

# 2026 Bock Community Garden Gardener Manual

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## Mission Statement

The Bock Community Garden is a welcoming and inclusive group of gardeners cultivating City of Middleton land to grow organic food, support local ecosystems, and strengthen community. We promote sustainable gardening practices, increase access to healthy and culturally relevant food, and respect the surrounding conservancy land.

## Core Values

**Sustainability:** Grow organic fruits and vegetables using practices that protect soil, water, and wildlife while minimizing waste.

**Respect:** Treat all gardeners, neighbors, and visitors with kindness, respect, and dignity.

**Equity & Access:** Reduce barriers to participation through fee assistance and support food justice efforts.

**Education & Learning:** Share knowledge through mentorship and educational opportunities in the Orchard and Children's Garden.

**Stewardship:** Care for individual plots and shared spaces and respect the natural areas of the John C. Bock Unit of the Pheasant Branch Conservancy.

## Commitment to Community

Bock Community Garden (BCG) is committed to building a nurturing community. As a part of that commitment, gardeners are expected to act respectfully toward all gardeners, neighbors and visitors to the garden, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, cultural practices or personal opinions.

## Commitment to Equity

Bock Community Garden (BCG) is committed to equity, one of Middleton's core community values: "We celebrate diversity and strive for fair and just opportunities and outcomes for all people." (Comprehensive Plan, 2021)

"Equity goes beyond equality. Where equality assumes sameness, equity is responsive to difference—it works to remove barriers, repair harms, and ensure everyone can fully participate, prosper, and thrive." ([City of Middleton](#))

## Land Acknowledgement

Middleton occupies the ancestral homeland of the Ho-Chunk Nation, who were forcibly removed in 1832. This land was then colonized by white settlers. [\(from the City of Middleton website\)](#)

Recognizing this truth means:

- Understanding the ongoing impacts of colonialism.
- Supporting and centering Ho-Chunk Nation voices in city policies and decisions.
- Learning about the [Ho-Chunk Nation's](#) present-day government, news, and members.

## Management of Bock Community Garden

The Bock Community Garden is located on City of Middleton Conservancy Lands. The Middleton Parks & Recreation Department is the overseeing authority of the BCG. As the landowner and governing body, the City is responsible for establishing the overall policies, rules, and processes that guide the operation and use of the garden. These may include matters related to land use, safety, public access, and alignment with city-wide initiatives or ordinances. To assist with the day-to-day operations, the City partners with the Bock Community Garden Volunteer Committee, a group of registered garden volunteers who serve as the on-site management team.

### Roles and Responsibilities

#### **The City of Middleton Staff & Parks, Recreation, & Forestry Commission:**

- Owns the land where the Bock Community Garden is located – John C. Bock Unit of the Pheasant Branch Conservancy
- Establishes and approves policies, procedures, and regulations governing the garden.
- Provides oversight and support for long-term planning, budgeting, and coordination with other city departments.
- Maintains authority over final decisions related to garden governance, access, and compliance with city ordinance and management plans.
- Plans special events.
- Manage all garden registrations, payments, invoicing and reimbursements.

#### **Bock Community Garden Volunteer Committee:**

- Serves as the City's designated garden management partner.
- Oversees the daily operations of the garden, including plot assignments, general maintenance coordination, and responding to gardener inquiries.
- Ensures compliance with the City's established policies, rules, and procedures.
- Provides feedback and recommendations to the City regarding garden improvements, policy updates, or community concerns.
- Acts as a liaison between the gardeners and the City.
- Supports City in grant writing.

### Summary of Relationship

The City of Middleton is the governing and owning authority of the Bock Community Garden facility and program, ensuring public oversight, legal compliance, and continuity. The Bock Community Garden Volunteer Committee operates as the City's trusted volunteer partner, handling daily operations and community engagement, while upholding the City's standards and direction for the garden.

# Bock Community Garden Committee

The Bock Community Garden Committee (BCG Committee) functions as the City's designated volunteer partner, managing daily operations, garden oversight, and community engagement in accordance with the City's standards and directives. The BCG Committee oversees daily garden activities, including plot assignments, overall maintenance coordination, and addressing gardener inquiries, while supporting adherence to the City's established policies, rules, and procedures. Additionally, the Committee provides feedback and recommendations to the City regarding potential improvements, policy updates, or community concerns. Serving as a liaison between gardeners and the City, the BCG Committee fosters collaboration and a positive community environment.

## Committee Responsibilities

The BCG Committee is not an official City of Middleton committee. The committee is made up of registered gardeners who are volunteering their time to help manage the garden.

- Each position on BCG Committee has voting capacity at meetings or when a special email vote is called.
- BCG Committee reviews and modifies the BCG Garden Manual each year, submitting to the City of Middleton for review.
- The committee creates the garden schedule and responsibilities in January-February for the upcoming garden year and plans the individual and group volunteer work opportunities for the upcoming garden season.
- All committee members are expected to be responsive to emails in a timely manner and engage in sub-committee work as needed.
- Committee members are expected to attend monthly meetings and provide oversight and management of their area of responsibility throughout the season.
- Collectively, the members are responsible for overseeing the smooth functioning of the garden throughout the year in alignment with the BCG Garden Rules, and obligations to the City of Middleton, conservancy land, residents of the neighborhood, and each other.

## BCG Committee Member Terms

- Terms for the new season's Garden Committee begin in January and end in November. (December is typically a month taken off, with some email communication).
- Committee members are asked to commit to two-year terms, if possible. Ideally, no more than one half of the committee members rotate off each year.
- Renewed terms are permitted, contingent upon a favorable vote by the committee. If the renewal is not approved, the individual is required to step down and collaboratively transfer information to the interim appointee.
- The current season Chair calls for a vote to appoint known committee members for the next season at the final meeting of the year.
- New committee members may be appointed by the current committee members at any time during the season by calling a vote.
- If needed, a vote may be conducted to remove a committee member from their responsibilities, following consultation with members of the Leadership Team and the City of Middleton.
- Committee members who do not fulfill the duties associated with their position will meet with the Committee Chair to decide if continuing with the committee is in the best interest of the BCG.
- Committee positions may be added, or duties changed when needed, and approved by the committee. If a person in a committee position leaves, efforts will be made to recruit new members, with the goal of maintaining a minimum of 7 total persons on the committee for management and voting quorum purposes.
- The City has the authority to remove any gardener from the BCG Committee if deemed necessary.

