

2023 GARDEN PLOT FAQs

I'm not a garden plot gardener. May I pick/collect produce, flowers or seeds during the growing season or after the garden plots close for the season?

- No, during the growing season only garden plot gardeners, who have rented and paid for a plot, may pick/collect their own produce, flowers and seeds. Violators will be ticketed.
- Also, once the garden plots close for the season, access is not permitted and trespassers will be ticketed.
- (Leftover produce is collected at the end of each growing season and donated to *Loaves & Fishes*, a local food pantry.)

How much does it cost to rent a garden plot?

- Please visit the Park District's [Garden Plot webpage](#) for fees.

How many garden plots are available?

- 412 Full size plots, approx. 29' x 18'
- 111 Half size plots, approx. 14.5' x 18'
- 11 Raised plots, approx. 4' x 20' (Use of a raised garden plot requires a doctor's note.)

When can I register for a garden plot?

- Priority Registration, which is for the previous year's gardeners, in good standing, begins in late February. Priority Gardeners are notified about early registration by email.
- Open Registration for the general public (residents and non-residents) begins in mid-March.
 - See the [Spring Program Brochure](#) or the [Garden Plot webpage](#) for the registration dates.
- All registration dates are posted on the Garden Plot webpage (see link above).

How do I get Priority Registration each year?

- Priority Registration is available for resident and non-resident gardeners in good standing from the previous gardening season. Gardeners that properly maintain their plots and clean up at the end of the season are considered in good standing and receive Priority Registration.

What if I miss Priority Registration?

- If you miss Priority Registration you will have to wait until Open Registration begins in March to rent a plot. We do not "hold" plots for Priority Registration gardeners.

Where do I register and pay for a garden plot?

- Online at <https://apm.activecommunities.com/napervilleparks>
 - Use search word "Garden Plots"
 - Select Full Plots or Half Plots (for Raised Plots please call us – see number below)
 - The plots will be listed in numerical order
 - (Click on the link to the map to view plot locations)
 - If you see an "Add to Cart" button the plot is available for rental
 - Click on the "Add to Cart" button and proceed to your Cart to pay
- By phone, 630-848-5000
- In person at the locations listed below

Can I register in person?

- Yes, at two locations:

- Alfred Rubin Riverwalk Community Center, 305 Jackson Ave., Naperville, 2nd floor
- Fort Hill Activity Center, 20 Fort Hill Drive, Naperville

Can I register for two plots?

- Yes, but you must wait until the first day of Non-resident registration, in mid-March, to rent a second plot.
 - See the [Spring Program Brochure](#) or the [Garden Plot webpage](#) for the registration dates.

Is there a limit on the number of plots I can rent?

- Yes, the limit is two (2).

Do you offer a senior discount?

- Yes, for anyone that is 60 years or older.

Do you have an organic section?

- Yes, we do. The far west end of the Community Garden Plots is designated for organic gardening.
- Approximately 43 plots are available in the organic section.

Do you charge more for organic plots?

- No, we do not. Please visit the Park District's [Garden Plot webpage](#) for fees.

Where can I see a map of the garden plot locations?

- You may view the [Garden Plot map](#) online.

Are there any forms I need to sign?

- Yes, one form is required but is part of the registration process - [Garden Plot Agreement form](#).

Is there a place where all the garden plot rules are listed?

- Yes, within the [Garden Plot Guidelines](#) and the Garden Plot Agreement form (see link above).

How long is the gardening season?

- The season depends on when the garden plots are able to open in the spring. The opening date typically occurs at the beginning of May, but soil and weather conditions dictate when the park district can prepare the plots for the season.
- The plots close towards the end of October.

When can I garden?

- Except for dates when the garden plots are closed or have limited access, you may garden in your plot, seven days a week, between sunrise and one hour after sunset.

How do I find out when the garden plots are open for the season?

- All updated information regarding the Garden Plot Opening and Closing Day, as well as closures (fireworks) and limited access days, will be communicated through:
 - The Naperville Park District's Weather Cancellations & Facility Closure [Rainout Line](#).
 - The Naperville Park District's [Garden Plots Facebook page](#)
 - The Naperville Park District's Garden Plot webpage, www.napervilleparks.org/gardenplots

Why are the Garden Plots sometimes closed, or open but with limited access?

