
Carkeek Park Demonstration Gardens

2024 Maintenance Guide for Volunteers

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Website: <https://www.carkeekpark.org/gardens-volunteers/>

Tools, restrooms, and gardening during Park hours

Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) provides all tools for volunteers including wheelbarrows, rakes, shovels, and hand tools. If you prefer using your own hand tools, please bring them. No power tools are allowed. An outdoor spigot is available for clean-up.

SPR provides arborist wood chips, compost, and gravel in the maintenance yard. We pile all yard waste in one bay. Please cut up large pieces of wood to four feet in length, or save for edging.

A portable toilet can be found at the bottom of the trail heading west beyond the Oak Tree Garden. Round trip is approximately half a mile. The Visitors Center is closed, and the ELC is a preschool.

You may encounter visitors when working in the garden. If you are comfortable, take the time to answer questions about plants, the garden, or the park, or refer them to another gardener who can. Frequent questions are about unlabeled plant ID, or directions to the beach or restrooms.

Insurance

While you are gardening, SPR is liable for your safety. Please pace yourself and do tasks that are within your comfort level.

If you become injured, depending on the severity, 1) we keep a first aid kit in the maintenance yard; 2) we call 911 and your emergency contact.

Design

As of the publication of this Guide, the founding gardeners are developing a Master Plan for the garden. Our goal is to improve the understanding of our purpose, and plan for the design evolution of the gardens. With this foundation in place, new leadership will be better able to advocate, fund, and maintain the gardens as an integral part of Carkeek Park, and a Master Gardener Demonstration Garden.

Paths

We want as many visitors with different abilities to navigate the gardens, so we weed and replenish the gravel on a regular basis. Gravel patching is encouraged after weeding. After gravel is dumped and spread, tamp it down to provide a stable surface and better weed suppression (tamper is kept in the locked trailer). Keep path edges defined and tidy. Natural wood edging is separated by three stones and repeated. Tidy this edging if it gets disturbed.

Plants that spill over a garden “edge” provide visual softening. If the plant is misplaced and blocking the path, it may be pruned or transplanted. Ask first before doing either.

Permeable pavers around the ELC are weeded and filled with gravel, then tamped down. Moss can be retained and grass weeded out. If the holes aren't filled, the pavers are unsafe for gardeners or the public to navigate.

Plant list and labels

Our master plant list: <https://www.carkeekpark.org/gardens-volunteers/garden-plant-list/>

Our goal is to keep it updated each year as we refine our garden design. We welcome any corrections on ID.

When gardening, let us know if you find a white paper label that needs to be replaced with a permanent black label. Sometimes we find labels moved around. Please try to find the original location.

Watering May through September

The gardens have underground water sources in proximity to the beds. Brass quick-connectors with hose bibs are kept locked in the yard. Please ask for help if you need training on how to connect them. We aim for deep watering once per week when drought begins and ending when the rains return. Currently each volunteer will be given watering instructions and a location to monitor during regular crew hours in the summer. Hoses and emitters are left in proximity to each bed, stored along the path edging, or in unplanted areas in a loose coil. Report any leaks or malfunction.

NOTE: Our goal is to install a drip irrigation system and to improve our water conservation. Volunteers will still be responsible for watering, but it will be faster so other maintenance tasks can be accomplished.

Maintenance levels 1 and 2

Two maintenance levels are most visible from spring until frost. We regularly weed invasives in all of the beds. We water weekly from the first extended drought to when regular rains return. The two levels are:

Level 1: less maintenance

Do low to no maintenance or tidying. For beds on the edge of the forest, we maintain only eight feet in from the path so the forest duff is left intact year to year. Some hallmark signs of Level 1 are allowing plants to grow into each other to provide safe nooks and crannies for a healthy ecosystem. Natural mulches and dead leaves are left in place to decompose. Trees and tree branches are allowed to die, break, and fall naturally.

Level 2: more maintenance

Mimic nature with increased clean-up in the spring to encourage new growth and shape trees and shrubs. Some hallmark signs of Level 2 are removal of dead wood and brown or damaged leaves, selectively arborized trees to allow more light, more pronounced margins around plants, and use of wood chip mulch in bare areas. Plants are combined to show naturalistic and informal design options within each themed garden.

Signed gardens and maintenance levels

- Dogwood Garden: Level 2
- North Garden: Level 2
- Ethnobotany Garden: Level 2
- Shady Woodland Garden: Level 2
- Hazel Wolf Garden: Level 1 at the edge of the forest; Level 2 along maintenance yard fence
- Butterfly Garden: Level 2
- Prairie Garden: Level 2
- Oak Tree Garden: Level 2
- ELC Garden: Level 1 at edge of east and south forest; Level 2 at north and west entrance

Other areas of interest: Levels 1-2

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- Parking lot island: Level 2
 - Parking lot surround: Level 1
 - Meadow surround: Level 1
 - The Visitors Center landscape; concrete retaining wall: Level 2
 - Split rail fence: Level 2
 - Garage garden: Level 2

Time spent

In general, maintenance requires 64–80 hours per month averaged over the year, with more hours spent in the spring, summer, and fall. The lead gardener keeps track of gardener hours per work session and reports to the Green Seattle Partnership.

Stick tents

Used to mark new or at risk plants, and keep people and pests off.

Pests

These include deer, racoons, rabbits, mice and rats, gophers, squirrels, voles, birds, and slugs. We do nothing to discourage them. Regular human disruption occurs in the garden such as graffiti, garbage, and sometimes tree and shrub damage. Ask if you encounter something you consider unsafe or requires a group decision about disposal or clean-up.

Flags

These are used for communication and a temporary maintenance aid.

- **Yellow = Caution!** We mark new or vulnerable plants and seeded areas until plants are well established.
- **Red = Major problem!!** Maybe a weed or a plant that needs editing, etc.
- **Blue = Water issues.** New plants might need extra water. Blue flags also identify irrigation problems.

Propagation

Bit by bit we are learning how to grow and propagate native plants by letting nature take over or by helping the process along. Seeds, plant divisions, live staking, and volunteer seedlings are used to revegetate new areas. If you are editing a ground cover, or reducing a shrub that has viable roots, please ask about potting it up and storing in the nursery.

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