



Gardener's Handbook 2026

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WELCOME TO THE CLEARWATER COMMUNITY GARDENS

Dear members, both old and new,

With great joy and pride we welcome you to the Clearwater Community Garden. Whether you've been with us since our humble beginnings or you're setting foot in our little ecosystem for the first time, know that you are now an integral part of a family that not only gardens together but also grows together.

Our garden isn't merely a space for produce, flowers and pollinators; it's a testament to the power of community and shared vision. Every garden plot tells a story. As you participate in our activities, tap into the spirit of Workshare, or partake in our educational events, you will be adding a few pages to our ever-evolving journey together.

The Workshare program epitomizes our ethos. It's here that we sow and cultivate not just in the Gardens itself but grow bonds with fellow members that shape our future. We sincerely hope that you embrace these opportunities with enthusiasm, for there's no greater joy than watching both our garden plots and community bloom together.

We recognize that the strength of our garden lies in the passion and expertise of our members. So, as you walk along this journey with us, never hesitate to ask questions, share your thoughts, concerns, or innovative ideas. Our doors are always open to you.

Together, let's cultivate not only a bountiful garden but also a vibrant community where every member is valued, involved, and inspired. Thank you for joining or sticking with us, and looking forward to many fruitful seasons of growth, laughter, and learning during the seasons ahead.

Warm regards,

The Board of Directors

About This Handbook and Our Gardens

Policies and practices of the Clearwater Community Gardens are laid out in this handbook, so please refer to it often as you participate in our many activities. It contains important information about how our garden operates and who to contact with general and specific questions. It also contains information about how you can help to make the garden run smoothly and efficiently. Changes, additions, and updates to the handbook will be made as necessary.

Because community gardening requires a fair amount of work beyond tending your own plot, every gardener is asked to participate to the best of their ability in the management and upkeep of the Gardens.

OUR MISSION: To create a thriving and sustainable community garden in Clearwater that encourages organic gardening practices, community engagement and education, and environmental stewardship.

OUR VISION: We envision a neighborhood hub of sustainable urban gardening that inspires a culture of environmental consciousness, promotes food security, and serves as a model for community-driven initiatives that contribute to a healthier way of life.

OUR ROLE:

Our gardens provide a venue for people to connect with the earth, grow fresh produce and herbs, get to know neighbors and together contribute toward improving our community.

CORE BELIEFS:

- Everything gets better when we work together as a team
- We strive to play win-win at all times
- We complain only when we are willing to contribute to a solution
- Every individual is important in our community
- We focus on abundance, give before taking, and learn as we go

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Membership

Our Garden includes 45 plots measuring 8'x 4 ' each for use by individuals or households in exchange for workshare hours (volunteer work for the maintenance and operations of CCG).

Membership Levels Summary:

Plot Membership

- Maintain a 4'x 8' gardening plot
- May attend all events and programs
- Workshare requirement and on at least one team
- Has one vote

Non-Plot Membership with Workshare

- May attend all events and programs
- Workshare requirement and on at least one team
- Has one vote

Non-Plot Membership without Workshare

- May attend all events and programs
- Workshare and team involvement are optional
- Does not vote

For fees, please see Membership Terms and Conditions section below.

Membership is open to adults 18 years and older who agree to abide by our rules and principles. Voting members are approved by the Executive Board.

The membership term is from January 1 through December 31. Members who initially join after our spring growing season, after July 1st, may carry over membership to the next calendar year.

Annual membership fee and completion of the Gardener Member Application is due on or before January 1 of each year and should be received no later than January 31. Extenuating circumstances will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Plot members who do not renew timely will have the irrigation to their plot shut off and the plot will be cleaned and reassigned to another member. This is so that there will be sufficient time to make productive use of the plot during the spring growing season.

All Community Garden Members agree to abide by our Rules and Guidelines and agree to participate as part of a team. Members are generally not authorized to work independently. Each member who is obliged to the Workshare arrangement must be part of at least one team and report their Workshare to their Team Coordinator. We are a community that cooperates and works together.

For those with physical limitations and / or limited funds, special arrangements can be made, as approved by the Board of Directors. In-kind donations of value exceeding the cost of membership may be considered for Non-Plot Membership on a case-by-case basis.

Board meetings are open to all gardeners, and you are welcome to attend as an observer. Garden news and updates are **primarily communicated via email** and key updates will appear on the bulletin board at the Garden. Every effort is made to notify gardeners of important changes (such as a new lock combination), so please keep your contact information current. You can update your contact information by notifying the Registrar at registrar@clearwatercgc.org.

Membership Terms and Conditions

Membership Fees are non-refundable.

