

East Sooke Community Garden User Agreement

Rules & Guidelines

Background

The East Sooke Community Garden Society (ESCGS) has established garden plots and assumed responsibility for a heritage orchard on a 5-acre parcel of ALR land owned by the Royal Canadian Marine Search and Rescue (RCMSAR). The gardens follow the principles of organic and regenerative gardening.

ESCGS is incorporated under the Societies Act and exists to serve its members. The purposes of the Society are:

- to create and maintain a community garden in East Sooke in order to provide a valuable community resource that contributes to health and well-being, environmental education, habitat development and connection to nature. The garden will be a multi-generational place where people can grow nutritious food using organic, regenerative farming practices that enhance soil health, biodiversity, and resilience.
- to participate in the removal of non-native invasive species and promote conservation of the natural ecology.
- to bring people together in a way that promotes positive social connections, neighbourhood building, and more active, healthy lifestyles; while working towards improving local food security.
- develop solutions to adapt and build resiliency in response to the impacts of climate change and environmental pressures and issues.

Organic gardening

In its simplest form, organic gardening means gardening without man-made chemicals. Instead of synthetic ingredients, organic gardeners rely on ingredients that occur naturally and that work in harmony with the natural goodness that comes from healthy, productive soil.

Regenerative gardening

Regenerative gardening is an environmentally conscientious approach to managing and planting gardens. Simply put, it means growing plants with the environment in mind, not just consumption needs. This way, you nourish the soil naturally instead of depleting it and attempting to fix it with fertilizers.

Assignment of garden plots:

Our rental plots vary in size from 4' x 24' to 4' x 12' to a couple of 4' x 9'. Two of our larger plots are reserved for the Sooke Food Bank. One plot is reserved for The Wolf Pack - a children's garden.

- Assignment of plots is given to East Sooke and neighbouring communities on a first come, first serve basis. Members who have helped to build the garden will be given first preference. If there is no wait list, AND a plot is available, the Board may consider an application from any community.
- When all existing plots are assigned, applicants will be placed on a waiting list and contacted as plots become available.

- No plot holder shall sublet or reassign their plot to another.
- Plot holders will contribute a minimum of 12 hours per year of volunteer time for special projects or general upkeep of the common areas.
- Due to insurance requirements, only ESCGS members are permitted to participate in the garden's activities.

Safety and Liability:

- All ESCGS members are covered by insurance through the BC Council of Garden Clubs.
- All members must attend an orientation to the use of public spaces and garden procedures.
- Anyone who works on any plot or volunteers with ESCGS should have a membership in the society (a \$15 fee paid once for a lifetime membership).
- A first aid kit is available in the garden shed for minor injuries. For serious medical incidents, please call 911 or go to the nearest medical centre.
- Consumption of, or being under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs is strictly prohibited anywhere in the garden / our licensed five acres and anywhere on RCMSAR property.
- Smoking, vaping and fires are not permitted anywhere on RCMSAR property.

Garden security:

- When leaving the garden please store any tools, wheelbarrows, etc., that you have used and check to see the tool shed is secured. If you are the last to leave, please put away any remaining items.
- All gates must be closed at all times to keep deer, rabbits and other animals out.
- All members should vacate the garden within one hour after sundown.

Fees:

- General membership of the East Sooke Community Garden Society (ESCGS) is required to rent or work on a plot. General membership requires a one-time fee (currently \$15 per person). Members must be aged 18 years and older
- Fees are payable to the East Sooke Community Garden Society by e-transfer at escgpayments@gmail.com
- Plot fees are for one calendar year, to be renewed each year, and are non-refundable.
- Notice of renewals shall go out each year to all plot holders during October of that year.
- Plot fees may be subject to change on an annual basis.
- Plot fees for the next calendar year must be paid before November 30 of the previous year.

Use of Plots – growing, maintenance and harvesting:

- Please be mindful of your plot neighbours and ensure that there is minimal impact on other plots from e.g. weeds going to seed, or tall plants shading or falling over other plots etc.
- Acceptable structures are: trellises, cold frames, row and plant covers. Glass and pressure treated lumber are not permitted. No structures or plants should exceed 6 ft (1.8m) above ground level. Ensure they are measured from the ground outside the plot on the LOW/ ocean side, NOT from inside your plot. They must be sturdy and safe, with no sharp or protruding

edge beyond the perimeter of the bed. Structures must be monitored & repaired promptly. Check plant height on seed packets before planting.

