



## 2026 Garden Guide

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### Introduction

Helfand Farm Community Gardens (HFCG) began operation in 2013, as a volunteer-run organic Community Gardens. It was largely through the hard work, planning and vision of Mike Humphrey that we have the Community Gardens that we enjoy today. Amy Thurber, Renate Oliver, John Wilde and other volunteers also provided support that was instrumental to starting the Community Gardens' as a community-run nonprofit. From the beginning we have always required the use of organic practices, but we are not organic certified.

The Dartmouth Natural Resources Trust (DNRT) provides us with our excellent site, but we are a separate, self-funding, self-managing, 501c3 non-profit. Thanks to the generosity of the DNRT and the Helfand Family, we garden on one of the premier agricultural properties in Dartmouth. There is a long history of food production at Helfand Farm, as evidenced by the many farming artifacts found on site. The DNRT has a small exhibit in their office lobby, for those interested in learning more about this history.

We are funded primarily through our members' plot fees. Improvements are made possible by our Plant Sale Fundraiser, along with occasional grants and gifts. We are governed by an elected Board of Directors with elected Officers, by our bylaws and by the Rules, Terms and Responsibilities set out in this Guide. Gardeners may attend Board meetings, which are conducted by Zoom. Board members' names are included at the end of this Guide, with contact information for select members.

We grow food for local soup kitchens and have a number of volunteer opportunities. We have Facilities and Programs Committees, which report to the Board, and are open to all members. We have gardeners of all levels who are eager to share ideas and knowledge. We have an excellent series of workshops and events throughout the season, culminating with our August Celebration and our Annual Meeting of the members in October.

Welcome, and enjoy the Gardens!

### **Amenities:**

- Gravel parking lot
- Port-a-jon
- Shared "Weed n' Pick" Garden
- Soup Kitchen Garden
- Greenhouse (to support the above projects, plus our annual Plant Sale)
- Gardening Tools, Carts and Wheelbarrows
- Picnic Table
- Shared and personal compost bins
- Free compost (for use on garden plots only, from our shared bins)
- Optional supplies, organic fertilizer and premium compost for sale
- Gardening workshops and social events
- Friendly supportive environment and gardening advice

### **Terms of Plot Rental**

- 1) The gardener pays \$65 per 10' x 20' full plot, or \$35 per 10'x10' half plot, per season.

- 2) First year gardeners are limited to no more than two plots. Returning gardeners are limited to no more than six plots.
- 3) The rental season begins Nov. 1 (or later) and ends the following Oct. 31. There is no provision for partial season reductions. Refunds for canceled leases may be given up to March 1.
- 4) Returning gardeners must both reserve and clean up their plot(s) by October 31st (see Rules: Maintaining Your Plot). If a cleanup extension is given, the deadline may be no later than March 1.
- 5) For returning gardeners, fees and completed plot registration form must be received by March 1. For new gardeners, fees and completed plot registration form must be received within two weeks of their plot assignment being emailed to them.
- 6) Returning gardeners who have not reserved and/or cleaned up their plot by October 31st (or any extension date) are assumed to have abandoned their plot(s). Returning gardeners whose fees and completed plot registration have not been received by March 1st are likewise assumed to have abandoned their plot(s). Any personal property left on abandoned plots becomes the property of HFCG (or the incoming gardener, at HFCG discretion).
- 7) Gardeners must follow all rules and responsibilities, as set out below.

### **Gardener Responsibilities**

- 1) To read and to follow all rules in this Garden Guide, posted at Helfand Farm Community Gardens (HFCG) and updated from time-to-time via email, and to ensure that anyone personally invited to HFCG does the same.
- 2) To follow any unwritten policy or request made by the Board of Directors, or any designated agent thereof, in the normal course of community gardens management, and ensure that anyone personally invited to HFCG does the same
- 3) To meet all deadlines, including both reserving and cleaning up pot(s) by October 31st and paying for plot(s) by March 1st.
- 4) To not Smoke at the gardens
- 5) To treat fellow gardeners with respect.
- 6) To follow applicable Federal, State and Municipal laws and regulations.

- 7) To keep up-to-date with HFCG announcements and any changes to rules communicated via email.
- 8) To respond to any direct communication from HFCG when a reply has been requested.
- 9) Failure to comply with any of these responsibilities, and/or the rules set out below, may result in forfeiture of your plot, at the sole discretion of the HFCG Board of Directors.
- 10) There is currently no volunteer requirement, but volunteering is encouraged and always welcome!

