

Dahlem Ecology Farm

Betty's Garden Guidelines - 2025

DahlemCenter.org

General Information

Betty's Garden at the Dahlem Ecology Farm, located at 1429 Wickwire Road, provides garden plots and education about how to grow food and flowers organically. You are encouraged to meet and make friends with other enthusiastic gardeners, participate in meetings and enjoy the various social events. This is our 16th year and each year gets better! **This year, in order to continue, we will need you to step up and volunteer!**

Betty's Garden is open during daylight hours, seven days per week. Be sure to hike the trail over Crouch Creek to the Dahlem Center. Dogs or other pets are not allowed on Dahlem property except on the Butterfly Trail surrounding Betty's garden. For obvious health reasons, dogs are not invited inside the gates of the gardens.

Betty's Garden is named for Betty Dahlem Desbiens, who provided generous start-up funding that supported installation of the deer fence and water system.

There is an extensive trail system at Dahlem – you can walk from Jackson College to Dahlem main campus and then on to the gardens. The trail map is on the Dahlem website and there are maps posted along the trail. <https://www.dahlemcenter.org/visiting-dahlem/>

Important Contacts

Hannah Schauer
Executive Director
hschauer@dahlemcenter.org

Libby Greanya
Communications
lag10@comcast.net

Terrie Goede
Plot Assigner
helter10@gmail.com

Garden Management

Betty's garden is managed and overseen by The Dahlem Conservancy. Volunteers makes decisions about the garden.

Plot Reservation

Dahlem membership is required for a plot reservation. (See DahlemCenter.org for membership options.)

New gardeners can apply for an available plot or be added to the waiting list by contacting the Dahlem Center. New prospective gardeners can get a tour of the garden with current gardeners to learn about responsibilities and ask questions.

Payments (\$45.00 plot fee) for **all** plots are due March 9th, 2025. **A signed application form and payment is required to guarantee the plot assignment.**

Garden Amenities

- Garden plots are 20' x 20' with walkways between each plot.
- The cost of the 20 by 20 foot plot is \$45.00 per year. Dahlem membership is also required. See website for various membership levels.
- Deer fencing surrounds the perimeter of the Garden, plus a critter fence along the bottom edge of the fence.
- Wheelbarrows, water and hoses are supplied.
- Porta-potty is located near the Cattle Barn for public usage (May through Oct).
- Two three-bin compost sites are available for gardeners to use (east and west sides). The Ecology Farm also receives occasional loads of compost and woodchips for gardeners to spread on their plots free of charge.
- Garden equipment (tomato cages, stakes, etc.) may be stored in the open Cattle Barn during the winter.
- The only public apiary in Michigan on the west side of the garden. (Beekeeping course is available. See Dahlem website for details.)
- Soil tests, for a fee, can be obtained from MSU or the Jackson Conservation District.

Gardener's Responsibilities

1. Pay plot fee by March 9th, 2025.
2. Fill out and sign application by March 9^h, 2025.
3. Adhere to gardening standards and land use policies.
4. Plant by June 15th, 2025 to avoid plot forfeiture.
5. Maintain plot and surrounding paths during the growing season, approx. May through Oct. (Notify Libby ASAP if unable to maintain plot.)
6. Clear plot in accordance with guidelines by November 1st, 2025.
7. **We encourage you to offer your ideas and suggestions for improvement. This is YOUR garden! Without your help, we will not continue.**

Betty's Garden Standards

- **Garden plots are organic.** Any fertilizers and weed/pest control measures allowed in the gardens must be approved by major organic certification agencies.
- **Do not plant non-acceptable plants**, including invasive species, mint, grapes, raspberries, garlic mustard, morning glories, trees, bushes, shrubs or illegal/dangerous plants.
- **Herbicides are prohibited.** Mechanical controls such as hoeing, mulching, and hand weeding are recommended.
- **Synthetic insecticides are prohibited.** Most problems can be controlled if you maintain a healthy soil, choose disease-resistant varieties, water judiciously, and remove diseased plants from the garden.
- **Gardeners must stay on-site when watering.** Water and hoses are provided on-site. The water should be turned off at the faucet and the hose should be bundled neatly off the walkways.
- **Garden plots and surrounding pathways must be maintained and weeded during the growing season**, approx. May through Oct. **IMPORTANT:** Plots that are not maintained during the growing season will be considered abandoned.

- **Gardens must be planted by June 15.** Any plot not planted by June 15th will be forfeited by the renter without refund. (If there is an unanticipated delay, please contact Libby.)
- Weeds and diseased plants should not be put in the compost bins.
- Remove all trash.
- Arrange for someone to assist with plot maintenance if you will be gone.
- **Garden clean up must be completed by November 1st.**

Additional Information

Path Maintenance

Mulching the pathways that surround your garden plot is important maintenance. You will spend a lot of time and money preparing and planting your garden. You will now want to protect your investment from the invasion of weeds, such as quack grass.

