

**DUKE  
FARMS  
COMMUNITY  
GARDEN  
HANDBOOK  
2025**





*Welcome to the*  
**Duke Farms  
Community Garden!**

The Duke Farms Community Garden provides Somerset County residents with a unique opportunity to grow fresh, organic produce while fostering a deeper connection to nature and community. Grounded in the principles of sustainability and equity, the garden serves as a microcosm of ecological and community solutions, modeling best practices for organic gardening and environmental stewardship.



Duke Farms is a center of the Doris Duke Foundation, who seeks to build a more creative, equitable and sustainable future by investing in artists and the performing arts, environmental conservation, medical research, child well-being and great mutual understanding among diverse communities. For more information, visit [www.dorisduke.org](http://www.dorisduke.org).

**HAPPY GARDENING SEASON!**

WHO WE ARE

# Meet the Team

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**Meghan Martin**

*Community Garden Coordinator*

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**Cathy House**

*Community Garden Assistant*

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**Jeff Geist**

*Manager of Community and  
Professional Education*

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## CONTACT INFORMATION

1112 Dukes Parkway West Hillsborough, NJ 08844

**Website:** [www.dukefarms.org/cg](http://www.dukefarms.org/cg)

**Members Only Webpage:**

[dukefarmscommunitygarden.wildapricot.org](http://dukefarmscommunitygarden.wildapricot.org)

**SLACK:**

Email [mmartin@dorisduke.org](mailto:mmartin@dorisduke.org) for an invite link

**Email:** [cg@dukefarms.org](mailto:cg@dukefarms.org)

**Security:** 908-243-3600

# Duke Farms Community Garden

Legend  
Specialty Gardens

Contact us at [cg@dukefarms.org](mailto:cg@dukefarms.org)

Neighborhoods

- Tomatoville
- Cauliflower Corner
- Turnip Town
- Garlic Grove
- Cucumber City
- Rutabaga Ridge
- Broccoli Boro

- Education Plot
- Giving Gardens
- Accessible Plots
- Garden waste

Well shed



Staff shed



Donation Station



Picnic area



Composting toilet



Accessible parking



Play Kitchen



67

Trading Post



Education Plot



Side parking lot

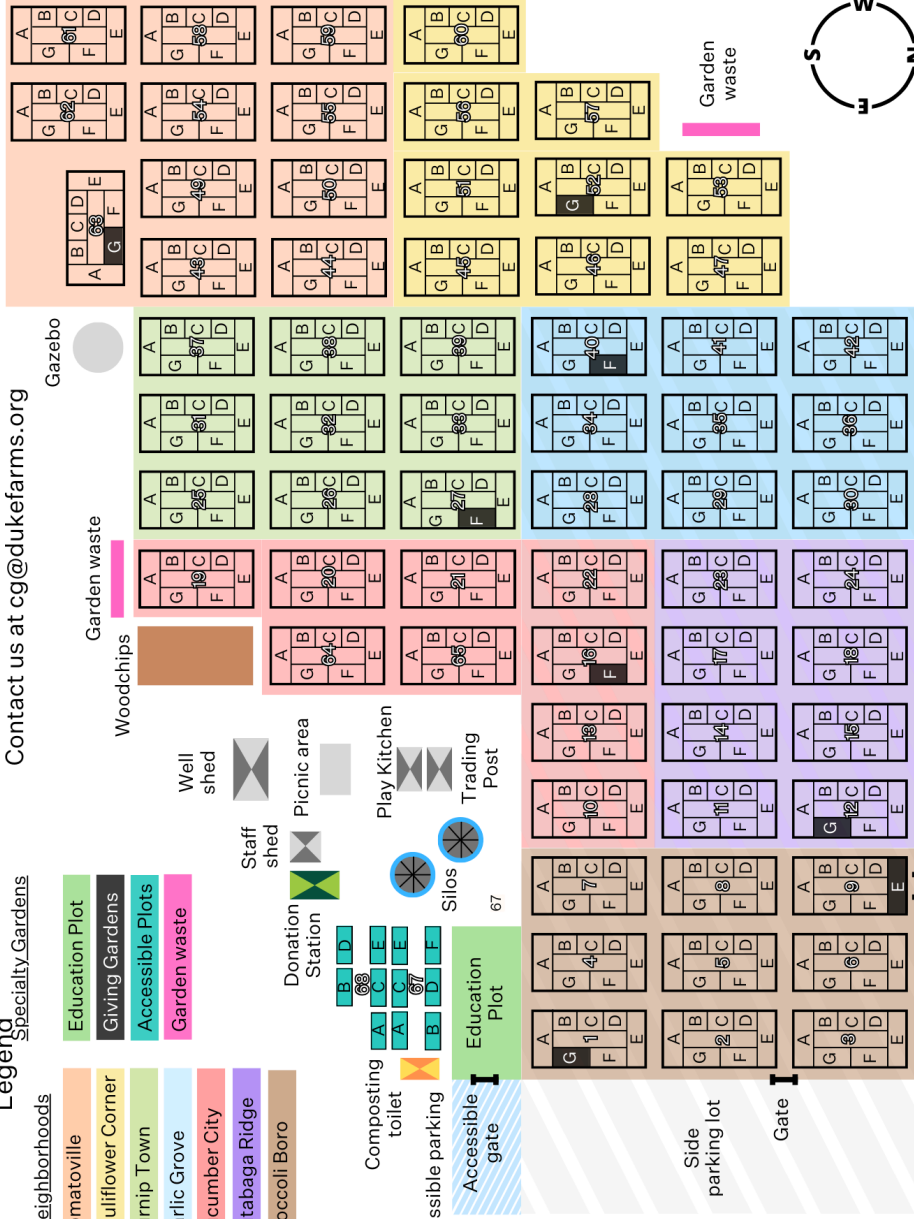
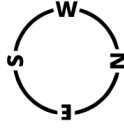
Gate