## Rules:

### **Rule: Organic Only**

1. ALL gardening inputs, materials and methods must be **organic** (including fertilizer, pest, weed, fungal and disease control). Commercial products must be OMRI-approved, unless otherwise exempted by HFCG. Seed and transplants are not required to be organic.

### **Rules: Parking and Garden Access**

2. The hours are from sunrise to sunset. The parking lot entrance is chained, but not locked. If the chain is up, please feel free to take it down and let yourself in. The last person to leave the Gardens at any time of day must replace the chain.
3. **Parking in the DNRT lot is strictly prohibited, except in rare instances when exceptions are made by the DNRT.**
4. Driving up to the plots, past the second chain, is discouraged as it damages the grass and can pose a risk to people and property. Vehicles may be driven up to the plots for the purpose of unloading difficult materials and promptly returned to the parking area. Parking outside of the parking lot is only allowed for gardeners with mobility issues, with permission of the Board.
5. Vehicle access to plots may occasionally be closed (indicated by orange cones blocking the grass driveway), due to wet conditions. Even when the cones are not up, gardeners are asked to avoid driving on the grass during wet conditions, to avoid ruts and turf damage.
6. Each renter has exclusive rights to their own plots. No one can enter other people's plots without explicit permission.

7. Well behaved dogs are allowed only if they are on a short leash and under control at all times. Owners must promptly clean up after them and keep them off of other gardeners' plots.
8. Community gardeners, their guests and their dogs are prohibited from entering the adjoining agricultural fields, and other private properties.

## **Rules: Maintaining Your Plot**

### **Plot Borders**

9. All gardening activity, including fencing, must be inside any corner stakes installed by HFCG maintenance volunteers. If stakes are ever removed, gardeners are still responsible for maintaining original 10' x 20' plot dimensions and not encroach on neighboring plots or the original grass aisles at their designated 5' and 10' widths (which is important for access by garden carts, mowers, vehicles and larger maintenance equipment).
10. Plants, rocks, fences, hoses and other materials must not block any part of the shared aisles.
11. Garden plot borders must be maintained and kept clear of tall grass, weeds and cultivated plants.

### **Tidy Plots**

12. Gardeners are responsible for keeping their gardens neat and orderly, not overrun by weeds and strewn with broken stakes, broken fences, dead plants, etc. Plots need not be completely weed-free, but at a minimum should consist of more crops than weeds and should be free of large and/or woody weeds.
13. Gardeners whose plots are poorly maintained or unsightly may be denied renewal for the following season.
14. Plots should be neat and prepared for winter by October 31st. Plots must be ready for rototilling (or for being turned-over, if worked by hand). If an extension is given, this work must be completed prior to plot renewal (which is due March 1st). Cover crops and other late season or overwintered crops are exempted from this deadline. Plants that require removal later in the season (such as Dahlias) may be attended to when suitable.
15. If a plot must be abandoned, please notify Tori.
16. Gardeners may not renew any plot(s) that have gone unplanted for two consecutive seasons. Since we have a waiting list, allocation of plots to active gardeners is a priority.

17. Garden activities are not allowed to affect neighboring plots with shade, water or creeping or spreading plants, and plants may not spread into the aisles. Tall or spreading crops should be planned accordingly.

### **Prohibited Plants**

18. All crops must be lawful and renters shall at all times conform to and comply with, all Federal, State and Town of Dartmouth laws, rules and regulations. The cultivation of marijuana is prohibited, regardless of legal status.
19. No invasive/aggressive plants are allowed, including raspberry, blackberry, lemon balm, wineberry, mint, horseradish and Jerusalem artichoke.
20. Woody perennials (including shrubs & trees) are not allowed. Asparagus may not be planted, but pre-existing asparagus is grandfathered in.

### **Rules: Garden Waste, Composting and Trash**

21. All trash must be removed from the Gardens each day. There will be no provision for trash at the site.
22. Disposal of trash in DNRT bins is not allowed.
23. Vegetable waste or weeds from garden plots should be disposed of in personal or shared compost bins. (With exception for invasives, such as mint, which should be discarded off site.) No other materials should be disposed of in compost bins, unless specifically allowed by the Board of Directors.
24. Unwanted rocks must be taken to the rock pile, and can not be left in the aisles or elsewhere.  
***Rocks left in aisles become a safety hazard when we mow the grass.***

### **Rules: Water**

25. Water conservation is a priority. Watering must be done by hand, soaker hose, or drip line, while the gardener is present. No sprinklers are allowed except when used by management on the Soup Kitchen Garden and other Helfand-managed spaces.
26. Hoses are supplied by gardeners. Keep in mind, hoses left on the stands are considered available for all to use. When using a hose that is not your own, please use care and treat it as you would treat your own property. Hoses left lying on the ground may be damaged by mowers or line trimmers.

