

URBAN ECOLOGY CENTER

COMMUNITY GARDENS



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A MESSAGE FROM OUR TEAM!

Over the years, our community gardens in Three Bridges Park have looked slightly different, and more recently have shifted departments internally. In the previous years and presently, the community gardens fall under the Neighborhood Engagement (NE) department.

The Neighborhood Engagement department was created in the middle of 2020. And since then, NE has put an emphasis on making the community gardens a staple to Urban Ecology Center and the community that we are in. In this manual, you will find how NE is working towards making the community garden experience to be accessible, enjoyable, rewarding, and filled with connectedness.

While we are still implementing new initiatives that will make the community garden experience sustainable, the NE team appreciates patience, feedback, ideas, and opinions.

As of now, please use this manual to answer any questions, learn more about the way we are doing things, how we want to grow a relationship with our community gardeners, and why we are deciding to do things differently.

Happy growing,

The Neighborhood Engagement department - Menomonee Valley Branch

UEC'S COMMITMENTS FOR THE YEAR

With a new growing season coming up and based on our learnings from the last couple of years, our team is focusing on three main commitments to continue building our community gardening program and foster deeper relationships with you all. Here are our commitments for this year.

1) We want to make theft preventable: We listened to your feedback and concerns! It was unfortunate to hear that the experience was tarnished due to the picking of plots but here is what the Neighborhood Engagement team is committed to doing:

- Work on our community gardens and allow visitors to pick of our plots. UEC is committing to 4 plots for vegetables and flowers at the beginning of the trail and it will be emphasized that they are open to be picked.
- Think about a Little Free Library! The NE department is envisioning a Little Free Pantry. Our hope is that the pantry will help decrease the picking of fruits and vegetables, as well as, provide anyone in need with a snack or items to create a filling meal. The pantry will only accept nonperishable food items.

2) We want to feel more connected to you and you to us: We want to establish a relationship with UEC community gardeners! Our hope is that they feel comfortable giving us all sorts of feedback, opinions, ideas, concerns, etc. Here is what we have in mind:

- End of garden season celebration, also known as, Fall Harvest Celebration. Fall Harvest Celebration is an annual event filled with pumpkin carvings, putting garden beds to sleep, and showcasing the items that gardeners have planted, etc. The event is hosted and planned by the NE department, alongside collaborative organizations.
- Quarterly meetings - the NE department wants to know who our gardeners are and we want our gardeners to know who we are. We want to create a space where our community gardeners know they can express any thoughts, and give the NE department any feedback and/or recommendations.

3) Improve the quality and atmosphere of the community gardens: Truthfully, the community gardens have not been as active during the last couple of years. Our hope is to change that by doing the following:

- Keeping up with upkeep. We do not want weeds to spread or garden beds to be taken over by weeds. The NE department is committing to a monthly community garden clean-up. With our collaboration with the Volunteer Programs department, we hope to also make this a volunteer opportunity for folks. We will be working to clean garden beds that are not being used and putting over a thick cloth/cardboard to prevent the growth of weeds.
- Making sure garden beds are numbered clearly.
- We hope and plan to create a vibrant mini mural on the community garden shed.
- Making the community garden shed more equipped for all gardening needs.
- Work with other departments to clean up the area surrounding our community gardens; whether it's picking up litter around the area, filling the water jugs on a regular basis, washing off any vandalism, etc.

RULES AND REGULATIONS

To make your community garden experience enjoyable, these are the rules and regulations to follow:

01 – Pricing:

On the next page, prices will be listed. A reduced fee is available to persons with limited income. Please contact someone in the Menomonee Valley Neighborhood Engagement department if you are interested in paying a reduced fee.

02 – Not allowed:

No pesticides or chemical fertilizers are to be used in the gardens.

03 – Responsibility:

The UEC is not responsible for damage from wildlife or vandalism.

04 – Left items:

No objects are to be left outside the garden bed in the walkway. Items left out in this way, will be removed and donated to a thrift store on a regular basis.