PLOT MEMBERS: To plant and maintain a 4'x 8' gardening plot, members agree to work as part of a Team to assist with maintenance of common areas and administration of the gardens as part of the Workshare Program. Plots are "paid for" with Workshare hours.

- **Membership Fee is \$45 per calendar year** (January – December)
- Commitment of a **minimum of two hours a month** with a team in the Workshare Program
- **Plot Security Deposit: \$50** (Refundable)
- **Summer City Water Use Fee: \$10 / month** for 3 months (optional)

It is recommended that all Plot Members visit their plot at least weekly to maintain it, and the surrounding aisle area. A plot that is not maintained for more than two months will be forfeited and re-assigned to a different member. In this situation the Plot Security Deposit will be forfeited.

If plot members are faced with unexpected extensive travel, illness, or other extenuating circumstances, it is their responsibility to report this change to their Team Coordinator to determine if any special arrangements can be made. Plot Members can relinquish their plot and switch to a Non-Plot Member at any time and will no longer be required to participate in the Workshare Program.

Please contact your Team Coordinator if you want to change your membership status. (See Board of Directors information under the Organizational Structure section)

Plot Security Deposit / Cleanup Fee per plot \$50: This fee is for two hours of contracted labor to restore a plot to good condition when the Plot Member leaves. This deposit is refundable if the member leaves their plot in a weed-free and ready-to-plant condition.

Summer Water Use Fee: \$10 per month or \$30 for 3 months. This fee is optional.

To conserve water during the summer months of June, July and August, the city water irrigation system will be turned off for all plots. It is anticipated that during this period each Plot Member may want to prepare their garden for the next growing season by clearing their plot, planting cover crops and / or

covering the plot to protect the soil from damaging UV rays, or cover with clear plastic to control root knot nematodes (solarize).

During this time, which is typically our rainy season, hand watering is encouraged using our five on-site hand-pump wells and rain barrels. If you want irrigation to continue to be provided to your plot, however, you must notify the Irrigation Team Coordinator and a \$10 per month fee will be assessed (applies to June, July and/or August only).

NON-PLOT MEMBERS with Workshare: For those who do not want to maintain a garden plot of their own but want to retain voting rights and open access to the Gardens, they agree to participate in the Workshare Program.

- **Membership Fee is \$45 per year**
- Commit to a **minimum of two hours a month** with a team in the Workshare Program

Non-Plot members can participate in all activities of the Garden, including access to community plots, gate lock combination, and have voting rights at General Membership meetings.

NON-PLOT MEMBERS without Workshare: For those who do not want a garden plot and do not want any obligation to participate in the Workshare Program

- **Membership Fee is \$45 per year**

Non-Plot Members without Workshare may share in all our Garden events and activities. Participation in the Workshare Program is optional (no monthly hour requirement). They may attend all Garden events. They may attend the annual General Membership meeting but cannot vote. These members generally visit the garden when other voting members are present.

Workshare Program

The Workshare program is designed to keep our Gardens well maintained for the enjoyment of all and to support our purpose as a thriving, sustainable organic garden in the community. When all members participate, there's a fair distribution of work and it becomes enjoyable for everyone. Many hands make the load light.

WORKSHARE TEAMS, PROJECTS AND TASKS

The purpose of Teams is to provide coordinated leadership and direction, while keeping our Gardens informal and welcoming. Teams are led by members of the Board of Directors who keep track of members who participate in the team's workshare responsibilities. The team coordinator is responsible for organizing specific tasks or projects and identifying needs within their department. All members participating in Workshare are assigned to at least one team, and the team coordinator is the member's primary contact for workshare activities.

Projects and Tasks are specific activities that need to be done and can be described. Projects and Tasks can be somewhat fluid, based on specific needs, seasons, talents, and opportunities. All Members can volunteer to help with nearly any project or team. Participating in different activities helps us get to know each other, learn more, and have fun while improving our Gardens.

The Core Teams Are:

- Bee Team
- Pollinators Garden Team
- Communications Team
- Events & Education Team
- Grounds & Beautification Team
- Irrigation & Water Resources Team
- Public Relations & Fundraising Team
- Tools & Materials Team (Quartermaster)

For more information about each team, see the Core Team Responsibilities section under Organizational Structure below.

TEAM MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

Team Coordinators: Core Teams are each led by a member of the Board of Directors. Any other special projects are authorized by the Board. All Team Coordinators are responsible for providing direction, support, and leadership to their team members. They also monitor their members to confirm monthly participation and provide support as needed. Team activity schedules are provided by the coordinators directly to their members and posted at the Gardens and / or on our website, when available.

All voting members are required to sign up for and participate in at least one Core Team and follow the direction of the Team Coordinator. Each voting member is required to perform a minimum of 2 hours of volunteer work per month as part of a Team in the common areas of the garden. Independent work and projects are not encouraged, unless assigned by a Team Coordinator.

