

**OPERATING RULES
Garden Centers**



A. General

1. Operating hours: Sunrise to sunset.
 - a. The garden centers may be accessed only by authorized volunteers or occupants and lessees who are actively leasing a garden, tree, shade and/or Vegepod plot in that particular garden center.
 - b. Laguna Woods Village residents who don't lease a garden center plot may arrange to tour the garden centers by making an appointment with staff or one of the center volunteers. Someone is typically available every day from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Contact staff at 949-268-2387 or gardencenters@vmsinc.org to make arrangements.
2. Guests must be accompanied by an authorized resident or staff member at all times.

B. Safety

1. Emergency telephones that connect directly with Security Services are located at both garden centers.
 - a. Garden Center 1: Emergency telephone is located at the Moulton side front gate.
 - b. Garden Center 2: One emergency phone is located outside of the office; another is on the east side of the storage building (tool shed and restroom) near the Maintenance Center.

C. Who May Rent a Garden/Tree Plot

1. Any resident may request a garden center use permit. One permit is issued per manor. These permits are accepted only on official forms provided by GRF. All persons using a plot must be listed with the following contact information: resident ID number, manor number, address, home phone number, mobile number and email if applicable.
2. All fees are according to the GRF schedule of fees and must be paid upon receipt of the garden center invoice.

D. Signing Required Release and Waiver of Liability Agreement

1. All gardeners and partners are required to sign a hold harmless, release and waiver of liability agreement. Forms are available online, at the garden center office or the recreation office. The waiver agreement form will be updated periodically and require a new signature.

E. Temporary Working of Your Plot by a Designated Person

1. If a garden plot holder is unable to work their plot for a period of time, the registered partner may work the plot in their absence. If a partner is also unavailable, contact the garden center office for guidance. A temporary partner may be assigned but will need to have a partner waiver on file for that plot. Guests may assist in the maintenance of the plot contingent upon a plot holder or their partner being present the entire time the guest is working on the garden.

F. Gardener Responsibilities

1. Gardeners are responsible for keeping plots free of excessive weeds and debris. Long periods of neglect will be addressed by GRF staff and may result in the loss of a garden plot.

2. Gardeners are expected to manage the garden in their plot on their own. GRF staff are not generally available to assist in the day-to-day activities expected of a garden plot.
3. Gardeners are not allowed to sublease or otherwise turn their plot over to someone who is not legally documented on the use permit as a partner.
4. Work must commence within 30 days of permit issuance.
5. Gardeners are obligated to plant fruits, vegetables and/or flowers.
6. Seasonal gardeners (“snowbirds” or summer “desert escapees”) are required to share their plot(s) with a partner who may maintain the plot in the opposing seasons.
7. Gravel and decomposed granite are not permitted for use in garden or tree plots. Gravel is only permitted for use on Garden Center 2 walkways.
8. Disposal of trash and debris is the responsibility of each gardener. Large green waste and general trash dumpsters are located strategically throughout the facilities. Do not place debris in walk areas or leave debris in wheelbarrows. Green waste items must be placed in the green waste bins. All trash bins must be kept closed after use.
9. Keep walkways clear and empty and return wheelbarrows to their proper storage areas. Gardeners who use GRF-furnished tools are responsible for the proper care, cleaning and return of said tools to the sheds from which they were obtained.
10. Gardeners are permitted to plant within their assigned garden space only. Planting in any common area, such as in the parking lot, within medians, around structure or in walkways is not permitted unless approved by recreation staff.
11. A licensed contractor must be hired for any improvements over \$500; these contractors must have current copies of their license and liability insurance and sign the GRF contractor/handyman release agreement, all of which must be presented to garden center staff prior to commencement of work.
12. A handyman may be hired for any improvements under \$500 and must provide proof of insurance and sign the GRF contractor/handyman release agreement, both of which must be presented to garden center staff prior to commencement of work.

G. Pets/Animals at the Garden Centers

1. Pets are allowed at the garden centers but must be on a leash at all times and remain inside the plot while the owner is gardening. Staff reserve the right to deny access to pets that are deemed aggressive or unruly.
2. Do not feed wildlife in the garden centers.

H. Annual Fees

1. As part of the initial plot rental process, residents will receive a statement from the Financial Services Department with the amount due for their plot(s). All checks will be made payable to GRF. The rental fees along with all applicable documentation must be submitted to the recreation office. GRF may revoke the use permit of any gardener who is 30 days delinquent in payment of his/her plot rental.
2. Plot rentals are for one calendar year and billed annually.

I. Assignment of Garden Plots/Spaces

1. Garden center staff will keep an active waiting list based on a first-come, first-served basis. When a plot is released, the first resident on the waiting list will be offered that plot. The plot will be transferred “as is” unless a dangerous structure must be removed or there is no working water source.
2. Plots vary in location, actual size and previous improvements. Any fencing around a plot must be maintained by the current use permit holder.

