



**Greenbelt**  
Essex County's Land Trust

# **Young 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 & must be leashed at all times.**
- 2. Practice only organic garden techniques.**
- 3. Plots must be planted in or cover cropped by July 1st.**
- 4. Garden weeds must be kept to a minimum.**
- 5. Plots must be kept in a reasonable condition.**
- 6. Harvest vegetables before they rot.**
- 7. Only use water for watering garden plots and rinsing tools. Turn off a faucet when you are not actively watering.**
- 8. Keep weeds and organic debris off and away from the fence.**
- 9. Perennial non-fruit bearing shrubs and state listed invasive plants are prohibited.**
- 10. Do not expand the garden into the paths around them and keep paths clear.**
- 11. Any raised bed gardening, perimeter fencing or hardscapes must be approved by the garden manager.**
- 12. Outdoor furniture is limited to chairs/small tables and must be removed at the end of the season.**
- 13. Please be courteous to our neighbors and keep noise to a minimum.**
- 14. 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 dusk to dawn.

### **Parking**

Parking is located on the shoulder of High St. in Gloucester. Park parallel to the street. Do not park on the lawn. Vehicles are not allowed beyond the parking area.

### **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**

In the back garden there are two compost areas and are for **community garden waste only**. The first pile is for woody debris, the second pile is for all other garden weeds. A special invasive plant dumping area may be set up for the disposal of invasive plants.

### **Spring and Fall 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. Gardeners currently assigned more than two plots may be asked to relinquish one of their plots if the waitlist exceeds ten people. 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 soils 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 soils are susceptible to running off and limits 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.

### **Garden weeds must be kept to a minimum.**

To reduce the spread of garden weed 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.

### **Plots must be kept in a reasonable condition.**

Gardens must be well kept, free of trash, broken tools/garden posts, old soil bags, etc. Unused gardening items like stakes, fencing or other items used for gardening must be kept in a neat pile, away from the fence line and free of weeds. Individual garden decorations help give the garden a unique look but need to be in reasonable condition.

**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.

**Keep weeds and organic debris off and away from the fence.**

Greenbelt spends a significant amount of time and money managing the vegetation around the garden. It is the gardener's responsibility to keep the fence next to their plot clean and free of weeds. Nothing should be leaning on, growing in or thrown over the fence. All garden weeds should be brought to the compost pile and not left against the fence or thrown over it. If you are growing raspberries next to the fence there must be a one-foot space between the fence and raspberry canes.

**Perennial non-fruit bearing 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>

**Do not expand the garden into the paths around them and keep paths clear.**

Gardens plot boundaries are not negotiable and must remain in the location they were in when you were assigned the plot. There needs to be enough space in the paths to allow gardeners and maintenance staff to safely navigate your plot with wheelbarrows and mowers. Any plants growing outside the garden boundary could be accidentally mowed over. Greenbelt reserves the right to adjust garden boundaries if needed for maintenance or safety purposes.

**Any raised bed gardening, perimeter fencing or hardscapes must be approved.**

The use of pressure-treated wood for any reason is prohibited. Young Farm is intended to be an “in-ground” garden space. If you find the soil not suitable for in-ground gardening, you can meet with the Garden Manager to discuss soil amendments or converting them to a raised bed.

Perimeter garden fences must be supported by wood or metal posts that are no more than six inches deep to prevent damaging the irrigation lines. Purchasing, construction and disposal of raised beds, fences and hardscapes is the responsibility of the gardener and must be removed when your time garden at Young Farm is over.

**Harvest vegetables before they rot.**

Rotting vegetables attracts pests and can spread 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.

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

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

**Outdoor furniture is limited to chairs/small tables and must be removed at the end of the season.**

Any furniture brought into the garden must be approved by the garden manager, lead paint free and removed at the end of each season (November). Special winter consideration can be made for winter storage if necessary. Otherwise, these items will be thrown out at the end of the gardening season.

**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:**

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

### **Garden Manager**

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