



# University of North Texas Community Garden Rules & Policies Handbook



updated spring 2023

## About the UNT Community Garden

The UNT Community Garden originated as a student led [We Mean Green Fund](#) project which opened in 2017. The mission of the garden is to promote environmental education, grow food organically, and foster a community focused on a greener, healthier future for everyone. Plot members grow a variety of their favorite fruits, flowers, vegetables, and herbs in assigned plots and help maintain the garden space with regular year-round maintenance. Plot members can take their harvest home as they please or donate grown food to the [UNT Food Pantry Presented by Kroger](#).

This community space is a place to harbor knowledge, peace, friendships, fresh food, and new skills. We welcome any current UNT student, staff, or faculty member to join one of our raised garden plots regardless of prior gardening experience.

We do not tolerate discrimination of any kind.

The UNT Community Garden is committed to accommodating differently abled people. If you require a reasonable accommodation because of a disability to fully participate, please contact 940-565-4587 or [CommunityGarden@unt.edu](mailto:CommunityGarden@unt.edu) for assistance. Please make the request as soon as possible to allow time to arrange the reasonable accommodation.

The UNT Community Garden is managed by the [We Mean Green Fund Project Coordinator](#) with assistance from a student Community Garden Facilitator. Plots are maintained by plot members.

The UNT Community Garden is subject to all applicable university policies and regulations.

All programming and supplies are provided for free to the plot members of the UNT Community Garden through the UNT We Mean Green Fund. Plot membership with the UNT Community Garden is a privilege, as this space is not large enough to accommodate every interested individual on campus. **Failure to comply with the following rules and policies may result in loss of plot membership.**

Questions and comments may be sent to [CommunityGarden@unt.edu](mailto:CommunityGarden@unt.edu) or (940) 565-4587.

More information about the garden can be found on the We Mean Green Fund website for reference: [communitygarden.unt.edu](http://communitygarden.unt.edu)

The UNT Community Garden is located on campus between the President's EDGE building and Legends Hall on the corner of North Texas Boulevard and West Sycamore Street.

## Garden Plot Membership Overview

- When considering UNT Community Garden plot membership, individuals must assess their weekly availability and ability to routinely commit time and effort to help maintain an assigned plot throughout a semester. Expectations of plot members are outlined in this document.
- Current UNT students, faculty, and staff must [apply for plot membership online](#). Once their application has been submitted, staff will follow up to assign individuals to a specific plot in the UNT Community Garden if there is available space. Individuals will be added to a waiting list and contacted for plot placement on a first-come-first-served basis.
- After applying for membership online, all interested individuals must attend an in-person orientation with staff before receiving a plot assignment. Staff will reach out to individuals via email to schedule an orientation if plot space is available. After orientation, new members must take a quiz on the rules and policies of the garden.
- Oriented plot members must join the UNT Community Garden Microsoft Teams group, actively engage on the platform and check for important updates weekly.
- Plot memberships are reassessed at the end of each semester regardless of when individuals joined the UNT Community Garden. Members need to renew their membership by the provided deadline at the end of each semester if they wish to continue. Membership renewal is contingent upon available space and whether that individual has consistently fulfilled all plot membership expectations and required duties outlined in this document.
- Plot members may NOT transfer ownership of their plot to another individual or group. These actions must be done officially through UNT staff.
- If a plot member is interested in adding a new member to their plot, the new person must apply for plot membership online and go through the official process of becoming oriented as a member. The new person can indicate on their application if they'd like to be placed with someone specific.
- Plot members must immediately notify staff at [CommunityGarden@unt.edu](mailto:CommunityGarden@unt.edu) if they are no longer able to meet the plot member requirements outlined in this document or if they wish to end their plot membership.



## Plot Maintenance Expectations of All Plot Members

- Plot members are expected to maintain their plot only during open facility hours. The UNT Community Garden is open from sunrise to sunset, except when the university is closed due to inclement weather.
- Tampering in any way with plots other than your own (without written permission from a plot group or the garden staff) is not allowed.
- Plot members should not rely on their neighboring plots to take care of their own plot maintenance responsibilities.
- Members of the same plot **must communicate to create a schedule** for sharing regular plot maintenance duties. There is not a set number of times everyone is required to visit their plot per week, as this varies based on the season and the type of crops being grown. In general, plot groups should make it a priority to check their plot *at least 2-3 times per week*. Usually, 2-4 cumulative hours of maintenance each week is enough. Communication can be made on whatever platform your group chooses. Previous groups have successfully used: Microsoft Teams, group texts, Google Calendar, Doodle polls, GroupMe, or other methods.
- All plot members are accountable for ensuring their plot group's maintenance schedule continues to allocate enough time for all plot maintenance requirements to be met throughout the semester.



