

STONY KILL FOUNDATION

ORGANIC COMMUNITY GARDEN HANDBOOK

2026 SEASON



STONY KILL FARM ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER
79 FARMSTEAD LANE WAPPINGERS FALLS, NY 12590



Welcome to the Stony Kill Foundation Organic Community Garden!

This handbook gives you the information you need to have a successful experience in our Community Garden. All gardeners and their guests are required to abide by the rules in this handbook. This handbook and associated rules are subject to updates by Stony Kill Foundation or New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) at any time as necessary.

For questions or concerns throughout the year, contact Stony Kill Foundation at garden@stonykill.org or 845-831-3800

Welcome to the Organic Community Garden at Stony Kill Farm Environmental Education Center

Stony Kill Farm Environmental Education Center (Stony Kill Farm) is a New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) facility managed by Stony Kill Foundation (SKF). The Foundation's mission is to connect the public to nature, sustainable farming, and local history. Our hands-on programs provide environmental education through the lens of agriculture.

Stony Kill's Community Garden was established in 1979 to provide an opportunity for community members to cultivate a section of the farm for personal use and to share knowledge and techniques with other gardeners.

Community Garden Plot Rentals

Individuals may rent a plot measuring 20' x 20' for a year, beginning March 1 through November 30th, at a cost of \$60.00 for the season. All plots are the property of Stony Kill Farm and are rented on a first-come, first-served basis. Gardeners use this land at the discretion of SKF and DEC. Gardeners understand that the garden is on state property, owned by DEC, and therefore all public rules apply. Rental fees are non-refundable and will not be prorated. Plot rentals are non-transferable. Plots that are given up or revoked for cause will be returned to Stony Kill Foundation for reassignment. Plots are assigned after payment is received. Community Gardeners are limited to their own plot(s) identified in the rental agreement. In the case of more than one garden plot rental, there is no guarantee that the plots will be contiguous. Multiple plots cannot be combined across an aisle or walkway.

Regulations and Renters' Agreement

The Stony Kill Foundation Community Garden is a collective of users whose activities and behaviors affect all other renters and users, as well as the long-term health of the farm itself. Therefore, each renter must agree to the conditions of use detailed in this handbook in order to provide the safest and most enjoyable experience possible. Community Garden conditions of use and guidelines are subject to annual review and revision.

Gardeners agree to abide by the practices, guidelines, and regulations defined by DEC and Stony Kill Foundation to safeguard the property. Gardeners also agree to comply with any instructions given by DEC or Foundation staff or posted by them.

FAILURE TO FOLLOW ANY OF THE PRACTICES, GUIDELINES, REGULATIONS, OR RESTRICTIONS OF THE NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION OR STONY KILL FOUNDATION CAN RESULT IN THE LOSS OF GARDENING PRIVILEGES WITHOUT REFUND OF RENTAL FEES.

Stony Kill Farm Environmental Education Center Essentials

Farm and Garden Hours: Stony Kill Farm and the Community Garden is open from sunrise to sunset every day of the year, including holidays. Anyone wishing to enter or remain on the property after dark or before dawn must request written permission, unless they are attending a Stony Kill Foundation program. Stony Kill Foundation and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) reserve the right to close the farm or the Community Garden at any time if necessary for reasons which might include maintenance, community safety, farm events, or by additional discretion.

Office: The Stony Kill Foundation office is in the red farmhouse next to the pond at the south end of the farm. Staff are typically present on the farm during weekdays from 9am-5pm.

Restrooms and Building Access: Gardeners are permitted use of the public restrooms next to the barn (when open). Gardeners may not enter other farm buildings and restricted areas unless they are invited during a Foundation program.

Prohibited and Restricted Items and Activities: Stony Kill Farm is governed by DEC and anyone who enters the property must follow New York State Codes. Prohibited Items that cannot be brought onto the farm include: alcoholic beverages, firearms, grills, litter, animals, and plants (except those to be grown in the Community Garden). Collection of animals or plants from Stony Kill Farm, except for plants grown in the Community Garden is also prohibited. Violators are subject to fines and prosecution.

