

**Guide to Successful Gardening  
at**

**Culverhouse  
Community Garden**

2016-2017



**Orientation Booklet**



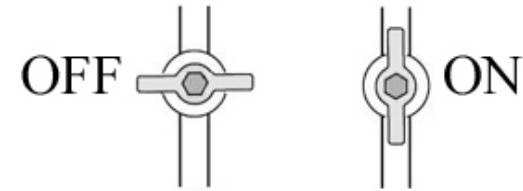
## The Culverhouse Community Garden

Managed by the Sarasota County Community Garden Program Coordinator [IFAS University of Florida Extension], and three to six Volunteer garden managers.

### Instructions and Expectations for Garden Use and Care

**A. Solar Powered Water System:** Gardeners depend on the garden's unique solar powered water system. They are expected to learn how to use it.

1. **Water system: Turning it ON and OFF:** Illustrated directions are on the clipboard at shed doorway. There is an outside valve and an inside ON-OFF switch. Turn off both if you are the last to leave - any time of the day.
2. **Well pump: Must be turned OFF if the cistern overflows:** Illustrated directions signage is on the cistern and inside the shed.
3. **Pressure pump: Must be turned OFF if water level in cistern is too low.** The Water Level is indicated by the red/white PVC pipe on top of cistern. Note: On cloudy days and late winter afternoons there may not be enough sunlight to run the well pump: **If the Red section is near the Black section of the pipe, stop all watering.**
4. **Hose Faucets:** Learn the correct OFF – ON positions.



**\*\*\*Always turn faucet OFF at hose bib after use.**

5. **Rinse Sink:** Use red round faucet, rinse dirt off produce, put harvest debris in receptacle provided, then rinse produce again at home. Turn faucet **off** after use.
6. **Watering:** Think *water conservation*.
7. **Do not drink the water. It is non-potable!**

## B. Garden Plots:

1. **Plot borders** and raised bed construction materials are limited to untreated wood or Trex brand materials in keeping with organic gardening. Confer with garden managers before installing.
2. **Pest Control:** The CC garden is monitored by the USDA for insect pests that can affect county commercial growers. Gardeners are expected to control insect pests in their own plot to be good neighbors. See the County **Integrated Pest Management** handy fold-over wallet sheet, documents in the shed Pest Control notebook, or the county website for recommended pest control.
3. **Community or project plots:** Several plots are devoted to growing experimental vegetables or edible perennials for all. Gardeners help with the maintenance and share the harvest. Garden managers check to see if suggested plants or experiments meet U of FL and county guidelines, and if plots are available for use.
4. **Plot Soil:** The pH of the soil is 6.5, a good level for most vegetables. To maintain that pH, place no **wood chip mulch** directly on the soil.
5. **Fallow plots: During summer or extended absences,** the best coverings are layers of a weed barrier material and straw. Gardeners are expected to arrange for plot and path maintenance during absences, including the summer.

## C. Raising Food Crops Successfully at CCG:

The county's community gardens were established to provide a place for residents to raise organic vegetables and herbs. The goal of many CCG gardeners is to take home produce each time they visit. Here's how to accomplish that goal:

1. **Time:** The most productive gardeners work on their plots at least once a week. Those on larger plots come more often.
2. **Produce:** To get the most out of a plot, gardeners plant vegetables successively, rotate crops, plant in blocks rather than rows, plant tall and short plants together, grow vertically with trellising, and use compost around plants to feed and to lessen evaporation.

**Step 5.** If the 14 day deadline is not met, the Coordinator will send a final warning letter to the member. The member then will have **seven days** to comply, or they will forfeit their plot.

The final notification will request that gardeners clear the plot. Failure to do so will result in the gardener being barred from all county community gardens in the future.

**\*NOTE:** Failure to abide by the rules stated within the membership agreement shall result in forfeiture of the participant's plot and associated fees. Sarasota County reserves the right to immediately terminate membership for any egregious violation(s).

### *Notification of Inactivity and Reminder of Membership Agreement*

By virtue of your Application Membership Agreement, you have taken on the responsibility of maintaining a garden plot as an Active Gardener. Your garden plot exhibits the following:

- \_\_\_ weeds in plot.
- \_\_\_ weedy surrounding paths/mulch in need of renewal.
- \_\_\_ plants or items obstructing the paths.
- \_\_\_ unused items stored on plot.
- \_\_\_ plot not fully planted,
- \_\_\_ unharvested vegetables,
- \_\_\_ more than 20% of plot in flowers.
- \_\_\_ evidence of insect infestation.
- \_\_\_ community work hours insufficient.

If you are temporarily prevented from active gardening, please let us know. In similar situations, we have suggested the following:

1. Add a partner to your membership to share the work and harvest.
2. Request a smaller plot or close down a portion of the plot.
3. Resign in good standing and return when you have garden time.
4. Select a different job you feel you can perform.

Please contact us within **one week of the date of this email** with a proposed remedy for the above violations. The County Garden coordinator has informed us that we have an extensive waiting list.

- **Bulletin Boards:** Entry gate A-frame and shed door bulletin boards contain current information and requests.
- **Signage:** Informational signs posted throughout the garden.
- **Website:** Culverhousegarden.org.
- **Operation Manuals:** An up-to-date operations manual is maintained by the current managers for succeeding managers. It contains information and documents about vendors, processes, and infrastructure. A CCG Solar Water System manual is also in place from Brilliant Harvest, the installer. [Both documents are in the shed, on the shelf above pressure tanks]

## J. When Members Fail to Meet Responsibilities:

On occasion garden members cannot keep up their plots, paths, or community work. A county termination procedure may be initiated.

