

Merriam Station Community Garden

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I get a plot at Merriam Station Community Garden?

Go to <http://merriamstation.org/joinus.html> and sign up for a plot. Applications are accepted beginning January 1 of each growing season, and plots are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Existing gardeners are given priority. For questions, email the Management Team at mscg@unionparkdc.org.

If I can't make it to a work day. Is there another way to fulfill the requirement for volunteer hours (two hours a month)?

We'll post tasks that gardeners can complete on their own on the MSCG website, and in the volunteer reporting binder in the tool shed. Typical tasks are weeding and mulching pathways and common areas; tending to compost; tending to communal fruit bearing plants; collecting and disposing of trash; organizing the tool shed; vacation watering; mowing and weed trimming; clearing brush; collecting coffee grounds; tending food donation plots; and harvesting and delivering food shelf produce. Those are a few but it takes a village to keep the garden running smoothly. If you have an idea for a special project, please contact the Management Team at mscg@unionparkdc.org.

Can I bring my dog to the garden?

Yes, but please be respectful of your neighbors. Tend to your dog's waste, and keep them on a leash or under voice command at all times.

How can I get involved with the Management Team, or with projects at the Garden?

It's easy -- volunteer! Contact us at mscg@unionparkdc.org. There are a number of areas where we could use your help, including compost, communications, trash removal, vacation watering, tending to food shelf plots, and food-shelf delivery.

What does the plot fee cover?

MSCG plots are \$35 for a full plot and \$20 for a half plot. The fees go into our general fund, which goes to paying the water bill, buying and maintaining equipment, sponsoring scholarships (discounted plots), and general garden operations.

What if I can't afford to participate in a garden activity?

No one is turned away for lack of funding. If you can't afford the regular plot fee, you can request a \$5 plot. Occasionally, the garden will sponsor educational programs or activities that include a fee. We always have gardeners who are willing to cover the cost for cash-strapped members. Please do not be shy in asking for assistance when you need it.

What kinds of chemicals may be used and what kind may not?

At MSCG we may not use any pesticides, herbicides, or chemical fertilizers per our lease agreement with the City of St. Paul except with written permission from the city and application by the city. So, no chemicals. This includes miracle grow and other chemical fertilizers. Don't worry, there are many organic fertilizers available and many expert gardeners to help you learn about organic gardening.

Are there standards or guidelines for organic gardening? How do I know what I can and cannot use?

For information on organic garden practices, please consult any of the resources listed below:

- Rodale's Organic Life (www.rodalesorganiclife.com)
- Peaceful Valley Farm & Garden Supply (www.groworganic.com)
- Planet Natural Research Center (www.planetnatural.com)

Are there any restrictions on materials I can bring to use in my plot?

The use of traditional horticultural materials for hardscaping is encouraged, including stone and wood. Most lumber is okay to use but please do not use green treated materials. Steel stakes and posts are appropriate. You may use landscaping cloth covered with wood chips to control weeds but you **may not** use non-organic materials such as carpeting, roofing material, plastic, etc.

What tools are available to use in the shed?

Wheelbarrows, shovels, hoes, rakes, loppers, and other common gardening tools are all available for use in our tool shed. Please remember to clean items before returning them to the shed. Always leave the shed tidier than you found it and make sure it is locked and the key has been returned to the lockbox before vamoosing.

What bee and butterfly-friendly kinds of activities does the garden promote?

MSCG is a host to The Wildflower Project, an ambitious nonprofit effort by a local wildflower enthusiast. Their plot has a winding path going up the hill between the central and western sections of the garden. Another pollinator garden is in the works, at the corner of Prior and Gilbert, with help from the City of Saint Paul.

MSCG is fortunate to have an expert entomologist as a member of the garden; John Dingley. If you have questions about bugs, reach out to mscg@unionparkdc.org and your question will be forwarded to him.

What should I do if I encounter a crime in progress?

If you encounter a crime in progress or a fire at the garden, you should call 911 immediately. Crimes include, but are not limited to, assault, harassment, or vandalism. If you see evidence of a crime committed prior to your arrival at the garden, you should contact the Saint Paul Police non-emergency number at (651) 291-1111, and notify the Management Team.

What should I do if I suspect someone is stealing?

If you are comfortable, confront them and ask them not to steal. It is possible to peacefully and respectfully advise vegetable thieves to move on. Remind them that they did not grow the produce or plants they are taking, and that they are taking food away from a gardener that is counting on the food they grow to feed their family. You can also suggest that they join the garden if they would like to grow their own. If you have any surplus, you may offer some food from your own plot.

MSCG donates fresh produce to the Midway Food Shelf at [Keystone Community Services](#). The food shelf is located 1916 University Avenue W. (near Prior Avenue), St. Paul, MN 55104 and the number is (651) 917-3792. If the person you've encountered is in need, please share this information with them.

What should I do if I catch someone dumping at the garden?

Get a license plate number and report the incident to the Saint Paul Police Non-Emergency Dispatch at (651) 291-1111, and notify the Management Team. If you are comfortable, confront them and ask them to stop.

Report large items that have been dumped at the garden to the [City of Saint Paul Department of Safety & Inspections](#) at (651) 266-8989, and notify the Management Team.

I saw a tree service contractor dumping a load of mulch at the garden. I asked him what he was doing. He said he had standing permission to “donate” mulch. Does that sound right?

No! Tree companies do not have permission to dump mulch at our garden. The City of St. Paul forestry department is the only entity allowed to give us wood mulch.

We do occasionally request and receive mulch from other sources, but those dump sites will always be clearly marked and a representative of the garden will be there to receive the load.

What should I do if the water is broken?

If you suspect that a water line is broken and there are visible signs of a water leak, turn the water off at the hydrant, and then contact the Water Coordinator using the contact information posted in the tool shed. Water problems are urgent, so please do not rely on email.

What can I compost at the garden?

Composting rules are posted at the garden and on the MSCG website. Please use the designated bins on site and only place organic garden debris from the garden itself into the bins. You may also bring a reasonable amount of compostable leaves and grass clippings only from home but no woody vegetation, kitchen waste, diseased plants or weeds with mature seeds are allowed.

What should I do with my trash?

MSCG does not subscribe to a garbage service and we do not (for the moment) maintain a trash bin on site. Please pack your own trash out of the garden with you. If

you find garbage at the garden and you are able to clean it up and bring it home, please do so.

How can I make suggestions to the leadership team?

Kindly email mscg@unionparkdc.org or find one of us in person at the garden!