Main parking lot

Gate

Garden waste

Garden waste



# GARDEN PLOT INFORMATION

Primary Gardener: \_\_\_\_\_

Secondary Gardener(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Plot Number(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Neighborhood(s): \_\_\_\_\_

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# PLOT REGISTRATION

*Anyone who lives and/or works in Somerset County, NJ is eligible to participate in the Duke Farms Community Garden.*

## ***Plot size fees are as follows***

<b>10x10</b>	<b>\$20</b>
<b>15x15</b>	<b>\$40</b>
<b>15x30</b>	<b>\$60</b>
<b>Accessible</b>	<b>\$20</b>

## ***Registration***

- All registration is done online.
- Garden plot renewals occur early November.
- Additional plot registration for current gardeners occurs two weeks after renewals.
- Plot registration for the general public begins on January 2.
- Plots are rented on a first-come, first-served basis until no more plots are available. There is no waitlist.
- Returning gardeners are allowed up to 3 plots. New gardeners are restricted to 1 plot.
- Garden plots are for personal use only; no commercial use is permitted.
- Fees are non-refundable.

### **Primary Gardener:**

- The person who registers the plot is fully responsible for the plot, all correspondence, and other gardeners who use it.

### **Secondary Gardeners:**

- Individuals who help with the plot but are not the primary gardener. Make sure they're listed on your Wild Apricot profile so they're allowed in the garden.

### **Communication:**

- Keep a valid email and join the Slack group for alerts. Report any changes within 3 days.

# GARDENER RESPONSIBILITIES

## Plot Maintenance and Expectations:

- **Plant Ratio:**
  - Plots must be at least 50% fruits/vegetables.
  - Visit page 10 for prohibited plant list.
- **Weeds:**
  - Keep weeds under 25% of your plot, no taller than 12 inches, and prevent them from going to seed.
  - Maintain clear boundaries between plots, pathways, and fencing.
  - Work together to keep block common area weed-free and woodchipped.
  - You are responsible for 1/2 of the pathway around your plot. Weeding here counts as volunteer time only if requested by staff or a garden mentor.
- **Boundaries:**
  - Keep all plants within your plot's four edges. No personal materials in common areas. Fencing is allowed but must not be a tripping hazard or encroach on neighboring plots.
- **Height**
  - No plant, structure, or item can exceed 5 feet in height, measured from the pathway.
- **Materials:**
  - Only use permitted organic materials. No inorganic amendments, manure, or items over 5 feet tall.
- **Harvesting:**
  - Harvest weekly to avoid rotting produce. Severe neglect will be noted. To have the Donation Team harvest, note it on the Donation Station door's whiteboard.
- **Pests:**
  - Address pests promptly. Severe infestations will be noted.



