

## **Hidden Harvest Ottawa COVID-19 Guidelines - Neighbourhood Leaders**

Hidden Harvest Ottawa (HHO), recognizes the gravity of the current context of COVID-19, and is establishing the following Guidelines to ensure the health and safety of our volunteers, Neighbourhood Leaders, home owners, food agency staff and volunteers, and the general public during this summer's harvest season.

We have heard from food agencies that a lot has changed for their neighbours, and that there is now more need for fresh food in their communities. We also recognize that there are significant challenges this year for food agencies to serve their clients safely, and that agencies may not be able to accept the same kinds of fruit, the same amounts, or offer the same window of donation time. We aim to do our best to lessen the administrative burden to food agencies, while still donating fresh fruit that is in need in our community.

We understand that HHO Neighbourhood Leaders (NLs), volunteers and tree owners may or may not be able to support fruit picking with HHO this year, given the variety of risk factors and circumstances we are presented with in these pandemic times. We respect whatever decision individuals make for themselves and their families. Participation this year will in no way impact future participation opportunities with Hidden Harvest.

These Guidelines have been developed in consultation with the HHO Steering Committee, several NLs and key volunteers, fruit picking and sharing organizations across North America, with information from local and national health authorities. It outlines minimum standards to be followed.

Changes may be made to these Guidelines in response to new information or guidelines from Public Health agencies. If updates are made, we would advise you through email. By signing these Guidelines you acknowledge that it is your responsibility to review the latest Guidelines shared with you in advance of attending a harvest event to ensure you are compliant. Thank you for your time in reviewing this document, and for your continued support and engagement!

### **FRUIT PICKING AND SHARING GUIDELINES**

Want to plan a harvest? The following principles must first be met:

1. Everyone involved must sign an agreement to abide by COVID-19 Guidelines
  - No children under the age of 16, unless held (ie. an infant in a carrier)
  - HHO has set up a process which ensures all volunteers registering to attend an event are required to sign off of these guidelines every time they register
  
2. Everyone attending will declare that they are symptom-free and low-risk according to the [Ontario Government Self-Assessment Tool](#)
  - HHO has set up a process which ensures all volunteers registering to attend an event are required to make this declaration every time they register
  - Anyone who is feeling unwell, who has had symptoms of COVID-19 within 14 days, who has recently come into contact with someone who has shown symptoms, or is a member of an at-risk group, is not able to host an event at their home or pick fruit.

3. Physical Distancing efforts must be in effect at all times
  - The site needs to be big enough to maintain 2m or 6ft space, NLs need to ensure this is possible

If the site is big enough for physical distancing then the Harvest Event can be planned. Mitigation measures to be taken include: Masks on, hands sanitized, limit the number of people touching fruit, stay spread out - but physical safety comes first. Only harvest what you can safely.

## BEFORE THE HARVEST EVENT

Below are the steps that Neighbourhood Leaders and Tree Owners will take prior to a harvest event.

**Talk with Tree Owners** regarding COVID precautions, space + equipment available, tree/fruit status, schedule of event.

- Confirm space & determine number of volunteers possible
- Eg: **12' x 12' = 3 volunteers** maximum (see drawing)

### Open volunteer spots

- Open the maximum number of spots that you are confident to still be able to maintain physical spacing
- No extra spots this year to account for no-shows
- One spot to Neighbourhood Leaders In Training (NLITs) if possible - [see NL Forum](#), reach out to someone close to completing their training to nudge them to sign up
- When publishing the event in the app, you can add text at the bottom of the page, requesting volunteers take note of something important, or asking volunteers to bring something if they have it on hand, such as:

“if you have [snips, a step ladder, extra cloth bags to donate] at home, feel free to bring that as well!”

**Note:** Volunteers will be automatically reminded of COVID guidelines and related items to bring (mask, hand sanitizer / hand wash, containers for their fruit, etc), and they will need to once again agree to the guidelines and declare that they are low-risk and symptom-free before successfully registering for your event

**Confirm the Food Agency** that will receive the donation ([see NL Forum](#))

- Containers - either collect cardboard boxes or gather and wash tote bags in advance.

### Obtain complete Equipment Bin

- Ensure all gear is ready to go for the event (see list in the *Safe Harvesting Practices*, below)
- If shared, leave 3 days between uses. Check NL Forum if you need to borrow a Bin.
- Ensure all fruit picking equipment is sterilized before and after each pick.