3. There is a limit of one garden plot and/or one tree plot per manor. Anyone with more than one garden plot and/or more than one tree plot prior to May 3, 2016, will be allowed to keep a maximum of two garden plots not to exceed approximately 400 square feet and/or two tree plots.
 - a. If the primary permit holder releases the plot, the registered partner may become the permit holder for one plot.
4. Use permits shall be personal to the gardener and shall not be assignable to any other person and shall not pass on to any successors or assignees unless the plot is shared by another resident who is a registered partner. If during the lease agreement a resident moves or dies, the resident sharing the plot may have an opportunity to become the use permit holder.
 - a. If the plot is offered to a partner, it will be in the order in which the names of the partners appear on the current use permit.
 - b. If the new designated use permit holder has another plot, they must relinquish a matching number of plots, which will be made available to those on the waiting list.
5. When a garden plot becomes available, all permanent structural improvements made to the plot become the property of GRF. Other gardeners are not allowed to remove items from the plot.

J. Watering/Irrigation

Any gardener watering their garden plot must be present at the garden center the entire period of time the water is turned on, unless an alternative irrigation system is in place.

1. All watering at the garden centers is subject to the El Toro Water District rules and any other governing agency or municipality.
2. All hoses must be equipped with a positive self-closing shut-off hose nozzle. Turn off the water faucet once watering is complete.
3. Staff shall be notified when faucets or valves are found to be leaking. Water shut-off valves must be accessible from outside the plot. All fences must have an opening at the faucet for easy access by garden center staff.
4. Irrigation work that will require shutting off water to a garden area must be done by a garden center staff member.
 - a. Common area water sources may not be blocked by personal garden fences or other obstructions.
5. All gardeners are responsible for prudent, non-wasteful watering practices and preventing water runoff from damaging adjacent plots.
6. No irrigation systems other than drip or soaker systems are permitted in a plot.

K. General Gardening Information

1. Garden plots must be maintained year-round.
2. Plot holders who do not actively garden during long periods (more than one month) must plant a cover crop or cover the plot with plastic to limit invasive weed growth. The registered partner may maintain the plot in the plot holder's absence.
3. All plants with invasive roots (e.g., banana trees, mint, canna lilies, bird of paradise, sugar cane and ginger) are not permitted and must be removed or grown in a container that can contain the roots.
4. Significant shading of a neighbor's garden plot with any plant or material is not permitted. Gardeners are required to monitor the growth of the plants and limit the height of structures in their garden as not to adversely affect the sunlight in neighboring gardens.

L. Garden/Vegetable Plot Specifics

1. Staff must approve any fence or other structure prior to it being built per GRF guidelines. Proper materials and structural integrity will be required as part of the plan. The plot and all improvements become GRF property upon release of the plot; no financial arrangement can be made with a prospective new renter.
2. Each gardener is responsible for walkways within and around their plots. Walkways must be clear of obstacles and weeds. No intrusion of growing material into the walkways.
3. No trees may be planted in **any** garden plots except in pots that fully contain the roots.
4. Plot holders may grow vegetables, fruits, herbs, flowers and edible weeds in their plot.
5. Plot holders may grow plants considered invasive, such as bamboo, mint and Asian Yams, as long as it is in an above ground mobile container, planter, etc. Invasive plants, such as bamboo, mint and Asian Yams and trees already existing in the garden plot must be removed by the gardener or transferred to a pot that can contain the roots.
6. Edible weeds must be harvested and not allowed to go to seed.
7. Plot holders must use at least 75% of the plot for planting. Plots are not to be used to store materials/tools not associated with gardening.
8. Plot soil must be maintained in an aerated state and no modification or amendment to the soil may be added that will impede the future use of the plot, including but not limited to gravel and decomposed granite.
9. Rice and sugar cane are water-intensive crops and are prohibited.
10. Crops must be harvested and not left on the ground to rot and go to waste.
11. All plants, planters, planter boxes and trellises must be placed inside the plot perimeter. Plants may not over hang into the walkway. Garden center staff has the right to trim excess plants hanging into the walkway without prior notification.

M. Shade House Spaces

1. Each bench space is approximately 16 square feet and will be assigned on a one-per-manor basis.
2. The shade house will be kept locked at all times when it is not in use by those with use permits. Keys will be issued to all shade house permit holders. Keys must be returned to the recreation office when the use permit is terminated.
3. All materials stored under the benches, such as pots, potting mixtures, etc., must be kept neat and orderly, and must be maintained above the ground to reduce the opportunity for rodent nest sites. Materials storage nonessential to shade house gardening activities is prohibited.
4. Each shade house gardener is responsible for elimination of all debris and weeds in their half of the walkways around their bench space.

N. Fruit Tree Areas

1. All new trees planted in tree plots in both garden centers shall be dwarf and semi dwarf fruit trees only and must obtain written approval in advance by the Recreation Department. Trees that are not fruit trees currently planted in both garden centers may be grandfathered in at garden center staff discretion. Untended or unapproved trees may be removed by garden center staff after notification to tree plot use permit holders.
2. In both garden centers, existing trees must be maintained as suitable for the plot space and the neighboring garden plots. New trees that are planted should only grow to a reasonable size that will fit in the plot and not intrude adjacent gardens.

