

## City preparing community gardens to open

**May 11, 2020** — With new direction from the Province of Ontario the City is moving to open community gardens, focusing first and foremost on the safety of residents and garden users during the ongoing COVID-19 State of Emergency.

On April 25, following requests from the City of St. Catharines and other municipalities, the Province lifted restrictions prohibiting the operations of community gardens under current emergency orders introduced in response to COVID-19. Since then City staff have been working, in cooperation with garden user groups, to reopen gardens in time for their typical opening dates in May as part of a cautious shift toward recovery from impacts of COVID-19.

While gardens on City properties — such as Centennial Gardens and Torosian Park — will open as an important source of nutrition for their users, operations of these amenities will look different as the City continues to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic. The City has moved to have safety protocols in place to ensure users and the community at large are protected from COVID-19 transmission.

“We are certainly happy to be opening the community gardens, not only do they provide an important source of sustainably-sourced food in our community, but many user groups really look forward to getting in there and tending their individual plots,” said Development Horticultural Technician Ilyse Norton. “With that said we can’t take any chances with the health of not only gardeners, but the community at large; we have been working with user groups to have safety protocols in place to ensure risks of COVID-19 transmission are mitigated.”

Safety protocols and measures being suggested by the City, in cooperation with user groups, include:

- Limiting access to registered garden members and volunteers only
- Restriction of access for individuals with symptoms of COVID-19, or in contact with confirmed or suspected cases of the virus
- Allowing access for gardening activities only
- Scheduling access for members to limit numbers in the gardens at any individual time
- Maintaining of physical separation of two metres
- Requirements for hand washing / sanitization upon arrival and departure
- Requiring users to bring their own tools and prohibiting the use of communal garden tools
- Requiring cleaning of tools and common surfaces before and after use

- Posting of signage reminding gardeners of safety protocols, and best hygiene practices

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