**Review the Ontario Self-Assessment Tool** within 24 hrs of event. If you have a change in symptoms or level of risk, find a replacement NL (review NL forum), or cancel event.

### Before the event, **Tree Owners will:**

- Sterilize any equipment they are lending the group including ladders and rakes before the event. They will also be asked to sterilize materials once volunteers have left their property.
- Open the harvest site in advance, and make equipment easily accessible so volunteers are not required to unhook gates, open doors, etc.
- Provide a location for the disposal of compost gathered during the volunteer's pre-pick tidy of the area, either by sanitizing their green bin and leaving it in an easily accessible location, or leaving out brown compost bags. If a compost location is not provided, compost will be raked or gathered into a pile to one side. If a rake is not provided, volunteers will do their best to tidy the area in the way they see fit.
- Stay in the house during the pick and not interact with the volunteers. If necessary, any directions or instructions must be provided from at least 6 feet away.

### **DURING THE HARVEST EVENT**

1. Before picking, the Neighbourhood Leader will:
  - Read aloud the talking points from **Safe Harvesting Practices** (see below) and ensure all picking volunteers understand the precautions that will be taken.
  - Take and record attendance, EITHER check off attendees in the app (preferred), OR write down attendee names and enter them in the post-harvest form shortly after the end of the Event. This can help public health with tracking efforts if anyone becomes infected.
  - Divide up tasks and equipment; ensure equipment is not shared.
2. All **volunteer Fruit Pickers** including Neighbourhood Leaders acknowledge that they will:
  - Wear a face mask or face cloth to prevent droplet spread. Please bring your own face mask if possible, and put it on prior to arrival on site. If the mask becomes moist, a second mask may be required.
  - Sanitize their hands upon arrival on site and practice proper hygiene practices (avoid touching face, sneeze/cough etiquette, proper hand washing/sanitizing). Please consider bringing your own hand sanitizer or hot, soapy water in a thermos. Hand sanitizer will also be provided on site.
  - Bring and use their own gloves, if required, for cleaning the site of compost materials. If gloves are used, hands should be sanitized before and after using gloves, and proper glove removal techniques should be followed.
  - Bring their own bags or boxes, as needed, for carrying their share of fruit. There is to be no sharing of bags between volunteers.
  - Not share equipment. All fruit pickers must use only 1 pole, or 1 pair of hand shears provided, or their own equipment from home that was sanitized prior to use.
  - Not access to the tree owner's home, and not accept refreshments from others. Volunteers are encouraged to use the bathroom prior to attending an event, and to bring their own water and snacks.
  - Use ladders only if they choose to. Ladder safety procedures must be in effect at all times: ladders must be secured by a second person holding the base of the ladder.
  - Maintain physical distancing efforts throughout the event:

- i. Unless picking with members of the same household, everyone attending the Event must maintain a physical distance of 2m or 6ft whenever it is possible to do so while maintaining physical safety.
    - ii. Volunteers will be encouraged to divide up tasks and complete them individually while social distancing. For example, only one person holds the ladder, one person weights the fruit, etc.
    - iii. *The length of an extended fruit picking pole is an excellent measure of 6 ft, and can be used to visualize proper distance by volunteers at all pick sites.*
  - Agree that attendance at harvest events will be taken, and that their contact information may be shared with authorities should contact tracing need to occur at a later date.
3. Be kind, and err on the side of caution:
- Please be conscientious, responsible, supportive, and respectful of each other and the safety Guidelines that we ask everyone to uphold. The strength of our group is in the trust and dependability between every autonomous individual involved. We trust you all to use common sense, and err on the side of extra precaution, during this pandemic.
4. Failure to comply with COVID-19 protocols:
- Due to the severity of the circumstances, if volunteers disobey the guidelines, they must be asked to leave the pick site. If asked to leave a second time, they will be removed from our volunteer list for the 2020 season. Volunteers may also be warned or fined by bylaw enforcement officers.

