



How to Create Social Distancing Plans for Your Garden

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) explains that social distancing (also known as “physical distancing,” means keeping a safe space between yourself and other people who are not from your household. To practice social or physical distancing, stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms’ length) from other people who are not from your household in both indoor and outdoor spaces. Social distancing should be practiced in combination with other everyday preventive actions to reduce the spread of COVID-19, including wearing cloth face coverings, avoiding touching your face with unwashed hands, and frequently washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, GreenThumb gardens that are on NYC Parks’ property are required to follow social distancing protocols to ensure public health and safety. For the latest updates to NYC Parks GreenThumb policies about garden access, permitted activities, and safety precautions, [please visit the GreenThumb website](#). Please review these policies carefully, as public health and safety remain a top priority during this time. Community gardens must adhere to all [City](#) and [State](#) policies. In addition, please note that these policies are subject to change as the City continues its phased reopening. If you have any questions, feel free to contact your [Outreach Coordinator](#) for clarification.

This guide serves as a complement to existing resources, including “[Best Practices for Community Gardening during COVID-19](#)” and “[Resources for Working Together Remotely](#).” In particular, this toolkit emphasizes ways that community garden groups can develop and implement effective social distancing plans for their sites.

Below are recommendations for ways that garden leadership can communicate with garden members about social distancing policies during COVID-19.

Update Your Garden’s Bylaws and Rules

- Follow your garden’s decision-making process outlined in your bylaws to determine how to proceed with opening your garden (to members and/or the public) or remaining closed until further notice.
- Create an addendum for your garden’s bylaws that includes social distancing policies and rules during COVID-19.
- Ensure that garden members sign off on the garden’s bylaws or rules, as well as NYC Parks GreenThumb policies. You could use a Google Form or ask garden members to confirm via email or text that they have read the new rules. (See the example from El Punte: Espiritu Tierra Community Garden below.)

Communicate with Your Members



- Host a virtual meeting (ex. Conference call, Zoom, etc.) to review the updated garden rules for social distancing during COVID-19 and see if they have any questions. Ensure that members understand how to access the virtual meeting via phone or video call.
- Set up a group chat (ex. WhatsApp, text message, etc.) for your garden group so that members can text each other when they plan to come to the garden to ensure that they can limit density.
- Ask designated garden members to volunteer to help get the word out to a set number of other members about garden rules and safety protocols for the duration of the garden season. This is particularly helpful for gardens where there are language access or tech access needs. For gardens with specific demographic groupings (ex. gardeners from a senior center, non-English speakers, etc.), you could have a representative from each group volunteer to communicate with members about COVID-19 policies and garden updates.

Post Signage about Social Distancing Policies

- Post external signage on the garden gate with the NYC Parks GreenThumb signs about the status of the garden's opening or closure (to members and/or the public). Several types of signage are [available at the bottom of this page](#).
- Consider posting signage inside the garden about social distancing rules during COVID-19. Signage from NYC Parks GreenThumb is [available in several languages here](#). The garden group could also post a list of any garden-specific rules and collective essential tasks that members can take care of individually.

Create Ways to Limit Density in the Garden

- Regardless of garden size, the total occupancy at any community garden may not exceed 25 people at any time. Consider creating staggered schedules for garden members to access the garden at different points. Garden members could sign up for a particular shift to work on their own plots at a consistent time each week and/or to work on essential tasks individually.
- Consider hosting special hours reserved for senior garden members, maintaining social distancing policies.

Examples of Social Distancing Plans

Here are examples of social distancing plans that community gardeners have created for their sites during COVID-19. Your garden group can use these as templates and adjust, as needed.

[2020 COVID-19 Bylaws Addendum- El Puente: Espiritu Tierra Community Garden](#)

[2020 Garden Help - with Communal Tasks- El Puente: Espiritu Tierra Community Garden](#)

[Garden Task Planning Template Calendar \(adopted from Columbia Secondary School Garden\)](#)