General Membership Workshare Days

As schedules and weather permit, Group Workshare Days are scheduled 2-3 times per month by the Grounds Team Coordinator and are provided so that as many teams can work together as possible to complete projects. The easiest way for members to meet their monthly workshare requirement is to participate in these scheduled Workshare Days.

WORKSHARE REPORTING

Workshare requires 2 hours of volunteer work from each voting member as part of a designated team or as part of the general Workshare Days each month. Team coordinators will monitor participation for each member of their team.

It is the responsibility of each voting member to inform their team coordinator if circumstances arise that might interfere with the fulfillment of the monthly 2-hour work requirement. Members may have a family member or friend perform workshare hours in their place, if necessary, and should arrange this with the approval of their team coordinator. Special circumstances may be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Executive Board.

Members may miss Workshare volunteering up to two times within a 12 month period, with prior notice to their team coordinator. If a member will be traveling for an extended period and is unable to participate in Workshare and has not notified their team coordinator of their situation in advance, the member may be converted to Non-Plot member status, at the discretion of the Executive Board.

After two months of non-participation in Workshare without a special arrangement, a plot-holding member may be required to forfeit their plot and their membership converted to Non-Plot status, so that a Workshare requirement is no longer needed. The member will not be invited back as a Plot member for at least one year but may continue as part of the community as a Non-Plot member.

Workshare requirements can be met through working with a team that is not your primary team, but this should be arranged with the team coordinators involved to prevent misunderstandings. Our Community Garden is designed to work together for the good of all and to maintain fairness for all members. Good communication and cooperation is what makes this possible.

WORKSHARE PROJECT AND TASKS

As the need arises, special projects and tasks may be assigned to teams, whose Coordinators may in turn delegate to members on their team. There are several tasks and projects with which Plot and Non-Plot members can help.

Examples of projects or tasks that your Team may be assigned are:

- **Grounds:** Maintains the garden's common areas. Mows grass, clears pathways and removes trash.
- **Maintenance:** Maintains tools, equipment, hoses and raised beds.
- **Supplies:** Maintains supplies of common garden materials such as compost, mulch, tools and hoses.
- **Composting:** Maintains and oversees the compost bins; provides gardeners with clear composting instructions via signs, verbal communication and workshops.
- **Horticulture advisers:** Possess gardening experience and a willingness to share it with gardeners. Mentors new gardeners, circulates new gardening resources, and coordinates

gardening workshops with the Events Team

- **Security:** Works to minimize theft, vandalism and other unwanted activities.
- **Plant Sale:** Start, grow, water and make preparations for these key fundraising events

Plot Maintenance Responsibilities

PLOT USE:

Gardeners may use only the plots assigned to them. Gardeners must maintain the plants within their plot and will trim any plants that extend into the aisles or common areas. Gardeners may not alter the dimensions of their plot. Excessively tall plants that shade adjacent plots are not allowed.

Gardeners should maintain their plots and adjacent aisles in a clean and neat fashion, promptly removing weeds, overgrowth, or other waste from their plot area. Gardeners will harvest edible produce in a timely manner and are responsible for disposing of their own trash, weeds, trays, bags, packets, and similar items.

Members and guests may not use other members' plots, tools or supplies, or harvest another member's produce, without the explicit permission of that member.

PLANTINGS:

Gardeners may plant vegetables, herbs, fruits, and flowers. Trees and cacti should not be planted inside plots, as they can be difficult to remove.

Florida is divided into USDA zones 8 through 10. Clearwater, Florida is in USDA Hardiness Zones 10A (Central Florida climate zone). A planting guide is available through the University of Florida Extension Office at

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/edibles/vegetables/vegetable-gardening-in-florida/>

Organic methods: CCG is an Organic Garden. All soils, fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides must be OMRI (Organic Materials Review Institute) approved.

Use of compost, organic mulch, and biodigester fertilizer is acceptable. The use of organic seeds and starts are recommended whenever possible. Use the best quality ingredients you can afford. If you are in doubt about a product, please ask your team coordinator or a board member.

Planting structures that impede the security of the garden or impede adjacent gardeners' access to sunlight are prohibited.

Prohibited plants and other items:

Plants that are regulated or prohibited by federal or state laws are prohibited. Trees, shrubs, mint, catnip, raspberries, marijuana, and other invasive plants are prohibited in garden beds.

PLOT REVIEWS: Plot conditions will be assessed monthly. If a plot is not maintained or is overgrown with weeds, the gardener will be notified that cleanup is needed. The 1st notice may be by phone, text or email. The gardener has two weeks to resolve the problem. If a 2nd notice is needed, the gardener has another two weeks to resolve before the **plot is considered abandoned**.

