

Hidden Harvest Ottawa COVID-19 Guidelines for Tree Owners

Hidden Harvest Ottawa (HHO), recognizes the gravity of the current context of COVID-19, and is taking the precautions below 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 there is now much more need in their communities. We recognize that there are significant challenges this year for food agencies to serve their clients safely. 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.

Volunteers and tree owners may or may not be able to support fruit picking this year, given the variety of risk factors and circumstances which we are presented with in these pandemic times. We respect whatever decision individuals make for themselves and their families. We may not be able to conduct as many harvest events this year, and harvest events that do happen will not be as efficient as pre-COVID events. We will all be doing our best, and going above and beyond to rescue as much fruit as safely possible.

This document has been developed in consultation with fruit picking and sharing organizations across North America, with information from local and national health authorities. It outlines minimum standards to be followed. A more detailed description of measures will be provided to Neighborhood Leaders and Volunteers, and is available upon request.

FRUIT PICKING AND SHARING GUIDELINES

1. All tree owners and fruit pickers must sign an agreement to abide by COVID-19 Guidelines in order to participate in the 2020 season
 - Attendance at each event will be taken and recorded for public health tracking purposes,
 - Children under the age of 16 will not be allowed to attend HHO events during the 2020 season, unless the child is held by a parent / guardian (ie. an infant in a carrier)
2. No more than 9 individuals are allowed to participate in a Harvest Event
 - Currently the Ontario Government allows for groups of 10 or less
3. Physical Distancing efforts must be in effect at all times
 - Tree owners will indicate the approximate picking area of their property
 - Fruit pickers will maintain a physical distance of 2m or 6ft whenever possible while maintaining physical safety, unless picking with members of their household / bubble
 - If fruit pickers arrive on a site and find they cannot safely maintain 2m or 6ft due to unforeseen circumstances, the event will be cancelled
4. Prior to Harvest Events fruit pickers and tree owners will declare that they have reviewed the [Ontario Government Self-Assessment Tool](#) and they “do not seem to have symptoms or be part of an at-risk group”.

If the above policies are met, the Harvest Event can be planned to proceed. Volunteers and tree owners then must follow the guidelines below for controlling the spread of COVID-19. All Leaders will also receive training in these measures.

1. Tree owners are asked to:

- Have a conversation with the Neighbourhood Leader in advance to ensure that the process is well understood. It is the Leader's responsibility to reach out, and the tree owner's responsibility to meet them halfway and return their call if need be.
- Make an effort to provide any bulky equipment required to pick your fruit. This may mean searching the back of your shed for a rake, or asking a neighbour to borrow a ladder in advance.
- Sterilize any equipment lent out before the event and also after volunteers have left your property (such as rake, ladder, compost bin). This involves removing all dirt, and using a disinfectant according to the instructions of the product.
The virus is easily inactivated by using simple disinfectants such as store-bought disinfectants, and alternatively, a diluted bleach solution prepared daily.¹ See below for DIY disinfectant options.
- Open the harvest site in advance and make equipment easily accessible so volunteers are not required to unhook gates, open doors, move furniture, etc. Volunteers should be able to walk right in.
- Provide a location for the collection of compost gathered during the volunteer's pre-pick tidy of the area (sanitized green bin or 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 tidy the area as best they can.
- 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.
- Not provide fruit pickers with access to their home, not to offer any snacks or refreshments to the volunteers.
- Understand that the harvest event will not be as efficient as pre-COVID-19 Guidelines which may mean that not all fruit is picked, or that multiple events are needed to pick the remaining fruit.
- Agree that resident contact information may be shared with authorities should COVID-19 contact tracing need to occur at a later date.
- Agree that if there is a change in symptoms or risk level of the resident of the property, the Neighbourhood Leader will be advised in advance of the Harvest Event

*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. You can also 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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2. Before picking, the Neighbourhood Leader will:
 - Have had a conversation with the tree owner to clarify the Guidelines.
 - Arrive first on site, prepare for volunteer arrival.
 - Ensure all harvesting equipment is available and sterilized for the event. Each equipment set will include hand sanitizer, tissues, sterilizing spray for equipment, touch-free garbage disposal location, spare masks and gloves. Proper methods of equipment sanitization, hand sanitizer use, and glove removal will be posted within each equipment bin.
 - Read aloud the Safe Harvesting Protocols for the event and ensure all picking volunteers understand the protocols.

3. All fruit pickers must:
 - Wear a face mask or face cloth at all times to prevent droplet spread
 - Sanitize their hands upon arrival on site and practice proper hand hygiene practices
 - Bring their own bags or boxes for carrying their share of fruit

4. Fruit sharing & donation
 - All volunteers must have clean, sanitized hands, when handling fruit²
 - The tree owner's share of the fruit will be left at their front door or where appropriate, to ensure contactless transfer. Under no circumstances will it be handed directly to the resident. Tree owners are to sanitize their hands and thoroughly wash the fruit after receiving the delivery.
 - Only 1 person will be responsible for delivering fruit to food agency partners, and they must wear a mask and are to sanitize their hands before and after making the delivery.

5. Be kind, and err on the side of caution
 - Due to these extreme circumstances, we want to remind all involved to remain conscientious, supportive, and respectful of each other and the Guidelines. The strength of our group is in the trust between every autonomous individual involved. We trust each other to use common sense and err on the side of caution during this pandemic.

6. Failure to comply with COVID-19 protocols:
 - If tree owners fail to comply with the Guidelines, the Event may be cancelled, and they may be removed from our harvesting list for the 2020 season. Tree owners may also be warned or fined by bylaw enforcement officers.
 - If a volunteer fails to comply with the Guidelines, they will be asked to leave the pick site, and may be removed from our volunteer list for the 2020 season. Volunteers may also be warned or fined by bylaw enforcement officers.

² 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

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?](#)