*The virus is easily inactivated by using simple disinfectants such as store-bought disinfectants, and alternatively diluted bleach solution prepared daily.<sup>1</sup>*

*If you wish to make your own disinfectant for equipment, you can use a sanitizing solution of either 75% or higher alcohol based product or bleach at a concentration of 1 teaspoon (5 mL) per cup (250 mL) or 4 teaspoons (20 mL) per litre (1000 mL). Diluted bleach has a shelf life of 24 hours, mix a fresh batch every day. See Health Canada for a list of disinfecting products*  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19.html>

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## Fruit Sharing & Donation

1. Where possible, volunteers will be asked to keep only the fruit that they handle. Volunteers will be expected to bring their own containers to take home their share of the fruit.
2. All volunteers must have clean, sanitized hands, when handling fruit<sup>2</sup>
3. The homeowner's share of the fruit will be left on their porch or where appropriate, to ensure contactless transfer. Homeowners are to sanitize their hands and thoroughly wash the fruit after receiving the delivery.
4. Only 1 person will deliver fruit to the Food Agency (in most cases, the NL), and they must wear a mask during delivery and are to sanitize their hands before and after making the delivery.
5. Deliveries will be made only to Food Agencies that have agreed to accept donations from Hidden Harvest in 2020, and completed our "**Information Required**" form - this information will be accessible to NLs through the NL Forum. Donations will be made at a time that is convenient for the Food Agency, as per prior agreement.
6. The NL will track the source of the donation, the amount donated, the date of the delivery, and the individual who delivered the fruit. This information may be needed in case of contact tracing in the future.
7. Food agencies must direct us to an area where we can drop off the fruit while maintaining 6 ft distance from any staff or clients. If the individual delivering fruit cannot enter the building while maintaining this distance, they will drop the fruit off at the door, and notify the Food Agency contact so that contactless curbside pick up can occur.
8. Food Agencies are to sanitize their hands and thoroughly wash the fruit after receiving the delivery.
9. HHO will not accept returns of tote bags from Food Agencies. They are to be washed or properly disposed of.

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<sup>2</sup> Outside of health care settings, the Public Health Agency of Canada says, "Gloves are only recommended when workers will come into contact with an ill person, or a contaminated object or environment."  
[https://www.whsc.on.ca/Files/Resources/COVID-19-Resources/WHSC\\_Pandemic\\_Gloves-at-Work\\_Safeguards-for-workers.aspx](https://www.whsc.on.ca/Files/Resources/COVID-19-Resources/WHSC_Pandemic_Gloves-at-Work_Safeguards-for-workers.aspx)

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## Key Resources Used in the Development of HHO COVID-19 Guidelines

Ministry of Health

[Safe Food Donation Reference](#)

Ottawa Public Health

[Guidelines for Food Banks, Donation Centres and Volunteers](#)

Volunteer Ottawa

[Safety Protocols and Volunteer Resources](#)

Government of Canada

[How to wear a non-medical mask or face covering properly \(video, 1 min\)](#)

[Non-medical masks and face coverings: Sew and no-sew instructions](#)

[How to Use Hand Sanitizer](#)

[How and When to Wear a Mask](#)

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association

[Resources for Growers and Workers](#)

Work Safe BC

[Glove removal procedure](#)

Workers Health and Safety

[Gloves at Work - Safeguards for workers for confronting COVID-19?](#)

## SAFE HARVESTING PRACTICES

Below we discuss some of the steps to take in order to deliver a COVID-19 savvy harvest event. First, as a Neighbourhood Leader you should have at least two masks on hand for yourself, in addition to personal supplies suggested for all volunteers. Since you will be present on site longer than other volunteers your mask is at an increased risk of becoming too wet to use effectively. HHO will provide one fabric mask you can adopt as your own, should you require one.

**Process:** Before you arrive, put on your mask then sanitize hands. Next, arrive at site and do a walk around locating the key elements of the event and the equipment from the homeowner if applicable. Then, lay out homeowner equipment and equipment bin contents in a location that will enable volunteers to access the equipment while maintaining 2m or 6' distance from others (see drawing, below). Prepare locations for compost to be gathered, and for food agency fruit to be collected. As people arrive, keep your distance to set the physical distancing tone, and take attendance. Ensure their masks are on, and invite them to sanitize their hands or wash their hands if they brought their own soap and water. Ask everyone to assemble in a circle, spread out by at least 2m or 6', and once everyone has arrived or the start time + 2 min has been reached (whichever comes first), begin to review the talking points below.

