

ATWOOD COMMUNITY GARDENS HANDBOOK 2021

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 Garden is one of 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 and community neighbors; and maintain the privilege of gardening in the Atwood Community Gardens corridor.

Garden Neighbor Agreement

The Garden Neighbor Agreement means you are agreeing to act respectfully and with kindness towards everyone who leases space in the garden and its neighbors. If conflicts arise, gardeners are encouraged to seek peaceful resolution directly with one another and, if necessary, reach out to the Volunteer Leadership Team for review. Reach out by either talking to/calling a Leadership Team member or by sending an email to atwood.garden@gmail.com and request contact information. All reports of harassment, threats, intimidation, and violence against people or property will be taken seriously and may result in the forfeiture of a garden space. This includes acts which create a hostile environment or negatively impact other gardeners and garden volunteers, Goodman Staff, Garden Leadership Team members, plot monitors, and other community members.

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 practices to grow vegetables and other plants in their garden. Gardeners may not use herbicides, pesticides, fungicides, and/or chemical fertilizers except those that are consistent with organic gardening best practices. Do not use rugs, plastic film, or woven synthetic mulch (commonly known as landscape cloth) because it can be a nuisance as it degrades over time. Floating row cover is permitted temporarily for pest control.

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, secured and covered newspaper or cardboard, and straw/hay are acceptable mulches for weed control. See "Plot Monitoring" section on page 2 for plot maintenance guidelines.

Garden Plot Boundaries.

- Plot numbers and boundaries will be marked with spray paint on St. Paul Avenue.
- Gardeners and the plot monitors need to be able to access the garden plots. Therefore, gardeners must maintain a path between their plot and every adjacent/adjoining garden plot.
- The path must be 12 inches wide, with 6 inches into each plot, except in places where plot monitors have determined that topography or established structures prevent it.
- The path must be maintained by gardeners of both plots and be sufficient to allow a person to walk on the path, push a wheelbarrow along the path, or carry and place a hose along the path.
- The path must also be kept clear of obstructions (e.g. gardening tools, buckets, chairs, tomato cages, hay bales, fencing) and kept mowed or mulched and weed-free.
- Please do not plant too close to your boundary path - plants grow quickly! You may be asked to remove or prune plants that block access along a path.
- 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 the area.

Gardeners. Everyone named as a gardener is jointly responsible for the upkeep of the entire plot. All gardeners must be identified at the time of garden signup each year, and combined income is considered when calculating the plot fee. Each gardener must provide complete contact information including mailing addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses.

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:

- Show evidence of activity (e.g. clearing debris, preparing beds, start weeding) in the plot no later than May 10th, 2021.
- Keep weeds down from Spring to Fall - this includes cutting, pulling, or otherwise controlling weeds before they go to seed or spread rhizomes. Weeds affect productivity of your garden and impact neighboring gardens as weeds spread by seed or underground.
- Keep your plot free of garbage, excess organic wastes, and unsafe or untidy materials, including glass.
- Observe plot boundaries with your neighbor's plot.
- Keep dirt and grass out of St. Paul Avenue so it doesn't wash down gutters and into the lakes.
- Keep the 3' buffer between the bike path, and keep the back of your plot mowed and free of debris.

- Prepare plots for winter each year by removing dead plant materials, plant cages, and tools. Low fencing, tomato cages, and other trip hazards that may be obscured by snow must be removed at the end of each growing season.

Each month monitors will identify plots falling into one of the four following categories:

Category #1 - The plot is well-maintained and at least 70% of the area is cultivated. No action needed.

Category #2 - Plot needs maintenance. The gardener(s) will be contacted by the plot monitor by phone or email and asked to make corrections by the next monthly monitoring date. Things that put a plot in this category are:

- No evidence of activity in garden by communicated "start gardening" date.
- Less than 70% of plot is cultivated.
- Garbage, inorganic waste, unsafe, or untidy materials in plot, including glass.
- 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., unsecured tomato cages, personal hoses, tools).
- Area between plot and bike path is not being maintained.

On the third finding during the season that the plot is in Category #2 or worse, the plot may be reduced in size or reassigned.

Category #3 - Weeds are covering more than 30% of the plot or being allowed to go to seed.

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

On the second finding that the plot is in Category #3, the plot may 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(s) to notify them that their plot has not been tended to and will be re-assigned unless corrective action is taken by the next monthly monitoring date, even if this is a first Category #4 finding.

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. Please remember that these are a resource for all gardeners to share. Do not use the compost purchased for the gardens to fill a raised bed.

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

Permanent structures and fencing. Gardeners do not own the plots they are gardening, so such structures and fencing are discouraged. Any structures or fencing must be within boundaries of a plot, while maintaining paths between plots. 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. Use of treated wood for any purpose is not permitted in the garden. Low fencing that may be obscured by snow must be removed at the end of each growing season.

Signs/posters/banners. No signs, posters, banners, or similar objects are allowed in garden plots, except for those related to gardening activity--for example, signs marking plantings in a plot or signs providing information about Atwood Community Gardens activities or resources (future meetings, work parties, Harvest Share dates, extolling donations of produce to the food pantry, etc.).

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. Talk with people you do not recognize who are in your plot or your neighbor's plot. Harvest your produce; unharvested produce invites theft.

Extra produce and Harvest Share. Harvest your ripe vegetables! If you have more than you can use, produce can be dropped off at the Goodman Community Center any time the Center is open. The food pantry will distribute it to families in need. Be sure to contribute excess produce at the annual Atwood Gardens Harvest Share in August. Dates will be announced.

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 meeting. Meetings are held at 6:00 p.m. on the second Thursday of every month.