



SAFETY IN THE GARDEN

Community Garden Safety Tips

Community gardens bring neighbors together and are a source of neighborhood pride. Studies show that residents living near gardens and green spaces tend to perceive their neighborhoods as being safer. As a steward of the garden, you are able to enhance neighborhood safety by building community with gardeners and other neighbors, being a positive presence in the area, paying attention to what is happening around you and reporting criminal and suspicious activity.

On occasion, we hear about crime happening at gardens throughout the City. Incidents have included the destruction of plants, locks and structures, graffiti on sheds and theft of fruits, vegetables and tools. Gardeners have also encountered or witnessed individuals acting aggressively. Below are crime prevention strategies that can contribute to the overall safety of the gardens.

– Report suspicious activity, crime, and livability issues in Portland –

Report criminal and suspicious activity happening now by calling:

- 9-1-1 for an immediate threat to life or property or a crime in progress.
- The police non-emergency number at 503-823-3333 for suspicious activity that is not an immediate threat to life or property.

Report all incidents of crime so that trends may be identified and addressed.

If a crime has occurred and the suspect is long gone:

- Report online at portlandoregon.gov/police/cor for thefts from the garden, sheds or cars and vandalism (not graffiti) when there is no known suspect.
- Call 503-823-3333 for other crimes not meeting the online criteria except graffiti.
- Use PDX Reporter app to document and report graffiti at portlandoregon.gov/pdxreporter. Take a photo of graffiti, report and remove it as soon as possible. To learn more about graffiti prevention, reporting and removal, visit portlandoregon.gov/oni/graffiti.

If there are ongoing issues in the park, such as alcohol and drug use and off-leash dogs, contact Portland Park Rangers at 503-823-1637 or email rangercallcenter@portlandoregon.gov.

In addition to the agencies listed above, please report all theft, vandalism, and other incidents to the Community Gardens office at pkcomgard@portlandoregon.gov or 503-823-1612 so we can track occurrences.



PORTLAND PARKS & RECREATIONSM
Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland



Get to know fellow gardeners, neighbors, and other users of the garden, park and immediate neighborhood

When you become acquainted with people in the area and the activities of the neighborhood, you can more readily identify suspicious and problem activity.

- Organize vegetable exchanges, group gardening times and get-togethers to connect with other gardeners. You will develop a sense of community and learn who is allowed and not allowed in the garden.
- Reach out to neighbors who have properties overlooking the garden. Ask them to look out for your plot and reinforce your relationship by offering them flowers, fruits and vegetables from time to time.
- Meet coaches of sport teams at the park and relay what they can do to report problems at the park and garden.
- Adopt a policy of wearing a formal name tag, so that members can easily identify each other.
- Exchange contact information so that you can communicate with gardeners, neighbors and park users if there is criminal activity or problems in the area. Let them know how they can report problems.
- Involve all members of the neighborhood in community gardening, including kids, so all members take ownership of what happens in your shared space.
- Form a Neighborhood or Park Watch that includes neighbors and garden members.



Practice personal safety skills and encourage your peers to follow suit

- Never jeopardize your safety for a radish, cucumber or zucchini... your safety comes first.
- Lock the gate to the garden behind you while gardening. If possible, secure the gate in a way that allows you to easily exit in the event of an emergency.
- Carry a cell phone with you at all times.
- Memorize the cross streets of the garden so that you can communicate the info to the dispatcher who fields 9-1-1 and non-emergency calls. When you call from a cell phone, the dispatcher cannot readily determine your exact location.
- Communicate with a friend or family member that you are going to the garden.
- Consider gardening with a buddy during daylight hours, or when there are a number of activities scheduled at the park.
- Do not bring purses or personal items into the garden. While you are working, these items are difficult to monitor. Bring only what you need such as a few dollars, credit cards, your keys, insurance card and driver's license. If you must bring items, store them in your trunk or out of sight before reaching the garden. Lock your car and park where you can observe it.
- If you park your car close to the plot and there is a problem, use your car remote panic button to draw attention to the area.
- Take a personal safety course and learn de-escalation techniques. The WomenStrength program through the Portland Police Bureau offers free self-defense courses for women and co-ed safety classes for community groups. Visit portlandoregon.gov/police/womenstrength to request a workshop. Their Street Safety brochure is available at portlandoregon.gov/police/article/61863.

Adopt crime prevention strategies for the community garden

- Lock the fence and storage shed. If you cannot monitor the shed, lock it up.
- Randomly rotate the disks of the combination lock so the code is not easily determinable. Do not leave the combination in a publicly accessible place. Notify your garden manager or staff if there is a problem with the lock or an ongoing security problem at the garden.
- Keep tools secured in sheds when they are not in use.
- Maintain an inventory of your tools. Take photos or videos of them and keep record of their serial numbers. If there are no serial numbers, consider engraving an identifier. If they are stolen, provide this information to the police to improve the chances of recovery if they are found.
- Determine whether the perimeter fence is sufficient to prevent trespassing. If not, check with Portland Parks about alternatives such as extending the height of the fence with latticework or planting prickly/thorny vegetation along the perimeter such as Oregon Grape so that it's not easy to scale the fence. This will require a Community Project Proposal and coordination with staff and other gardeners.
- Be strategic about where you plant crops. If the theft of fruits and vegetables is a problem, consider planting root or other low growing vegetables that are difficult to reach from the periphery of the garden. You can also plant less popular crops such as kohlrabi along the fence line. Another option is to confuse a thief by planting atypical varieties in that area such as white eggplant.
- Consider visibility in the design of your garden plot. Tall plants make it difficult for neighbors and park users to observe activity. Where possible, plant lower growing plants in areas that have been vulnerable to theft and vandalism.
- Harvest your crops as soon as they are ripe to reduce temptations to steal.
- If there are consistent problems at your location, identify the day and time when problems are occurring and organize positive activities during that time. This will bring more responsible users to the area and can deter criminal or problem activity.
- Report burned out park and street lights and other maintenance issues. Make sure you know whom to report problems to and do so in a timely manner.

Residents benefit from having community gardens located in their neighborhood and the positive presence of gardeners who are invested in the area. By employing crime prevention strategies, you can increase the enjoyment, safety and productivity of your community garden.

About Portland Parks & Recreation Community Gardens

The Community Gardens program has provided gardening opportunities for the physical and social benefit of the people and neighborhoods of Portland since 1975. Currently, 51 community gardens are located throughout the city, each developed and operated by volunteers and PP&R staff, and offering a variety of activities. If you have questions about garden safety or would like more information, contact Community Garden Program Staff at 503-823-1612 or e-mail pkcomgard@portlandoregon.gov and we can work with you to determine how to involve Crime Prevention Program resources.

About the City of Portland's Crime Prevention Program

The Crime Prevention Program provides prevention advice, organizes and trains Portland residents and businesses on crime issues. To connect with a Crime Prevention Program Coordinator in your Portland neighborhood, call 503-823-4064, email onicpa@portlandoregon.gov or visit www.portlandoregon.gov/oni/cp.