



Common Area Steward

The main responsibility is maintaining common areas for their designated purpose, such as communal herbs plots, pollinator zones, fruit trees, gathering spaces, donation plots, sacrificial plots called “Buffer Plots”, and Public Pick Fence areas, etc. This includes spring preparation of planting beds; maintenance such as weeding, thinning, and pruning; preparing the area for winter; and coordinating any distribution of the plot’s produce, if applicable. If you are unable to complete your responsibilities, please contact your WCG Garden Manager so that they can make other arrangements.

Spring Preparation of the Area

Common plots should be cleared of weeds by May 1st, or within two weeks after the mandatory spring meeting, whichever is later. Take care to avoid damaging or removing any overwintering, non-weedy plants. Depending on the contents of the common plot, it may be necessary to do some pruning, ideally while the plants are still dormant. Check with the WCG Garden Manager for pruning guidance.

If the common plot was cover cropped with something like vetch or rye in the previous winter or early spring, you will need to kill the cover crop by uprooting it or tilling it into the soil (Never disturb the soil when it is very wet – you may destroy the soil structure, which takes years to recover). If tilling the cover crop into the soil, you should do so two weeks prior to any planting that you do in the common plot. You may also use the dead cover crop material as a mulch. In any case, do not dispose of the cover crop material, as it was grown to provide organic matter to enrich the soil of the common plot.

If cover crops are not used, it will be necessary to amend the soil from time to time. Check with the WCG Garden Manager, as there may be funds available to purchase some soil amendments. Never add fertilizers high in phosphorous to garden soils, as they may already have excessively high levels that can harm plant health.

Maintenance During the Growing Season

Common plots should be weeded twice per month during the growing season. If the common plots are growing produce for the consumption of fellow community gardeners (herbs, fruit, etc), the garden group should be notified on the listserv when there is produce ready, so that everyone is aware of what is available. To prevent theft before gardeners can help themselves, you may want to harvest the produce and leave it in the garden shed.

During your regular weeding activities, monitor the common plot for signs of pests. An excellent resource is Utah State University (USU) Extension’s handbook, “Vegetable Pests of Utah”, which is available in the garden shed. If you notice signs of pests or diseases, try to identify the cause and its organic treatment options. If you are unable to positively identify the pest or disease, check with the Pest Monitors or WCG Garden Manager. If unresolved, the USU Extension Help Desk is your best bet for reliable diagnostics, and can be reached at mastergardener@usu.edu. Include your contact information (including a phone number), as much detail as possible about your issue, and photographs. Optionally, you may take samples from infected plots to the **USU Extension Help Desk located in room S1-300 in the South County building at 2001 S State Street in Salt Lake City (385-468-4828)**. The Help Desk is open Monday, Wednesday, and Fridays from 9am to noon during the growing season and is staffed by Master Gardeners and horticulturalists

Preparing the Area for Winter

Common Plots should be prepped for winter by November 15th: Perennials and winter crops may remain. Common plots must be cleared of other debris and trellising, and covered completely in mulch

and/or cover crop. Drip tape should be laid out straight in the bed, below mulch.