- Certain events that take place downtown, such as races/runs, may require closing of the garden plots.
- Other events, such as a parade, limit entry into the garden plots due to the parade routes.

Can I still garden on limited access days?

- Yes, but you will need to visit the garden plots before or after the closed time period:
 - Visit the Naperville Park District's *Weather Cancellations & Facility Closures* **Rainout Line**
 - Call 630-883-4242 or visit <https://www.napervilleparks.org/cancellations>
 - *Sign up for Email and Text alerts!*
- Check the City of Naperville's race and parade route maps beforehand as well.

How do I know which plot is mine?

- Each plot is identified by a painted wooden stake in the center of the plot. These stakes have the plot number/letter on them. A flag is placed at the corner of each plot. These flags are shared by adjoining plots.
 - Full-sized plots are identified by one number plus one letter.
 - Half-plots are identified by one number plus two letters.
 - Raised plots are identified by one number plus one or two letters.

Do you have restrooms at the Garden Plots?

- Yes, there are 4 ADA accessible port-o-lets onsite. See the [Garden Plot map](#) for locations of three. The last location tbd. (Look for the "P" within a square.)

Where do I park?

- You may park in the parking lot near West Street.
- Or if you want to be closer to your plot you may park along the interior roads, but only on the designated side (look for the signs)
- Parking on next to plots, and/or in the grassy areas, is not permitted.

Is there something I should display that shows I'm a registered gardener?

- Yes, once you register you will be provided with a Parking Permit.
- The parking permit must be displayed on your car's dash or hang it from the rear view mirror every time you visit your garden.

Can I use my Garden Plot parking permit during special events?

- No, your Garden plot parking permit is only for tending to your garden.

Are the plots tilled?

- Yes, a local farmer, and the park district, tills the soil each fall and spring. However, you may want to till your plot again before you plant.

Can I use a rototiller in my garden plot?

- Yes, you may use a rototiller or hire someone to till for you.

Do you offer no till plots?

- Currently we do not, but we are assessing the possibility for 2024. There is no additional land available to designate as a no-till area so current plots will have to be converted to no till, which will affect current gardeners.

Does the Park District add any amendments to the soil?

- No, however each fall pumpkins are added to the plots. As they decompose they release their nutrients and water back into the soil, providing some soil replenishment throughout the regular plot areas.

Can I add soil amendments to my plot(s)?

- Yes, soil amendments are found onsite. Gardeners who rent a plot may use the manure, leaf mulch and pine mulch available onsite. See the [Garden Plot map](#) for locations of these amendments. Please note: **The onsite woodchips *are not* for gardeners use.**
- You may also purchase amendments for your plots.

I'm a first time gardener. Is there anyone that can answer gardening questions for me?

- Yes! Each year the park district offers garden plot tours plus basic gardening and organic gardening workshops. Check the latest [Spring Program Guide](#), Nature/Adult section, for more details.
- You can also ask a Master Gardener. During the gardening season Master Gardeners are available to answer questions, every Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday from 8 am – 10 am, in their plots, 1E, 2E, 1F, and 2F. You can also contact the [Master Gardeners Help Line](#), a service provided by the University of Illinois Extension Office.

May I place items in the aisles?

- No, nothing should be placed in the six foot aisles, which are mowed by Park District staff. However you may spread a thin layer of grass clippings in the aisles if they are muddy.

How do I water my garden?

- There are water spigots located throughout the plots. You will need to bring your own watering cans or buckets to transport water to your plot.

Can I use a hose?

- No, however a limited number of gardeners may be granted a hose permit if they qualify for one. Contact the [garden plot manager](#) for details.

What if I go on vacation or out of town?

- You are required to keep your garden plot weeded even if you are out of town. Please make arrangements with a family member or friend to weed and water your plot.

What happens if my garden plot is weedy?

- If your garden plot is weedy you will be notified by Park District staff through an email or phone call. You will have a certain amount of time to weed your plot.
 - No more than 1/3 of your plot may be covered with weeds 12" or taller.
 - Gardeners will be contacted by the Park District if their plot is weedy.
 - Once contacted for the *1st time*, gardeners have *2 weeks/weekends to remove weeds* from their plot. If your plot is still weedy after two weeks, your garden plot will be mowed.
 - Gardeners placed on the weedy list for a *2nd time* will have *only one week/weekend to weed*. If your plot is still weedy after this week, your garden plot will be mowed.