## Garden Plot Rules

- Plots are provided "AS IS."
- Duke Farms is not responsible for soil or drainage issues.
- Remove weeds and cover crops by May 15.
- Arrange for plot upkeep during your absence.
- Do not go away for multiple weeks at a time.
- Plots with weeds going to seed will receive a maintenance warning.
- **Common Area:** Located in the center of each block. Only hoses can be stored here.
- **Garden Waste:** Place weeds and plant debris in designated waste piles (no plastic).
- **Water:** Hydrants are located at the center of the block common area. Gardeners must provide and share hoses.
  - If there is danger of frost- disconnect all hoses and splitters from the hydrant.
- **Tools:** Bring your own tools. Wheelbarrows and carts are available.
- **Wood Chips:** Provided by Duke Farms for pathways, as available.
- **Trash:** Carry in, carry out. No trash disposal on-site.
- **Bathroom/Water:** Two composting toilets near the silos. Water from spigots is non-potable.
- **Wildlife:** Protect your plot organically. Small rodent traps allowed; no poison. Check traps daily and remove trapped rodents.
- **Fall Cleanup:**
  - Remove non-secure items (chairs, string trellises) by October 31st.
  - Secure items like fences can stay over winter.
  - If not renewing your plot, clear it by October 31st. Leftover materials become Duke Farms property.

# MAINTENANCE SURVEYS

- Maintenance surveys will occur between April 15th and October 31st on a weekly basis to ensure the safety & standard of all community gardeners.
- Keep your plot weeded, harvested, and well-maintained at all times. Arrange for maintenance during absences.
- Plots with weeds going to seed will receive a maintenance warning.

## Notification System

- **1st-3rd Notices:** An email will describe the issue. You have one week to fix it. Notices are cumulative and do not have to be consecutive. They are logged in your online profile.
- **4th Notice:** Final email notice. You have one week to clean and maintain your plot for the rest of the season. Failure to comply will lead to a 5th notice.
- **5th Notice:** Duke Farms reclaims the plot. You will receive an email and have one week to remove your belongings. Items left after a week become Duke Farms property.

## Personal Hardship

If you're facing personal hardship and can't maintain your plot, contact staff for help to avoid maintenance warnings. Garden Mentors and Garden Guardians are available upon approval of application. Email [cg@dukefarms.org](mailto:cg@dukefarms.org) for more information or to fill out the application.

# GARDENER REQUIREMENTS

**Deadline: Complete and record your courses and volunteer hours on Wild Apricot by October 31st to be eligible to renew your plot for the next year.**

## **Items for returning gardeners to complete annually:**

- Attend annual pre-season meeting & complete quiz
- 1 continuing education course
- Required volunteer hours

## **Education Requirement:**

- Attend one gardening-related course per year.
- The garden-related course can be taken through Duke Farms or another approved provider.
- You must record the course title and date in your online Wild Apricot profile to get credit.
- For New Gardeners: In your first year, you need to take three courses: New Gardener Orientation, Introduction to Organic Gardening (both from Duke Farms), and one garden-related course.

## **Volunteer Requirement:**

- 4 hours per year for the first plot; 1 additional hour for each extra plot.
- Primary Gardeners need to record volunteer hours in the online Wild Apricot gardener profile to get credit.
- Volunteer time must be completed and recorded by October 31st.