### Talking Notes:

- Thank you for coming and agreeing to HHO's COVID-19 protocols
- Gratitude to the homeowner for allowing us to harvest
- XX portion of the fruit we harvest today will be donated to XX food agency
- We're going to: review safe picking practices, equipment we'll use, then we'll divide tasks and start picking fruit together

### Safe picking practices:

Everyone declared that they are covid free, without any symptoms or exposures, and that they are low risk. Has anyone had a **change to this status?** > *Have everyone respond, if anyone has an update other than "I am still low risk and had not had any symptoms or exposures" then kindly ask them to leave.*

We have all agreed to **wear a mask** for the duration of the event (*everyone should already be wearing a mask covering their nose and mouth*), so we should all be ready for our masks to be warm, and possible fogging of glasses. If someone's mask becomes wet, switch it out for a dry one - leave the pick site before exchanging your mask, and re-sanitize hands before returning.

We will aim to be **physically distant** whenever safely possible (6ft / 2m / 1 picking pole space). Find a spot for your belongings, and keep anything you brought with you in that location when not in use. There are some physical safety hazards that would require being closer than 6', but they are avoidable and you will not need to be within 6' of someone unless you choose to. Discuss any particulars about maneuvering around site.

We will **practice safe hand hygiene** at all times, and avoid touching our faces. We will sanitize our hands at the beginning, after sanitizing our equipment, and anytime an unhygienic action is taken such as face touching. For drinking or snacks please leave the site, and replace your mask and re-sanitize your hands before return.

We will decide in advance who will do what, we will start by ensuring the tools we will be using have been sanitized, and we **won't share roles** as we pick.

The fruit we pick will be divided evenly into (XX) portions. As we pick fruit, we will prioritize the best fruit to be donated to the food bank, which will go into XX containers, located here. Some fruit that you pick can also be placed into the containers you have brought for yourself, to take home.

At the end, we will **estimate the total amount of fruit** we harvest by weighing a portion of the fruit at the end of the event, and looking at all the fruit gathered. Please leave your fruit out and visible until this final estimate is complete.

We will not be entering the **homeowner's home** for any reason, we cannot accept water or snacks, and the homeowner is to stay inside at all times. There is no washroom - if you need to go, plan accordingly.

Discuss **physically hazardous options**, which may bring volunteers within 6' distance: Ladder climber & spotter, tree climber? & spotter, etc.

**Big picture:** Be kind to each other, and err on the side of caution! We're a part of Ottawa's food system, and have a responsibility to those that are not here picking with us. Failure to follow Guidelines means that you'll be asked to leave. [if this happens, NL to notify Katrina]

#### **Review equipment bin, including:**

- Hand sanitizer, sanitizing spray for equipment (*review [hand sanitizer use](#)*)
- Tissues, location for garbage (touch-free)
- Spare gloves, disposable masks, cloth masks (if any one has a scrape or cut, they must wear gloves) (*review [glove removal](#) if gloves will be used*)
- Fruit picking equipment (ladder, pole, snips, blanket, scale, etc.)
- Fruit picking aprons (washed between harvests)
- First aid kit / supplies

**Pause for questions** - any questions regarding the safe picking practices or equipment?

#### **Divide tasks and get started!**

- Who feels comfortable climbing the ladder / holding the ladder? Do not feel you need to step forward for this role - it is likely that the two people using a ladder will be within the 2m recommended distance.
- Demonstrate / discuss ladder safety. Avoid physical safety issues if consent is not given.



[Note: If ladders are used, it is likely that adopting one person to be the 'fruit sorter' will be helpful - to receive the fruit from the person up the ladder, and to distribute the fruit according to their quality and equal division]

- Who would like to use the pole pickers / blanket to catch fruit / snips / etc? Demonstrate safe use.
- Who would like to use the rake / hold the compost bags?
- Other tasks, as needed.

#### **At end of harvest:**

- Take attendance in the app.
- Weigh some of the fruit, estimate total weight.
- Share the fruit: The homeowner's share will be left via contactless transfer (if applicable). Food Agency donation will be made by one person, to Agencies that have agreed to accept donations from Hidden Harvest in 2020, and completed the "**Information Required**" form.
- Complete Post-Harvest Form within 24hrs. The NL will track the amount donated, the date of the delivery, and the individual who delivered the fruit. [Post Harvest Form found here.](#)
- Share a photo for social media! Submit w form, or text Kat (613) 406-0681

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#### **NL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & COMMENTS**

*Below are remarks which arose through our process discussing guidelines amongst our team of Neighbourhood Leaders. They are shared below in case they further shed light on the challenge of leading events during a pandemic.*

##### **1. Insightful comments:**

- If it's a great tree with more fruit, but doesn't allow for a big harvest event as it's a small site, you could always come back and do a second event!
- We should give the tree owners a heads up about harvests not being as efficient as usual. Kat can do this via email, and NLs can do this when they talk to the tree owner.
- Some NLs would like an NL-only event to try it out and get it right first. Laura and Diane both expressed an interest. Please let Kat know if interested, or add your name on the NL forum under '**COVID practice harvest interest?**' column.