- Remove any non-permanent plant supports by Nov. 7 (e.g. tomato cages or other items that may be swept during storms). Row covers must be secured and kept in good repair.
- Only organic fertilizers and organic slug baits may be used. The use of chemicals and pesticides is not permitted. If you have questions, please email eastsookecommunitygarden@gmail.com
- Have someone with membership to ESCGS attend to your plot when you are away.
- Growing cannabis is prohibited as per the B.C. Cannabis control and Licensing Act.
- Any produce grown on site by individual plot holders cannot be sold commercially.
- All plot holders are welcome to use community composts for plot waste only. No household compost is allowed in the community compost bins at the garden. Any diseased plant material, such as tomato or potato blight must be taken off-site and not be placed in compost bins. Compost is currently being collected in the North-East corner of the fenced area. Do NOT place invasive plants in the compost pile. We will share updated guidance on invasive plant management with members as it becomes available.
- Please consider donating any surplus food you have grown to the Sooke Food Bank.
- Cans, bottles, papers, and any other trash are not to be left on site. All non-plant material such as plastic pots, wrappers, metal and wood of all sorts must be removed on the same day and disposed of in your home garbage.
- Please treat the community tools and equipment with care as you would your own. Clean the tools after use and replace them neatly in the shed. Community tools are to be used for work at the garden and returned to the shed at the end of each day. Please leave a note on the bulletin board in the garden shed if any tool is broken or needs repair, or fix it if you can.
- Invasive species such as mint and horseradish are prohibited in garden plots. Species such as mint will be grown, with care, in the herb garden. If in doubt, see <http://www.bcinvases.ca> before you plant.
- Gardeners are responsible for keeping the paths surrounding their plot clear of weeds; do not allow them to go to seed. Maintain your plot throughout the year and harvest produce when it ripens. If you are unable to harvest, please place a sign in your lot inviting others to do so.
- Your plot should be weeded and clear of debris by November 1. Growing winter crops is encouraged, but if you're not overwintering plants, cover the bed with a layer of leaf mulch to protect it from heavy rains over the winter. *Please see the advice in the section on how to prepare your soil using organic and regenerative gardening methods.*
- You must keep your plot weeded and prevent weeds from going to seed. Plants should not grow beyond your borders. Cover crops such as winter rye, legumes, clover, etc., must be cut back and turned under by May 1.
- Plot markers must be left in place.

Water:

The ESCG does not have access to the CRD water supply. Non-potable water (not fit for drinking) is pumped and stored into several water tanks positioned close to the garden; they are filled during the rainy season. It takes up to 10 hours to fill the large water tank in ideal conditions. If possible, the tanks will be refilled during the growing season; however, the water

supply may dry out during the summer. For this reason, water needs to be conserved as much as possible and is only accessible through short hoses attached to taps, where watering cans may be filled. Plots must be hand watered using a watering can; the use of watering wands and sprinklers is not permitted. Please only water other gardeners' plots on their request and with their permission.

There is a two-way tap built into the main irrigation hose at the southeast corner of the garden. To turn on the water, rotate the handle 90 degrees so that it is parallel with the hose. Then use the tap nearest to your plot to fill your watering can. When you have finished watering, the two-way tap must be closed to avoid accidentally draining the water tanks. Expect the water pressure to be low, as it is gravity fed.

Water lines are not buried; they are on the surface, and care must be taken when walking around them.

Regenerative gardening techniques such as mulching are intended to enhance the soil's ability to hold water. We are hopeful that they will help to reduce the risk of water shortages. Drought conditions due to climate change are becoming more common and the ESCGS will provide guidance on regenerative gardening to help manage this problem.

If you are concerned that part of the irrigation system is not working properly, please email eastsookecommunitygarden@gmail.com. If there is an emergency, please shut the water off at the two-way tap.

The water is turned off during the winter months around the end of October.

How to prepare your soil using organic and regenerative gardening methods

There are many ways to prepare soil for a garden; the advice below has been recommended by an expert from the ESCGS.

As the soil in the garden is mineral dominant versus organic, it is important to get as much organic matter into the soil as possible. The fastest way to do this is to buy COMPOSTED manure or sea soil from the store and add it to your garden bed. BEFORE you add the purchased amendments to your garden bed, place cardboard or newspaper down on top of the existing soil followed by your amendments. Paper and cardboard are available on-site for your use.

