

RCCG operates in Rock Creek National Park pursuant to a permit provided by the National Park Service. These rules are based in part on NPS requirements.

RCCG is a Community Garden. As members, we each have rights and responsibilities. We rely on each other to be good stewards of both the garden generally and the plots we are assigned. Part of that responsibility involves volunteering.

RULES CONCERNING GARDEN CULTIVATION, MAINTENANCE, INSPECTION OF PLOTS AND EXPULSION FROM MEMBERSHIP

(Approved by Garden Membership at Annual Garden Meeting 11 March 2023)

Do:

1. Use organic gardening methods.
2. Grow vegetables or other edible produce.
3. Maintain an active garden during the official season (May 1-November 1).

By May 1, your plot must be thoroughly weeded and the soil prepared for sowing and planting. There should be clear evidence of sowing and/or planting by the second inspection (approximately May 15th). Any part of the plot on which produce is not being grown at a particular time during the growing season must nonetheless be maintained according to the rules set forth herein.

4. Weed regularly; keep your plot and any adjoining exterior paths free of weeds, pests, standing water, trash, and diseased plants.

Pay particular attention to promptly controlling and removing invasive weeds.

Promptly remove seriously infected plants. Ripe produce should be picked before it attracts pests.

To eliminate standing water, pay attention to items such as pots, any plastics used for weed control, etc., to reduce as much as possible mosquito proliferation.

Composting of vegetable waste on site in bins is permitted provided it is routinely checked and watered to discourage pests (wasps, rodents, snakes).

If you are going to be away for an extended period, please communicate that to the Garden Manager. The garden may be able to provide some back-up help, but the responsibility for your plot remains with you.

With the exception of winter crop cultivation, plots should be cleared, weeded and tidy by the end of the first week in November.

Add wood chips to adjoining paths as necessary, but not to a point that the path gets too soft to walk on and for wheelbarrows; carefully remove decomposed dirt in the path if it becomes too high relative to the plot, being mindful of the potential for damage to the water system pipes.

5. Maintain your garden plot's fencing.

Patch holes. You can request support for replacing quadrant and exterior fencing from the fence committee volunteers. It is your responsibility to secure this fencing and the optional rabbit/rodent fencing and internal quadrant fencing. As of fall 2022*, the NPS has approved limited top cross-beams to allow support of the fencing from sagging. The crossbeams must be discrete, no larger than a 2x2 (i.e. no 2x4s). Crossbeams are the gardener's responsibility. *(Email to RCCG gmail account titled Horse Stable Rd., dated 15 Nov 22)

6. Take care with community-provided equipment.

After use, clean and return all equipment to the appropriate storage area. Lock the sheds.

7. Be safe.

Heed the garden safety plan and support community members who may need assistance. The NPS Park Police number is posted on the tool shed bulletin board. Report any injuries, accidents, or damage of any kind at or around the garden to the Executive Committee for reporting to the NPS Representative. These include injuries to people, flora, or fauna. Gardeners must ensure that there is nothing in their plot that could be considered a danger to other gardeners or the general public.

Park only in public parking areas.

8. Be courteous to others in the garden.

9. Pay your dues.

Don't:

1. Don't use chemical herbicides, pesticides or rodenticides. Monoculture is discouraged.
2. Don't allow your crops or weeds to grow over into a neighbor's plot or into common paths. Neighbors may remove or keep anything on their side of the boundary.
3. Don't use quadrant fencing as a trellis for plants.
4. Don't store anything in your plot that is not needed for regular use, and these items must be unobtrusive. Any furniture should be removed at the end of the growing season.
5. Don't build or use any fence, trellis or other structure in a way that significantly shades any neighboring plot. Taller plants should be positioned on the south side of your plot.
6. Don't grow any trees (whether ornamental or edible fruit bearing), woody ornamental shrubs (such as roses, butterfly bushes, etc.), or wineberry plants.
7. Don't grow any agricultural shrubs (such as blueberries and currants) or berry canes taller than 4 feet high or that project into neighboring plots or paths. Don't grow more than three such shrubs in any single plot.
8. Don't use the garden to cultivate produce for sale.