27. Spigots must be turned off after use. Spigots left on can cause hoses to burst, resulting in property damage and expensive water bills if someone is not present to turn off the water.
28. Red Frost-Proof Spigots MUST be both turned off and have the hose disconnected after use. Failure to do so during cold weather could result in damage that would be expensive to fix. Whoever connects the hose is responsible for disconnecting.

## **Rules: Shared and Personal Property**

29. Owners take the sole risk for tools, supplies or any personal property left in their plots, or anywhere at the Gardens.
30. Anyone wishing to leave tools or materials in common areas, must get approval from the Board of Directors. This also applies to leaving anything left in the tool or fertilizer shed.
31. Shared tools, wheelbarrows and carts must be promptly returned to the shed when they are no longer in use.
32. Any purchased compost should be transported to garden plot(s) no later than August 1st. Unused compost left after this date may be sold to interested gardeners, or used in the Soup Kitchen Garden, Greenhouse or Weed n' Pick Garden.
33. No power equipment may be used at the Gardens without explicit prior permission from the Board, for safety and liability reasons.
34. Any personal property left on abandoned plots becomes the property of HFCG (or the incoming gardener, at HFCG discretion).

### **What may be taken home**

35. Only produce (vegetables, flowers, etc.) may be taken home. Soil, compost or other materials may not be removed from the property without permission by the Board of Directors.

## **Facilities**

### **Garden Plot Water Spigots**

Our primary water system is frost-sensitive – it is turned on when we have passed the risk of frost (typically in April) and turned off at the end of the year, when risk of frost is anticipated (October or November). Both will be announced by email.

### **Frost-Proof Spigots**

We have three newly-installed RED spigots, which are usable year-round. Watering cans are available next to the spigots. Please note Rule #28: Red Frost-Proof Spigots MUST be both turned off and have the hose disconnected after use. Failure to do so during cold weather could result in damage that would be expensive to fix. Whoever connects the hose is responsible for disconnecting.

### **Garden Tools**

We have a wide variety of garden tools available in our tool shed (larger shed next to the bulletin board). We are always open to suggestions or donations of useful garden tools. Wheelbarrows and carts are next to the tool shed. Please contact Ben or Tori, if you need the combination for the shed. Last one to leave, please lock the shed.

### **Port-a-Jon**

A Port-a-Jon is available April through October (exact dates will be announced by email).

## **Plot Fencing Recommendations**

Helfand gardeners are free to decide whether they want any plot fencing, and to choose their own plot fencing materials, but because so many ineffective fences have been installed, we offer fencing material recommendations.

No non-electric perimeter fencing can keep out raccoons, but fortunately, they have not been a particular problem. Deer can jump over tall fences, but a fence at least 5' tall around a single plot may deter them, especially if other plots are more accessible. Rabbits have been common at the Gardens, and have caused losses, but they are often content with the grass and white clover in the mowed areas. Woodchucks have been a persistent and destructive pest. DNRT, our host, does not allow trapping or killing of wildlife.

Medium gauge, galvanized or coated wire is the recommended fencing material, in part because it can withstand the line trimmer.

Bird netting is almost completely ineffective as fencing, and has caused the death of entangled animals at the Gardens. Rabbits can bite through any kind of plastic fencing, when they choose to. Light weight metal chicken wire is floppy, non durable and crumples so easily that it is difficult to make it meet the ground.

The gauge of a wire indicates its thickness, and gauge numbers increase as the thickness gets smaller. 14 gauge wire is definitely effective, and stiff enough to stand straight up. Sturdy metal posts are highly recommended over light wood or plastic posts, and a minimum fence height of 3' is suggested for woodchucks.



If Gardens members would like more information on design, installation, materials or sources for fencing, or for other supplies, any Board member can help direct you to that information.

## **Soil, Organic Fertilizer and Compost**

### **Soil Characteristics of Helfand Farm**

Helfand Farm is USDA-designated “Prime” farmland, consisting of Paxton Fine Sandy Loam. Paxton soil is the state soil of Massachusetts. Our soil has a high water table, particularly during the early season (April and sometimes May), when water is temporarily close to the surface. As a result, many gardeners who garden early favor raised beds. With or without raised beds, soil compaction can be minimized by using permanent beds that are not walked on. We encourage “no till” or “low till” practices, particularly to minimize weeds.