PLOT CLEANING DEPOSITS: Each plot member is assessed a \$50 plot cleaning deposit. The purpose is to reduce reliance on workshare to clean plots abandoned throughout the season and to maintain a well-kept garden overall. This deposit is refundable if the plot is surrendered in a clean and ready-to-plant condition.

Any Plot Member who wishes to discontinue the use of their plot should contact their Team Coordinator or the Registrar: registrar@clearwatercg.org

Member Access and Harvesting Common Areas

MEMBER ACCESS

All CCG voting members are free to access the Gardens during daylight hours 7 days a week. Upon joining the Gardens, you are provided with the combination code to the lock on the front gate. The same combination is used to open the brown shed, which contains tools and supplies to be shared and maintained by all members. If the gorilla carts are locked, they can be accessed using the same combination code.

Member Responsibilities

- DO NOT share the lock combination code with anyone other than a fellow plot member of the Gardens
- Visitors who are not members may come to the Gardens, but must be accompanied by a current member
- If you are the last person to leave the Gardens, you are responsible for doing the following:
 - Assure tools used have been returned to the brown shed, stored neat and orderly
 - Any water spigots should be turned off and hoses emptied of water
 - The brown shed should be locked and the code scrambled on the padlock
 - Use the chain and padlock to lock the front gate and upon locking it, scramble the code on the padlock. The current code should not be showing on the dial

GARDEN COMMON AREAS

The Common Area is generally the area outside the green box in the photo below. This includes the Pollinator / Butterfly Garden, herb garden, fruit trees, plants and vines and roadway. It does NOT include the Bee Apiary area. The Apiary is only accessible to Bee Team members.



Any fruit or herbs in the common areas (unless otherwise marked) can be harvested by any member for personal use **up to 10% of the available produce**. This is a sharing community, and we want all members to benefit from what our Gardens produce in the Common Areas.

Membership & Plot FAQs

What happens when all plots have been assigned? A waitlist is established consisting of Non-Plot with Workshare Members who have expressed interest in obtaining a plot. As plots become available, they are assigned from the waitlist on a first-come, first-served basis. The waitlist is maintained by the Registrar.

Can my plot be transferred to a family member or friend? Yes. If you no longer wish to maintain your plot, it can be transferred to a family member or friend in writing, submitted to and approved by a member of the Executive Board. Upon approval, the transferred member must fill out a membership application and abide by the Gardens' rules and guidelines.

Can a member have more than one plot? Yes. A member can sign up for an additional plot, if available when there is no waitlist, by paying the \$50 deposit / cleanup fee AND committing to an additional 2 hours minimum of Workshare per month. An additional member vote in elections is not included.

What if I am ill, traveling or otherwise unable to maintain my plot? Members may not abandon their plot. Abandonment means failing to maintain a plot for 2 or more consecutive weeks. If a member expects to be away from the garden for more than a month, they must inform their Team Coordinator as soon as possible. Members who are away more than 2 months without notice or approved special arrangements relinquish their plot privileges and are converted to a Non-Plot Non-Workshare member. The \$50 plot deposit is forfeited.

Organizational Structure

The Gardens are led by a Board of Directors comprised of 4 Executive Officers, and up to 10 Directors. Board members are elected annually by voting members. Any Board member can serve in the role as a Team Coordinator. Board members may hold more than one position, but per our Bylaws, no director can hold the position of both President and Secretary at the same time.

All members of the Board are participating in Workshare, as their position duties will typically require much more than the 2-hour Workshare requirement.

The Executive Board consists of the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. They are responsible for making emergency decisions when there is not time to hold a full Board meeting, can approve new members, and pre-authorize expenses up to \$100.

The Board of Directors consists of the Team Coordinators who are considered essential to the operation of the Gardens.

Sharing of Board Positions are permitted, provided a primary and secondary member for the position is designated and approved by the Board, and only one vote, by the primary position, will be counted at Board meetings.

Per the Bylaws, except for those decisions by the Executive Board, all general decisions actions and policies are approved by a majority of the Board if a quorum has been met, which is a majority of the non-vacant positions.

The entire Board of Directors is elected by the Garden voting members consisting of all Plot and Non-Plot Workshare members, at the annual general membership meeting, held in the last quarter of the calendar year.

Members Eligible to Vote: All Members who participate in the Workshare Program, with no outstanding fee balance, are eligible to vote in Garden Elections. Non-Plot Members who do not commit to the Workshare Program are not eligible to vote in Garden elections.