Dogs and Other Pets are Prohibited: DEC regulations concerning the use of environmental education centers (including Stony Kill Farm) prohibit pets on center grounds except by written permission. The exception to this rule is for service dogs trained to do tasks for a person with a disability, with the tasks directly related to the person's disability. Emotional support animals are not considered service dogs.

Restricted Activities: Some activities that require special permission on the farm: fires, ice skating, swimming, boating, hunting, fishing, or trapping, unless part of a Foundation program or with written permission from DEC.

Safety and Security: Neither DEC nor SKF are responsible for the loss or damage of personal property. Valuables should not be kept in the Community Garden. Any suspicious activity should be reported to the Foundation at garden@stonykill.org or 845-831-3800. If criminal activity is observed, please call 911 with any relevant information. Local police, forest rangers, and environmental conservation officers do regular patrols of the farm and will issue tickets for illegal activity or violations of DEC regulations.

Stony Kill Foundation Organic Community Garden Terms and Guidelines

As part of the Stony Kill Foundation Community Garden (SKFOCG), gardeners agree to the following terms and guidelines:

1. **All gardeners are required to read and sign the 2026 Terms and Guidelines form as well as complete the online SKF Community Garden Plot rental form by February 28.** Gardeners must include most recent contact info, automobile make, model and license plate number, along with a working phone number and email. Gardeners are responsible for updating SKF with new contact information if it changes over the rental season.
2. **Plot Rentals:** Plots are rented “as-is,” with a two plot maximum per person, with up to 4 plots per household. Garden Plot Renewals are sent out by email in early February. **Renewing plot renters must complete an online renewal form by February 28. All cash and check payments must be received within 10 days of the form submission. A paper copy of the renewal form will be available for pick up in the farmhouse office after January 15. If you are not renewing your plot, please notify SKF in writing by Feb 28 to garden@stonykill.org.** Renters may not transfer their garden plot to another person without receiving explicit permission from Stony Kill Foundation. Doing so can result in loss of gardening privileges at the renter’s expense. Renters cannot create additional garden plots outside the Community Garden perimeter. These will be considered illegal and must be removed immediately.
3. **Plot Maintenance:** During the spring and summer months, the community gardens are in full bloom, with visitors, students and campers walking the pathways to enjoy the sights, sounds and smells. Plots are maintained by the renter and are expected to be kept in good condition throughout the season. SKF and DEC do not till or plow plots between renters. Gardeners are expected to remove their own trash from the property. Maintaining a garden plot takes time so please expect to spend a few hours each week maintaining your area. Gardeners must keep their plants within the limits of your plot. Plants are not permitted to grow outside of your fence line. Tall plants and structures cannot shade or interfere with a neighbor’s plot. Failure to maintain your plot may result in your plot being forfeited at the discretion of SKF. We want everyone to have a successful growing season. If you are temporarily unable to maintain your plot, please reach out to SKF before we reach out to you. We will do our best to get volunteers to help if there are extenuating circumstances and you’re unable to maintain your plot. If you are unable to maintain your plot during a season and plan to discontinue use of your space, please let SKF know so that we can reassign your plot.
4. **Community Work Days:** In the spirit of building our community of gardeners, we will be scheduling several work days throughout the growing season. Please plan to attend at least 1 work day session. Community work days focus on accomplishing projects for the common good of the garden. Those who do not attend a work day session will be charged an additional \$30 and an invoice will be sent by email. A sign-up form will be emailed to gardeners before work days and staff will check in gardeners at arrival. Please save one of the dates below on your calendar:
 - Saturday, April 25 from 10am - 12pm (National Volunteer Week)

