



OUR GRATITUDE GARDEN

Program Guide for Aspiring
Garden Leaders

OUR GRATITUDE GARDEN

HELPING OURSELVES HELP OTHERS 2026



Why Garden?

Nature-based interventions (including community gardens and spending breaks outdoors) are impactful methods to decrease employee stress, burnout, and increase overall well-being (Cordoza et al., 2018).

When nurses take breaks in hospital gardens they report less stress, burnout, anxiety, depression, and report increased cognitive abilities. To maximize the potential benefits of nature-based interventions, employees should be taking breaks outdoors several days per week during or directly after their shifts (Gola et al., 2021).

Our Gratitude Garden is an accommodating space for employees to experience the therapeutic benefits of outdoor gardens. By the beginning of September the gardening space will offer:

- Assorted seating for relaxation and lunch breaks.
- Fruits and vegetables readily available for visitors to enjoy (when in season).
- Sensory elements including lighting, fragrant herbs, and wind chimes.
- Opportunities for staff to engage in group gardening activities.
- Website with wellness tips including walking routes around SOMC.

While the primary focus is on nursing staff, all employees and visitors are encouraged to utilize and enjoy the gardening space. Leadership is encouraged to promote not only the gardening space to employees, but regular participation in healthy outdoor activities in general. In November, garden participants and select nursing units will be surveyed on their use of the gardening space, outdoor activities, and perceived stress.



Contact Information

Garden Manager:	Seth Lemons	LemonsS@somc.org
Manager of Grounds and Gardens:	Tyler Riffe	RiffeRT@somc.org
Director of Operations:	Justin Clark	ClarkJM@somc.org
Manager of the ICU:	Kim Lester	LesterK@somc.org
Director of Critical Care:	Amy Fraulini	FrauliniA@somc.org
Marketing Communications Specialist	Kylee Duduit	DuduitKL@somc.org

Mission and Vision

Mission

To help employees of SOMC utilize outdoor activities to live healthier lives, to not only improve their personal wellbeing, but to continually enhance the wellbeing of those we serve.

Vision

To offer employees of SOMC a space to enjoy the outdoors, designed to enhance personal wellbeing, and improve the care we provide our community by enhancing the care we provide to ourselves.





TIMELINE FOR GARDEN MANAGER

January

- Schedule season planning meeting with Grounds and Gardens Manager

J

February

- Update Webpage and Facebook Information

F

March

- Start Spring Seeds
- Design Spring Flier
- Recruit Volunteers through Volunteer Services.

M

A

April

- Spring Planting Party
- Place Yard Signs in Garden Area
- Distribute Watering Requests to Volunteers

M

May

- Continue planting
- Update Webpage and Facebook
- Continue Watering Requests from Staff
- Resubmit Volunteer Request through Volunteer Services
- Plan Summer Gathering

M

J

June

- Hold Summer Gathering
- Design Summer Flier
- Resubmit Staff Watering Requests

July

- Update Webpage and Facebook
- Monitor Watering Schedule

J

A

August

- Start Fall Seeds
- Design Fall Flier
- Fall Planting Party

September

- Update Webpage and Facebook
- Plan Fall Gathering

S

O

October

- Host End of Season Gathering
- Schedule Fall Meeting with Grounds and Garden's Manager

November

- Put Garden to Bed
- Put Yard Signs, Chairs, Table, Garden Decorations inside Greenhouses

N

D

December

- Rest
- Pick out Seeds and Plants for Next Growing Season



Q & A

Why do I want to be a part of Our Gratitude Garden?

Being a leader in Our Gratitude Garden is an excellent way to help make a positive impact on our staff, our patients, and our organization as a whole. Workplace stress and burnout is on the rise nationally and have been shown to have negative impacts on employee health, patient care, and a hospital's bottom line (Lee et al., 2023; AbsenceSoft 2025; Babapour et al., 2022). By being a part of Our Gratitude Garden you can work to slowly reverse this national trend and work to improve the lives of coworkers, employees, patients, and visitors.

How might the garden benefit SOMC?

The garden is based on the philosophy that healthy nurses provide higher quality care. Nature-based interventions including gardening have been shown to reduce symptoms associated with stress and burnout (Cordoba et al., 2018; Sahlin et al. 2014). Higher levels of stress and burnout in nurses have been shown to increase rates of nosocomial infections and medication errors, while reducing patient satisfaction and quality of care (Li et al., 2024). The garden offers a low-cost, low-risk modality to help employees with stress and burnout, hopefully leading to happier employees and improved patient care.





What have we learned so far from running the garden?

We have learned many important lessons through managing the gardening space. In our 2025 end-of-season survey 52% of participants surveyed felt that the gardening program had an “extremely positive” impact on the ICU and SOMC in general, with 33% of staff agreeing that the program was “somewhat positive.” Staff also generally enjoy working in the garden and find the experience fun and relaxing. From the same survey, 83% of respondents who visited the gardening space found the experience to be useful for reducing stress and burnout, and 78% of respondents who used the online resources found them to be beneficial.

The program’s primary barrier has been in attracting participants into the gardening space. While participants enjoy themselves once they are present, they often cite “too little time”, “too tired after a shift”, and “the garden is too far away” as primary reasons for not participating in the garden space.

Who have been the garden’s primary participants?

Garden participants have historically been nursing staff from the Intensive Care Unit. As the garden is located on the hospital grounds the space is open to all employees and visitors who would like to enjoy the therapeutic space. Additional participants can be recruited through the use of signs, advertisements in “The Weekly Beat”, and by word-of-mouth. One of the best parts of a public garden is that unexpected visitors are bound to pop up!





Does participation have to be limited to ICU nurses?

Absolutely not! While the garden was initially focused on ICU nursing staff, the garden is open to anyone who would like to join. All employees and visitors of SOMC can potentially benefit from the garden's therapeutic elements.

How can I become the manager of the garden?

If you are interested in becoming the manager of Our Gratitude Garden at SOMC please contact Seth Lemons at 740-352-4398 or sethlemons@yahoo.com. You can also contact the Grounds and Gardens Manager Tyler Riffe at RiffeRT@somc.org to visit the gardening space.

Who do I talk to for help in managing the gardening space?

Our Gratitude Garden is a complex project that relies on the support of several hospital departments. The garden as a physical space is located on the hospital grounds and is thus under the purview of the Director of Operations. The Manager of Grounds and Gardens (who reports directly to the Director of Operations) should be a primary contact point for issues related to the physical space and supplies. Contact information is listed above.





Where are the gardening supplies located?

Gardening supplies are located within the greenhouses located at the gardening space. For additional resources (plants, seeds, mulch, etc.) speak to the Manager of the Grounds and Gardens. Additional tools can be borrowed with permission from the Grounds and Gardens office next to the gardening space under the Blue Parking Garage.

How do I gain access to the garden's Facebook account?

Currently the owner of Our Gratitude's Facebook account is Seth Lemons. For future project managers, please message Seth Lemons on Facebook, phone, or email to request ownership of the account.

Additional Resources To Help You Get Growing!

Seed Starting Calendar

- <https://www.almanac.com/gardening/planting-calendar>

Starting Seeds Indoors

- <https://extension.umn.edu/planting-and-growing-guides/starting-seeds-indoors#buying-seed-1178960>

Sowing Seeds Outdoors

- <https://www.almanac.com/sowing-seeds-vegetable-garden>

Growing Vegetables in the Midwest

- <https://www.youtube.com/migardener>

Managing deer

- <https://byf.unl.edu/managing-deer-landscape/>



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