# 2026 BCG Committee & Leadership Structure

All committee members will be voted on yearly by the BCG Committee, and additional committee positions may be added in 2026, as needed and approved by the City and BCGVC. Committee Members agree to the minimum number of volunteer hours, and will attend and positively contribute to BCG Committee meetings.

## Committee Members - Leadership Team:

- Leadership positions support daily management, operations, and priorities of BCG.
- Shared leadership structure reduces the leadership burden on one person and includes two co-chairs and the Garden Manager.
- Make timely operational decisions together, independently, and with the City of Middleton.
- Each Leadership Team Committee member is expected to contribute a minimum of **50+ volunteer hours per season**.
  - **Co-Chair - Committee & Meetings:** Oversight of BCG committee meetings and all committee positions. Coordination with City staff and BCG Committee members around grants, special events, outreach and special projects.
  - **Co-Chair - Garden Operations:** Oversight of process improvement, implementation, efficient workflow management, volunteer scheduling and managing information to support daily operations for BCG, which includes assessments, volunteer hours, and work groups. Works closely with Garden Manager and Coordinators for scheduling volunteer activities, and is the BCG liaison with Assistant Middleton Director for Parks and Recreation.
  - **Garden Manager - Grounds:** Oversight of garden, grounds and tools, purchasing requests, and management plans.

## Committee Members - Coordinators:

- Each BCG committee member is expected to contribute a **minimum of 30+ volunteer hours per season**.
- Each position will coordinate with the leadership team as needed to perform their role, which includes creating management plans for their area of oversight, creating volunteer budget plans, attending monthly meetings (usually remotely), and giving timely updates for monthly meetings.
  - Orchard Coordinator
  - Food Pantry Plot Coordinator
  - Food Pantry Donations Coordinator
  - Children's Garden Coordinator
  - Outreach & Grant Coordinator

## Committee Meetings

Meetings will be held on designated dates established by the BCG Committee Chair at least once a month, between January and November. Additional meetings can be held at the discretion of the majority of the BCG Committee.

All committee members are expected to make an effort to attend all monthly meetings. Those who cannot attend monthly meetings must provide the Committee Chair with an update of their activities.

Committee members send agenda items to the Committee Chair one week (7 days) before the scheduled meeting. The Committee Chair prepares the agenda and sends the agenda to the committee members at least 24 hours prior to the meeting.

The Leadership Team has the capacity and authority to make decisions that impact daily operations and their areas of oversight. The combined committee discusses ideas for garden operations, garden issues, potential projects, future planning and work session tasks.

Approval of voting items requires a quorum of affirmative votes, representing a majority of the total committee membership. A quorum of BCG Committee members must be present at meetings to vote for changes to major BCG procedures, or to vote on the status of committee members. If voting through email, a quorum of members needs to respond which includes a response of yes, no, or active abstaining from casting a vote. (If the BCG Committee has 8 members, quorum is 5, and if the BCG Committee has 7 members, quorum is 4).

All registered gardeners are welcome to attend the monthly meetings. Gardeners should contact the Committee Chair at [bockgarden@gmail.com](mailto:bockgarden@gmail.com) for instructions on how to attend.

## Committee Rules of Order

1. Items brought up during the meeting not on the scheduled agenda, go to the bottom of the agenda. If time permits, these items will be discussed briefly at the end of the meeting or added to next month's agenda.
2. Discussion of agenda items will follow a set of collegiality principles:  
the person initiating the agenda item will speak first; time limits may be set for discussion of each agenda item; and discussion of agenda items should never be personal.
3. If time limits are deemed necessary by the Committee Chair, they will act as the timekeeper and give five-minute warnings to committee members. Re-visiting and rebuttal are allowed within the established time limits.
4. Committee members are requested to follow the meeting etiquette listed below:
  - a. Seek to understand by practicing active listening
  - b. Assume positive intentions with the option to ask clarifying questions of the speaker
  - c. Offer and/or seek solutions to a stated problem
5. Conflicts should be discussed in person, face-to-face, if possible. If needed, a third person (Chair or Garden Manager) will mediate the conflict of discussion.

# Gardener Communication

The BCG Committee communicates with gardeners through the BCG website, newsletter, email and online portal. These communications provide Bock gardeners with timely information about best ways to deal with gardening issues including the results of individual plot assessments requiring immediate action, food pantry donations from individual plots, other related issues, and upcoming events. It is the responsibility of all gardeners to read BCG Committee communications and take actions as needed.

**The best means of communication is via email.**

**To facilitate the communication process, BCG gardeners need to:**

- Add the following emails to your contact list to ensure that messages go to inbox and are not caught in spam filters:
  - [bockgarden@gmail.com](mailto:bockgarden@gmail.com) (general communication)
  - [bockassess@gmail.com](mailto:bockassess@gmail.com) (plot assessments)
  - [bock-community-garden@timecounts-mail.com](mailto:bock-community-garden@timecounts-mail.com) (online volunteer reminders)
- Communicate questions, ideas and concerns to the BCG Committee by email to [bockgarden@gmail.com](mailto:bockgarden@gmail.com)
- Provide the BCG Committee with updated contact information after any change in contact information from what was provided at time of registration
- Report to the BCG Grounds Coordinator by email to [bockgarden@gmail.com](mailto:bockgarden@gmail.com) about broken tools or outbreaks of plant disease, insect pests, invasive weeds, etc.
- If a gardener is unable to take care of their garden plot—such as being away for a long time, illness, or a family emergency—they should send an email to [bockgarden@gmail.com](mailto:bockgarden@gmail.com) to request help. The BCG Committee will arrange for assistance during their absence. Gardens will be considered abandoned after 30 days, if the gardener cannot personally care for their plot, and may be managed by work teams to harvest for the food pantry.