# *How Can I Volunteer?*

## **1. Volunteer Meet-Up Days**

- Volunteer Meet-Up Days offer a chance for gardeners to work together on garden projects. These sessions alternate between every other Thursday at 5 PM and every other Saturday at 9 AM from May to October, lasting 1-4 hours.
- Key Details:
  - RSVP on Wild Apricot to get project updates.
  - Self-guided tasks: Choose from the independent project list posted on the bulletin boards in the Donation Station and on the entrance gates.
  - Bring your own tools and gloves.
  - Community focus: Meet-up days are a great way to fulfill volunteer hours and connect with other gardeners.

## **2. Giving Garden Program**

- To volunteer for your Giving Garden, contact your neighborhood Giving Garden Coordinator (listed on Wild Apricot under the “Volunteering” page).
- To assist with sorting and delivery of of donated produce, sign up in the **Event Calendar on Wild Apricot**.
- **If you sign up to help but can no longer make it, let us know. If you do not show up and give no notice, you will receive a maintenance notice.**

**3. Join our Volunteer Slack Group to receive personalized volunteer opportunities that match your specific interests.**

- Meghan will post opportunities in these groups on Slack.
- **Garden Guardians:** Help maintain plots for gardeners facing hardships by weeding, watering, and harvesting.
- **Weed Warriors:** Focus on weeding and maintaining pathways, entrances, and cardboard/woodchip areas.
- **Plant-it-Forward:** Adopt and maintain a vacant plot to grow vegetables for donation. Materials are provided.

**4. Independent Volunteer Activities:**

- Find opportunities on the Community Garden Slack channel, blackboard in the donation shed, and bulletin boards at the gates.
- Activities can be done anytime. Remember to take before and after pictures before logging hours on Wild Apricot.

## Independent Volunteer Activities:

These opportunities are listed here, on a bulletin board in the donation shed and on the bulletin boards located at each entrance gate of the garden.

- **Weed/Woodchip the outer perimeter pathways:**  
Gardeners maintain halfway into the pathways around their plots, but no one is assigned to the outer half of the pathways around the perimeter of the garden. Help by walking the perimeter and weeding any areas that need attention.
- **Collect trash around the garden and the compost piles.**
- **Weed/woodchip any common areas in the garden:**  
Wheelbarrow parking, picnic area, compost flower beds, front and side gate entrances.
- **Organize clamshells:** In the donation shed, you'll find bins labeled by size. Please sort the clamshells into the appropriate bins based on their size. If a clamshell was used for anything other than produce (like baked goods), dispose of it. Wash any clamshells that are dirty before placing them in the bins.
- **Weed around the green compost bins in the accessible gardening area.**
- **Move the contents of the accessible compost bins to the main compost piles.**
- **Check the Garden Guardian and Weed Warrior groups on Slack:**
  - Specific jobs may be listed.

# How to log your hours on Wild Apricot:

- Visit [www.dukefarms.org/cg](http://www.dukefarms.org/cg)
- Scroll down and click the “Log on to the WildApricot Gardener Membership platform” button
- Login

## For Current Gardeners

Click

Log On To WildApricot Gardener Membership Platform

Community Garden Map

Participation Agreement

Frequently Asked Questions

Community Garden Handbook

- Click the little person in the top right-hand corner. This will bring you to your profile.



## DUKE FARMS COMMUNITY GARDEN

Click

Meghan Martin  
[View profile](#)  
[Change password](#)  
[Log out](#)

[SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES](#) [NEWS](#) [GARDEN PROGRAMS](#) [GROWING TIPS](#) [VOLUNTEERING](#)

WHAT'S WITH  
THE RULES?



- Click “Edit Profile.”

## MY PROFILE

Click

to Community Garden Member's Only webpage

EDIT PROFILE

[My directory profile](#)

[Profile](#) [Privacy](#) [Email subscriptions](#) [Member photo albums](#) [My event registrations](#) [Invoices and payments](#) [Donations](#)

# How to log your hours on Wild Apricot:

- Scroll down to “Requirements” and fill in your hours.
  - Example: If you are required 4 hours, please fill out Hour 1, Hour 2, Hour 3, and Hour 4. Leave Hour 5 and Hour 6 blank. If you worked additional hours, tally them in the “Addition Hours Worked” field.