- Plots must be fully planted and actively gardened year-round, including winter and summer breaks.
- Plot members that are unable to maintain their plot over the winter break should plan to utilize low-maintenance, frost tolerant cover crops in their plot during fall planting.
- Each fall and spring, staff will designate a date by which all planting must be completed to ensure seeds can mature before the first frost or after the last frost depending on the season.
- If garden staff requests immediate action regarding maintenance or plot neglect issues, plot members are responsible for responding in a timely manner and communicating with their plot group to resolve the matter.

## Regular Plot Maintenance Duties Required of All Plot Members

- Plant frequently to ensure the plot is utilized year-round
- Water plants routinely depending on rainfall
- Keep the inside of the plot completely clear of any dead plants, weeds, or rotting produce
- Keep the pathways surrounding your plot completely clear of weeds, litter, or plant debris spilling out from the plot
- Apply mulch to pathway areas surrounding the plot to prevent mud and weeds
- Properly dispose of any litter left in the UNT Community Garden common areas
- Tumble/mix the compost bins after each use
- Regularly prune back plants that need it
- Inspect for and address pest issues
- Maintain soil health by adding compost or fertilizer regularly
- Prepare for frost and extreme Texas heat by appropriately covering or shading plants
- Apply mulch to the top layer of the plot
- Harvest all ripe produce that you wish to take home by Tuesdays of every week. On Wednesdays, we donate excess ripe food from all plots to share with the community.\*
- Research how to care for your plants \*\*
- Communicate plot details and plans to fellow plot members regularly
- Make timely requests for seeds or other needed supplies to garden staff
- Update the designated plot journal on the UNT Community Garden Microsoft Teams group each time plants are added or removed or garden activities like fertilizing and pest management occur



\*Harvesting produce in a timely manner means picking produce before it spoils, becomes overripe, or grows too large to be edible. Some plants will lose their flavor if left on the plant for too long. It is up to every plot member to learn when to harvest their crops at peak maturity. If plot members neglect to harvest their produce in a timely manner, garden staff reserve the right to harvest it and donate it before it spoils. If you are intentionally allowing plants to produce seed so you can harvest seeds, notify staff.

\*\*If plot members are unsure of how to care for their plants, they are expected to research or ask for help! The UNT Community Garden Microsoft Teams group is a great resource for questions about plot maintenance and an excellent platform to ask fellow gardeners for advice and help. The workdays and workshops that are offered by staff throughout the year are NOT frequent enough to be relied on as a sole source of gardening information. There is a wealth of gardening knowledge among fellow plot groups, in the [UNT library](#), and on the [UNT Community Garden Microsoft Teams group](#).

## Expectations of Plot Members Regarding Gardening Tools, Seeds, & Supplies

- Plot members of the UNT Community Garden must practice **sustainable, natural** gardening methods and pest/disease remedies. Plot members can request purchases of supplies, tools, seeds, plants, and soil nutrients by emailing [CommunityGarden@unt.edu](mailto:CommunityGarden@unt.edu). Purchase requests will be reviewed by garden staff and are not guaranteed for approval.
- Plot members do not need to spend their own money to buy materials, but if they would like to bring something of their own, they must email [CommunityGarden@unt.edu](mailto:CommunityGarden@unt.edu) **in advance** for approval.
- Plot members who bring approved personal gardening tools assume liability for all damages or injuries caused by malfunctioning, damaged, or misused equipment. UNT is not responsible for damages or injuries caused by improper use of equipment and/or resources in the garden.
- Plot members should not leave their personal belongings in the shed or garden.
- Plot members must close the water supply lids on the ground after use to avoid hazardous walkways
- Plot members must return hoses and all other tools to the shed after each use. Do not leave tools out as they can be a hazard to others, may be stolen or lost, or will become damaged if wet.
- Garden tools and supplies should not be taken away from the garden for any reason. When a tool needs repair or disposal, plot members are expected to notify garden staff for repair or disposal.
- Gardeners are required to use all gardening tools responsibly and for their intended use.
- Seed packets, even empty ones, should be returned to the shed or directly to a staff member. Staff will store seeds in a climate-controlled office and repurchase seeds that have run out.
- Plot members should not share the shed code with others. Only individuals who have been authorized to use the shed will be supplied with the code by garden staff.
- Keep the shed floor clean and put things back where you found them.
- Completely clean all tools before bringing them into the shed to avoid tracking in dirt. Utilize a scrub brush to clean tools outside of the shed.
- All plot members must secure and lock the shed doors upon leaving the garden. Ensure the left door is hinged shut at the top and bottom of the door before locking the right door. The lock's numbers should be spun to a number sequence that is different from the code.
- Report any issues with supplies or the garden facilities to garden staff immediately.
- A first aid kit can be found on the shed counter near the hand tools. Report any injuries to garden staff immediately.
- **It is up to all members of the garden to assess and address maintenance issues they come across in the garden and communicate with the garden staff if any issues with maintaining plots, pathways, compost bins, the tool shed, gazebo, and flower bed areas, etc. are noticed.**