## Conflict, Disrespectful Conduct or Harassment

Our mission statement states that we offer respect and dignity to all gardeners, neighbors and visitors. There may be times when conflict occurs, or incidents of disrespectful conduct or harassment.

Gardeners are encouraged to report any incidents of harassment or disrespect by sending an email to the BCG Committee at [bockgarden@gmail.com](mailto:bockgarden@gmail.com). These reports can include things like rude or aggressive language or behavior toward others, sending unwanted emails to gardeners' personal email addresses, or any actions that interfere with a sense of safety or enjoyment while gardening at BCG.

Once a report is received, the BCG Committee, along with the City of Middleton, will investigate the situation. After reviewing the evidence, they will decide if the gardener involved should receive a warning, which affects their good standing in the garden, or if their behavior is serious enough to ask them to leave the garden. If the person involved is a committee member, they may be asked to step down from their role. If any member feels physically threatened or experiences severe harassment, they can also report the incident to the Middleton Police Department.

## Gardeners in Good Standing

Gardeners in Good Standing are eligible to return to the garden the following year. Bock Community gardeners will retain their good standing status by:

- Adhering to all BCG rules within the Garden Manual.
- Fulfilling the full volunteer hours requirement per plot rental.
- Completing orientation and/or best practices information each year.
- Address any issues raised by a plot assessment in a timely manner and communicate with the BCG Committee in a timely and respectful manner. Deadlines for addressing issues are included in the plot assessment email to the gardener.
- Being respectful of the BCG grounds, all gardeners, the BCG Committee, the City of Middleton, John C. Bock Unit of the Pheasant Branch Conservancy, and the surrounding neighborhood.

Gardeners who fail to meet all criteria during a given garden season will lose their “gardener in good standing” status and will not be invited to return for the following season. Any instance of a gardener no longer being in “good standing” will be reviewed by the BCG Committee with oversight from the City of Middleton and will be discussed with the gardener ahead of time, over email or in person.

## Plot Assessment Criteria – Remaining in Good Standing

- **Between April 15 – May 1 (beginning of season)**
  - Prepare your plot for the season, begin attending to weeds, add compost.
- **Between May 1 and October 31:**
  - Actively garden in your plot, weekly attention is needed to maintain the health of your plot (weeds, invasives, diseases, pests).
  - Plot is free of weeds, prohibited/invasive plants and weeds. (See Appendix B)
  - Pathways are free of weeds and wood chips managed according to guidelines.
  - Plants need to be removed if they are dead, diseased, decayed, over-ripe, or dried.
  - Plants should not shade or encroach on neighboring plots or pathways.
  - Plot should be free of debris, trash, and personal items neatly stored within the plot.
  - Plot boundaries and fencing are managed so that it does not encroach.
  - Seeds are removed from plants, or plants are trimmed before going to seed.
  - No open standing water for more than 24 hours.
  - Compost according to guidelines.
  - Harvest and donate to the Food Pantry to reduce food waste.
- **Between June 15 and September 15:**
  - Garden plot is at least  $\frac{3}{4}$  planted through this time period.
- **Between October 15 – Nov 1: (end of season)**
  - Begin to winterize your garden. (See Appendix D)
  - Remove plants that are dead, diseased, decayed, over-ripe or dried.
  - Take garden waste to the compost facility.
  - Utilize the drop dates outside WEST GATE for end of season garden waste.
  - Have your garden completely winterized by NOV 1.

## Individual Plot Assessments

Assessments are carried out to make sure that the BCG gardeners using city land are following the same standards. These standards are set by the City of Middleton and the BCG Committee in the Garden Manual. The assessments are a requirement from the City of Middleton to help manage the garden according to their expectations, which we have all agreed to as gardeners. See Appendix C for an example of a Plot Assessment form.

- The assessments are meant to be a communication tool to help the gardeners remain in good standing.
- The committee is also willing to offer support if a gardener needs advice, mentoring or short-term assistance in order to resolve an issue.
- Communication is the key to “staying in good standing.” The BCG Committee is committed to offering assistance, advice, and/or extra accommodations if timely communication indicates a need.

During each garden assessment, every garden plot and the surrounding pathways are reviewed for compliance with the BCG Garden Rules. As the assessments are part of the criteria used to determine “A Gardener in Good Standing”, it is important to periodically check the rules to ensure your plot and pathways are in compliance.

The Assessment team or Garden Manager may need to remove items from your plot (seeds or plants that are invasive, when timely removal is necessary). When encroachment into the pathways is occurring, anything in the pathway can be moved or trimmed, and this may happen instead of giving you a notice.

## Timing of Assessments

Individual garden plot assessments are conducted regularly from May through October by the Assessment Team and will be published ahead of time in the newsletter and on the chalkboard. There will also be an opening assessment in late April as the garden re-opens in the spring, and a final assessment at the end of the season to ensure the plot has been winterized appropriately. See Appendix D for “end of season winterizing process.”

## Categories of Assessment Status:

**1 - GOOD STANDING:** Gardener is in Good Standing.

**2 - FYI COMMUNICATION:** There is a minor issue, and the FYI is to give the gardener time to manage the issue before it becomes an official notice. The next assessment occurs in 2 weeks with the rest of the garden.

**3 - INITIAL / NEW NOTICE:** Gardener has an issue to resolve in their garden in a timely manner. The deadline is 2 weeks to resolve before reassessment, unless it is noted that the issue needs immediate attention.

**4 - FOLLOW-UP NOTICE:** Gardener has made good progress and is still working on what needs to be resolved. The deadline is 1 week to resolve before reassessment.