##### **2. What if the location isn't big enough to physically distance - could we harvest it inviting only people in our bubble?**

- A: If only two people can pick and maintain distance, the NL should invite an NLIT if at all possible, to use the opportunity to provide the NLIT with more experience, or open one volunteer spot to the list.
- Whenever the space is 12'x12' or more, 2 or more volunteer spots should be opened up to the volunteer list, or one to the list and one NLIT. Hidden Harvest believes in sharing fruit with the local community, and these spots are our chance to share the fruit love & learning.

- If it is **absolutely not possible** for two people to pick the fruit and maintain physical distance, but an NL would like to pick the fruit, then the NL can do it solo or invite one person from within their [bubble](#). **To note: This is not a practice to take lightly as it is against our principles of sharing the fruit with a greater number, and diversity, of people.**
3. How are we going to use ladders and physically distance?
    - A: We aren't. Ladder use requires a ladder spotter at all times, and are to be used at the discretion of the volunteers. NLs should not presume that ladders will be used. We have adopted the public health guidelines in place for times when physical distancing is *\*not\** possible, so in principle, we can operate within 6' or 2m safely - however, we are working with volunteers, not employees, so it is entirely up to them as to whether they'd be willing to volunteer to step within physical safety boundaries to use a ladder.
  4. What if people want to drink some water while up a ladder?
    - Nope, this would contradict the principle of wearing masks at all times, and also it wouldn't be possible to safely sanitize hands after taking a drink while up a ladder. Please remind people to take lots of breaks before they are needed, and if they'd like a drink or snack, they must leave the area to do so and then replace their mask, then resanitize their hands, before returning to the area.
  5. What if the person living at the house isn't the tree owner / property owner?
    - A: This won't be a common problem, and will be a case-by-case basis. Feel free to reach out to Katrina if you're not sure how to proceed. But, in principle, if you speak with the tree owner and you find out someone else lives on site, you do need to request contact information for the resident, and have the resident verbally agree to open up the space for us, and not come outside while we pick.
  6. How will we sort / grade the fruit if food agencies have particular food requirements?
    - A: Follow the principle of having the least number of people touch the fruit as safely possible. This may mean that the fruit is graded as it comes off the tree, each volunteer deciding where the fruit they picked will go. Alternatively, one person could adopt the role of grading the donation fruit and dividing it between different bins for donation, such as fruit that needs to be cooked and that which can be eaten fresh.
  7. What if there is too much fruit for one car / delivery?
    - A: If you've picked a lot of fruit, you have a great problem to have! Feel free to make multiple donation drops, just follow the principle of limiting touches to the fruit and limiting the number of people showing up at the food agency door. So, if you have two cars full of fruit headed to two different agencies, then it will make sense for two people to make the donations from the event. Just make sure you track the who, what and where of all donations.
  8. If it's just the NL donating fruit, do I have to load all the boxes into my car too?

- A: To clarify, it doesn't \*have\* to be the NL that does the donation delivery, but the NL does need to ensure that the food is headed somewhere that will appreciate it, as well as tracking the details of the drop off. The delivery person needs to have familiarized themselves with the food agency drop off guidelines and follow COVID safety guidelines. If you need help moving heavy fruit into your car, it is ok to let willing volunteers load your car - just continue to follow the principles of masks on, clean hands, limit touch points.
9. What about face shields, or people who have medical conditions which do not allow them to use face masks?
- A: Right now it is our duty to follow the public health guidelines regarding safe practices in public places, which is primarily face masks covering nose and mouth plus hand hygiene. We are not able to accommodate those who cannot wear masks at this time. Volunteers are welcome to wear face shields in addition to masks if they would like.
10. What if it's difficult to find containers - what about accepting donation cloth bags from volunteers who come to pick fruit?
- All cloth bags should be washed prior to being used for food donations, and so any bag donations could not be used for the event they are brought to. But, NLs could insert a request for cloth bag donations when publishing their event in the app, such as "Please consider bringing a few extra cloth bags to donate for the next food drop off donation. They will be collected and used at subsequent events."