## Items Prohibited from the Garden

The following prohibited items are not allowed under any circumstances in any part of the garden

- **Illegal plants** of any kind
  - (Examples: hemp/cannabis, hallucinogenic mushrooms, or poisonous plants, etc.)
- **Restricted imported plants** – as Texas has strict agricultural laws, importing live plants from other parts of Texas, the U.S., or the world may be subjected to local or state laws regarding importation. If you are bringing a live plant from outside Denton County, please speak with the Community Garden Facilitator before adding it to your plot.
- **Synthetic or chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides**
- **Invasive or chemically treated plants** that have not been approved by the garden staff
  - (This includes plants that may be invasive to our area or plants that may have been treated with synthetic and chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides.)
- **Animal manure**
- **Insects or other animals** to be released for reasons of pest control or other purposes
  - (Examples: ladybugs, praying mantis eggs, earthworms, and nematodes)
- **Permanent Structures** or modifications to the raised beds
  - (Tomato cages or trellises are allowed if they can easily be removed and securely installed. Always ask the garden staff if wanting to bring outside structures into the garden.)
- **Irrigation timers**

## Garden Workdays & Workshops

Garden workdays are a time for gardeners to maintain the shared areas of the garden together and learn from each other's plots. A tentative garden workday schedule will be posted on the UNT Community Garden Microsoft Teams group each semester.

Typical workday tasks may include maintaining plots, pathways, compost bins, the tool shed, gazebo, flower bed areas in and around the garden, etc. Always come prepared with sunscreen, water bottles, hats, and proper clothing for doing manual labor. Gloves and tools are provided.

Staff will offer educational workshops to enhance gardening knowledge for interested gardeners. The Mean Green Growers Cohort offers gardening lessons to take at your own pace. There are supplemental activities in the garden where you will have the opportunity to put the lesson topics to use and ask fellow gardeners any questions.



## Plot Neglect Warning System

- One of our goals as a gardening collective is to keep the community garden aesthetically beautiful and well-kept as it is a public campus space that must uphold campus facilities standards. Staff will work proactively with plot members to avoid plots from experiencing neglect but if plot members fail to maintain their plot appropriately, corrective action will be assigned by garden staff.
- All plot members are expected to communicate with their plot group and with garden staff to ensure their plot is maintained consistently. If any of the regular plot maintenance duties (listed on the previous pages) are not being upheld, a judgement of plot neglect may be made by staff.
- Any email correspondence between garden staff and the plot members will clearly state if this Plot Neglect Warning System is in play, and will reference these procedures:

### **Plot Neglect Warning Procedures:**

- 1) The garden staff will document the instance of plot neglect (the specified issue) in writing or with photos.
- 2) This documentation will be sent to all members of the plot in a “Garden in Need of Maintenance Warning” email and request follow up action to resolve the maintenance issue at hand. The plot members will be given one week to correct the specified issue. Plot members should reply to the email confirming their understanding of the request.
- 3) Plot members should reply to the garden staff email once the maintenance is completed to resolve the specified issue. This must occur no later than one week from the “Garden in Need of Maintenance Warning” email (see step 2).
- 4) If the plot members fail to correct the specified issue within one week, photos or written documentation of the specified issue will be taken again by staff and emailed to the plot group as the second warning of the specified issue. The plot group will have one week from the second warning to correct the specified issue.
- 5) If the plot group still has not corrected the specified issue after one week from the second warning and is showing no signs of actively amending the specified issue through correspondence with garden staff, they will be notified of automatic forfeiture of plot membership and all plot contents. Garden membership will be revoked from all plot members who failed to resolve the specified issue.



- A plot group may receive up to two “Garden in Need of Maintenance Warning” emails for separate instances of specified issues of plot neglect each semester so long as they have followed protocol to resolve each warning.
- In the second instance of receiving a “Garden in Need of Maintenance Warning” email within a semester, the plot group will be notified that they are on their final warning of plot neglect. The next documentation of plot neglect will result in automatic forfeiture of plot ownership and all plot contents. Garden membership will be revoked from all plot members who failed to resolve the specified issue.
- If individuals who are removed because of plot neglect want to apply for membership again, they must reapply online in the following semester and may be waitlisted depending on space availability.