### County Termination Process for Membership Agreement Violation

**Step 1:** Garden managers monitor plot and path maintenance to identify neglect, as well as other unmet responsibilities.

**Step 2.** Garden managers send gardener an email of *Notification of Inactivity and Reminder of Membership Agreement* (See Notification document following.) That notification:

- lists the instances of plot or other neglect, including community work requirements,
- offers suggestions to rectify problems
- sets a **deadline** for improving the situation.

**Step 3.** If the deadline passes, and the situation is not remedied, the garden managers send a photo of the plot, attendance and community work hour records, and any email messages pertinent to the situation to the County Garden Program Coordinator who initiates a termination process.

**Step 4.** County Garden Coordinator will send a warning letter to the member. The member then will have **14 days** to resolve the identified violation(s) of the membership agreement.

3. **Watering:** Gardeners use a garden hose without a nozzle to water the plant's roots, not its leaves, **water** seeds and seedlings with a watering can; **deep water** established plants with an open hose held near the ground; **use compost** or straw around plants to keep soil from drying out.
4. **Vegetable Varieties:** After four years of operation, the garden members have learned which varieties grow best at this location. See **Garden Information Resources section of this booklet.**

## D. Where to Put Stuff:

Gardeners cope with harvest debris, branches, fronds, weeds, trash, manure, used straw, and wood chip mulch. They:

1. Put **weeds and harvest debris** (stalks removed) in the Managed Compost Plots: # 6, 28, 53, 62.
2. Place **stalks, branches, fronds** in the labeled Shredding Pile in the **southeast corner** of the garden.
3. In the fall, place **summer cover straw** at the **east fence** at the **STRAW** sign. They retrieve it later for mulching young plants or to put in compost.
4. Take all other **trash** home: including pots, plastic, paper, wire frames, rotted plot frame wood, and whole spent or diseased plants.
5. Place **NO manure or wood chip mulch** directly on plot soil.

**E. Composting:** Gardeners get free compost by:

- Joining the **Bin Composting** and **Shredding** teams,
- Contributing to and working on the **Managed Compost Plots** #s 6, 28, 53, 62,
- Making compost in their **own plot**,
- Making compost at **common area** along EAST fence line – keeping that common area weeded and mulched.

**F. Common Area Maintenance:** Gardeners are expected to participate in the shared responsibility of maintaining all common areas and vacant plots. [See *Membership Agreement*]

- 1. Community Work Requirement:** The *Membership Agreement* requires 16 hours per plot per year. At CCG, gardeners can choose an on-going job to fulfill that requirement. Work sessions are scheduled as well to provide community work time. See the **Jobs List** in the shed - contact GMs to help you select a job. Gardeners record their time on the garden sign-in sheet.
- 2. Orchard:** Gardeners who wish to plant a tree in the common area orchard [space allowing] consult with the garden managers to ensure selections adhere to U of F and County Nature Park guidelines, and to learn if there is room. Tree planters are responsible for its care and the surrounding grounds. The fruit belongs to the tree owner. Several fruit trees belong to the community. Gardeners volunteer to take part in their care and harvest. One CCG job is *Orchard Manager*.

### G. Staying Safe at the Garden:

- **Leaving the garden:** Learn how to properly turn off water, lock shed, and lock the entry gate. **Turn off water system and lock up if you are the last to leave at any time of the day.**
- **Gate:** Keep gate locked at all times. **Stop and verify that it is locked when you leave the garden.**
- **Tetanus shot:** Keep shot up to date. The land was ranchland before it was a garden.
- **Fire Ants:** Place flags on active fire ant nests for county-trained IPM personnel to treat.
- **Allergies:** Carry an Epi-pen if you have severe allergies.
- **First aid:** Find kit on the inside back wall of shed.
- **Fire Extinguisher:** Find extinguisher on the front wall to the right as you enter shed.

**Safety:** continued

- **Medical Emergency or any condition of potential threat:** Call 911. Tell EMTs and Sheriff's office our location – in the **Culverhouse Nature Park** at 7301 McIntosh Rd.
- **Sign-in:** For safety sake, gardeners help each other by noting who is on site. They look around or give a shout before leaving.

**H. Proposal & Suggestion Procedure:** When gardeners have an idea for a community project or some change in an ongoing operation, here is how they proceed:

- Garden member(s) proposes an idea or project to the garden managers. The proposal includes a description of the idea or project, a cost estimate, and most importantly, **a maintenance plan**.
- Managers assess the proposal and route the request through the County Garden Program/Extension or the FCCG leadership group.

**NOTE: Some previous ideas that have been implemented in this way:** the rinse sink, the composting bins, the orchard, seed exchanges, seed and transplants project; growing edible flowers, pineapples, ginger root, hops, mushrooms, and blue berries.

**I. Garden Information Resources:** Active and successful gardeners read these.

- **Message System:** Garden Mangers post email messages through a blind carbon copy email address system. They post bulletin board messages often at the garden gate.
- **Quarterly Newsletters from Extension.**  
**Website:** <http://sarasota.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/commgarden.shtml>
- **Garden Notebook:** [in shed] Emergency numbers, Water System, Composting Systems, Best Watering Practices, Pest Control, What-to-Plant-Each-Month, and more.