3. Tree plots must use shared water spigots. Please roll up your hose and place it in your plot after each use.
4. Gardeners are reminded of the steep sloping grades in the tree area; lessees must maintain safe walks, steps and slope retaining walls at all times.
5. Tree plots must be maintained year-round and must be clear of excessive weeds, fallen leaves and unharvested fruit.
6. Structural fences are prohibited around tree plots. Temporary fencing may be installed with staff approval. Due to the nature of the trees in the plots, fences that can be removed are necessary in order to prune as needed.
 - a. Temporary fencing guidelines are as follows:
 - I. 14-gauge wire fence or flexible plastic mesh with $\frac{3}{4}$ " to 1"
 - II. Up to 2½" Metal T or U Posts not to exceed 6 feet in height
 - III. Galvanized steel fence T-Post clips
 - IV. Wooden boundary footings are permitted
 - V. Concrete or other hard curing materials are prohibited.

Temporary fence sample pictures below:



O. Garden Product Policy

1. Any organic substance for use in the gardens should be approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Organic Program or by the Organics Materials Review Institute (OMRI). To determine whether a substance is allowed in a community garden, check the USDA National Organic Program National List, Subpart G, 205.601 and 205.602 or the OMRI website, www.omri.org.
2. Organic gardening: The form of agriculture that relies on techniques such as crop rotation, green manure, compost and biological pest control. Organic gardening uses fertilizers and pesticides but excludes the use of manufactured (synthetic) fertilizers, pesticides (including herbicides, insecticides and fungicides), plant growth regulators, sludge and nano materials.

3. All bottles must be clearly marked and stored in such a way that they can be read by staff from outside the plot.

The following table includes, but is not limited to, recommended/not recommended substances:

	Recommended	Not Recommended
PEST AND DISEASE CONTROL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt) - Soap spray - Horticulture pepper/onion spray - sulfur - Wood ashes - Sour milk solution - Lace wings - Dormant oils - Microcop or equivalent - Diatomaceous earth (DE) - Baking soda - Borax, boric acid - sluggo - Lady bugs - Tangle foot - Marigolds - Beneficial nematodes - netting - Pyrethrum* <p>* Pyrethrin is a naturally occurring insect-killing chemical derived from chrysanthemum flowers. In the flowers, these bug-killers exist as a mixture of six separate chemicals that together are called pyrethrum or pyrethrins. Pyrethrins (without piperonyl butoxide or other enhancers) are permitted for use on organically grown crops.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Roundup is forbidden - Rotenone - Pyrethrate, pyrethroids - Nicotine sulfate - Malathion - Diazinon - Sevin - Organophosphates - Finale - Dursban - Organ chlorides - Chlorpyrifos
FERTILIZERS	<p>Recommended</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cotton seed - Kelp - Compost - Manure - Blood, bone, horn and hoof meals - Liquid fish or seaweed - Fertilizers classed as organic 	<p>Not Recommended</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ammonium sulfate - Ammonium nitrate - Muriate of potash - Auperphosphates - Highly soluble chemical fertilizer - Ozmicote - Nonorganic MiracleGro

P. Authority, Enforcement of Rules and Revoke of Use Permit(s)

1. VMS staff is authorized to make periodic checks of all garden/tree plots to ensure they are being maintained and adhering to the operating rules. Staff will communicate concerns via email or phone to ask that these issues be addressed.
2. If a gardener is found to be in violation of the operating rules, the gardener shall be notified by Recreation Department staff of alleged violations and required to comply within a reasonable time from the date of the notice. Failure to comply within the allowable time may result in a hearing for disciplinary action by GRF. Violation protocol is as follows:
 - Notice 1: Verbal outreach to resolve the violation; if no response after seven days
 - Notice 2: Letter outlining the violation and required deadline completion; if no response after 14 days
 - Notice 3: Compliance Division notified of violation.
3. Upon termination or revocation of a use permit, a gardener shall not be entitled to any refund or apportionment of any fee paid to GRF for any material planted, growing or otherwise located within the garden centers or for any improvements made on the premises by the gardener, and at the option of GRF, all or part of such material and improvements shall become the property of GRF. Gardeners are responsible for leaving plots weed and debris free and ready for the next gardener. If not, GRF may charge for cleanup when a garden is left in such a condition as to require clean up.
4. Violations that warrant disciplinary action through Security Services or the Orange County Sheriff's Department (if warranted):
 - a. Theft of tools and equipment
 - b. Theft of produce and plants
 - c. Vandalism of tools, equipment
 - d. Foul language and offensive behavior, including but not limited to threats, intimidation, violence, racial/ethnic slurs and sexual harassment (GRF anti-harassment policy)
 - e. Odors, including second-hand smoke (cigarettes, cigars, marijuana, vaping, etc.), are a violation of the GRF anti-harassment nuisance policy
 - f. Violation of GRF policies
 - g. Receiving more than three combined written warnings without correction of the issue(s)
 - h. Failure to pay registration fee by the deadline

Note: The Recreation Department reserves the right to review and adjust the operating rules to accommodate the needs of the community at any time. The Recreation Department also reserves the right to enter any plot at any time. All GRF policies and procedures apply to the use of the amenities.