**5 - WARNING NOTICE:** Gardener did not resolve within the time frame of initial notice, and/or did not respond to the notice given, and a warning is being given to resolve this issue in a timely manner. The deadline is 5 days to resolve before final assessment.

**6 - NOT IN GOOD STANDING:** Gardener did not address the issue in a timely manner through previous Notices and Warning. An option to create a management plan that will be reviewed by the BCG Committee may be offered in order to return to good standing. Timely communication and follow-up are needed; otherwise, possible forfeiture of plot will be determined by the BCG Committee. Gardeners who have multiple notices/violations throughout the growing season, even if they bring their plots into compliance, may receive “gardener not in good standing.” A plot management plan would need to be created and adhered to for the following season, in order to maintain the plot.

Gardeners with noncompliant criteria must attend to the issues within the timeframe of the emailed notification. If a gardener is unable to address the issues within the time frame of the notification, they need to contact the Assessment Team via [bockassess@gmail.com](mailto:bockassess@gmail.com) or [bockgarden@gmail.com](mailto:bockgarden@gmail.com).

## Community Garden Area & Boundaries

Individual plots are numbered and shown on the map, which is not to scale. Areas inside the garden, that are not included in an individual plot, are considered common areas. All gardeners are responsible for the upkeep of common areas through participation in work groups, individual assignments, and maintaining the pathway(s) adjacent to their plot.

Please be courteous when using the common areas and tools, as they are intended to be shared among all gardeners.

### **Common areas of note inside the fence include:**

- Common pathways between plots and around fence lines.
- Fruit trees & currant bushes
- Perennial pollinator triangle garden
- Children's Garden
- Food Pantry Garden
- Tool rack
- Tool shed (for storing BCG property, and remains locked)
- Cardboard shed (primarily for work sessions use, remains locked over winter)
- Water spigots and hoses

City of Middleton controls and supplies the spigots. The City is solely responsible for when the water is turned on (early May) and off (early October).

### **Common areas outside of the fence that are part of BCG responsibility include:**

- Wood chip piles and compost pile
- Fruit trees outside East fence
- Wood chipped pathway along the outside of the South fence on Highland Avenue.
- Two South stairways into the garden off Highland Avenue.

The prairie area on Highland Avenue is under management by the City of Middleton.

See Appendix A. Garden Map for a full-page copy of the map.

# Garden Rules

Under the direction of the City of Middleton, the Garden Committee is charged with enforcing rules and providing clear communication. There are rules specific to our location, since we border Conservancy land. We want gardeners to be successful and to enjoy their experience. We need to ensure the success of the garden by following the rules and guidelines provided below.

E-mail [bockgarden@gmail.com](mailto:bockgarden@gmail.com) with any problems, concerns, or suggestions for review by the BCG Committee.

## General Rules

- Hours of operation are 5:00 am - 10:00 pm.
- Pets are not allowed inside BCG at any time.
- Weapons, alcohol, drugs, vaping and smoking are prohibited.
- Driving on the gravel access road to BCG is prohibited.
- Children under 12 years of age must be accompanied by an adult at all times while they are in the BCG.
- Gardeners may not harvest produce of other gardens or enter their garden plots uninvited. Anyone harvesting produce or entering a garden plot that is not their own must be able to prove they have permission to do so. Gardeners permitting others to harvest from their garden plot are advised to notify the Garden Committee by email to [bockgarden@gmail.com](mailto:bockgarden@gmail.com). As part of assessments and grounds management, there may be times that BCG Committee members need to enter the plots.
- Gardeners must manage their own garden plant waste. Take it to the free site managed by Purple Cow on HWY Q.
- There is no city trash pick-up from BCG. Gardeners must take out what they bring in and properly dispose of all trash, diseased plants and non-compostable plant materials.
- Only BCG common property is to be stored inside the garden shed.
- Only cardboard, burlap bags, or tarps to protect the cardboard are stored in the cardboard shed.
- Unless labeled for general use, materials such as plastic bags and other supplies kept in the garden shed are not for individual gardener use.
- Garden tools and equipment must be cleaned and returned to the general supply before leaving at the end of the day.

## Individual Plot Rules

- As an organic garden, standard organic gardening practices must be followed at all times. Gardeners may not use non-organic fertilizers, herbicides, or pesticides. If a gardener has questions about products that can or cannot be used, email [bockgarden@gmail.com](mailto:bockgarden@gmail.com)
- Materials that include meat, dairy, pet feces, or non-composted livestock manure are not permitted.
- Use of gas operated equipment, such as rototillers, and other machinery is prohibited for liability reasons.
- Gardeners may not sell any produce grown in the BCG.
- All personal items must be stored properly within your plot or removed from the garden when leaving the grounds, unless the BCG Committee has approved temporary or permanent placement. This includes furniture, storage items, play equipment, buckets, and plastic tarps.
- No standing water for more than 24 hours to prevent mosquitoes.
- Pathways must be kept clear of all personal items.
- New hay bales must be used or stored inside your garden for future use. Order as much as you will use in one season and can use or store in your plot.
- Gardeners may not move or remove the steel posts that mark the corners of garden plots nor the numbered markers identifying plots.

# Reminders: Plot Boundaries and Common Pathways

## HAYBALES:

- Haybales are to be used in plots, and not stored in aisles. (Safety and liability reasons). At registration, the city offers a split delivery in April and October for the haybales to be delivered when you most need them. The aisles need to remain clear (4' clearance where possible), which limits tripping hazard and overall liability for the garden and city.