2025 Board of Directors

Executive Board:

President	Gabrielle Fontaine
Vice President	VACANT
Secretary	Shane Kirchoffer
Treasurer	Gabrielle Fontaine

Core Team Leaders

Bee Team	Toni Lupo
Common Areas & Butterfly Garden Team	George Sprague
Communications Team	David Tinoco
Data & Plot Registrar	Simin Kovacs
Events & Education Team	Amy Lidman
Grounds and Beautification Team	Mireya McDonald
Irrigation & Water Resources Team	Shane Kirchoffer
Public Relations & Fundraising Team	VACANT
Tools & Materials (Quartermaster)	Martin Wade

Executive Board Members can also serve as Team Coordinators but only have one vote. Therefore, the number of Board Members can fluctuate from 9 to 14.

Duties and Responsibilities of Executive Officers are summarized below and expanded descriptions are included in the Bylaws of the Clearwater Community Gardens, Inc (CCG):

PRESIDENT – The President shall be the principal executive officer of CCG. Subject to the direction and control of the Board of Directors, the President shall oversee the business affairs of CCG and assures that the directives of the Board are carried out. The President executes contracts, deeds, bonds, or other legal instruments.

VICE-PRESIDENT Assists the President and carries the responsibilities and authority of the President in his or her absence.

SECRETARY - Keeps the minutes of meetings, is custodian of CCG records and manages routine correspondence.

TREASURER – Maintains CCG’s financial records, is responsible to keep account of all receipts for fees and donations, The Treasurer tracks and process all payments owed by CCG.

Core Teams Responsibilities

BEE APIARY TEAM “The B Team”: The B Team has the responsibility to maintain our honeybee apiary. Due to various State and local codes and regulations, and potential liability, this team, and the Coordinator in particular, must be responsive and reliable. Members of this team must be approved by the Licensed Coordinator.

Tasks include routine inspections, assessments, pest control, watering, supplementary feeding, securing the hives from exterior hive pests, maintaining the hive, apiary and bee watering area, equipment and suits for harvesting honey. The Coordinator maintains liaison with professional beekeepers to share their equipment for harvesting and bottling.

COMMON AREAS & POLINATOR GARDEN TEAM: This team maintains the areas of the Gardens that include the Pollinator Garden and Herb Garden. Duties may include planting, trimming and watering these gardens and helping to prepare these areas for various events throughout the year.

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM: This team coordinates all communications efforts to members and the public, including the website, email broadcasts, social media, and the information board located at the Gardens. They work closely with the Public Relations and Fundraising Team and the Events Team.

EVENTS & EDUCATION TEAM: This team sets the Garden calendar of events, leads all arrangements and preparations for members-only and public events, and participates in the promotion of these events with the Communications Team.

GROUNDS & BEAUTIFICATION TEAM: This team leads the general Workshare Days open to all members of the Garden. They oversee the overall neat appearance of the aisles between the plots and surrounding common areas, removing trash and debris, report garden rules violations to the Board, intake of donated items, pest control, maintenance of the compost, and seasonal tree pruning.

IRRIGATION & WATER RESOURCES TEAM: This team oversees the plot irrigation, city water spigots, wells and rain barrel system. They monitor water usage, particularly the city water, including coordination of the summer watering to the plots and turning water off due to non-use.

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND FUNDRAISING TEAM: This team assists in raising funds for the Gardens, grant writing, attends official functions, contacts potential sponsors and financial supporters, and represents the Gardens at official functions, often accompanied by other Board members.

Water Conservation and Reduction Program

One of the largest expenses for our Community Garden is the cost of city water to irrigate our plots and common areas. Up to 1/3 of our total budget is used to pay the City of Clearwater water bill.

Several approaches to reduce and conserve water are being used:

- During the rainy season – June, July, and August plot irrigation will be turned off by default. If you want irrigation to be provided to your plot over the summer, A \$10 / mo. per plot fee is required. You will be notified and provided with instructions on how to participate in this program on or about May 15th via our regular email notifications.
- Expansion and extension of rain barrels
- Use of soil amendments and mulch in plots to retain moisture is encouraged

- Adjustment of daily irrigation schedules based on current weather conditions.

If you have questions or feel that the irrigation to your plot is not working properly, please contact the Irrigation Team Coordinator at water@clearwatercg.org. **Tampering with the irrigation timer is prohibited.**

Zero water waste is our goal! Please monitor and adjust your watering as the weather changes. Please use water from our rain barrels and wells whenever possible and remember that these sources are not unlimited. The following tips and tricks can help conserve water:

- Choose drought tolerant plants when possible.
- Lay out plots to use water efficiently by grouping plants with similar water needs together.
- Water to wet the root zone by delivering water to the base of your plants, rather than “washing” them (this prevents evaporation and disease)
- Use mulch to keep moisture in the soil (and suppress weeds).

Irrigation will also be shut off to individual plots if they appear to be abandoned, and to all plots during our rainy season of June July and August, unless participating in the summer water program.