### **Organic Only**

As stated in rule #1, ALL gardening inputs, materials and methods must be organic (including fertilizer, pest, weed, fungal and disease control). Commercial products must be OMRI-approved, unless otherwise exempted by HFCG.

### **Soil Fertility**

We sell an organic 7-2-6 fertilizer and lime/gypsum, with suggested annual application rates posted in the fertilizer shed for each. This specific combination of fertilizers and minerals is based on our soil tests, the advice of local experts and years of gardening experience at Helfand Farm. It contains composted chicken manure and can be used without additional compost. Gardeners are welcome to use organic fertilizers of their own (we suggest minimizing magnesium and phosphorous inputs, focusing on nitrogen, potassium and calcium). The fertilizer we sell is located in the fertilizer shed, next to the bulletin board. Please contact Ben or Tori, if you need the combination (last one out, please lock the shed).

### **Compost we Sell**

We also sell Dartmouth-made Tom’s Best Organic Compost to our gardeners. We find that a little goes a long way and suggest 1 wheelbarrow per garden plot. Plots may benefit from larger one-time applications of up to 3-4 wheelbarrows per plot (we can often provide records of compost application, upon request). Compost does not need to be “tilled-in”... simply applying it to the surface of garden beds is sufficient to feed soil and plants. This compost is properly aged, but still high in carbon, so it is not suitable for filling raised beds, except when mixed with topsoil (but it is a great mulch on top). It is also low in nitrogen, which is why we sell fertilizer in addition to compost. This compost is based primarily on horse manure and bedding with additional vegetable waste as well. It is produced using hot composting methods and is free of weed seeds.

Our soil is naturally high in phosphorous, which is one reason why large amounts of manure-based compost are not needed (and can potentially tie-up soil micronutrients or even cause

ecologically-damaging runoff). However early season use of compost, 7-2-6 and/or Organic Gem (fish fertilizer) can be helpful, since phosphorous is less available to plants in cooler temperatures.

Please note rule #32, with respect to purchased compost:

Any purchased compost should be transported to garden plot(s) no later than August 1st. Unused compost left after this date may be sold to interested gardeners, or used in the Soup Kitchen Garden, Greenhouse or Weed n' Pick Garden.

### **Our Free Compost**

The compost we produce from garden waste is free to use on your garden plots, but may not be removed from the property (Rule 35). It has a lot of soil mixed-in, making it weaker than the compost we sell, but also an excellent free option for filling raised beds (unlike the compost that we sell). Gardeners have used this free local resource with great success, particularly when improving a previously neglected plot. We suggest application of larger amounts, compared with the compost that we sell.

## **Seeds and Plants**

Plants and seeds are not required to be organic certified.

### **Seed Library**

We have a seed library, typically available during Saturday morning Volunteer hours (It is available 7 days a week in the shed, once temperatures are warm enough... availability is subject to change and will be announced in emails). Elizabeth stocks our seed library from donations she acquires, along with additional seed donated by Marlene and others.

### **Plant Sale Fundraiser**

Organized annually by Marlene, our plant sale fundraiser has become one of the events our volunteers are most proud of. There are TWO sales, an early sale in April (for cold-tolerant plants) and a larger sale in May that includes additional summer vegetables (please see our website for dates and times). We specialize in vegetables (particularly tomatoes, in the May sale) but we also have a selection of herbs (mainly annuals) and a few favorite flower varieties, such as zinnia and sunflowers.

Everything is grown on site, in our unheated greenhouse. Our plants receive extra TLC from experienced gardeners, plus some of the best organic ingredients available (including a soil mix made by Vermont Compost). We sell exceptionally healthy plants, without charging a premium – if you grow them next to plants from a big box store, we think you'll see the difference!

We typically offer a Friday presale, to allow our gardeners and volunteers to get the best selection and avoid the Saturday morning crowds. Our gardeners and volunteers also enjoy a 20% discount (please remind the cashier, if you attend on Saturday). All proceeds go to support Helfand Farm

Community Gardens (HFCG), an all-volunteer 501c 3 nonprofit. Even with the discount, your purchase goes a long way towards supporting the Community Gardens!

### **Seed Sources:**

The following are seed companies recommended by our gardeners and volunteers. Johnny's and FEDCO are especially popular locally, with most of the seed for our plant sale coming from Johnny's.

Thank you to Abbi and Marlene for starting this list.