### From the 2025 City of Middleton Management Plan:

- Make every reasonable effort to ensure that any materials brought into the Garden are both weed and seed free, such as compost, mulch, and hay bales. For example, look for the Wisconsin Crop Improvement Association's weed-free certification for straw and hay. Confirm that compost has reached high enough temperatures to kill seeds. If using hay with unknown weed seed content, do not store excess material next to the prairie. Remove plant material at the end of the growing season from the garden.
- See for instance the Wisconsin Noxious Weed Free Forage and Mulch Certifications: [wcia.wisc.edu/NoxiousMulchStandards081414.pdf](http://wcia.wisc.edu/NoxiousMulchStandards081414.pdf)

## ENCROACHMENT:

- Encroachment of plants and fencing is not permitted for safety and mobility reasons. Keep your garden within the boundaries of your plot posts and attend to encroachment into pathways or plots immediately. Tall plants that could shade neighboring gardens must be planted in the center of plots. If plants are found to be shading neighboring plots, gardeners will be asked to remove or trim the plantings
- Plants that grow more extensively during the season and are likely to encroach need to be planted in the center of the plot. Do not use the bordering fence to grow beans or flowers as they automatically encroach from that position.
- Chives, dill, fennel, and oregano (among other plants) tend to spread rapidly and need to be kept trimmed and/or thinned in order not to encroach into neighboring plots and pathways. They also need to be trimmed or harvested before going to seed.

## PATHWAYS:

- Walkways must be kept clear and accessible to everyone, and neighboring plot lines must be respected by either trimming, using trellises or other means of restraint. Grow plants that may encroach in the center of your plot, not on the edge. Vegetables like squash, beans, peas and other vining plants tend to encroach on neighboring plots and walkways quickly if not controlled.
- Gardeners must keep one-half of the pathways between their plot and neighboring plots weeded and covered with a 3–6-inch layer of provided wood chips over cardboard beginning May 1<sup>st</sup> and continuing through October 31<sup>st</sup>. Cardboard decomposes over time and needs to be maintained as a weed barrier under the wood chips. If you can see dirt under your wood chips, you need to add cardboard and wood chips to your pathway. Wood chips are brought to the north gate of the garden by the city and available to use for pathways.

## WEEDING:

- Throughout the season, gardeners need to continue weeding their garden plots on a weekly basis, attending to boundaries, pathways and fences. Keeping free of weeds and especially attending rhizomatous weeds from creeping into neighboring garden plots or pathways.
- If weeds or plants are encroaching at the border of fences, you need to maintain the fence so that the garden and fence are weed free. If fences on plot boundaries are not kept weed free, the gardeners will be asked to remove them temporarily to weed, or permanently if they are not being maintained.

# Composting in Plot: Rules and Recommendations

Composting at the Purple Cow facility is strongly encouraged. If composting in your garden plot, do not compost invasive weeds/plants/seeds in garden soil.

## Three ways to compost in plots at BCG:

1. **Trench composting** -
  - area not to exceed 4'x4'
  - needs to be dug at least 12-18 inches
  - compost covered with soil or hay
  - no open-air trenches.
2. **Above ground composting** -
  - needs to be contained to a 3'x3' area
  - be mindful of smell and height of 2-3'
  - keep compost covered with leaves or hay
3. **Surface composting** -
  - is mostly for leafy items, (not rotting produce or stalks)
  - is not to exceed 2 inches
  - needs to be in contact with soil

## Only organic plant residues may be composted.

- No meat, dairy or poultry products
- No plastic, oils, or anything that has been chemically treated
- No pet waste or non-composted livestock manure

## Composted materials decompose quicker:

- If they are chopped into pieces no longer than 6 inches (about the length of your hand)
- If they are not woody and have stems no thicker than ½ inch (about the width of your finger)
- If fruits or roots, are chopped into pieces less than 1 ½ inch diameter (about the size of a golf ball)

## Composting guidelines to follow for specific items:

### Must be trench-composted 10-12 inches or removed from BCG:

- Purslane and dandelions, unless buried at least 10 inches
- Mature tomato, pepper, squash, fruit

### Must be removed from BCG, and can be taken to compost facility

- Plants or weeds that have gone to seed
- Bindweed, crabgrass, Quackgrass, Canada thistle, and other plants that spread by rhizomes
- Plants from the mint family, like creeping Charlie, catnip, etc.

### Must be bagged and removed from BCG, taken to garbage:

- Diseased plant materials

## Mulches

Only biodegradable mulches that are free of weed seeds may be used. Through fees collected, BCG purchases weed seed free compost from Purple Cow for use by all gardeners. Mulch and plant covers must be secured so that they can't blow around the BCG. Examples of acceptable mulches include leaves, hay, straw, and herbicide free grass clippings. Burlap, paper, and cardboard are acceptable if they are totally covered with a primary mulch such as leaf compost or marsh hay.

The following restrictions apply to mulching:

- Carpet, landscape fabric or plastic is not permitted as mulch in garden plots or common pathways. They break down and leave microplastics in the soil.
- Stone or pebble mulch is not permitted in the BCG. Rocks may be used for decoration in individual plots, but they must be at least 6 inches in diameter and weigh less than 50 pounds.
- Wood chips are not allowed in individual garden plots. They may only be used to mulch designated common pathways and other common areas.

## Soil

Ensure that soil brought into the Garden is free of jumping worms and other invasive earthworms. Resources to prevent jumping worms from coming into the Garden and for determining if worms are already present can be found here:

[www.uvm.edu/d10-files/documents/2024-08/Guidelines\\_for\\_Plant\\_Sales\\_to\\_Avoid\\_Jumping\\_Worms.pdf](http://www.uvm.edu/d10-files/documents/2024-08/Guidelines_for_Plant_Sales_to_Avoid_Jumping_Worms.pdf)  
[cctompkins.org/resources/jumping-worm-fact-sheet](http://cctompkins.org/resources/jumping-worm-fact-sheet)

## Plot Health

Plots must be monitored weekly for plant diseases and insect pests and take appropriate action to control them. Outbreaks of disease or insect pests that pose a threat of spreading must be reported immediately to [bockgarden@gmail.com](mailto:bockgarden@gmail.com) and appropriately mitigated with acceptable organic controls. Diseased plants must be bagged and removed from the BCG.