An alternative method that follows the organic and regenerative principles of soil preparation includes the following steps:

1. screen any stones from your plot either by hand or using a screen;
2. place stones in a wheelbarrow and pile outside the garden by the garden shed or at the base of the big tree (outside the gate nearest Covina Road).
3. wet the soil surface, being conscious to preserve water;
4. lay cardboard or newspaper on soil surface;
5. layer the surface of the cardboard with alternating greens and browns (4-7) mixed with a small amount of the provided amendments.
6. applying liquid organic fertilizers like fish emulsion or kelp emulsion is recommended every two weeks as it will accelerate the decomposition of the leaf litter into food for the soil/plants.

These microbes will need a source of food to stay alive and ultimately feed your crop, but how do you feed microbes? Microbes like proteins and carbs. Protein comes from nitrogen rich organics, such as grass clippings, alfalfa meal and manure, while carbs come from carbon rich organics, such as leaf litter, straw and wood chips. They are referred to as "greens and browns", respectively.

Not all microbes' food is created equal! A good rule of thumb is 30:1 ratio of browns and greens (carbon and nitrogen) Grass clippings and leaf litter work best. This method of soil preparation is an excellent way of regenerating your soil and putting your plot to bed at the end of the growing season.

General Garden Rules:

1. The garden is multi-generational. Children are welcome with supervision. Children must not wander onto other plots and pick berries or vegetables, or be near areas with water. Please remember that the food has been watered with non-potable water.
2. No dogs are allowed. ESCGS members have made a commitment to not bring dogs to any part of the RCMSAR property.
3. No burning.
4. Personal vehicles must be parked only in designated area. Usually, this will be in the parking area at the main entrance to RCMSAR property. Quick unloading of garden materials is allowed off Covina Road, but it must be brief.
5. The society is not responsible for loss or damage to crops or personal property within the garden site. Furthermore, the society and RCMSAR are not responsible for damage to vehicles or other personal items outside of the garden site.
6. **Members may not drive into the fenced garden. In rare and necessary instances, board members may give temporary permission to individuals on a case-by-case basis.**

Non-compliance with the Rules and Guidelines:

In the event that a member does not comply with the *Rules and Guidelines*, in severe cases (like alcohol/drug use, noise, fires) where our lease agreement with RCMSARS could be revoked, the member will be contacted/notified and lose their plot and membership immediately.

In less serious infractions:

1. Members will be informed in writing (email) of their violation AND will be given 1 week to fix the infraction. They will be informed that there will be a fine if infraction is not addressed.
2. Member will be fined if infraction is not addressed. The fine will be the amount of that year's annual fee. No plot renewal or new membership will be permitted until the fine is paid.
3. The ESCGS board reserves the right to cut down any plants over 6 feet tall.

Examples of situations that could result in the loss of a plot are:

- plots not worked by June 1;
- failure to respond to notifications;
- plots neglected and spreading weeds;
- use of treated lumber;
- use of materials or structures that do not meet the specifications;
- use of herbicides, pesticides and fungicides and all fertilizers not approved for organic and regenerative gardening.
- excessive use of water
- plants or structure over 6 feet tall

If you have questions, please email eastsookecommunitygarden@gmail.com.

Privacy Policy:

- See the East Sooke Community Garden [website](#) for current policy.

Revision History

11JAN2025	New.
18OCT2025	<p>Additions and/or changes:</p> <p>ASSIGNMENT OF GARDEN PLOTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If there is no wait list, AND a plot is available, the Board may consider an application from any community. <p>SAFETY AND LIABILITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Location of liability area clarified. <p>USE OF PLOTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clarifications made regarding impact on other plots, plant and structure sizes, composting location and invasive plant management. <p>WATER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Removed “A water fee is added to the plot rental fee in case we run out of water. If this happens, we will arrange for the delivery of CRD water.” <p>GENERAL GARDEN RULES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New rule added that states “Members may not drive into the fenced garden. In rare and necessary instances, board members may give temporary permission to individuals on a case-by-case basis.” <p>NON-COMPLIANCE OF RULES & REGULATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New Board actions against Less Serious Infractions have been outlined.
19NOV2025	<p>USE OF PLOTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Invasive management change: Do NOT place invasive plants in the compost pile. We will share updated guidance on invasive plant management with members as it becomes available.