- Saturday, May 2 from 10am - 12pm (I Love My Park Day)
 - Wednesday, July 15 from 6 - 8pm
5. **Garden Committee:** SKF has established a Community Garden Committee consisting of SKF staff, board members and garden renters. Gardeners are welcome to join the committee to assist in planning work days projects, planning educational workshops, communication, and to encourage community minded, collaborative efforts in the community garden.
 6. **Yearly Orientation Meeting:** SKF will host a yearly orientation meeting for new gardeners and renewing members each season. The meeting will be held at Stony Kill Farm and will give renters an opportunity to meet other gardeners and ask SKF questions. SKF will go through the handbook, and we'll typically have a presentation by a guest speaker about gardening topics. This meeting is recommended but not mandatory. **The 2026 season orientation meeting will be on Saturday, April 11 from 10 am - 12 pm.**
 7. **Use of Organic Methods Only:** Only organic gardening practices are permitted. Stony Kill Farm is an environmental education center, and we are happy to meet with you to discuss best practices for organic gardening. All chemical pesticides, herbicides, and chemical fertilizers such as Miracle-Gro, Preen, Spectricide and Round-Up are not permitted. Empty containers that once contained prohibited materials also cannot be brought to the farm, even if the container carries another product. Traps and ultrasonic pest controls are not permitted. Any issue with pests should be reported to the Foundation. Great ways to garden organically include using compost to enrich your soil and natural pest control and fertilizers. Kaolin Clay is natural and can be effective in curbing squash beetles. If you are not sure if your method is environmentally friendly and pesticide free, please contact SKF. Please be mindful of your neighbor's garden when applying your natural deterrents and fertilizers.
 8. **Courtesy:** We are a community of gardeners, learners and teachers and we are also neighbors. There's no better way to make a friend in the gardens or start a conversation than saying hello! Let's be kind and considerate of our fellow gardeners, visitors and SKF and DEC staff. Renters are not permitted to enter or alter another renter's garden plot or fence, without their express permission. Note that the Foundation or DEC can enter a garden plot at any time as needed to perform maintenance, inspection, remove restricted materials, or other duties.
 9. **Adjoining Pathways and Fencing:** For the safety of fellow gardeners and visitors, please keep pathways clear of hoses, equipment, growing plants and weeds. Pathways adjacent to the plots are part of the rental agreement, and Community Gardeners are expected to maintain those areas. Please don't deposit weeds or litter in the pathways. Gardeners are permitted to install temporary fencing and gates around their plot at their own expense, in accordance with the rules. Fences may not be higher than 5 feet tall and must be see-through all around.

Electric fencing and barbed wire are not permitted. Galvanized metal wire fencing with T-posts is recommended. Fences must be temporary and easily removable at the end of a gardener's rental period (November 30th). Fences should not cause excessive shade for neighboring plots and must be kept tidy and straight. Sagging or deteriorating fences and gates must be maintained or removed at the gardener's expense. Locks on garden plot gates are allowed, however, DEC or SKF staff may remove locks if needed under any circumstance at the plot renter's expense. If fencing is installed that does not meet these guidelines, renters may be required to remove fencing at their own expense.

- 10. Weeds and Invasives:** Weeds grow fast and keeping on top of them can be as simple as weeding 20 minutes a day. Scuffle hoes are great for pulling that stubborn dock plant. Gardeners must maintain their plots by weeding their gardens. Landscape fabric is not permitted in garden plots. We recommend mulching around your plants and pathways to prevent weeds and conserve water. Weeds and other compostable plant materials may be deposited in the marked compost dumping area located at the front of the Community Garden between the Raised Bed Gardens and the Community Garden (see map). This is the only area that is designated for dumping compost. Please do not start new compost piles along the roadway or near the mulch pile. Please remove any plastic, twine and trash before tossing into the compost pile. For a complete list of compostable items that can be tossed in our compost please review our Gardening Tips page. Renters are expected to begin maintaining their plot by June 15 of each year. Plots that are not active by this time or that are not maintained during the growing season may be considered abandoned. Please notify SKF if you are unable to begin gardening by June 15 or if you will be unable to keep up with maintenance of your plot due to travel, illness, or other circumstances. Refunds are not issued for abandoned plots. Gardeners who do not maintain their plot will not be invited to return next year. We recommend planting any plants that spread, like mint, in containers. If you notice particularly aggressive invasives like mile-a-minute or tree of heaven, please contact SKF. Trees are not permitted in the gardens and should be removed while still saplings.
- 11. Waste:** All garbage must be taken off the farm. Farm dumpsters are restricted to DEC, Foundation, and Common Ground materials and are not available for public use. Depositing material in other areas is not permitted. Gardeners found to be dumping litter in compost areas, aisles, neighboring fields, or other areas may lose their gardening privileges.
- 12. Water:** Water conservation is extremely important at the farm. Watering early in the day is most effective, with most vegetable gardens requiring just 1" of water per week. Water for the Community Garden is provided by a single, metered well that serves most of the lower section of Stony Kill Farm. During the summer, the community garden is responsible for the highest amount water usage on the farm. Gardeners must be conservative when using water to prevent damage to Stony Kill's well and to help ensure that water will be available during the growing season. The Foundation is financially responsible for all well repairs. Overuse or drought conditions can result in water being restricted or