Johnny's Select Seeds  
955 Benton Ave.  
Winslow, ME 04901-2601  
[Johnnyseeds.com](http://Johnnyseeds.com)

FEDCO Seeds  
PO Box 520  
Clinton, ME 04927  
fedcoseeds.com

High Mowing  
76 Quarry Road  
Wolcott, VT 05680  
highmowingseeds.com

Pinetree Garden Seeds  
PO Box 300  
New Gloucester, ME 04260  
[superseeds.com](http://superseeds.com)

John Scheepers  
Kitchen Garden Seeds  
23 Tulip Dr.  
PO Box 638  
Bantam, CT 06750-0638

kitchengardenseeds.com  
Territorial Seed  
PO Box 158  
Cottage Grove, OR 97424  
territorialseed.com

Seed Savers Exchange (Specializes in Heirlooms)  
3094 North Winn Rd.

Decorah, Iowa 52101

[seedsavers.org](http://seedsavers.org)

Baker Creek (Specializes in Heirlooms)

2278 Baker Creek Road

Mansfield, MO 65704

[rareseeds.com](http://rareseeds.com)

## **Weed n' Pick Garden**

Managed by Marlene and other volunteers, this is a “pick your own” garden for our members and volunteers. Produce includes asparagus, strawberries, blueberries, tomatoes and herbs (annual and perennial). Gardeners are encouraged to help with weeding.

## **Soup Kitchen Garden**

Managed by Marlene and other volunteers, this garden produces over 4,000 lbs of exceptional produce for local soup kitchens and food pantries (which frequently lack fresh produce). It also serves as an educational demonstration garden and testing area for various organic gardening methods and materials.

## **Volunteer Opportunities**

***We are an entirely volunteer-run 501c3 nonprofit – Thank you to all of our great volunteers!***

### **Gardening Volunteers**

Greenhouse, Soup Kitchen Garden and Weed n' Pick Garden

Saturdays (start date announced via email)

10:00 am to 12:00 pm (subject to change, see emails for latest information)

Join fellow Helfand volunteers to prepare for our Soup Kitchen Garden, Weed n' Pick Garden and Plant Sale Fundraisers. Work at your own pace and pick up gardening tips as you go. If Saturdays don't work for you, please contact Marlene to learn how you can help on other days. For more information, please contact Marlene: [loraxfan@comcast.net](mailto:loraxfan@comcast.net)

### **Maintenance Volunteers**

It takes a lot of maintenance to keep the Community Gardens in tip-top shape! Our greatest need is for mowing, trimming and rototilling (a riding mower, and multiple push mowers, line trimmers and

rototillers are available). Additional work is needed... everything from brush clearing, plot staking, to keeping the tool shed swept and organized. We occasionally have special projects as well. Volunteer for the job that matches your interest and time. Contact Aaron for more information: [crossett.aaron@gmail.com](mailto:crossett.aaron@gmail.com)

### **Board Meetings**

Helfand Board meetings are the first Wednesday of each month, at 5:30 pm. We are currently meeting via Zoom. Helfand gardeners are welcome -- if you would like to attend, please let us know and we will make sure you get the Zoom info: [helfandfarmcommunitygardens@yahoo.com](mailto:helfandfarmcommunitygardens@yahoo.com)

## **Weather Station with Agricultural Sensors**

*This is still a work in progress, as of writing (December, 2025). In addition to standard weather sensors, we will have a soil thermometer and soil moisture sensor. Gardeners will have free access to live and historical data on any device with internet access – phone, tablet or PC/Mac. We hope to have everything fully installed and accessible to gardeners in spring of 2026 (we will update gardeners when everything is ready).*

## **Contact Information**

Ben Rapoza  
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Marlene Holohan  
Programs Manager (Greenhouse, Soup Kitchen Garden, Plant Sale, Weed n' Pick Garden, Events)  
[loraxfan@comcast.net](mailto:loraxfan@comcast.net)

Aaron Crossett  
Facilities and Maintenance Manager  
[crossett.aaron@gmail.com](mailto:crossett.aaron@gmail.com)

### **Board of Directors**

Lisa Allen  
Abbi Canney, ***Treasurer***  
Bobby Mouzon  
Kendra Parker  
Tori Pilger, ***Vice President***  
Ben Rapoza, ***President***  
Elizabeth Winiarz, ***Secretary***  
Bess Coughlin

### **Online:**

[helfandgardens.com](http://helfandgardens.com)  
[facebook.com/HelfandFarmCommunityGardens](https://facebook.com/HelfandFarmCommunityGardens)  
[youtube.com/@helfandgardens](https://youtube.com/@helfandgardens)

### **Mailing Address:**

Helfand Farm Community Gardens  
PO Box 80644  
Dartmouth MA, 02748

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