## REQUIREMENTS

Volunteer Hours Required      NA-Staff

Hour 1 (Write date, time spent, and activity performed):

6/14 - 1hr- Donation volunteer

Hour 2:

8/22 -45min trash pickup & 15 min clamshell sorting

Hour 3:

9/18- 2hrs- weed warrior

Hour 4:

Hour 5:

Hour 6:

Additional hours worked (only put total number-no words):



## How to log your hours on Wild Apricot:

- You will also log your education course in the field labeled "Education Requirement 2025."
- **ALWAYS CLICK SAVE.**

Additional hours worked (only put total number-no words):

Volunteer Hour Status

Intro to Organic Gardening

Orientation

Education Requirement 2025:

MAINTENANCE WARNINGS: IF THERE IS NO NOTE NEXT TO THE DATE- YOUR PLOT IS IN C

Click

Nov 7

SAVE

CANCEL

## The following items are not permitted in the Community Garden:

- Mechanical tillers
- Sprinklers
- Gas powered equipment
- Materials made of PVC - plastic type 1, 3 (PVC) or 7
- Treated lumber (pressure treated wood)
- Chemical fertilizers or pesticides
- Manure
- Dyed or treated wood chips
- Insect lures and/or traps; rodent poison
- Bird netting
- All structures taller than 5 feet
- Any flying devices, including drones
- The use of any contractors or professional services (anyone other than primary or secondary gardener must fill out a waiver)

## The following plants are not permitted in the Community Garden:

- Invasive or Harmful Plants

### **Specific Plants Not Permitted**

- Castor beans (*Ricinus* sp.), cannabis (*Cannabis* sp.), sunflowers (all varieties), currants, gooseberries (*Ribes* sp.), and shiso/perilla (*Perilla frutescens*) are not allowed.

### **Restricted Plants (Only Permitted in Pots)**

- Raspberries, blackberries, mint, tansy, jerusalem artichoke, garlic chives, horseradish, comfrey.

### **Perennial Restrictions**

- Perennials other than blueberry, strawberry, asparagus, rhubarb, and assorted herbs and flowers are not allowed.

## Compost/Soil/Mulch Guidelines

- Use only organic materials. Approved soil and amendments must have the OMRI or USDA Organic label. Any unapproved amendments need garden staff approval. Bulk compost and soil deliveries can be scheduled with staff.
- Apply a thick layer of organic mulch (e.g., straw, dried grass, leaves) to retain soil moisture. Homemade compost must be kept in a solid compost bin.

# GARDEN PROGRAMS

In addition to offering a space for growing food, Duke Farms Community Garden is an educational space where both new and seasoned gardeners can learn about growing organic food in a sustainable, eco-friendly manner. Please check the garden webpage & newsletter for dates and registration info.



## GIVING GARDENS

- The garden is divided into seven neighborhoods: Tomatoville, Cauliflower Corner, Turnip Town, Garlic Grove, Cucumber City, Rutabaga Ridge, and Broccoli Boro.
- Each neighborhood has a Giving Garden that grows organic produce for local foodbanks.
- To volunteer for planting, harvesting, or maintenance, contact your neighborhood Coordinator—no experience needed!
- You can also leave produce from your plot at the Donation Station, where volunteers handle sorting and delivery every Tuesday from late May to October.
- Every year, the Duke Farms Community Gardeners grows and donates over 4,000lbs of fresh organic produce to local food banks as part of our Garden Donation Program.

# OPERATION & CONDUCT

Following these rules and responsibilities ensures the safety and well-being for all our gardening participants and visitors. Please report any inappropriate behavior to garden staff. In the event of an emergency, contact Duke Farms Security directly by calling 908-243-3600.

## Guidelines

Duke Farms (DF) and the Doris Duke Foundation (DDF) are not responsible for any accidents, injuries, theft, or loss/damage of belongings, equipment, or plantings. By joining the Duke Farms Community Garden, you agree to hold DF and DDF harmless from any claims or liabilities related to garden use. There is no security for personal belongings.

Failure to follow garden rules, after reasonable notice, may result in the loss of your plot without refund for any materials left behind.