Irrigation System and Watering:

The irrigation system will operate on the schedule established by the Irrigation Team and will be posted on the information board at the Garden from time to time.

Individual gardeners requiring additional water may **hand water** their plots using the watering cans located around the common areas. **Whenever possible, rainwater from the rain barrels or well water should be used.**

In most instances, it is unnecessary to use additional water unless you are planting new seedlings or starter plants in your garden. Too much water can rot the roots and rob the plants of much needed air. Soil that is constantly wet will also encourage diseases and unwanted pests. If the soil has dried to a depth of 3 - 4", the plot needs water.

It is up to YOU to check that your water irrigation system is working and your plants are getting what they need. Please be kind. Remember that our Garden is run by volunteers.

Garden Rules and Guidelines

The primary goal of these rules and regulations is to ensure an enjoyable experience for all. As a member of our community, it is important to abide by the rules and guidelines outlined below.

GENERAL MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

All Plot Members are responsible for maintaining their own plot and adjacent paths surrounding their plot in a neat and orderly condition.

Members and guests may not alter other members' plots, use other members' tools or supplies, or harvest another gardener's produce, without the explicit permission of that plot member.

Guests: Members may bring guests, including children, into the garden, provided that the guests comply with the rules. Members will supervise any child under the age of 16. Members will be responsible for the conduct of their children and their guests, making sure they do not damage or interfere with activities, others' plots, or engage in inappropriate conduct. The gate code should not be shared with guests who are not voting members of the Garden.

General Conduct: Members are expected to be civil, honest, and cooperative in dealing with other gardeners, and their guests. Members will respect other gardeners and neighbors and will not use abusive or profane language or discriminate against them.

We must all work to make the garden a pleasant, secure and enjoyable place for all.

- No smoking, chew tobacco, or vaping
- No alcohol or illegal drugs,
- No weapons
- No open fires
- No solicitation (including on the community bulletin board)
- No loud music
- No pets

General Maintenance

One of our Core Beliefs is that we only complain when we are willing to participate in a solution. Maintenance at the Gardens is a key area where this principle turns a negative into a positive.

If something is broken, fix it or contact the Quartermaster.

If you can repair it, check in the shed for tools and supplies to do so. If it is a repair beyond your abilities, contact your Team Coordinator or the Quartermaster.

If it needs attention, attend to it.

Please pick up any trash you find around the garden or the fence. If a broken item is replaced, throw the old one away. Note that the blue containers are for recycling (glass, plastic and paper only) and the black containers are for all other wastes (trash and yard waste).

Trash pick-up is on Thursday morning. The waste and recycle bins are placed at the curb outside the fence on Wednesday evening.

Path maintenance is everyone's job. Please maintain weed-free paths around the plots. Pull weeds, replenish mulch and keep your garden from encroaching on pathways.

Communication

Working together as a community is always a work in progress. Communication – on the part of all members – is vital to reach our goals and build a thriving Community Garden.

Here's how to stay informed and get all the benefits of your membership:

- **Check your email regularly** – our main channel for announcements and updates is email. Please check your email weekly to stay informed and participate.
- **Get to know your fellow gardeners.** As you meet people in the Gardens, introduce yourself and learn from them. We all benefit by sharing what we've learned and asking for help.
- **Check the information board** at the Gardens for announcements and helpful information
- **Check the website** – ClearwaterCG.org – this is where we post general information, photos, and upcoming event announcements
- **Visit us on social media** – We have a Facebook page and group as well as an Instagram channel where you can see announcements and photos from our events, as well as helpful general gardening and bee information
- **Attend General Members Meetings** and Potluck events held at least annually (usually more often) so you can get the latest updates, vote for key decisions and choose the Board of Directors, as well as socialize with your gardening community.
- **Listen in on Board Meetings** – Board meetings are open to all CCG members to observe and learn about the issues and developments in the Gardens. Board meetings time and place are announced in email notices, on the information board at the Gardens and on our website.

Contact the Registrar if you have a change of email, address or telephone number – registrar@clearwatercg.org

Fertilizers and Amendments

All fertilizers and amendments used in the gardens must be organic. MiracleGro® and similar synthetic fertilizers **are not permitted**. Instead, we recommend the following:

Slow-release soil builders (add 1 inch of these organic materials each year):

- Aged manure
- Fish emulsion/seaweed
- Compost when available
- Certified organic slow-release granular fertilizer

Midseason "boosters" – add to base of plants:

- Aged manure tea
- Compost tea
- Certified organic liquid fertilizer (please follow label instructions)

These “teas” can be made by mixing approximately 2 cups compost or manure into a gallon of water. This mixture can “steep” for 3 to 30 days. Occasional mixing or shaking will help the nutrients dissolve into the water. This concentration may be too strong for direct application on leaves, or even for new seedlings. It is recommended to dilute the solution and applying once a week instead of the full concentration all at once.

