

Community Garden Program Policies and Operations Guidelines for Volunteer Participants

Community Garden Program Mission

Learning from each other while growing and sharing healthy, organic food based on sustainable practices tailored for our unique coastal climate.

Community Garden Program Objectives

- Increase the community's capacity to grow healthy, affordable, local food
- Program participants share seasonal produce for household use only
- Provide organically grown produce to the local food bank and senior meals program
- Focus on education and sharing knowledge
- Create a sense of community through programs and activities

Lower Nehalem Community Trust Conservation Values

- To garden is to steward the land
- Recognize that nature and natural systems sustain all life
- Take responsibility for human impact on ~~nature~~ and the natural world around us
- Learning is an ongoing process
- Live in harmony and balance with nature

Program Overview

The Community Garden Program, located at Alder Creek Farm and Natural Area in Nehalem, includes a row garden and orchard area of approximately 1.2 acres, a greenhouse and hoop house, and growing tunnels, all managed and maintained by volunteers. Alder Creek Farm is a communal garden, which is cultivated as a group vs. managed as individual plots.

The Garden Coordinator, a staff person of the Lower Nehalem Community Trust, and a Garden Leadership Team composed of experienced Community Garden volunteers guide the work of garden volunteers. The leadership team manages the planning aspects of the garden, while the volunteers participate in the day-to-day tasks of running this small farm.

Application to the program is open to interested community members on a "space available" basis. The application period begins February 1 each year. Priority is given to returning gardeners, much like a traditional community garden program.

The program runs from late February through mid-October with weekly work parties, and then monthly work parties during the winter months. We are in the garden rain or shine, as our work sessions are aligned with the schedules of local distributors of food in our community. However, weather events which may create a risk to volunteers, such as high winds, may result in a cancellation.

Policy Overview and Operations Guidelines

*Acknowledgement of these guidelines, and compliance to them,
is required to participate in our program.*

Land Stewards:

A gardener is a steward of the land. We garden in a manner that will maintain or improve the soil to produce food for many generations to come. We use organic gardening methods and products exclusively (as defined by Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI)). In order to ensure compliance, our Garden Coordinator will purchase all supplies for the garden program.

As Alder Creek Farm is a Wildlife Sanctuary, and the Trust has a policy that no dogs are allowed on the property.

Program Participant Cost:

The 2022 Garden Program fee is \$60 per family. These fees are used to cover the costs of seed, soil amendment, tools, etc. Fees are non-refundable, and are due at the first work session of the program (see below). During the application process, gardeners may request a full or partial scholarship on this fee. Approval is at the discretion of the Garden Coordinator.

Time Commitment:

Volunteers must be able to spend a minimum of 3 hours per week, or 100 hours annually, working in the garden. This ensures we are able to keep up with the plant maintenance and crop harvest schedule. Our schedule is intentionally aligned to the hours of operation of our partners in food distribution, and to allow for working families to participate.

Tuesday 9am - Noon

Saturday 9am - Noon

Missed time should be made up within the month of an absence, unless otherwise approved by the Garden Coordinator. Options include switching to an alternative work party day, or being assigned a task that can be completed outside the normal work party schedule.

Our official first days will be Tuesday, February 22 and Saturday February 26th. These days will include a welcome from representatives of our Trust Board, introductions of Garden Leadership, and an orientation to 2022 operations for all gardeners.

The garden program's final weekly work parties, or "Put the Garden to Bed" days, are October 18 and 22, 2022.

During the winter, there are five additional opportunities to participate:

- Thanksgiving Day harvest and delivery
- Monthly work parties on the 2nd Saturday of November, December, January and February.

Harvest Sharing:

Community Garden volunteers take home fresh produce for their personal household only.

Our stated goal is to support our local community with weekly harvest deliveries to the North County Food Bank, the Food Pantry at Nehalem Methodist, and Seniors Meal program. Once each month there is a targeted distribution to the Latinx community through a drop site in Nehalem. In addition to produce, we share vegetable plant starts early in the season to these same locations.

Careful Use of Resources:

As a non-profit organization, we need your help in careful management of our resources.

- Gardeners must drive slowly, a maximum of 10 MPH, on Underhill Lane in order to reduce disturbance to the neighbors and to maintain the condition of the gravel road. We encourage walking, biking or carpooling to work sessions whenever possible.
- Gardeners are expected to make careful use of resources, such as seeds, fertilizers, soil amendments, to help us keep program costs within budget.
- Gardeners are expected to practice good tool maintenance practices, such as cleaning and properly storing tools after use, to help them last longer in our climate.

Community Aspects:

- Actively share knowledge and skills with fellow gardeners, from "what's that?" to how to prepare some of our more unusual fruits; this is one of the joys of the community gardening experience.
- Composting practices require gardeners to be mindful of invasive plants, flowering weeds, weeds with seed heads etc. Absolutely no home waste can be brought into the garden composting bins.
- Community gardens contribute to awareness of local food cycles and provide a venue for training and skills development. The establishment and ongoing management of community gardens also contribute to building community leaders.
- By bringing people together, often from different age groups and diverse ethnic, cultural and economic backgrounds, community gardens play an important role in combating loneliness and isolation, improving social cohesion, building life skills and awareness, and building connectedness with our neighbors.
- Radios/cell phones, etc. are not to be on "speaker" mode while you are working, as a courtesy to other gardeners.
- Each gardener is expected to constructively work along side others and resolve any conflicts respectfully.

Gardener Safety and Operations Practices:

- COVID policies will change as our community manages through the pandemic. For the foreseeable future, this means:
 - Masks are required at all times when in the Greenhouse, Hoop House, Barn, or our tunnels (unless working solo)
 - Masks are also required if working outside and within 6 feet of another gardener.

- No smoking or vaping is allowed at Alder Creek Farm.
- No firearms or fireworks are allowed at Alder Creek Farm.
- Maintain the garden in a neat and safe manner, for ourselves and our guests. This means we put away tools and secure irrigation lines. Any maintenance observations should be reported timely to the Garden Coordinator or a Garden Leader for repair.
- Use of Power tools (mowers, trimmers, rototillers) requires training, and use of appropriate safety equipment. Safety equipment is provided by the Trust, or you may bring your own.
- Guests are welcome to join you during a work party, however, they must stay with a gardener and be supervised by a gardener while they are on premises.
- Gardeners must be capable of:
 - lifting 25 lbs , sometimes repeatedly during a single shift.
 - pushing wheelbarrows, pulling carts filled with garden materials
 - operating a lawnmower, a gas weed eater and other tools
 - bending, stooping and reaching

Note: some jobs may require less strenuous capabilities – please discuss with Garden Coordinator if you would be challenged to manage the above activities.