During the peak of the growing season, the Garden Manager and Assessment Team will also monitor garden plots weekly for diseases and insect pests. They will notify the gardener about any problems and will work with the gardener to address the problem quickly to prevent the disease or insect pest from spreading throughout the BCG. Failure to work with the Garden Manager in a timely manner means the gardener is "not in good standing" and the plot may be offered to another gardener for rent.

## Appropriate Use and Cleaning of BCG Tools

It is important to use proper tools in an appropriate manner. If a tool breaks or is damaged when a gardener is using it, the BCG committee should be notified so it can be assessed, repaired or replaced. Send email to [bockgarden@gmail.com](mailto:bockgarden@gmail.com) and let the Garden Manager know.

Soil and other debris must be removed from BCG tools **in a gardener's plot** before returning the tools to the tool rack or shed. (Often a piece of wood chip gets the majority of the dirt off). When returning shovels and rakes, please use sand provided in container to finish cleaning. Clean tools are easier to use, last longer, and reduce the spread of disease.

## Required Volunteer Hours

All gardeners have a requirement to complete yearly volunteer hours. During the 2026 season, the minimum requirement will be 8 hours per plot. Gardeners with smaller plots and raised beds have a minimum requirement of 2 hours per plot. The garden depends on enthusiastic gardeners who offer more than the minimum number of hours, and we are very grateful for your support. Gardeners who complete their required volunteer hours will remain a gardener in good standing, which is one of the criteria to return for the following season.

To continue the privilege of utilizing city land for our community garden, we have certain responsibilities to maintain and manage the garden and community spaces together. Instead of having a few gardeners doing the majority of the work, we are spreading the work out to be completed together by the gardeners. We hope to have opportunities that meet your interest, skills and abilities, although sometimes, we will need to work together to complete projects.

There will be opportunities to sign up for volunteer tasks through an online sign-up sheet or email from an area coordinator. It is your responsibility to sign up for enough work to meet your hours requirement or ask for work opportunities if you need accommodations for tasks that meet your skill or ability. If you have questions or concerns, please contact [bockgarden@gmail.com](mailto:bockgarden@gmail.com) for accommodations, if needed.

A gardener who is unable to attend a previously scheduled work assignment must promptly email [bockgarden@gmail.com](mailto:bockgarden@gmail.com) to notify the Work Group Leader of their absence. The gardener is responsible for signing up for a replacement work session or asking for individual work tasks to make up the volunteer hours. If a work assignment is canceled due to weather, please sign up or ask for another work opportunity.

The success and health of the BCG depend on the cooperative efforts of all gardeners being fully involved in the BCG community throughout the garden year. Gardeners are strongly encouraged to be aware of issues occurring in common use areas, such as dirty tools, weeds, dropped fruit, and voluntarily pitch in to help keep the BCG healthy and tidy. Please take a moment to pick weeds when you see them or take a run to the compost facility, every little bit helps!!

## Tracking Volunteer Hours

We have set up an online portal system that will help with scheduling and tracking hours. Each gardener is responsible for signing up for enough scheduled work groups and/or scheduled independent tasks to complete your hours. Once the event is completed, it will trigger a verification of your hours by a committee member. Once verified, you will be able to see completed hours in your portal. Gardeners can use the link provided through email to access the online system.

Gardeners need to sign and date the log when they arrive for any work session for the BCG yearly records in order to verify that you were physically present for both tracking hours and for liability reasons. All hours are tallied at the end of season by the BCG Committee to ensure required hours are completed and determine good standing status for each plot. Reminder emails you receive are offered as a courtesy from the BCG committee. It is each gardener's responsibility to complete their minimum required hours each season. If you do not complete your hours, you will not be in good standing as a gardener and will be ineligible to register for the next gardening season.

## Work Groups & Work Group Leaders

Because the BCG is a relatively small community garden of volunteers, leadership responsibilities are shared by all gardeners. Everyone is asked and invited to step into some level of leadership or responsibility during your time at BCG. Some examples are Work Group Leaders, Team Leaders, Coordinators and Committee positions.

Each work group has a leader, who is either a BCG Committee member or another gardener assigned to lead by the Committee. The work group leader follows a list of work tasks assigned by the BCG Committee based on the needs specified by the Garden Manager, Coordinators, and the expectations outlined by the City of Middleton, and it is important that the BCG gardeners follow the tasks as outlined.

For work group hours, work group leaders are responsible for having participants sign in on the permanent log sheets when they arrive, which are stored for BCG Committee verification throughout the season. At the end of a work group, the work group leader also makes sure that the tools used are clean and put away properly, arranges to have garden waste taken to the compost facility by themselves or a volunteer, and locks the shed(s).

Work group leaders will get credit for **3 hours**. The expectation is to arrive 15 min early to prepare for the work group, and to stay a little longer at the end to make sure things are cleaned up and put away properly. There is also an additional 30 minutes credited for being a work group leader. For example, you will see a sign-up slot that will be 930 am - 1230 pm (3 hrs.) for a group that is from 1000 am - 1200 pm (2 hrs.), and likely will be preparing, working and cleaning up for 2.5 hours.

## Individual Assignments

In addition to the regularly scheduled work groups, there may also be individual work assignments available. The online scheduling system will have these opportunities available, including light-duty assignments. Some examples of individual assignments: taking food to the food pantry, drop off garden waste to the compost facility, cleaning the shed, sweeping and weeding the stairs, maintenance needs, orchard needs, and food pantry plot weeding/watering. There may also be coordinated efforts with the Friends of Pheasant Branch for volunteer hours that support the surrounding conservancy land, which will count toward your required hours.

