

Guidelines for Master Gardeners working in public gardens during COVID-19 Mitigation

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Rensselaer County

The May 7, 2020 original guidelines were developed by a group of Master Gardeners and staff via a ZOOM meeting. Attendees: Nancy Scott, Bette DiNovo, Mike Reger, Beverly Reinhardt, Kathy Hartley, Betsy Kauffman, Marge Davey, Mary Ellen Ratcliffe, David Chinery. The Executive Director reviewed the document and approved it at that time.

This June 11, 2020 update to the original document developed guidance, which included reference to health screening and trace-ability mechanisms to MG outreach in the community and the waiver of Assumption of Risk for COVID-19. This is a living document and will be adjusted as is relevant given our statewide/regional CCE, county, state and federal oversight.

1. We will not be doing any garden maintenance until we get a “green light” from Extension administration – which was granted as we entered Phase 1 – May 20th, 2020.
2. We will make sure we have permission to be at each garden site from the site owners. Locations that own/house gardens should be asked if there is any protocol we need to follow and we should review and follow their requirements in addition to what we have in place in this document.
3. Master Gardeners will work in small groups and practice social distancing of a minimum of six feet and wear a face cover. A minimum of two Master Gardeners should be at each site for safety.
4. Master Gardeners will bring their own face mask, gloves, hand sanitizer, etc. Master Gardeners will bring and use their own tools.
5. We will resume regular gardening activities in 2021. This may include the purchase and application of mulch and other projects.
6. The public will not be invited into the gardens until restrictions ease. If we meet members of the public while we are working, we will practice social distancing and encourage them to do the same.
7. The gardens are for the most part in good condition currently. Captains are encouraged to check their gardens and see what needs to be done.
8. We will update our lists of who works in each garden. Garden Captains will need to track the work being done and by whom including day and time and be sure Master Gardener’s that work are aware and follow this document.
9. Each MG volunteer will decide if he/she wants to participate in gardening. No one should feel pressured to participate.
10. All volunteers and program participants must complete and return to the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Rensselaer County office the document entitled “Assumption of the Risk and Waiver of Liability Relating to Coronavirus/COVID-19.”
11. All Master Gardeners are to be able to answer “no” to the following questions before they are able to work in the community at a garden site on behalf of CCE as a Master Gardener:
 - a. Have you knowingly been in close or proximate contact in the past 14 days with anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 or who has or had symptoms of COVID-19?

b. Have you tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days?

c. Have you experienced any symptoms of COVID-19 in the past 14 days?

According to the CDC guidance on “Symptoms of Coronavirus,” people with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported, ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms of COVID-19 include, but are not limited to:

Cough

Shortness of breath

Difficulty breathing

Fever

Chills

Muscle pain

Sore throat

New loss of taste or smell

Slightly revised 2/11/2021