



2023 Community Garden Guidelines

The Franciscan Earth Literacy Center (FELC) promotes active learning and healthy relationships with our natural environment. One of the most effective ways this is accomplished is through community garden plots, which FELC hosts each year through the growing season. Community garden plots provide individuals, families, and small groups the opportunity to have hands-on learning experiences, as well as healthy, organically-grown produce. Plots are available in three sizes for annual rental, and program supervisor Sr. Shirley Shafranek is happy to provide guidance to anyone who may be interested but needs assistance in getting their garden plan started.

The following guidelines are in place to ensure that the community garden project is in line with FELC's mission and gives participants all the information they need to make sure their gardens succeed.

Preparing your plot

FELC staff will till your garden area to prepare it for planting by approximately May 1st, unless delayed by weather. You will be notified by email or phone when your garden area is ready for you to plant and care for.

Garden areas will be identified with stakes and string and labeled with the gardener's name. We encourage having children help with gardens, as long as there is close adult supervision.

Choosing your plants

Any annual vegetables, fruits, and flowers are permitted. If you want to grow perennial herbs, pots are permitted but will need to be removed at the end of the season to allow gardens to be tilled for winter. Tall crops (corn, sunflowers, etc.) should be planted where they will not shade neighboring plots, and trellises kept in locations that will not shade other plots. If you have questions about a crop's height, please ask FELC staff.

Tools and equipment

You will want to bring gloves to work in your garden space. You may bring your own garden tools or borrow what you need from the garden shed on the north side of the barn. Please return any borrowed tools to the shed when you are finished. Please be sure to clean any tools that you have used. FELC is not financially responsible for any lost or damaged tools brought by community gardeners.

Parking

Parking is permitted in the large parking lot on the south side of the Franciscan Earth Literacy Center. The Community Garden area is situated to the northeast of the barn and is easily accessible from the parking lot by walking behind the barn.



Upkeep

Please keep paths between beds and around the garden clear. Please keep weeds controlled with frequent weeding. Weeds should not get taller than 4 inches or cover more than a third of your plot. Weeds that have been pulled can be spread between garden rows or in the path between garden spaces where they will decompose and add nutrients to the soil.

Please make arrangements to have someone tend your plot if you will be unable to tend it for over 7 days. Please notify FELC staff if you are unable to continue to garden your plot. Plots that are left unmaintained, and with weeds exceeding 4 inches tall, are subject to being tilled or reassigned. If such a situation arises, FELC staff will contact the gardener, first to provide a friendly reminder that their garden needs tending, then if necessary, to notify them that their plot will be tilled and reassigned if not cleaned up within 7 days.

Soil Amendments

Gardeners can add organic material to their plots if they desire, though it may not be necessary. Acceptable products include those of plant or animal origin (i.e. compost, leaf mold, livestock manure, fish emulsion, cover crops, kelp meal, liquid seaweed and commercial organic fertilizers), as well as natural mineral fertilizers, such as greensand, granite dust or ground limestone.

Prohibited Fertilizers

Gardeners may use only natural fertilizers and pest control measures that are deemed acceptable by major organic certification agencies, such as the Organic Materials Review Institute. Commercial inorganic fertilizers, such as Miracle-Gro, are prohibited.

Herbicides & Insecticides

Herbicides are artificial chemicals that are used to control weeds. Herbicides, either organic or synthetic, are not permitted. Mulching, hand weeding and hoeing are recommended to reduce weed growth.

Insecticides/pesticides are products used to control harmful insects. Synthetic insecticides are prohibited. There are many home remedies that are used to control insects in gardens. While we do applaud these efforts we want to be sure that all home remedies used are safe for the environment and safe for you. If you are unsure whether or not your method is permitted, please ask an FELC staff member.

Other Pests

Generally our worst four- legged pests are deer and ground hogs. Please do not attempt your own pest control practices on these animals. The staff tries to keep the deer and ground hog populations under control. However if you notice a persistent problem, please contact an FELC staff member.



Water Use

FELC has garden hoses available on reels near the community gardens for times of insufficient rainfall. In keeping with the values and mission of the center, we ask that gardeners use water sparingly, and to water only plants and not the spaces between rows. This will ensure that gardens are environmentally sustainable, and will substantially cut down on the amount of weeding you will have to do.

Please be considerate of other community gardeners by sharing hoses and winding them up when finished. Watering cans are also available to get water from the rain barrels at FELC.

Harvest

Check your crops frequently and harvest in a timely manner to avoid rotting produce. Please do not harvest from the plots of others without permission.

Ending Date

FELC staff will till community garden plots at the end of the gardening season, which is most often in October. Please clear your plot after your gardening has ended for the season.

Clearing your plot

Remove all tomato cages, fencing, stakes, string, plastic, and all other non-organic materials from your garden and take them home with you. Please do not place any material in the barn or anywhere around the garden without permission. Pull out all plants that have tough stalks or vines, such as sunflowers, corn, pumpkin, squash, etc. These can be spread around your site, to be tilled later by FELC staff.