

# ELKS PARK COMMUNITY GARDEN AGREEMENT

## 2025 Season

### General Guidelines and Garden Etiquette

The gate lock combination is \*\*\*\*. Make sure the gate is secured before leaving the garden and spin the numbers on the lock so the combination cannot be easily guessed by others after you leave.

DO NOT PARK BETWEEN THE GARDEN AND THE TOT LOT. Additionally, the parking lot is assigned parking for the condo building and private property. Your car may be towed if you park in either location. Please help us maintain good relationships with our neighbors!

Only gardeners who have signed this agreement and Ridgeville Park District's liability waiver may work the assigned garden plot. Two gardeners can be identified per plot.

You may ONLY plant or store items INSIDE the boundaries of the plot assigned to you. Items outside of your plot will be removed. This includes items along the east fence. Planting outside your plot is strictly prohibited and will be enforced by removal of plants.

No chemicals, herbicides, pesticides or artificial fertilizers are to be used in Elks Community Garden. Natural fertilizers such as compost, composted manure, manure or vermicompost tea and other natural organic (OMRI approved) fertilizer formulations are acceptable. If you need help identifying a fertilizer or pest management solution that meets these guidelines, please email Laura at [gardens@ridgeville.org](mailto:gardens@ridgeville.org)

Multiple compost bins are provided throughout the garden. These blue barrels in the east/west pathways are emptied once per week during the regular season (see below for dates of the regular season). Black barrels along the east fence may also be used again this season. Please DO NOT create your own compost piles as this attracts rodents.

Maintain your plot! Your plot must be planted by June 1 (or communicate the with Garden Manager of your plans). You are expected to maintain your plot by keeping it planted, weeded, watered, plants tied inside the plot so the pathways remain clear, etc. Please weed in the pathways and along fences around your plot. Neglect will lead to loss of gardening privileges.

Garden hoses must be turned off after use and returned to the west side of the garden. Please keep hoses untangled and neat. If you pull a hose to a different section, return it to the section where it connects to the main line. ALL gardeners are responsible for maintaining hoses and keeping them untangled. If you notice a leak or issue with hoses, please email the Garden Manager ASAP at [gardens@ridgeville.org](mailto:gardens@ridgeville.org).

If you're unable to maintain your plot for the season or part of the season (ie going on vacation), please contact us and we can help by either connecting you with other gardeners or Youth Grow Team. [gardens@ridgeville.org](mailto:gardens@ridgeville.org)

Items that collect water (including plastic bags) are prohibited because they become breeding grounds for insects and disease. Please be sure that water is not sitting in your plot at any time. The Garden Manager will request items that are collecting water to be removed.

## **Personal Respect and Safety**

Respect your fellow gardeners. Do not take plants, soil, produce or other materials out of other plots or from Youth Grow Team areas. Gardeners are to provide their own seeds, plants, tools, soil, compost, wood chips and other materials they would like for their plots. Soil, compost and wood chips outside the garden gate belong to Ridgeville Park District and are not for gardener use. Plants along the fence line belong to Ridgeville Park District and are not for gardeners to harvest.

No pets allowed inside the garden. We love them and understand why you want to bring them but they cannot be in the garden.

Do not let small children play in the garden for their own safety. Children are not permitted to play in garden plots and close oversight is recommended inside the renter's plot. We are not responsible for insect bites occurring on the garden property or surrounding area – we encourage bees and other pollinators to the garden so our plants can grow! Please keep in mind that organic does not mean organism free – as a matter of fact, organic gardening requires more organisms which can be harmful or cause serious illness to children putting things in their mouths. Please wash hands with soap and water (not solely hand sanitize) every time after visiting the garden.

Shoes are required inside the garden

Respect the peace of neighbors. No loud noise or music, no foul language or disrespectful conduct, no alcohol or drug use on park property and remember that all tobacco products are forbidden in the garden due to disease issues.

## **Tilling**

NEW gardeners have the option of requesting for their plots to be tilled at the beginning of the season. Tilling timing will be determined by weather/ground freeze and likely not available until April 1.

Gardeners are responsible for their own soil maintenance. Returning gardeners will NOT have the option for tilling at the beginning of the season. This is due to best practices in maintaining soil health and the limitations with tilling. Returning gardeners are required to have their plots cleared by June 1.