- If your plot is placed on the weedy list for a 3rd time it will automatically be mowed.
- *Please note: Once your plot is mowed you cannot continue to garden in it and you will not receive Priority Registration for the following year. Refunds are not issued for mowed plots.*

Can I use plastic sheeting in my plot to limit the weeds?

- No, only fabric landscaping material is allowed in your plot. Biodegradable types of fabric landscaping are preferred. However, any fabric left at the end of the season must be removed. (Plastic sheeting gets caught in our equipment and can cause damage.) Use of plastic sheeting may result in loss of Priority Registration for the next year.

Can I use herbicides, fungicides and pesticides in my plot to keep the weeds and pests under control?

- You may use synthetic/organic products in the regular plots.
- In the organic plots you may only use organic control methods.

Can I use a mower or weed whacker to keep the weeds down?

- Yes, you may use a weed whacker and/or mower in your plot.
- Use of the equipment cannot disrupt neighboring garden plots and must be used in a safe manner.

Can I raise livestock, like chickens, on my plot(s).

- No, livestock are not permitted at the garden plots.

Can I plant *Cannabis*, or *tobacco*, in my plot(s)?

- No, planting, and growing cannabis and tobacco is not permitted.

Can I put up bird feeders in my plot(s)?

- No, since dropped seeds from bird feeders can create unwanted weedy plants.

Where should I put the weeds and other plant waste from my plot?

- Large yard waste dumpsters are available throughout the plots.
- At each dumpster site we also provide green garbage and blue recycling bins.
- Do not overfill a dumpster. If the dumpster nearest to your plot is full, take the landscape material to another dumpster.

Can I dump waste from my home yard in the yard waste dumpsters?

- No, the onsite dumpsters are for garden plot generated waste only.

Can I dump leaves from my yard, in my garden plot, after the season closes in October?

- No, once the garden plots close for the season your rental/access expires.

What should I do if I have lots of extra produce?

- Consider donating it to [Loaves & Fishes](#), a local food pantry. There is a collection stand at the east end of the plots (off the parking lot and near the Idea Gardens) where you can leave extra produce. Master Gardeners regularly check this kiosk and take produce to Loaves & Fishes.

Is the general public allowed into the garden plots to collect produce for themselves during the gardening season or during the annual gleaning day?

- No, vegetables, fruits and flowers grown in the garden plots belong to the gardeners who grew them.

- After the plots close for the season, on the annual gleaning day, any remaining produce is collected and sorted for donation to [Loaves & Fishes](#), a local food pantry.

I've heard that pumpkins get composted in the garden plot each year. Is this true?

- Yes, the Park District is part of S.C.A.R.C.E.'s [Pumpkin Smash](#) annual event which collects pumpkins for composting instead of sending them to the landfill. This event takes place every year on the Saturday after Halloween from 9 am – 12 pm. Rather than shipping the pumpkins to a composting facility, we smash the pumpkins directly into the soil to help replenish nutrients and water.

What should I do if someone steals produce from my garden plot?

- If you see vandalism or theft taking place, and want someone to respond right away, you may dial 911. Get a license plate number if you can. You will need to remain in the garden plots until the Naperville Police arrive.
- If you discover missing produce or items after the theft takes place you may call the Naperville Park District Police, at 630-601-0925, to file a report. Again you will need to stay onsite until a Park Police officer arrives or if you get voicemail leave a message with your contact information and a Park Police officer will follow up with you at a later time.

Where can I find more information about the garden plots, registration and the gardening season?

- **GARDEN PLOT WEBPAGE**, <https://www.napervilleparks.org/gardenplots>
- **PRIORITY REGISTRATION information:**
 - The Park District's Garden Plot webpage, <https://www.napervilleparks.org/gardenplots>
 - The Naperville Park District Garden Plots **Facebook page**: <https://www.facebook.com/Naperville-Park-District-Garden-Plots-137495489657127/>
- **OPEN REGISTRATION dates:**
 - Open Registration for the general public (residents and non-residents) begins in mid-March.
 - See the [Spring Program Brochure](#) or the [Garden Plot webpage](#) for the registration dates.
- **GENERAL ACCESS INFORMATION: Opening/Closing Day, closures (Fireworks) or limited access days:**
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