Plant Timing: **Clearwater**, Florida is in USDA Hardiness Zone 10a, Central Florida. A planting guide is available through the [University of Florida](#).

Invasive Plants and Weed Prevention

Mulch: Most weed seeds germinate in the top eighth inch of soil. If they can't see the sun, they eventually rot. One especially effective mulching technique is to lay a layer of newspaper or cardboard under mulch. Weeds that have to grow through 4 inches of mulch will use a lot of root energy to reach the sun. Pull these and you will remove most of the energy that supports the plant. It may regrow 2-3 more times, but with persistent pulling the roots will be exhausted.

Corn Gluten: Corn gluten inhibits the germination of seeds; sprinkle a layer on paths to keep the seeds that are carried in from destroying all your hard work. Be careful – it prevents ALL seed germination, so make sure that it is not too close to the seeds you want to sow.

To prevent weeds:

- 1) **Pull.** Go for the whole root. This is easiest if done after watering or a soaking rain.
- 2) **Hoe.** This is especially effective in the spring when the top layer of ground is dry. Move the hoe lightly beneath the soil surface to dislodge the roots of young weeds. Shallow cultivation prevents bringing up more seeds from deeper levels.
- 3) **Chop.** The best technique for weeds that get ahead of us and are suddenly knee-high.
- 4) **Deadhead.** If you let the weeds grow for too long, this is the process of removing the flowers and/or seed heads of weeds so they don't reproduce. This keeps the number of weeds down for the following year, but the plant itself may continue to be a problem. This is not effective with weeds that have underground runners.

The bad news: Weed seeds can live in the ground for up to seven years. Each time you till the soil, you bring more of them to the surface where they find the ideal circumstances for germination.

The good news: Persistence pays. Each year, with vigilance, there will be fewer and fewer weeds.

Perennials and annuals may become weeds! Raspberries and mint spread by underground shoots. Sunflowers, zinnia, callaloo and others drop seeds that readily germinate. Please relocate any volunteers (plant that self-seed and grow on their own) that you want to keep and remove the rest to keep them controlled.

Do not put weeds into the compost bins – our bins may not get hot enough to destroy weed seeds and chopping some weeds helps them spread. Instead, put weeds in the black waste bins.

Insects & Pests

The first step is to assess the insect situation. Predatory insects will only populate our gardens if there are prey insects. Aphids and beetles may damage some of your plants, but a plant can lose up to one quarter of its leaves before fruit yield is affected. The insects that are attacking your plants will often identify the weak ones that suffer from being root bound, transplant shock or inconsistent watering.

With that in mind:

Step 1: Gather information. Is it a good bug, or a bad bug? What predatory insects will this one attract? How much damage are you willing to tolerate before you do something? You can research advice on pests on the [University of Florida website](#).

Step 2: Become a pest predator - pull and squish pests. Leaving their guts on the plants is a strong deterrent to other pests of the same family. If that's too messy for you, a container of water with dish soap that you can knock the pests into to drown them is an alternative method (though it won't deter other pests).

Step 3: Nourish & stimulate. Add compost and manure to the soil, sprinkle [azomite](#) for trace minerals. Use fish emulsion, a tea of manure or compost at the root zone. Pests often attack weak or stressed plants. Keep your plants happy and strong and you will find fewer pests.

Step 4: Introduce your own beneficial bugs. Good examples are ladybugs, lacewings, parasitic wasps, and praying mantis.

Step 5a: Use organic repellants. Homemade sprays of garlic & cayenne, antibacterial soap, bug tea, plantings of marigolds and mints and other aromatic herbs confuse the bug's sense of smell.

Step 5b: Use organic "terminators." Spray with organic insecticidal soap, spinosid, neem oil or Bt.

Step 6: Eliminate. Remove affected plants. **Do not** add these plants to the compost bins and risk infesting other areas of the garden with pests and disease. Instead, put these plants in the black trash bins.

Inorganic or chemical Pesticides and insecticides are forbidden. Use of these items is a violation of the garden agreement. Use of synthetic insecticides will result in the removal of both plants and the gardener. You will forfeit any rights to harvest your plants and lose your future rights as a community gardener.

Trash vs. Recycling

In the Garden we have blue bins with yellow lids that are used for the City of Clearwater recycling program. We also have black bins that are put out for City trash pickup.

Waste materials that are not used for our compost need to be separated into two groups:

- Weeds, diseased plants, branches and other plant materials go into the **black trash bins**
- Soiled paper, food containers, non-recyclable plastic, Styrofoam, wood, and metal go into the **black trash bins**
- White and brown paper, glass bottles, plastic bottles and metal cans go into the **blue recycle bins**

Unless for the use of our Garden, anything brought from home should be taken back home.