By renting a plot, you confirm that you have read and will follow the Duke Farms Community Garden Guidelines.

## Hours of Operation

The Duke Farms Community Garden is open year-round, sunrise to sunset, seven days per week.

On days with extreme heat, the garden will close during peak hours for safety, but will remain open in the morning and before sunset.

Gardeners will be notified of any closures.

## Parking

There are two gravel parking areas next to the Community Garden. On busy Saturdays in spring and summer, these lots may be used for overflow visitor parking. For accessibility accommodations, email [cg@dukefarms.org](mailto:cg@dukefarms.org).

## Security & Theft

- Garden gates are locked to keep non-members out. The access code will be emailed to you yearly; please do not share it. Keep the gates closed **at all times** to prevent theft and wildlife entry.
- Duke Farms has zero tolerance for theft. Entering another plot without permission will result in immediate loss of garden privileges, regardless of the plot's condition.
- Report broken gate locks or suspicious activity to staff via email, and call security at 908-243-3600 for theft or damage.

## Safety

- Please drive carefully through the Duke Farms parking lot, following the 10 mph speed limit and watching for pedestrians.
- For the safety and enjoyment of all gardeners, do not bring items such as radios, BBQs, or pets (service animals are permitted).
- Gardeners agree to hold Duke Farms harmless for any illness resulting from consuming food grown on the property.

