

Dahlem Ecology Farm

2019 Community Garden Guidelines

dahlemcenter.org

General Information

The Community Garden at the Dahlem Ecology Farm, located at 1427 Wickwire Road, provides garden plots and education about how to grow food and ornamentals organically. In the spirit of community gardening, you are encouraged to meet and make friends with other enthusiastic gardeners, participate in meetings and enjoy the various social events. This is our 10th year and each year gets better! **This year, in order to continue, we will need you to step up and volunteer!**

The Community Garden is open during daylight hours, seven days per week. Be sure to hike the trail over Crouch Creek to the Dahlem Center. Dogs or other pets are not allowed on Dahlem property except on the Butterfly Trail surrounding our gardens. Dogs are not invited inside the gates of the gardens.

Important Contacts

Ben Dandrow
Executive Director
bdandrow@dahlemcenter.org

Pegg Clevenger
Farm Communications
sullo1@sbcglobal.net

Libby Greanya
Plot Monitor
lag10@comcast.net

Terrie Goede
Plot Assigner
helter10@gmail.com

Community Garden Management

The garden is managed and overseen by The Dahlem Conservancy. The volunteer Farm Committee makes decisions about the Community Garden and the Ecology Farm property in general. Please contact Pegg Clevenger, contact info provided above, if you are interested in serving on the Farm Committee. Monthly meetings are held during the growing season to discuss and review policies for the garden and to develop plans that encourage forward movement of garden issues.

Plot Reservation

New gardeners can apply for an available plot by contacting the Dahlem Center. Deposits for plots from new gardeners are due March 10, 2019. A signed application form and payment is required to guarantee the plot assignment.

This is a very good deal. Due to the generous start-up funding from Betty Dahlem Desbiens, an \$8,000 deer fence and \$13,000 water system was installed.

Amenities

- Garden plots are 20' x 20' with walkways between each plot.
- The cost of the 20 by 20 foot plot is \$40.00 per year. Dahlem membership is also required.
- Deer fencing surrounds the perimeter of the Community Garden, plus a critter fence along the bottom edge of the fence.
- Wheelbarrows, water and hoses are supplied.
- Porta-potty is located near the Cattle Barn for public usage (May through Oct).
- Two three-bin compost sites are available for gardeners to use (east and west sides). The Ecology Farm also receives occasional loads of compost and woodchips for gardeners to spread on their plots free of charge.
- Garden equipment (tomato cages, stakes, etc.) may be stored in the open Cattle Barn during the winter.
- The only public apiary in Michigan on the west side of the garden. (Additional charge. See Dahlem for details.)

Note: Plot Numbers start at the Northwest corner of the fenced gardens with Plot # and proceed down the long northern fenceline to #12; then counting starts again at the eastern fenceline in the second row, for #13, etc.

Gardener's Responsibilities

1. Pay plot fee by March 10, 2019.
2. Fill out and sign application by March 10th, 2019.
3. Adhere to gardening and land use policies.
4. Plant by June 15, 2019 to avoid plot forfeiture.
5. Maintain plot and surrounding paths (notify Pegg ASAP if unable to maintain plot)
6. Clear plot in accordance with guidelines by November 1, 2019.
7. Contribute at least 5 hours per year of volunteer service at Dahlem or the gardens.
8. Read my e-mail as the primary form of communication about the Gardens.

Volunteer Requirement

Each gardener must volunteer 5 hours during the year, either at the Ecology Farm or at the Dahlem Center. Your time is greatly appreciated as we continue to develop this community asset. **We encourage you to offer your ideas and suggestions for improvement. This is**

YOUR garden! Without your help, we will not continue. Please consider bringing in your electric weed whip any time to help keep edges free of weeds.

Non-Acceptable Plants

The following plants are not allowed at the Community Gardens: invasive species (e.g. mint, garlic mustard, morning glories, etc.), perennials, trees, bushes, shrubs, or illegal/dangerous plants, including marijuana.

Fertilizers, Soil Amendments, Weed/Disease/Insect Control

All garden plots at the Ecology Farm are organic, meaning that fertilizers and weed/pest control measures allowed in the gardens must be approved by major organic certification agencies. In general, soil fertility is maintained by creating the best conditions for soil biological activity through crop rotations, cover crops, and incorporating organic matter (compost-including your kitchen compost, leaf mold, composted manure, blood and bone meal, fish emulsion, kelp meal, liquid seaweed, and commercial organic fertilizers are acceptable). Natural mineral fertilizers, i.e. greensand, granite dust, and ground limestone are also acceptable.

Initial soil tests in 2010 showed a highly acidic soil. They were repeated as they were assumed to be lab/sampling error but results were confirmed. Soil tests of your individual plot can be obtained from MSU for only \$25.00. Details at <http://www.msusoiltest.com/get-your-soil-test/>

Changing the pH of the soil with chemicals is tricky (and not organic) and can “poison” the soil. It is also virtually impossible to hit the right pH BUT we have learned that an amended/healthy soil covers a lot of “pH sins” and is easier to achieve! Once your soil is amended, you will be able to “cut it like butter” and see your productivity increase and work decrease.

