



**Greenbelt**  
Essex County's Land Trust

# **Dodge Farm Community Garden**

## **Garden Manual**

Revised February 2026

## **About Greenbelt**

Greenbelt is a member-supported nonprofit land trust. Greenbelt works within the 34 cities and towns of Essex County, Massachusetts, helping families, municipalities, and organizations realize their land conservation goals. Greenbelt protects natural land and working farms across Essex County forever, helping to conserve healthy ecosystems, clean water, local food supplies, scenic landscapes, and free, accessible places for all to benefit from nature. Dodge Farm is one of over sixty properties Greenbelt's Stewardship Department actively maintains. All of Greenbelt's properties are free and open for all to enjoy.

## **Garden History**

Dodge Farm (Hamilton/Wenham) Community Garden was founded in 2012 by a group of volunteer gardeners working with the Hamilton Wenham Open Land Trust (HWOLT) and Hamilton Wenham Green. In 2022, Greenbelt acquired the land from HWOLT. The garden is a fenced garden with 56 (4'x12') raised bed garden plots. The garden features a "community" managed blueberry patch and pollinator garden.

## **Annual Garden Registration**

To obtain a garden plot please reach out to the Land & Trails Manager (Garden Manager) at Greenbelt to check for plot availability. If a garden plot is not available, you will be placed on the waiting list. There is not a fee to join the gardens. Instead, a Greenbelt membership at the \$60 level for one plot and \$50 for any additional plots is required when registering for a garden plot. In March, each gardener will receive a renewal email with the membership renewal information. Gardeners must sign and return the garden agreement, acknowledge Greenbelt's waiver form and pay their membership by April 1st. **Gardens will be forfeited** if renewal is not received by then unless other arrangements have been made. Special financial considerations can be considered if needed. There are a number of expenses that Greenbelt pays for at the garden. From staff time, hiring contractors, the water bill, and tools and equipment, it costs Greenbelt a significant amount of money annually to run these gardens. Each membership helps offset the cost of running this garden.

## **Garden Rules** (Details about this can be found later in the manual.)

- 1. Dogs are not allowed inside the garden fences.**
- 2. Practice only organic garden techniques.**
- 3. Plots must be planted or cover cropped by July 1st.**
- 4. Garden weeds must be kept to a minimum.**
- 5. Harvest vegetables before withering.**
- 6. Plants must remain within the garden boxes and kept to a height that doesn't shade neighboring gardens.**
- 7. Only use water for watering garden plots and rinsing tools. Turn off a faucet when you are not actively watering.**
- 8. Perennial non-fruit bearing shrubs and state listed invasive plants are prohibited.**
- 9. Please be courteous to our neighbors and keep noise to a minimum.**
- 10. Winterize your garden by the end of November.**

*Gardeners that do not follow the rules of the garden will lose their garden privileges.*

## **General Garden Information**

### **Hours of Use**

The community garden is open from April 1<sup>st</sup>. to December 1<sup>st</sup>. from dawn to dusk.

### **Parking**

Parking is located off of Porter St. in Wenham.

### **Tools and Wheelbarrows**

Greenbelt provides community tools and wheelbarrows for gardening. All gardens have access to the tools in the community shed. Please be sure to clean them and place them back in the shed when you are done with them for the day. Contact the Garden Manager if there are any issues with the tools or if they need replacement.

### **Compost Area**

Next to the garden there are two compost bins. One bin is for disposing of any organic garden waste. The other is for the fresh compost delivered once a year by Greenbelt.

### **Community Workdays**

In the spring and fall Greenbelt schedules volunteer workdays at the garden. Gardeners are encouraged to attend. These workdays help Greenbelt offset the cost of running the garden and keep the gardens looking good.

### **Plot Information**

There is a two-plot maxim for the garden. Extra plots can be signed up for if available and there is a vacant wait list. Gardeners keep the plot they are assigned from year to year until they decide to leave the garden, reduce the number of plots they are tending to or are asked to leave the garden.