shut off, in which case SKF will work to alert gardeners of any restrictions and updated watering schedules. Water pressure may also be impacted by the number of users at a given time, and gardeners are asked to be mindful of the need to share access to water and to be respectful of one another when sharing our water.

- Water is not available before April 15 or after October 15, nor after dark on any day.
- **Unless otherwise determined, water will be available in the garden as follows:**
 - **Mornings: 7 - 9am and Evenings: 5 - 7 pm (or sunset)**
- Gardeners arriving at 7am are requested to check for and close any spigots in the garden that have been left open from the previous day to prevent water waste. All spigots are numbered. If a spigot has been left on, please report to SKF staff at garden@stonykill.org.
- Water restrictions and amended watering schedules may be implemented during the season if necessary to prevent damage to the Stony Kill well.
- Please use water-conserving practices. Only water the roots of your plants instead of broadcast spraying over plants. Use mulch to reduce evaporation. Avoid overwatering or letting hoses run unattended. Please keep all spigots closed when water is not flowing.
- Use of personal garden hoses is permitted, but hoses should not be left running when not in use. They must be disconnected from the main line when not in use.
- Sprinklers are not permitted. Open-channel irrigation using trenches in the dirt is not permitted. If you find a water spigot left open, wasting water, please close the spigot. If there are any leaks or breaks in the waterline, a valve located at the rear of the greenhouse (see map) should be shut off and the Foundation contacted immediately.

13. Mulch: Mulching is recommended for weed control and water conservation. When available, mulch can be taken from the Stony Kill Garden chip or mulch piles (see map) on a first-come, first-served basis. Renters should not bring uncured wood chips or mulch onto the farm because they can include invasive organisms or materials that can be harmful to the plants or animals on the farm. Straw mulch purchased from garden stores and use of cardboard and newspaper that does not contain toxic inks is also permitted. Landscaping fabric, plastic, and other non-biodegradable mulch is not permitted.

14. Vehicles: SKF and Common Ground have their busiest seasons in spring and summer with school field trips and summer camp, which means there is a constant stream of youth and adults walking all areas of the farm. Vehicles must stay on designated roadways and parking areas only (see map) and must abide by the 5 mph speed limit. They may not be driven on the fields, trails, or any restricted roadway. Vehicles may not be driven in the fields next to the community garden, even when loading and unloading material. Vehicles must be operated with caution and at a slow speed to protect the safety of the many children and adults who spend time at Stony Kill Farm.