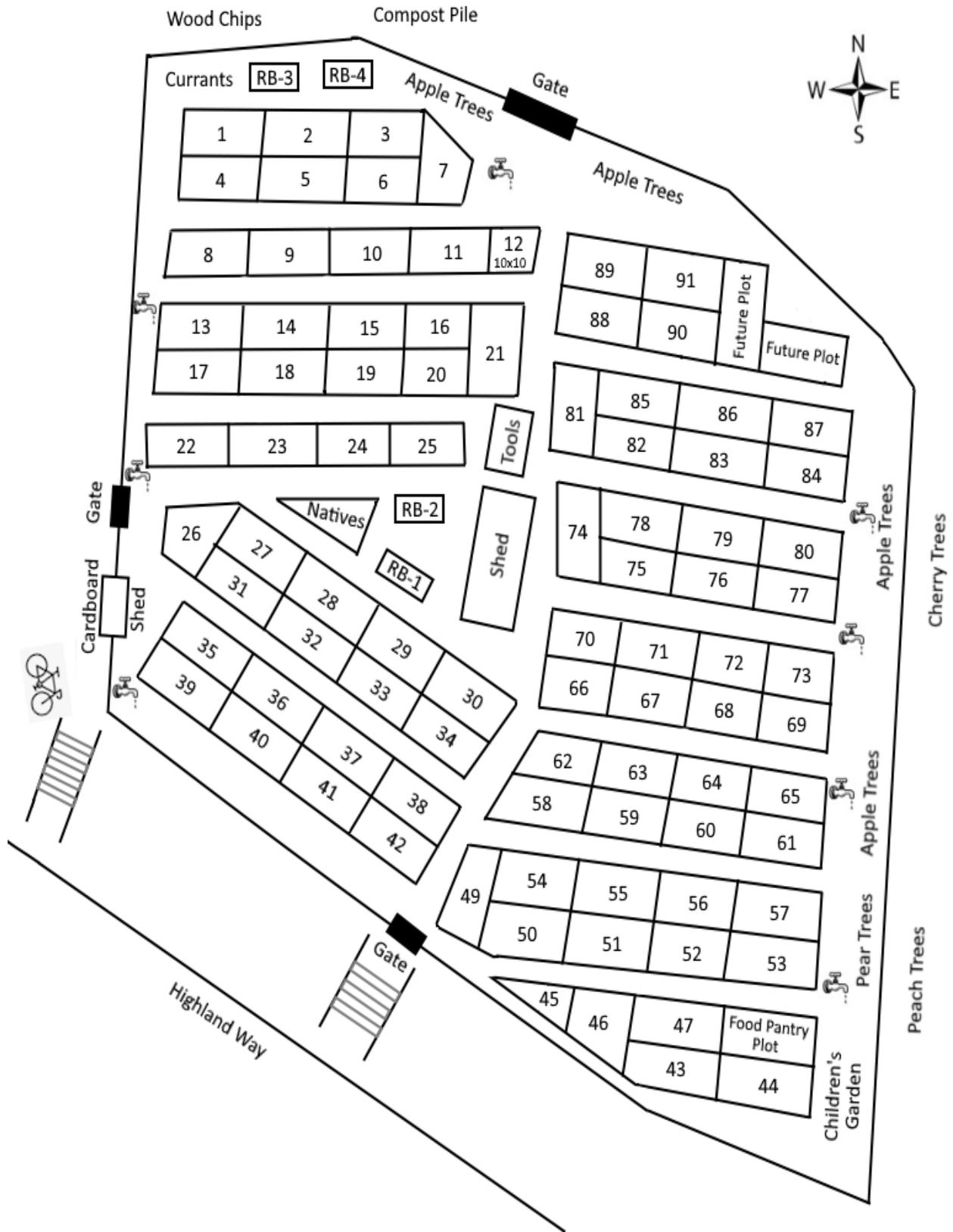
BCG Committee members fulfill the work requirement by carrying out the duties of their positions as defined in Garden Committee Positions and will help out as Work Group Leaders as needed.

## Shared Space Gardening

Starting in 2026, BCG is embracing new terminology around shared plots, which is moving away from the previous practice of double plots. Every plot will have one primary gardener and each gardener will only have one plot. Friends and family may choose to garden near each other in Shared Space Gardening. If you would like to move your plot to be near a friend or family member, let the BCG Committee know of your interest and they will let you know when a plot is available. Plot assignment changes will happen for the next garden season.

# Appendix A. Garden Map

(not to scale)



## Appendix B. Forbidden and Cautionary Plants

Information about plants may be added/changed if the City and BCG Committee see a problem with spreading, or if there is new information from DNR and Dane County. If you have questions about plants or weeds, please use the [UW-Extension website](#) for more information.

<p>Plants allowed -  <b>ONLY if Carefully Controlled</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Chives-do not let it go to seed, clip off flowers to prevent seeding, contained in a pot would be better. Do not plant in borders</li> <li>● Dill-do not let it go to seed, watch for encroachment in plots and pathways</li> <li>● Fennel-do not let it go to seed, watch for encroachment in plots and pathways</li> <li>● Oregano-contained in a pot or managed well so that it does not spread. Do not plant on borders.</li> </ul>	<p>Other Potentially Invasive and Woody Plants <b>Not Permitted in Garden Plots</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Amaranth</li> <li>● Cane berries</li> <li>● Comfrey</li> <li>● Grapes</li> <li>● Horseradish</li> <li>● Jerusalem artichokes</li> <li>● Mints, especially catnip, spearmint</li> <li>● Motherwort (in mint family)</li> <li>● Mugwort</li> <li>● Shrubs</li> <li>● Trees (including weed trees like mulberry)</li> </ul> <p>Regularly pull leaves off mulberry to starve it from light, if unable to dig it out.</p>
<p>Poisonous Plants &amp; Wisconsin Noxious Weeds  <b>Not Permitted in Garden Plots</b></p> <p>Noxious</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bindweed varieties</li> <li>● Thistle varieties</li> <li>● Pepperweed</li> <li>● Garlic Mustard</li> <li>● Giant Foxtail</li> <li>● Leafy Spurge</li> <li>● Buckthorn (Common and Glossy)</li> <li>● Japanese Knotweed</li> <li>● Japanese Stiltgrass</li> </ul> <p>Poisonous</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Castor Beans</li> <li>● Delphinium</li> <li>● Foxglove</li> <li>● Jimsonweed</li> <li>● Morning glory</li> <li>● Narcissus (daffodil, jonquil, etc.)</li> <li>● Poison Ivy</li> <li>● Wild Parsnips</li> <li>● Nightshades [deadly nightshade/belladonna (Solanum dulcamara) and black (S. nigrum)]</li> </ul>	<p>Common Weeds of Particular Concern  <b>Pull regularly, do not let them grow/spread</b></p> <p>Items in red are common weeds that are seen in plots at BCG and need to be pulled and managed regularly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Common purslane</li> <li>● Crabgrass</li> <li>● Crown vetch</li> <li>● Dandelions</li> <li>● Lamb's quarters</li> <li>● Mullein</li> <li>● Quackgrass</li> <li>● Reed canary grass</li> <li>● Sheep (red) sorrel</li> <li>● Velvetleaf</li> <li>● Barnyard grass</li> <li>● Birdsfoot trefoil</li> <li>● Common morning glory</li> <li>● Common ragweed</li> <li>● Curly sour dock</li> <li>● Green and yellow foxtail</li> <li>● Yellow rocket</li> </ul> <p>THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION – Due to being on conservancy land we have to be attentive to invasive plants that spread easily and would disrupt the prairie.</p>