### **Waiting List**

People on the waiting list are selected in order on the date they inquired about gardening. They stay on the list from year to year until they are assigned to a garden plot or until they decide to be taken off.

## **Garden Rules in Context**

### **Dogs are not allowed within the fenced area.**

Dogs must be leashed and may not be in the fenced area. Curb your dog before entering the property. Service dogs are exempt from the policy.

### **Practice only organic garden techniques.**

Only organic fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and fungicides can be used. Imported soil must be natural/organic and free of invasive weed seeds. Imported seaweed must be free of plastics.

### **Plots must be planted or cover cropped by July 1st.**

The preservation of garden soil is a primary goal. Exposed spoils are susceptible to running off and limit the function of soil microbes. Any fallow garden must be covered with hay or planted with a cover crop like field peas, oats, crimson clover, winter rye or hairy vetch during the growing season.

### **Plots must remain weed free.**

To reduce the spread of garden weeds to other gardens, garden plots must be weeded on a regular basis. Any plot that has not been planted in and has weeds growing on July 1st will be forfeited unless other arrangements have been made with the Garden Manager. Greenbelt recommends weeding the paths around your garden bed. Garden plants can be damaged during routine maintenance if beds are not weeded around.

### **Harvest vegetables before they rot.**

Rotting vegetables attracts pests and can spread plant diseases. Rotting fruits or vegetables must be removed on a regular basis. If your plot is too successful and you can't handle the production, please consider donating your vegetables or fruits to the local food pantry.

### **Plants must remain within the garden bed and kept to a height that doesn't shade neighboring gardens.**

Please be considerate of your neighbor's garden space. Keeping plants contained to your garden bed will help with air flow which will help limit the spread of garden molds. Planting tall

crops like corn is not prohibited but should not shade other gardens. Consider planting shorter dwarf or hybrid versions of these crops.

**Practice water conservation.**

Water is for garden use only. The water for these plots comes from the city's public water supply and is paid for by Greenbelt. Never leave a hose running. Turn off the hose from the spigot when not in use and make sure it is turned off when you leave. Any issues with the water should be reported to the Garden Manager as soon as possible. Practicing water conservation will help protect this limited resource and help keep the water bill as low as possible.

**Perennial shrubs and state listed invasive plants are prohibited.**

Grow only plants for food, flower and textile production or to benefit native pollinators. Any kind of non-fruit bearing shrub is prohibited from the garden beds. Plants found on the Massachusetts list of invasive plant species are prohibited. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/invasive-plants>

**Please be courteous to our neighbors and keep noise to a minimum.**

Outdoor speakers are not prohibited but must be kept at a level that doesn't disturb your fellow gardeners or our neighbors.

**Winterize your garden by the end of November.**

Gardeners must prepare their garden for the winter by removing past growth and cutting back vegetation. Gardens must be "covered" in the winter with either a cover crop, hay, leaves or compost. Cover crops take time to germinate and need to be planted early enough to allow for appropriate coverage. The garden should be ready for planting in the spring in the event that a gardener does not return for the next growing season. The preservation of garden soil is our primary goal. Exposed soils are susceptible to running off and reduce the function of soil microbes.

### **Gardener Conduct Policy**

**Inappropriate conduct, including but not limited to harassment, intimidation, bullying, discrimination, theft, dishonesty, threats, violence, sexual misconduct, or any behavior that negatively impacts the organization or its mission, will not be tolerated. Any gardener exhibiting such behavior may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of their garden plot.**

**We reserve the right to terminate or suspend a gardener's participation in our program if their actions do not meet our expectations for conduct. The decision to terminate a gardener will be made based on the nature and severity of the behavior in question and after consideration of all relevant factors.**

*Gardeners that do not follow the rules of the garden will lose their gardening privileges*

### **Contact Information:**

Essex County Greenbelt Association Inc.

82 Eastern Ave

P.O. Box 1026

Essex, MA 01929

<https://www.ecga.org/things-to-do/community-gardens>

### **Garden Manager**

Dave McKinnon, Land and Trails Manager

978-768-7241 (ext126)

dmckinnon@ecga.org