## **Regular Season Dates/Winter Growing/Water Dates**

We recognize that climate shift has resulted in the possibility for 4 season gardening in our region. With this comes some additional guidelines for winter growing.

Plot rentals run March 1-February 28/29 every year. This means you can work in your plot all year round but please see guidelines in this section.

Regular season dates are March 1-October 31. During regular season dates, the park staff will maintain certain aspects of the garden including compost removal, trash removal, pathway maintenance, etc.

Winter season dates are November 1-February 28/29. During the winter season, park staff will NOT be maintaining regular season items such as compost removal, trash removal, pathway maintenance, etc.

There will be no snow removal. Gardeners who choose to winter garden must expect to have freezing issues with the gate padlock that we will not be able to resolve and provide your own water. See guidelines on building structures below.

Water dates are May 15 – October 15. Ridgeville Park District will utilize this schedule OR COMMUNICATE REVISED DATES BASED ON WEATHER CONDITIONS to turn on water by May 15 and turn off water by October 15 each season. If you require water outside of those dates and safe weather conditions for turning on our water supply, please provide your own. If our system freezes and bursts, potentially large sections of the garden will have to be dug up to replace ruptured parts so we cannot risk plumbing freezes. Water turn on/off dates are at the discretion of park staff.

IF YOU KNOW YOU ARE GIVING UP YOUR PLOT for the following season, please have ALL items removed and the plot cleaned out by November 1. We will be preparing plots for new renters to begin March 1 and nobody wants to be out there in February trying to remove things from frozen ground.

If you do not plan to garden over the winter, please have your plot cleaned out and supplies safely stored by November 1. Overgrowth, vegetation and materials piled around provide perfect habitats for a variety of pests including insects, rats, mice and bunnies. While we appreciate this wildlife, it is highly problematic to have them inside the garden. Warmer winters allow for more of them to survive when they have good habitats which makes this even more important.

### **Structures and Trellis in the Garden**

Gardeners are permitted to build the following in their garden plots:

- Garden boxes/planters: must be ON THE GROUND with a maximum height of 3 feet.
- Trellis: Must be free standing with a maximum height of 8 feet
- Hanging posts: Must be free standing with a maximum height of 6 feet

Gardeners ARE NOT permitted to build the following in their garden plots:

- Structures that utilize horizontal supports
- Planters on legs or stacked on top of materials
- Green houses

These guidelines protect the physical safety of other gardeners and park staff. Ridgeville Park District reserves the right to request ANY structure to be removed.

### **Youth Grow Team**

Youth Grow Team is a Ridgeville Park District program that employs teens (through a partnership with the City of Evanston) to grow food that is donated in the community. Youth Grow Team utilizes Plot 15 as well as the fence line to grow produce and native pollinator plants.

Youth Grow Team also engages in some garden maintenance but they are not responsible for maintaining Elks Community Garden – that is a responsibility of ALL gardeners.

If you are unable to work your plot for any reason but you want to keep your rental agreement, Youth Grow Team can always utilize more space to grow more food.

If you have excess produce we are more than happy to help harvest and get that produce to people who need it. We no longer collect in the coolers on Fridays and Saturdays – we are much more flexible now and can accept or collect produce any time.

Youth Grow Team and the Garden Manager can be a resource for you! If you'd like to learn about something (ie organic fertilizer) or are having an issue with something (ie managing aphids or identifying squash beetles), we're happy to help! Every plot with pests affects all other plots so we want to help everyone have a successful growing season.

### **Guideline Violations**

The Garden Manager will contact you via email with any concerns, questions or requests for violations to be remediated. If the violations are not remedied by the date provided (or a mutually agreed upon date), gardeners will lose rental privileges. Communication is important – we want to support you while keeping the garden safe for all gardeners and staff. Please let us know when you encounter issues that may lead to a violation (ie an injury prevents you from working your plot) so we can problem solve where possible.

### **Questions and Concerns**

Questions or concerns about your plot should be directed to Laura Downey, Garden Manager, at [gardens@ridgeville.org](mailto:gardens@ridgeville.org) or leave a message for Laura with the office at 847-869-5640. Email is checked regularly during the season but responses to non-emergency emails may take up to 48 hours.

Failure to comply with the guidelines within the agreement will result in a loss of rental privileges and that this can happen at any time during the agreement period (March 1, 2025 – February 28, 2026).