9. Don't use more than 25% of your plot to cultivate non-edible plants such as flowers or for berry canes.
10. Don't modify or change the garden water piping system without the approval of the Executive Committee.
11. Don't construct permanent structures, including cement footers for fence posts. You may use a limited number of steppingstones, but are not permitted to have stone or brick walkways or borders, or use gravel for any reason.
12. Don't enter or remove produce from any other plot without the express permission of the other plot holder. Don't enter or remove produce from any other plot without the express permission of the other plot holder. The Garden Manager [or designee] may enter plots to conduct garden business. Generally, such entry will be with the gardener's knowledge, except for emergency issues when notification of the gardener is not practical in advance.
13. Don't dump garbage or garden debris in any area of the garden or park.
14. Don't light fires or any material in the garden areas.
15. Do not park vehicles on grass, trails, or closed roadways.

The Garden Manager and/or Executive Committee may also communicate additional rules and guidance based on the need for the Association to comply with National Park Service rules and guidelines. Such rules will be clearly promulgated via electronic means and posting on garden notice boards.

Additional Provisions

Inspections

1. Inspections are carried out by volunteer teams of fellow gardeners. The role of inspections is to ensure the garden rules are observed and bring any emerging issues to the attention of the gardener before they become problematic.
2. At the beginning of each gardening year, the Garden Manager/Inspection Committee will establish a timetable for inspections. The schedule will be available on the website and posted on the garden bulletin board.
3. The inspection teams may issue Notices to a gardener for emerging issues and minor rule infractions, so gardeners may proactively address potential problems. If a gardener fails to heed one or more Notices or otherwise commits a clear and substantial breach of the rules, the gardener may receive a Citation.
4. In the case of a clear and substantial breach of the rules, the inspection team may issue a written citation to the responsible gardener. Citations are issued most commonly because invasive weeds or trees are present, because plots are insufficiently used or excessively weedy, or because of the condition of the paths or fences.
5. Gardeners who receive citations may be expelled from the Association and lose their right to garden in RCCG. If a gardener has a good record of compliance with these Rules, the gardener will be expelled only after receiving three Citations in a given garden season. If a gardener does not have a good record (as evidenced by a history of previous Citations and/or a pattern of repeated Notices), expulsion may take place after the issuance of fewer citations. In extreme cases and for good cause, gardeners may be summarily expelled. Such cases include, but are not limited to instances of theft, abusive or threatening behavior, dumping of garden waste or other substances anywhere in the park.

6. Recommendations to expel may be made by the Inspections Committee or Garden Manager at any time during the gardening season, at the time of an offense, or at the end of the gardening season. The Executive Committee will decide on expulsion. Notices to expel will be communicated in writing from the Garden Manager to the Primary Member. The Primary Member may, within 10 days of the notice date, appeal to the Association President to reverse the decision. The President will consult with the members of the Executive Committee before making a final determination. Factors to be considered in an appeal will be extenuating circumstances, previous history, including the affected gardener's contributions to the garden community. The Garden Manager may also issue probationary notices at the end of the gardening season notifying a gardener of a pattern of violation of garden rules which could result in expulsion with fewer than three citations in the coming garden year. The Inspection Committee and inspectors will be informed of those gardeners on probationary status.

Plot Succession

1. Plots are assigned to individuals on the wait list, generally on a first-come, first-served basis, in a process managed by the Garden Secretary. The person receiving the assignment is designated as the Primary Member. The Primary Member may designate one other person to be the Secondary Member.
2. After three years as a Secondary Member, a Primary Member with a single plot may designate the Secondary Member as the Primary Member. In the case of a double plot, the same opportunity applies to the substitution of a Secondary Member for a Primary Member after the Secondary Member has been recorded as such for five years and the Secondary Gardener meets all other criteria for eligibility for a double plot. [Amended Mar 2024 to add the following language:] Primary and Secondary Members are jointly responsible for plot status and record PRIOR to and AFTER the plot is transferred to a qualified Secondary Member. Transfer of the plot does not "reset" plot record, status, and history.
3. Former Members who leave the garden in good standing will have priority over new (waitlist) applicants for up to three years in the event they wish to rejoin the garden. They will not, however, be returned to their previous plot, but will be offered what is available. This right does not apply if the Member left the garden by turning over their plot to a Secondary Gardener.

Miscellaneous

1. When a double plot opens up, those gardeners on the double plot wait list may reapply, in which case they must update their participation information to permit the Committee to determine their current position on the list. Thus, if someone on the wait list has greater recent and/or long-term participation in the community, they may jump over someone on the wait list who has minimal to no participation. Reference: Double Plot Policy 2019.
2. A gardener's household may not hold more than one plot throughout the ten-garden system of community gardens administered by Rock Creek Park.