05 – Planting:

Gardeners agree to consider their neighboring gardeners when planting (i.e. plant taller plants on the south side of the garden so as to not shade your neighbors garden & timely weed removal before seeds set).

06 – Upkeeping:

In the fall, gardeners should cut back any dead growth and apply mulch in the garden with any organic material (leaves, straw, green manure, etc).

PRICING AND HOW TO PAY

Our prices look different compared to previous years, here's how we are determining prices at this time:

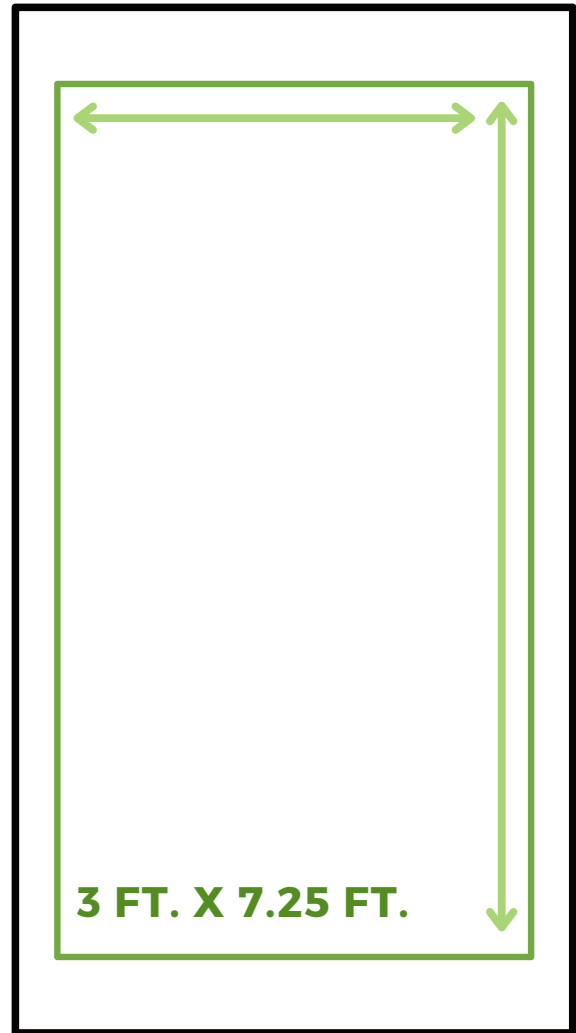
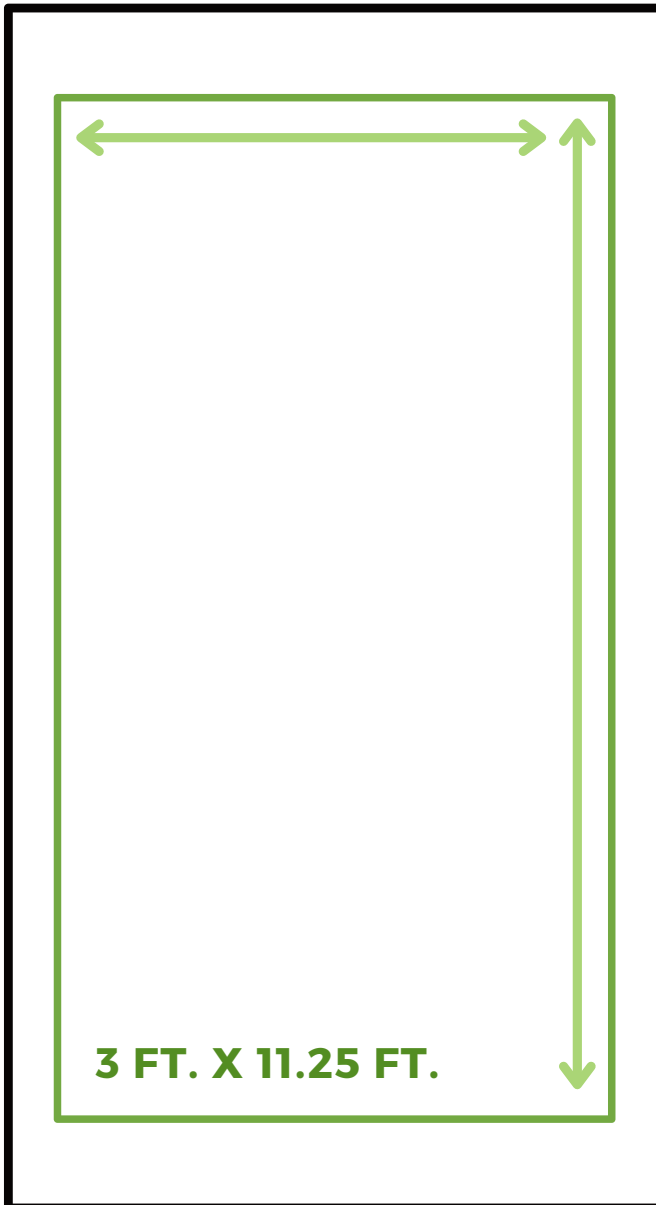
TYPE:	PRICE:	
Student	\$10.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We believe that any student, regardless of level of education should have affordable access to a community garden plot.
Members	\$16.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UEC Members automatically get their community garden plot at a discounted rate.
Non-Members	\$20.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You do not have to be a member to rent a community garden plot from us.
Organizations/ Companies	\$25.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We want to allow organizations/companies the opportunity to have various folks working on their plot.

