

COMMUNITY GARDENS IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR SEASON 2015 ALL GARDENERS NEED TO KNOW

PLEASE READ THOROUGHLY

We have been surveying daily, all of our city sports fields and community gardens and while the worst seems to be over, thank goodness, there is still enough ice and snow in many key locations to create a safety issue. The back road at the gardens, as of yesterday, still had several inches of snow on the ground with an under layer of ice making driving a car and walking unsafe. Side key areas are also in bad shape right now due to how badly soaked the ground is and how muddy both grass and road are. We could use two weeks of warm and dry weather to help clear up the grounds and all fields, but Mother Nature keeps on throwing the rain, freezing temps and more white stuff at us. **At this time, we are looking at our official 2015 season opening weekend to be on Saturday, April 11th.** Entrance onto the grounds to begin work in plots is not permitted before April 11th. We are basically on target with last year's time frame and 2014's vegetable yields were outstanding. **The safety of all our participants walking and driving on the grounds are our main concern.**

Before our season begins, there are a few things that myself and three volunteers need to address, so we will be working to get these things done before opening day. Since the community gardens now has its south side newly fenced with the SolidLock 8 foot deer fence and new 15 foot swing gate, a new combo dial lock needs to be placed on the swing gate lock. Since last year, I had to replace the combo lock five times due to gardener's taking them home in their pockets, several simply disappearing, and others looking like they were smashed. To hopefully make it easier for all involved, the new lock will have a small chain welded to its shackle as well as welded to the gate post. This will enable all gardeners to simply open the lock and let it hang right there on the chain so it's always visible and simple to access. I will also be working with my volunteers to flatten the land on the left side where the swing gate will fully open to. A new post will be put there in the ground so that when the swing gate is open, it will be able to be hooked to the post so that it doesn't swing back and forth or remain partially open so that someone drives into it and breaks it.

There are also approximately 14 plots that still have old plastic and chicken wire fencing around them that need to be replaced with the new YardGuard Green vinyl coated fencing material. My director's goal is to have this completed by early spring of 2015 so we will be assisting those plot holders with volunteer groups to help take down the old fencing and put up the new fencing. This needs to be addressed before these gardeners begin planting so we will probably have a fencing - Take Down and Put Up - volunteer day on our opening day Saturday, April 11th as well as a second volunteer fencing day on Saturday, April 18th. This week I will be emailing those gardeners who have plots with old fencing to see if they can pull it out themselves and if not, our wonderful volunteers will do it for them. Also, several gardeners are in need of a simple new gate for their plots so I am putting together a small group of folks who can make durable, yet simple 4' by 4' gates out of the same YardGuard fencing material and wooden frames. This whole fencing upgrade is all about safety, durability and uniformity. Our goal is to

have all fences and gates look the same and operate safely. I'd like to remind all gardeners that anyone who brings a wrought iron bannister railing or a bed foot post or headboard to the gardens to use as a gate will have it removed immediately. Using appropriate materials and products in a garden that are **specifically made for gardening** is of utmost importance and something that everyone needs to adhere to. Two people were hurt last season thanks to a gardener who partially wired a full size iron head board meant to be bolted to a bed frame, onto his ripped plastic fencing for use as a gate. Not smart!

This year, we have a new gentleman who has offered his tilling services to our program for all those gardeners interested. **Bill's contact number is 203 414-9428 and his fee for each 20 x30 plot is \$40.**

My department only contracts and approves one individual tiling in that section of city land, so other companies or professionals are prohibited from doing so. Gardeners are encouraged to use their own tillers, turn the soil over by hand or give Bill a call for an awesome tilling job. Tilling certainly has its advantages and those include aeration and softening of the soil so that plant roots can grow more easily and deeper, producing a healthier plant. It does a great job blending compost and organic fertilizers deeply into the soil where it matters most and in the spring and especially the fall, it helps break up and rid your garden of bad pest/bug populations by burying and killing adult bugs so they can't prosper. Recommended to also do in the fall so their winter homes are destroyed. Please keep in mind that tilling is done when the soil is just moist, not soaking wet, otherwise you will have large clumps that will dry into heavy compacted chunks.

Also, let Bill know what vegetables you plan on putting in your garden so that you both can come up with an appropriate time frame for both tilling and planting. If you till your whole plot and put in early peas, but then don't plant anything else until tomatoes and corn the end of May, you'll have a plot full of weeds within a two week period. More gardeners are putting plastic down over their newly tilled plot to buy them more weed-free time between plantings. Bill will let all interested gardeners know how and when payment needs to be made after you call him.

Last, but not least, 2015 season ID Badges and Parking Permits will be available for pick up at our Monday night, community gardens meeting on April 6th. We hold all meetings at 6:30 pm at the Milford Senior Center on Jepson Drive. Come to the meeting, stay for some important updates, and pick up your ID packet. The following day, Tuesday, I will leave the ID packets in the office of the Recreation Department for those who can't make the meeting. The Recreation Department is open Monday thru Friday from 9 am to 5pm. and located at 70 West River Street in the Parsons Complex. **As a reminder to all community gardening participants - ID Badges are required to be worn, where visible, by all valid plot holders when entering the gardens. Parking Permits must be visible on all dashboards of each and every gardener wearing an ID Badge. Please do not come to the gardens or begin work in your plot until you have picked up your 2015 ID packet.**

Happy spring to all!!

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