The most permanent solution that you'll see used in our gardens is to cover the pathways with a heavy black plastic (provided by Dahlem in the open cattle barn) that will block the sunlight that the weed needs. Gardeners have been successful using this method combined with adding a thin layer of wood chip mulch (provided by area tree-trimmers) over the top of the black plastic to help keep it in place, protect the plastic from the sun and prevent tearing of the plastic layer.

Wood mulch alone, or the use of cardboard or landscape cloth and wood mulch or similar techniques, does not work. The paper breaks down in one year or the grass pushes right through the weave of the cloth making it more difficult to pull out the rhizomes through the cardboard or cloth and mulch.

Composting

Compost bins are located within the fence. **These bins are for disease-free plant material only. Weeds should not be placed in the compost bin** to avoid allowing them to spread/re-seed. Please remove weeds from the garden. (There are areas outside the fence near the parking lot where they can be dumped. Look for the piles of dead weeds.) We need everyone to take a turn turning the compost bins, please.

Abandoned Garden Plots

Gardens must be planted by June 15th. Any plot not planted by June 15th will be forfeited by the owner without refund. If there is an unanticipated delay, please contact Libby.

Neglected/abandoned plots are a huge problem transferred to your fellow gardeners.

Maintaining your plot is important the success of the entire garden community. Maintenance includes weeding and keeping the pathway clear. Your weed seeds can quickly wreak havoc.

Plots that are not maintained (not planted, significant weed issues, etc.) during the growing season, which is approximately May through October, will be considered abandoned if reasonable and timely attempts are not made to remedy these issues.

If during the growing season a plot appears to be abandoned, the gardener will be contacted to find out the reason for the lack of care. If no contact is established and/or if the plot continues to be uncared for, the plot will be forfeited by the owner without refund. Gardeners of forfeited plots will not be guaranteed their plot for the following year. Be sure your contact information (e-mail and phone number) are up-to-date with the Dahlem office.

Garden Clean Up

Clean up must be completed by all gardeners by November 1st. All non-organic materials, (stakes, plant supports, tomato cages, pots, black plastic or fabric in your plot) ideally should be removed from your plot. Note that winter takes quite a toll on equipment and this is for your best interest. Additionally, surrounding pathways must be cleaned and weeded. You can use the Cattle Barn by the parking lot for storage but please label your stuff with your **plot number!** In the summer, when everything should be out, there may be another clean-up of the barn.

Please DO NOT sweep the Cattle (AKA swallow) Barn. The aerosolized bird droppings can be harmful to humans; do not stir them up.

Vacation

If a gardener will be on vacation longer than 2 weeks, arrangements must be made by that gardener for someone to care for their plot. It is not hard to find someone to harvest when you are gone. This, of course, can be anyone you know, but you will also get cooperation from your fellow gardeners.

Sharing Produce

Excess produce can be taken by individuals to the Interfaith Shelter, John George Home, St. Vincent's, churches, other food pantries, up to the discretion of the person harvesting/delivering, etc. During the peak harvest weeks during 2021 through 2024 we partnered with the food pantry of Jackson Free Methodist church, providing transportation of donated produce to the church and plan to do that again in 2025.

Note that most anything* left on the picnic table– Plot 16 -can be considered “shared”. You will often find produce here during peak harvest – help yourself! Take to the food pantry, your neighbors, etc. (*If you find someone's lunch on the table at Plot 16, that doesn't count!)

The picnic table also functions as a lost and found. Smaller found items may also be found attached to the kiosk. Valuable found items, such as car keys, will be taken to the lost and found at the Dahlem Center Office/Gift Shop.

Betty's Garden Plot Rental Application

Gardener Responsibilities

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2. Fill out and sign application by March 9th, 2025.
3. Adhere to gardening standards and land use policies.
4. Plant by June 15th, 2025 to avoid plot forfeiture.
5. Maintain plot and surrounding paths during the growing season, approx. May through Oct.
6. Clear plot in accordance with guidelines by November 1st, 2025.

Name	
Street Address	
City	
Zip Code	
Phone Number	
E-mail	
Date	
I have read the Garden Guidelines and will adhere to all of the rules.	Signature

Plot Number (if known) _____

Make check payable to: The Dahlem Conservancy
 7117 S. Jackson Road
 Jackson, MI 49201
 517-782-3453

Date Received by Dahlem _____

Check/Money/Credit Card Received By _____