- 15. Garden Tools, Implements, Containers, and Rain Barrels:** Renters using and storing hand tools and gardening implements in their plots, do so at their own risk. Chairs and work benches are permitted. Rain Barrels and similar containers must be covered with netting or mesh to prevent mosquito growth. Storage of propane tanks, gasoline canisters, and other hazardous materials is not permitted. Equipment must be stored away at the end of the season or removed from your plot till next season.
- 16. Umbrellas, Trellises, Shelters and Other Structures:** Shade umbrellas may be used only while you are present in your plot. At all other times, umbrellas must be closed and secured to prevent accidents from wind. Small trellises and arbors to promote plant growth must be easily removable, under 7 feet tall and not cause undesirable shade to neighboring plots. Other structures, shelters, and canopies are not allowed unless approved by SKF. The Foundation may require a structure to be removed if requested by DEC or otherwise determined necessary. All materials within plots must be kept tidy and in maintained condition. All tables, chairs and umbrellas must be removed at the end of the season.
- 17. Time Away:** Please notify SKF if you plan to be away for an extended period, more than 1 week, and would like to have your ripe produce harvested for donation to the local food pantry. Our goal is to eliminate food waste and contribute to the community. You still need to be responsible for keeping your gardens maintained by keeping down the weeds so consider asking a neighbor for help. Again, plots that are not maintained will receive written notice.
- 18. End of Season and Winterizing Plots:** By November 30, all plots should be winterized and all items secured for the season. Plots should look presentable over the winter, with weeds cut back, fences straightened, garbage removed, and materials secured from wind. Tables, chairs, umbrellas, and other large seasonal equipment must be removed from plots. Plots that are not winterized by November 30 will be contacted via email and allotted 10 days to winterize with large equipment removed and small equipment stored. Renters who do not comply may not be invited back for the next season. If a renter does not plan to return the following year, the plot must be cleaned out. Materials remaining will be considered abandoned and discarded. Departing gardeners may contact SKF to request to leave fencing or other helpful materials for future gardeners. Any materials not approved by the Foundation to be left, must be removed by the renter.
- 19. Theft and Vandalism:** Gardeners are prohibited from entering other renters' plots unless they have express permission from that garden plot renter. Renters who are caught stealing or vandalizing another garden renters plot will immediately lose their garden privileges and be asked to vacate their garden plot along with belongings within 5 days of notice. Vandalism includes but is not limited to stealing equipment or plants, cutting or removing plants, vandalizing gates and fences, and vandalizing DEC/SKF equipment. If a garden plot renter witnesses theft or vandalism, please report it to SKF office at garden@stonykill.org as soon as possible. Garden plot renters must provide make, model and plate

number of vehicle on rental form.

20. Plot Monitoring and Loss of Gardening Privileges: DEC and SKF staff and volunteers conduct regular inspections of the community garden. A renter found to be in violation of the garden rules and requirements will be notified by SKF via email and requested to promptly address the issue. **Renters must address the violation within 10 days or they may lose their gardening privileges without refund.** Renters who repeatedly violate garden rules or who behave in a manner that is dangerous, disruptive to the Community Garden, or disrespectful to other gardeners, SKF or DEC staff, or visitors to Stony Kill Farm, will lose their gardening privileges and be told to vacate the plot(s) they have rented without refund. If a renter is instructed to vacate the garden due to these violations, they will have 10 days to remove their materials, after which time, anything remaining will become the property of Stony Kill Foundation and the plot will be offered to a new gardener. Stony Kill Foundation maintains the discretion to revoke a renter's gardening privileges and reassign a garden plot at any time without refund. It is a priority of Stony Kill Foundation to maintain a safe and courteous environment and to encourage collaborative, nurturing enjoyment of the Stony Kill Foundation Community Garden.

Prohibited Materials:

- **Chemical fertilizers, herbicides, or insecticides.** Including (but not limited to) common materials such as Miracle-Gro, Preen, and Roundup
- **Grills or fires (even enclosed), propane canisters and unmonitored gasoline containers.**
- **Alcoholic beverages, cigarettes and tobacco products, illegal drugs**
- **Firearms.**
- **Tires.** Whether used as planting beds or any other reasons.
- **Radios or electronic audio devices with speakers.** Headphones are permitted.
- **Political signs, advertisements, or postings.** Unless granted permission from Stony Kill Foundation.
- **Pets.** Including dogs, cats, chickens, goats, ponies, reptiles, etc.

21. Process for Revoking Garden Plot Rental

FAILURE TO FOLLOW ANY OF THE PRACTICES, GUIDELINES, REGULATIONS, OR RESTRICTIONS OF THE NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION OR STONY KILL FOUNDATION CAN RESULT IN THE LOSS OF GARDENING PRIVILEGES WITHOUT REFUND OF RENTAL FEES.