As previously mentioned, a reduced fee is available to persons with limited income. Please contact someone in the Menomonee Valley Neighborhood Engagement department if you are interested in paying a reduced fee.

To pay, please contact Neighborhood Engagement Specialist, Selena Cruz at scruz@urbanecologycenter.org.

COMMUNITY GARDEN PLOTS LOGISTICS

We have 42 raised bed plots that make our Community Gardens along with a Community Gardens Shed, 3 large rain-water cubes under sheds, and 2 composting systems for organic matter (no weeds please, those could go in the trash).The plots have also been remastered!



LOCATION

Please refer to this map to locate the community garden plots. If you still need assistance, a Neighborhood Engagement staff member is happy to help out!

Urban Ecology Center Menomonee Valley Trails / Senderos de Menomonee Valley



THINGS TO KNOW

01 – Location

Garden plots are located along the south portion of the Hank Aaron State Trail, north of the Urban Ecology Center (UEC) in the Three Bridges Park (see map in previous page).

02 – Tools

Various gardening tools and watering cans are available to gardeners in the locked garden shed by the community gardens. These tools are labeled for community garden use and must be returned to the shed. There is no reason to check in with anybody to use these tools, simply walk in and grab what you need. You are also able to bring in your own tools to use, we do recommend taking them back with you and not store them in the shed unless you are ok with other gardeners potentially using them as well. If so, they should be labeled with your contact info.

Some of the tools in the shed are: gloves, pruning shears, garden forks, hand trowel, watering can, etc.

03 – Water

Water will be available on site from the rain-water cubes located at the garden area. If there is not enough water due to low rain, the water cubes will be filled as needed by our Neighborhood Engagement department. If you notice that it's running low, please let a Neighborhood Engagement staff member know.

Watering cans are available for you to help carry your water from the container to your garden. If you need to borrow a wagon, please let a Neighborhood Engagement staff member know and we are more than happy to get you a wagon. Wagons are available at the building.

Please note, the water cubes are filled with rainwater directly from the shade-structures they are under. Each cube has a spigot for filling your watering can.

04 – Communication

We will be sending out a monthly email with information, updates, event invites, and more!

If you need to contact us for any reason, please email Neighborhood Engagement Specialist, Selena Cruz, at scruc@urbanecologycenter.org.

05 – Planting and Compost

You are welcome to grow annual plants and herbs of your choice. Food crops and native plants are great choices! Please refrain from using chemical pesticides and fertilizers and avoid species that tend to become invasive. If you would like to plant something else or you are not sure if it's an invasive species, please ask us first, we are here to help.

Composting is available from our composting system. You are welcome to bring in your own organic material for your garden if you would like.