Common Tools

Tools and sprays in the garden storage shed are shared by all members. Please return what you borrow after its use. All tools and lawn equipment are the property of CCG and are to be left on the garden premises. Trellises, stakes, and some fencing are found on the West side of our property. Do not store your personal tools, sprays or trellises inside or behind the garden shed unless you are contributing them to the Garden to be shared by all gardeners.

Please clean and return all tools to the shed after use to avoid wandering tool syndrome, make sure tools have been returned to their place in the shed. Please lock the shed before you leave the Gardens.

Broken equipment needs to be fixed or replaced – if you find that something is bent or broken, try to remedy the situation, if possible. Some repair materials may be available in the brown shed. If you wish to take on a repair project for the garden, please reach out to the Quartermaster or the Grounds Team Coordinator before doing so.

Garden Security

Keep the lock combination confidential! The lock combination should only be shared with current plot members. Family or friends who visit the Garden should be accompanied by a member. Any possible exceptions to this rule should be approved by your Team Coordinator.

The gate lock combination will be changed annually, or more often as needed for security. All active plot members will be notified of lock combination changes via email.

If no one else is in the Gardens when you leave, YOU are the last person, regardless of the time of day. The last person out of the garden should make sure tools are neatly stored in the appropriate shed and locked and should lock the front gate on the way out.

Lock the front gate from the outside by stringing the chain through the gate and place the padlock through both sides of the chain (generally not the last link for better security) and close the lock and remember to scramble the combination.

If a lock becomes difficult to use, please report it to your Team Coordinator so it can be replaced or remedied.

Personal Safety

All activities in the Clearwater Community Gardens that you participate in are at your own risk and you accept all responsibility for any liability, damage, harm, loss or claim that occurs in connection with your use of the Gardens.

Make sure that someone knows you are going to the garden or find a buddy to garden with you. Bring a cell phone to the garden so that you can call someone if you feel uneasy. It's easy to get absorbed in gardening. Remain aware of your surroundings at all times.

Greet anyone who enters the Gardens, so they know you are aware of their presence. Bring and use personal bug spray during mosquito season. There are bees and other insects in the gardens. If you are allergic to bee stings, please have an EpiPen or other medication with you, in case you need it.

Children In the Garden

We welcome children to the Garden. For safety reasons, however, **children should be accompanied by an adult at all times.**

The Garden is for growing plants – children are welcome to participate in planting food and flowers and helping them grow - they will also get to practice the skills necessary to be in a community.

While parents are primarily responsible for their children while in the Gardens, others may speak to your children when they are active in the garden – for praise or for safety.

Remember that our most powerful teaching tool is our example. If we treat the gardens and each other with respect, the children will usually follow along. Be a good example and enjoy gardening with the next generation.

Toilets

There is no toilet facility on site. Nature's Food Patch across Cleveland Steet has bathrooms located between the café and the store.

Dogs

Dogs are not generally allowed in our Community Gardens except for service dogs or leashed at public events. Dogs should never be allowed to roam free in the Gardens, even if you are alone. Dog owners are required to clean up after their pets.

Bees

We have active bee hives, and our Bee Team harvests honey throughout the season. Due to liability and health concerns, only certified members of the Bee Team who have signed required documentation are allowed in the apiary area. Any Member who enters without authorization may be removed and lose their membership and / or plot privileges.

In our garden area, please be respectful of the bees by not crowding them. If you know you are allergic to bee stings, carry medication, such as an EpiPen.

Our Journey So Far

The Community Gardens was established by the Clearwater Garden Club in 2016. We operate under Division 26 of the City of Clearwater's Development Code. We are a section 501(c)(3) charitable organization, eligible to receive tax-deductible contributions. FEI Number: 82-4098054

Our site was identified as an undeveloped property owned by the Redevelopment Agency of the City of Clearwater, for an annual lease at \$1 per year.

While City Council Members are very supportive of our Garden and recognize the benefits we provide to the community, unlike many other community gardens, we are not an agency of the City of Clearwater, nor associated with the City of Clearwater Parks Department. We receive no financial support from them, and we pay the standard retail rate for the tap water we use.

To bolster the City's continued support for the lease of our land, we strive to demonstrate our commitment to the green goals of the City of Clearwater, serving all and contributing to stability and sustainability of the community by using organic growing methods, composting and recycling, as well as conserving water.

Thank YOU for being a part of our journey. Our success is possible only with the participation of each community member!

If you have questions or suggestions, please reach out to your Team Coordinator, or contact the President at president@clearwatercg.org