While we hope that those who use our garden plots will follow the rules set forth in this document and demonstrate good citizenship with all members of our community garden, we recognize that there may be instances in which we may need to remove an individual(s) from the community garden. Stony Kill Foundation maintains the discretion to revoke a renter's gardening privileges and reassign a garden plot

at any time and for any reason without refund. It is a priority of Stony Kill Foundation to maintain a safe and courteous environment and to encourage collaborative, nurturing enjoyment of the Stony Kill Community Garden. Renters who fail to abide by the rules of the Stony Kill Farm Community Garden Handbook will lose their gardening privileges and be asked to vacate the plot(s) they have rented within 10 days, without refund.

SKF will use the following process if we need to revoke a garden plot rental and/or the use of the community garden:

1. SKF staff will maintain a written log of any complaints or incidents that are received in relation to the use of the garden plots/community garden.
2. SKF will provide written notice by email if a renter is in violation of garden rules within 5 days of violation.
3. If renter fails to rectify violation within 10 days after receipt of such notice, SKF may terminate garden plot rental by providing written notice by email, with the termination date effective 10 days after delivery of such notice.
4. Upon termination of a lease, the renter will vacate the garden plot(s) within 10 days, removing their materials and leaving the plot(s) in at least as good order and condition as when assigned.
5. Any personal property remaining in the plot(s) after termination will become the property of Stony Kill Foundation.
6. If a renter violates the garden rules 3 times during a season and is notified 3 times via email for these infractions, SKF will revoke their gardening privileges and renter will be asked to vacate the plot(s) they have rented within 10 days, without refund.

We wish everyone a successful growing season and look forward to working with you!

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

- **JANUARY 21** - Lottery opens for new renters
- **February 1** – Renewal form available at Farmhouse and online
- **FEBRUARY 28** - Renewal form submitted to SKF and fees paid **AND** Lottery closes
- **MARCH 1** – First day of plot rental
- **MARCH 10** - Cash or check payments must be received for renewals
- **APRIL 11 - 10am - 12pm** - Orientation meeting for new and returning members (recommended but not mandatory)
- **APRIL 15** - Water turned on for the season
- **APRIL 25 - 10am - 12pm** - Community Garden Work Day
- **MAY 2 - 10am - 12pm** - Community Garden Work Day
- **JUNE 15** – Begin maintaining plot

- **JULY 15 - 6 - 8pm** - Community Garden Work Day
- **OCTOBER 15** - Water turned off for the season
- **NOVEMBER 30** - winterize plot deadline, end of season

The site plan shows the layout of Common Ground Farm. At the top is the 'Greenhouse'. Below it is the 'COMPOST AREA'. To the right of the compost area is the 'Raised Bed Gardens' area, with a note '(Please Do Not Touch)'. Below the raised bed gardens is the 'WATER VALVES*' area. To the left of the compost area is the 'Common Ground Farm' area, which includes a 'Gravel Road' and a 'Common Ground Farm' area. The plan also shows various vehicle parking lots (A12-H12) and a 'NO VEHICLES' zone. The layout is as follows:

- Greenhouse** (top right)
- COMPOST AREA** (top center)
- Raised Bed Gardens** (top left)
- WATER VALVES*** (middle right)
- Common Ground Farm** (middle left)
- Gravel Road** (bottom left)
- Vehicle Parking Lots:**
 - A12-H12:** A12, A11, A10, B12, B11, B10, C12, C11, C10, D12, D11, D10, E12, E11, E10, F12, F11, F10, G12, G11, G10, H12, H11, H10
 - A9-H9:** A9, A8, A7, B9, B8, B7, C9, C8, C7, D9, D8, D7, E9, E8, E7, F9, F8, F7, G9, G8, G7, H9, H8, H7
 - A6-H6:** A6, A5, A4, B6, B5, B4, C6, C5, C4, D6, D5, D4, E6, E5, E4, F6, F5, F4, G6, G5, G4, H6, H5, H4
- NO VEHICLES** (bottom center)

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***Note:** The main water valves are located on the garden side of the greenhouse. Please only touch these valves if there is a water line break, and the water needs to be shut off quickly.