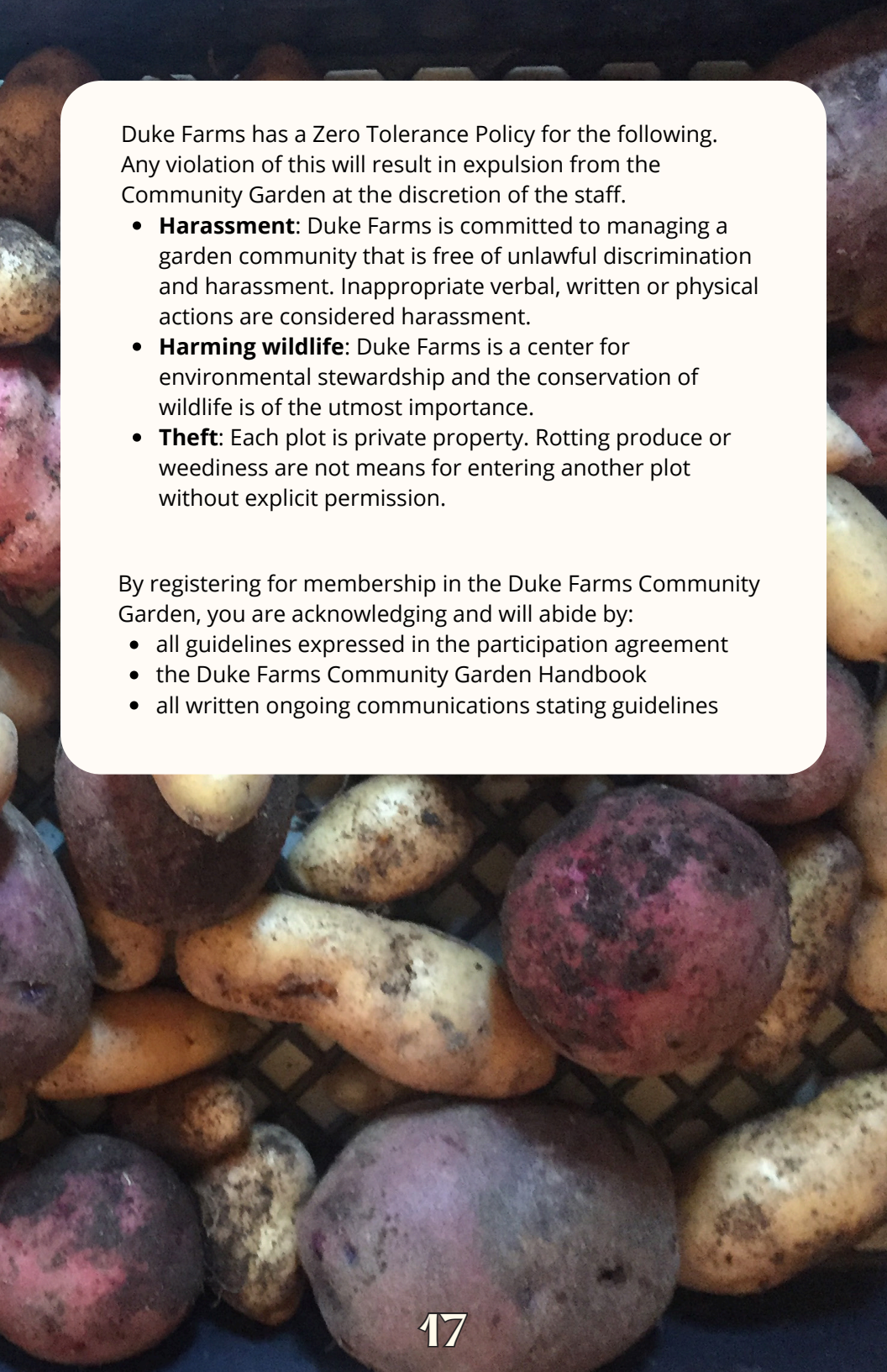
## Behavior

- Please be courteous and respectful in the garden at all times. Failure to follow instructions or inappropriate behavior may result in expulsion at the discretion of garden staff.
- Duke Farms is committed to maintaining a community free of discrimination and harassment. Any inappropriate verbal, written, or physical actions will be treated as harassment and grounds for expulsion.
- Stay on designated wood-chipped paths—cutting through other plots is considered trespassing. Gardeners are responsible for supervising their guests and children at all times, including in the mud kitchen and picnic area.
- Tobacco, alcohol, and illegal substances are strictly prohibited on Duke Farms property.

# PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT

Gardeners are bound to this agreement which is signed online during plot registration. **Gardeners are required to fulfill the following obligations annually in order to maintain membership.**

1. **COMMUNICATION:** Maintain a valid email address. This will be the primary form of communication between staff and gardeners. Gardeners also must join the Duke Farms Community Garden Slack group for emergency alerts and updates. Any changes in email are to be reported within 3 business days.
2. **MAINTENANCE:** Plots must be food-centric with at least 50% fruit/vegetable crops. Gardeners must comply with all maintenance expectations listed. Surveys will be done weekly between April 15 and October 31. If a gardener receives a notice, they must address this issue within one week.
3. **CONTINUING EDUCATION:** Attend 1 elective environmental course of your choice through Duke Farms or another suitable vendor. Record title course & date in your Online Garden Profile on the Community Garden webpage in order to receive credit. **NOTE:** *First year gardeners must complete 3 courses in total: Orientation, Intro to Organic Gardening and 1 elective.*
4. **VOLUNTEER:** Complete 4 hours of volunteer time at Duke Farms for your first garden plot, plus 1 hour for each additional plot. Record hours in your Online Garden Profile on the Community Garden webpage in order to receive credit.
5. **CODE OF CONDUCT:** Please be courteous in the garden at all times. You are expected to review all safety, security and conduct expectations as stated in the Duke Farms Community Garden Handbook.



Duke Farms has a Zero Tolerance Policy for the following. Any violation of this will result in expulsion from the Community Garden at the discretion of the staff.

- **Harassment:** Duke Farms is committed to managing a garden community that is free of unlawful discrimination and harassment. Inappropriate verbal, written or physical actions are considered harassment.
- **Harming wildlife:** Duke Farms is a center for environmental stewardship and the conservation of wildlife is of the utmost importance.
- **Theft:** Each plot is private property. Rotting produce or weediness are not means for entering another plot without explicit permission.

By registering for membership in the Duke Farms Community Garden, you are acknowledging and will abide by:

- all guidelines expressed in the participation agreement
- the Duke Farms Community Garden Handbook
- all written ongoing communications stating guidelines







# Duke Farms

[dukefarms.org/cg](http://dukefarms.org/cg)

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Duke Farms is a center of the  
Doris Duke Foundation