

VCE & FOUA Guidelines for Volunteering in Gardens During COVID-19

May 22, 2020. Updated 6-22-20

1. **Handwashing:** Wash your hands frequently. Handwashing stations with soap, disposable paper towels, and trash receptacles should be set up in community garden spaces to allow faculty, staff, and volunteers and other gardeners a place to wash their hands in the garden. Please refer to this VCE publication to learn how to properly set up a handwashing station: Handwashing Facilities.
2. **Masks/Face coverings:** Because social distancing cannot always be maintained during gardening, we highly recommend that face coverings are worn at all times. CDC, Arlington County, APS, and VCE have strongly recommended wearing face coverings. Individuals should wear a covering for added protection. *Masks/face coverings are required* to enter the school grounds unless the individual has a health condition.
 - a. Masks must be worn properly, cover the nose and mouth, and fit properly.
 - b. For guidance see: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>
3. **Garden sanitization:**
 - a. Sanitize high touch areas frequently, including at the start of a shift and at the end with disinfectant sprays or wipes. Such areas might include water spouts, hoses, garden gates, and other hard surfaces in the garden. It is important that high touch areas are first free of any dirt or debris before sanitizing.
 - i. Disinfect surfaces on a regular basis, including: bins and buckets, tools, railings, doorknobs, tables, gates, hoses, etc.
 - ii. Use non-porous plastic tables that can be easily disinfected whenever possible.
 - b. Gardens should provide handwashing stations, if at all possible, and/or hand sanitizer to all guests and request that they wash their hands before entering the garden and upon exiting.
 - c. CDC advises using compounds on the list of EPA recommended disinfectants, which can be found at: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>
 - i. Bleach may be used to disinfect surfaces, but the concentration is higher than for everyday sanitation: 5 tablespoons bleach per gallon of water
 1. Check the label to see if your bleach is intended for disinfection and has a sodium hypochlorite concentration of 5%–6%.
 2. Ensure the product is not past its expiration date.
 3. Bleach solutions will be effective for disinfection up to 24 hours.
 4. Leave solution on the surface for at least 1 minute.-From CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cleaning-disinfection.html>

4. **Tools:** FOUA, MGs, and volunteers should bring their own tools and gloves to use in the garden and should leave with those same tools at the end of their shift. ***Communal tools and sharing of personal tools should be avoided at this time.***
5. **Scheduling and group size:** A schedule for each local garden location should be created to help with staggering of volunteers in gardens. No more than 10 individuals should be in the garden space at one time.
6. **Social distancing:** Social distancing should be maintained at all times while in the garden. Volunteers and any others in the garden should maintain a distance of at least 6 feet between each other. Please stand, squat, or work 6 feet apart from other people at all times. Only exceptions if family members.
7. **Harvesting and Delivery:** While food has not been implicated in being a source of transmission for the coronavirus, it is important for individuals to follow best practices for hygiene such as handwashing and avoiding touching the face during transport and delivery of produce.
 - a. Gloves must be worn while harvesting. Hands should first be washed and then gloves placed on the hands. Gloves should be discarded if tears develop. After discarding used gloves, hands should again be washed.
 - b. Necessary precautions must be taken to minimize the number of touch points between volunteers, harvested produce, and transferring the produce to the appropriate distribution outlet (e.g. food bank, food pantry, direct to client). This includes packaging, containers, vehicles, surfaces, and coolers at the distribution location.
 - c. Remove dirt from produce and roots as much as possible, deliver in bulk, don't place in bags upon delivery.
8. **Gloves:** must be worn at all times.
 - a. Train workers to use gloves properly if they will be used during harvesting or packing. Gloves are required for use by workers during harvesting. If they are used, disposable single use gloves are the best choice.
 - b. Gardeners must change their gloves regularly and avoid cross-contamination between food and tools, etc.
 - c. Keep in mind when purchasing gloves that some workers may have a latex sensitivity. Teach workers when using gloves to:
 - Wash hands prior to putting gloves on.
 - Avoid touching hair, face, skin, etc. with gloves.
 - Change gloves if they have been worn while eating, smoking, or using the bathroom; if they become soiled or torn and when changing tasks. Do not disinfect gloves if using
9. *Stay home if you are sick.* Please do not come to the garden if you are unwell, have symptoms of Coronavirus, or have potentially been exposed to someone who is sick, have traveled recently out of the area, or have been tested and not yet received the results. When in doubt, stay home.
10. Eating, drinking, and socializing should be done outside of the garden.

11. Children below the age of 18 will be allowed at the discretion of the individual garden coordinator. If you bring children, you must be responsible for their safety and they must use masks and gloves.
12. No Pets

Rules of Conduct for Management

1. Managers will wear masks at all times and gloves as needed.
2. Until the coronavirus pandemic abates and group gathering restrictions are lifted, managers will not structure and operate the garden in a way that encourages people to linger. Managers will limit the number of people at the garden at one time or space people out to prevent groups of ten or more. Garden volunteering layout will be structured to maximize space between individuals in the garden.
3. The managers will explain to volunteers the rules for the garden during the current pandemic, in a quick and concise way. Rules for each garden, PPE training, and VCE resources will be posted on the FOUA Victory Garden Website
4. We will create watering and work schedules that allow one person to water the whole garden in effort to minimize touch points between volunteers. When scheduling, we will limit group size to no more than 10 volunteers in the garden at one time. Family/household members are encouraged to volunteer together. Based on the size of the respective garden we may need to reduce the number of volunteers present in order to maintain current social distancing recommendations.
5. We will maintain hand sanitizer and/or handwashing stations at the garden for use by volunteers.
6. Managers will wipe down commonly used surfaces as needed.
7. There are no bathrooms on-site.

Information adapted from:

https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs_ext_vt_edu/FST/fst-368/FST-368-16.pdf and VCE Rules for Master Gardeners publication

Rules are subject to change based on FOUA, VCE guidance, and local and state health regulations.