grassroots Gardens WNY employee or landowner or land manager.
7. Enter the garden while that person's abilities are impaired to the slightest degree by alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs or remain in the garden in such a state of impairment (excluding permitted garden events).
8. Commit any actions deemed by NYS and the federal government as illegal or a crime.

If a conflict arises between two gardeners, they are required to contact both the Community Garden Trainer and the Executive Director who will meet to discuss the problem with the assistance of the Erie County Restorative Justice Coalition*. Further action will be determined.

IMPROVEMENT PLAN

If a garden, gardener or volunteer does not comply with the *Garden & Gardener Conduct Policy*, it is the right of Grassroots Gardens WNY to place that party on probation until the conflict has been addressed.

1. During probation they may not volunteer OR enter any community and school garden a part of the GGWNY network.
2. They must also schedule a meeting with Erie County Restorative Justice Coalition * to work with them and any parties involved to resolve the issue and keep Grassroots Gardens WNY staff and Executive Director informed of their progress.

Any costs associated with this process will be covered by GGWNY, as long as 100% commitment to the process is proven.

If a gardener on probation does not address the probation, Grassroots Gardens WNY reserves the right to terminate the gardener as a volunteer with the GGWNY. The gardener must immediately remove their personal items from the gardens. Terminated gardeners will not be allowed to return to **ANY** of the GGWNY gardens.

If a gardener or volunteer believes they were unfairly terminated, they must contact the GGWNY Executive Director who will inform them of the steps to appeal the decision including appearing before our Board of Directors.

***Erie County Restorative Justice Coalition Contact Information:**

Phone	716 – 249 – 0770
Email	ecrjc567@gmail.com
Address	567 Hertel Avenue Buffalo, NY 14207
Website	https://www.ecrjc.org

GLOSSARY

Accessible Garden Beds: Raised beds that are accessible for people with limitations such as but not limited to: mobile - i.e. wheelchair accessible, movement difficulty - and sight. Accessible raised beds typically stand 2-3 feet off the ground.

Decommission: Garden is removed from the GGWNY network. All materials returned to GGWNY unless owned by gardeners. Raised beds deconstructed, plants removed and relocated. If public, the lease ends with the city and the city resumes maintenance and ability to sell the lot as vacant land. If private, please see the landowner for post-garden information. (If a garden received 3-strikes they are not eligible for re-commission in the future).

Fence: a secured, buried border that prevents direct access to a community garden. Is typically made of wood or metal.

Gardener: any human that actively participates in their community garden. Has basic knowledge of gardening related topics.

Garden Border: similar to a fence but instead made of natural objects found within the direct environment. i.e. stones, planters, flowers, garden beds, etc.

Garden Plots: Individual plots shall be laid out in an organized fashion to allow fair and equitable assignment. Plots should be visibly defined and easy to navigate around. Each community garden, if it includes individual plots, must also include at least one community plot for the public benefit.

Gate: a hinged barrier blocking entrance through a fence

Notification of Decommission: Gardens will be notified via three ways: phone, e-mail, and mail. Notifications of Decommission will be sent out no later than December 1st of each year.

Permanent Structures: A non-movable structure, secured into the ground or foundation, i.e. barns, garages, homes, sheds (movable sheds are permitted, please check with GGWNY staff before installation).

Raised Bed: Soil and plants are enclosed above ground in a removable structure made of wood planks and a card-board, or fabric base. Typical size = 8x4x4 feet (length, width, height).

Restorative Justice: Response to criminal or other hurtful community behavior that focuses on lawbreaker restitution and the resolution of the issues arising from a crime in which victims, offenders, and the community are brought together to restore the harmony between the parties (Britannica 2020).

Seasonal Lease: Lease agreement is for a partial amount of time i.e. growing months - March to October depending on the weather.

Tools: an object used in the garden to help pull weeds, break up the ground, move items etc. (example: wheelbarrow, shovel, weed whacker, lawn mower, gloves, et.)

Volunteer: Gardeners and non-gardeners; anyone who participates as a gardener at a community garden or who does not typically garden at the garden but is on site to volunteer their skills and labor for a specific period of time. Example: United Way Day of Caring volunteers.

Worked: weeded, mowed, planted, etc.; consistently gardened in and cared for, this is visibly present.