

ATWOOD COMMUNITY GARDENS HANDBOOK 2018

April 14, 2018

See the Gardens page on the Goodman Center website for this and other documents and information about the gardens <http://www.goodmancenter.org/services/community-gardens>.

Atwood Community Gardens Rules and Expectations

The Atwood Community Gardens are Madison's most visible community gardens. As a condition of the Goodman Community Center's lease on the garden land, the City of Madison has established rules and expectations for gardeners. Atwood Community Gardeners are committed to abiding by these rules and expectations in order to create a beautiful, safe, and functional garden space, foster cooperative and friendly relationships with garden neighbors, gain personal pride and satisfaction from their gardening, and maintain the privilege of gardening in the Atwood Community Gardens corridor.

Organic Gardening Practices. The Atwood Gardens are not strictly organic because neither the compost nor straw/hay mulches provided through the gardens are certified organic. However, gardeners are expected to practice organic gardening methods to grow vegetables and other plants in their garden. Do not use herbicides, pesticides, fungicides and/or chemical fertilizers not approved for use in organic gardening. Also, do not use plastic film (clear or black) or woven synthetic mulch, commonly known as landscape cloth.

Weed Control. Gardeners must maintain their garden plot in a manner that limits the spread of weeds and pest plants to other garden plots and to areas surrounding the Atwood Community Gardens. Wood chips, newspaper and straw/hay are acceptable mulches for weed control. See Plot Monitoring section below for plot maintenance guidelines.

Garden Plot Boundaries.

- Plot numbers and boundaries will be marked with spray paint on St. Paul Avenue.
- Gardeners with plots adjacent to the bike path must maintain a three-foot buffer between their plot and the bike path and must keep the buffer clear of plantings, structures, and debris so that City staff can mow it.
- Pathways of at least 12 inches wide (6 inches into each plot) must be maintained between plots. This is the joint responsibility of neighboring gardeners.
- Paths should be mowed or kept tidy with wood chips or other mulch and clear of all objects such as hoses, tools, and hay bales, so that wheelbarrows may be brought in on the path and so that people may walk safely on the paths.

Gardeners and Co-Gardeners. The primary and co-gardener are jointly responsible for the upkeep of the entire plot. Co-gardeners must be identified at the time of garden sign up each year. Each co-gardener must provide complete contact information including mailing address, phone number and email address.

Water System. Instructions for use of the garden water system can be found on the Goodman Center website.

Plot Monitoring. A team of volunteers will monitor plots monthly from early May to November for weeds, usage and maintenance throughout the gardening season. Please maintain your plot by doing the following:

- Evidence of activity in plot no later than May 1st (e.g. clearing debris, preparing beds, start weeding).
- Keep weeds down from spring to fall. Weeds make the gardens look bad and under used, affect productivity of your garden and impact neighboring gardens as they spread by seed or underground.
- Keep your plot free of garbage, excess organic wastes, unsafe or untidy materials.
- Observe plot boundaries with your neighbor's plot.
- Keep dirt and grass out of St. Paul Ave. so it doesn't wash down gutters and into the lakes.
- Keep the 3' buffer between the bike path and back of your plot mowed & free of debris.

Each month monitors will identify plots falling into one of the 4 following categories.

Category #1 - Plot is planted and well maintained - no action needed

Category #2 - Plot needs maintenance.

The gardener (and any co-gardeners) will be contacted by the plot monitor by phone or email and asked to make corrections by the next monthly monitoring date. Things that would put a plot in this category are:

- No evidence of activity in garden by start date of May 1
- Garbage, inorganic waste, unsafe, or untidy materials in plot
- Plot boundaries are not being observed or maintained (e.g., debris in area near bike path or on roads, uncleared/unmowed paths, boundaries being encroached upon)
Evidence of non organic practices
- Unharvested produce left to rot in the garden
- Personal property and annual plants remaining in the garden at the end of the season (e.g., tomato cages, trellising, fencing)
- Area between plot and bike path is not being maintained

On the 3rd finding of any combination of these conditions the plot will be reduced in size or reassigned.

Category #3 - Weeds are covering more than 30% of the plot or being allowed to go to seed or plot is not planted.

The gardener (and any co-gardeners) will be contacted by the plot monitor by phone or email and asked to make corrections by the next monthly monitoring date.

On the 2nd finding that the plot is in category #3 the plot will be reduced in size or reassigned.

Category #4 - Plot appears to have not been tended in recent weeks or appears to be abandoned.

If a plot falls into category #4 one of the Plot Monitoring leads will email or telephone the gardener (and any co-gardeners) to notify them that their plot has not been tended to and will be reassigned unless corrective action is taken by the next monthly monitoring date, even if this is a first offense.

Compost and Wood Chips. Compost for use in your Atwood Garden plot is purchased using plot fees. Wood chips are provided by the City for use on pathways and in common areas. These materials are only for use in the Atwood Community Gardens and are not to be taken for use in home or other gardens.

Plantings. Do not plant so close to pathways that when mature, the plants block the pathway. Do not plant trees or shrubbery in your garden. These grow large and will shade neighboring plots. Do not place tall plants (sunflowers, corn, etc.) where they will shade your neighbor's plot.

Permanent structures. Gardeners do not own the plots they are gardening so structures are discouraged. If you do place structures or other objects in your garden you are responsible for eventual removal if you cease gardening. The exception is terracing or retaining walls in sloped plots. All structures must be maintained.

Fencing. Fences may be erected within plots. Do not use shipping palettes. Low fencing that may be obscured by snow must be removed at the end of each growing season.

Personal property. Garden tools may be kept in your plot at your own risk and must be placed out of walkways. All personal property (buckets, chairs, etc.) must be removed from the garden plot at the end of the growing season.

Vandalism and theft. These plots are located in a highly traveled area and you garden at your own risk. Police can only help if they arrive while a person is stealing from or destroying your plot. Write down descriptions and license numbers of cars you suspect are improperly at your or your neighbors' sites. Let your neighbors know if you witness a theft from their plot. Talk with people you do not recognize who are in your plot or your neighbor's plot. Erect fences and natural structures to deter theft. Harvest your produce.

Extra produce/Harvest Share. Harvest your ripe vegetables! If you have more than you can use, produce can be dropped off at the Goodman Community Center anytime the Center is open. The food pantry will distribute it to needy families. Contact the Goodman Center if you'd like produce harvested from your plot while you're away on vacation. Be sure to contribute excess produce at the annual Atwood Gardens Harvest Share in August, dates to be determined and announced.

Garden Clean Up/ Work Days. All gardeners are expected to attend and participate in spring and fall cleanups and other work days that may be scheduled during the season. These are times to come out and lend a hand to maintain the gardens and build community within our garden.

Atwood Community Gardens Volunteer Leadership. A group of gardeners meets monthly to discuss and address the tasks and issues involved in operating the gardens. Any gardener is welcome to be a part of this group or to bring issues or ideas to a committee meeting. Meetings are held monthly on the second Tuesday of the month, 6:00 p.m. at the Goodman Center.