Weed/Insect/Disease Control

Gardeners are responsible for keeping weeds down in their plot and in surrounding paths.

Herbicides of any kind are prohibited in all plots. Any non-biodegradable cloth or plastic may be used, but must be removed by November 1st, 2017, unless permanently covered by wood chips. Mechanical controls such as hoeing, mulching, and hand weeding are recommended.

Synthetic insecticides are prohibited. Most problems can be controlled if you maintain a healthy soil, choose disease-resistant varieties, water judiciously, and remove diseased plants from the garden. Other control methods are crop rotation, hand picking of insect pests, introduction of predator species, companion planting, and soil solarization. You may spray any brand of bug spray on yourself outside of the garden gate.

Watering

Water and hoses are supplied on-site. Gardeners must stay on-site during watering, to avoid accidentally leaving the water running. A gardener may water for a maximum of 40 minutes per

day that you are at your plot. The water should be turned off at the faucet and the hose should be bundled neatly off the walkways.

Path Maintenance

Mulching the pathways that surround your garden plot is important maintenance that should be completed shortly after you have planted your garden. You will spend a lot of time and money preparing and planting your garden. You will now want to protect your investment from the invasion of a perennial grass-like nuisance that threatens to strangle life from the plants you have just put in the ground.

Quackgrass is this perennial weed that reproduces by underground rhizome and seed. While keeping the plant from seeding is important, it is vital that the rhizomes be killed so that control can be achieved in your garden. Quackgrass rhizomes will grow almost 5 feet in one year. Since many of the pathways are 5 feet wide, the rhizomes are likely to pop up in your garden from the pathways in the very year you have planted your garden.

The most permanent solution that you'll see used in our gardens is to cover the pathways with a heavy black plastic strip (provided by Dahlem in the open barn) that will block the sunlight that the weed needs. Gardeners have been successful using this method combined with adding a deep layer (4"-5") of wood chip mulch (provided by area tree-trimmers) over the top of the black plastic to help keep it in place and prevent tearing of the plastic layer.

Wood mulch alone, or the use of cardboard or landscape cloth and wood mulch or similar techniques, does not work. The paper breaks down in one year or the grass pushes right through the weave of the cloth making it more difficult to pull out the rhizomes through the cardboard or cloth and mulch.

Composting

Compost bins are located within the Community Garden. **These bins are for disease-free plant material only.** Weeds should not be placed in the compost bin to avoid allowing them to spread/re-seed. Please remove weeds from the garden. (There are areas outside the fence near the parking lot where they can be dumped. Please don't dump near the parking lot so we can keep the parking lot looking tidy.) We need everyone to take a turn turning the compost bins, please.

Trash Disposal

A trash container will not be provided. All trash should be removed by the gardener and disposed of at home.

Garden Clean Up

Clean up must be completed by all gardeners by November 1. All non-organic materials, (stakes, plant supports, tomato cages, pots, black plastic or fabric in your plot) ideally should be removed from your plot. Note that winter takes quite a toll and this is for your best interest. Additionally, surrounding pathways must be cleaned and weeded. You can use the Cattle Barn by the parking lot for storage but please label your stuff! In the summer, when everything should be out, there may be a clean-up of the barn.

Please DO NOT sweep the Cattle (AKA swallow) Barn. The aerosolized bird droppings can be harmful to humans. Do not stir them up..... LOTS of other stuff you can do!

Abandoned Garden Plots

Gardens must be planted by June 15. Any plot not planted by June 15 will be forfeited by the owner without refund. If there is an unanticipated delay, please contact Pegg.

If during the growing season a plot appears to be abandoned, the gardener will be contacted to find out the reason for the lack of care. If no contact is established or if the plot continues to be uncared for, the plot will be forfeited by the owner without refund.

Gardeners of forfeited plots will not be guaranteed their plot for the following year. They will be put on the waiting list for available plots for the following growing season.

Maintaining your plot is important for your neighbors. Your weed seeds can quickly wreak havoc.

Vacation/Sharing Produce

If a gardener will be on vacation longer than 2 weeks, arrangements must be made by that gardener for someone to care for their plot. It is not hard to find someone to harvest when you are gone. This of course can be anyone you know, but you will also get cooperation from your fellow gardeners. Excess produce is taken by individuals to the InterFaith Shelter, John George Home, churches, other food pantries, up to the discretion of the person harvesting/delivering, etc.

Note that most anything* left on the picnic table at the shade umbrella – Plot 16 -can be considered “shared”. You will often find produce here during peak harvest – help yourself! Take to the food pantry, your neighbors, etc. (*If you find someone’s lunch on the table at Plot 16, that doesn’t count!)

Garden Application

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Name	
Street Address	
City	
Zip Code	
Phone Number	
E-mail	
Date	
I have read the Community Garden Guidelines and will adhere to all of the rules.	Signature

Make check payable to: The Dahlem Conservancy
 7117 S. Jackson Road
 Jackson, MI 49201
 517-782-3453

Date Received by Dahlem _____

Check/Money/Credit Card Received By _____