**Dahlem Ecology Farm**

**2022 Garden Guidelines**

***dahlemcenter.org***

**General Information**

The Gardens at the Dahlem Ecology Farm, located at 1429 Wickwire Road, Jackson MI 49201 provides garden plots and education about how to grow food and flowers organically. You are encouraged to meet and make friends with other enthusiastic gardeners, participate in meetings and enjoy the various social events. This is our 13th year and each year gets better! **This year, in order to continue, we will need you to step up and volunteer!**

The Gardens are 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. For obvious health reasons, dogs are not invited inside the gates of the gardens.

There is an extensive trail system at Dahlem – you can walk from Jackson College to Dahlem main campus and then on to the gardens. The trail map is on the Dahlem website. https://www.dahlemcenter.org/visiting-dahlem/

**Important Contacts**

Ben Dandrow Libby Greanya Terrie Goede

Executive Director Communications Plot Assigner

bdandrow@dahlemcenter.org lag10@comcast.net helter10@gmail.com

**Garden Management**

The garden is managed and overseen by The Dahlem Conservancy. Volunteers makes decisions about the Garden.

# Plot Reservation

New gardeners can apply for an available plot by contacting the Dahlem Center. Payments for **all** plots are due **March 5th, 2022**. Again, we have a waiting list for plots. 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 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 website for details.)

**Gardener’s Responsibilities**

1. Pay plot fee by March 5th, 2022.
2. Fill out and sign application by March 5th, 2022.
3. Adhere to gardening and land use policies.
4. Plant by June 15th, 2022 to avoid plot forfeiture.
5. Maintain plot and surrounding paths (notify Libby ASAP if unable to maintain plot)
6. Clear plot in accordance with guidelines by November 1st, 2022.
7. **We encourage you to offer your ideas and suggestions for improvement. This is YOUR garden! Without your help, we will not continue.**

**Non-Acceptable Plants**

The following plants are not allowed: invasive species (e.g. mint, grapes, raspberries, garlic mustard, morning glories, etc.), trees, bushes, shrubs, or illegal/dangerous plants.

**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. 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.

**Watering**

Water and hoses are supplied on-site. Gardeners must stay on-site during watering, to avoid accidentally leaving the water running. The water should be turned off at the faucet and the hose should be bundled neatly off the walkways.

Watering deeply and less frequently promotes healthy deep root growth. In wet summers, watering may not even be necessary or minimal!

**Path Maintenance**

Mulching the pathways that surround your garden plot is important maintenance. 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 (provided by Dahlem in the open cattle 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 fence. **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. Look for the piles of dead weeds.) We need everyone to take a turn turning the compost bins, please.

**Trash Disposal**

A trash container is not provided. All trash should be removed by the gardener and disposed of at home. “Pack it in-pack it out.”

**Garden Clean Up**

Clean up must be completed by all gardeners by November 1st. 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 with your **plot number**! In the summer, when everything should be out, there may be another 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 15th. Any plot not planted by June 15th will be forfeited by the owner without refund. If there is an unanticipated delay, please contact Libby.

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. Neglected/abandoned plots are a huge problem transferred to your fellow gardeners.

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 can be taken by individuals to the InterFaith Shelter, John George Home, St. Vincent’s, churches, other food pantries, up to the discretion of the person harvesting/delivering, etc. During the harvest weeks of 2021, we partnered with the food pantry of Jackson Free Methodist church and plan to do that again in 2022.

Note that most anything\* left on the picnic table– 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!)

The picnic table also functions as a lost and found. Smaller found items may also be found attached to the kiosk.

**Garden Application**

**Gardener Responsibilities**

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

**Plot Number (if known) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

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 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_