Report immediately to [bockgarden@gmail.com](mailto:bockgarden@gmail.com) if you see jumping worms in your garden.  
 Information on jumping worms: <https://p.widencdn.net/tkh5lw/Unwanted-Jumping-Worms>

## Appendix C. Assessment Form

Following are images of the online plot assessment form that is emailed to gardeners to communicate when issues are present and need to be managed by the gardener.

### Example of a BCG PLOT ASSESSMENT NOTICE:

You are receiving this notice because something was identified in your garden plot that needs attention. Please see below for the issue(s) identified and remedy them in the timeframe noted in the email you received.

If you are unable to address the issue in a timely manner, please email the Assessment Team at [bockassess@gmail.com](mailto:bockassess@gmail.com) to talk about the issue and your plans to resolve it.

**The following items are based on common issues that arise that are not in compliance with the BCG Rules and Regulations.** \*

**If one or more is checked, this is an issue for the gardener to address in a timely manner.**

- Reassessment completed and previous issue(s) appear to be resolved.
- Plot needs to be 3/4 planted from 6/15 to 9/15. To keep a plot at BCG it needs to be well-maintained and utilized for growing capacity.
- Encroachment into pathway or neighboring plot. Plants from garden need to be contained and remain within plot boundaries, not extending into pathways or other plots.. (examples: chives, fennel, dill, tarragon, rhubarb, asparagus, squash, tomatoes, flowers and beans). You can remove, trim, stake or pull back with a string.
- Prohibited plants are present in plot, and they need to be removed. (examples: any tree, shrub, or morning glory)
- Invasive weeds are present, and they need to be removed. (examples: bindweed, quack grass, purslane, thistle)
- Weeds are covering 50-70% of plot, and they need to be removed. Weeds spreading can cause a plot to be quarantined.
- Weeds are covering 80-100% of plot, and they need to be removed. Weeds spreading can cause a plot to be quarantined.
- Seeds - Certain plants, such as fennel, dill, amaranth, and invasive weeds/plants such as thistle, mullein, and velvet leaf, need to have the plants removed before they go to seed. We need to protect the garden and the conservancy land around us.
- Pathway has weeds that need to be removed.
- Pathway needs cardboard/wood chips replaced to help prevent weeds.
- Debris, trash, or plastic bags are present in plot or pathway and need to be removed. Plastic bags/tarps are not allowed in plots.
- Items need to be stored neatly in plot.
- Items need to remain in plot and not stored or placed in community spaces.
- Fencing needs to remain within the plot post boundaries, not outside of them. For safety reasons, the fencing needs to be secured and not falling into the pathway. Make sure fencing/posts do not have sharp edges for safety reasons.
- Over-ripe produce, diseased, dead, decaying plants are present and need to be removed. Please pick produce and offer to food pantry if you are not able to use it.
- Compost in plot needs to be covered with hay /soil / burlap or trench composted to reduce smell and critters.
- No standing water in plot for more than 24 hours. Please cover or empty to prevent mosquitoes and odors.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D. End of Season Plot Clean-up

To reduce the threat of disease and pest carryover, keep the BCG presentable to neighbors, and facilitate spring planting, gardeners must prepare their garden plots for overwintering. By November 1<sup>st</sup> at 5pm, all garden plots, including borders and one-half of the surrounding pathway(s), must be cleaned-up following the guidelines below. Gardeners who fail to do so will not be eligible to register for the following season.

The golden rule is to take out what you bring in. It is especially important that “gardeners not in good standing” and other gardeners not planning on returning the next season remove all personal property by November 1<sup>st</sup>, otherwise, it becomes the property of BCG.

Follow these steps to prepare your plot for winter:

1. Except for perennials, hardy fall crops, and cover crops, all vegetation should be cut down or pulled out. Plant residues must be appropriately composted in the gardener’s plot (i.e., surface, trench, spaded-under, chopped and placed in a small compost bin in plot) or bagged up and removed from the BCG. Except for healthy asparagus plants, all other perennials and crops harvested after October 31<sup>st</sup> should be cut down to 4-6 inches height following the first hard freeze or after the tops die back.
2. Collect all dead fruits and vegetables that may have fallen onto the ground and bury them in your plot to decompose or bag and remove them from the BCG. Otherwise, these residues may harbor plant diseases, insect pests, and weed seed or attract rodents and other unwanted animals.
3. Any unused mulch hay should be placed within the garden plot.
4. Remove all personal tools from the BCG to prevent theft or loss.
5. Non-perimeter fencing, posts, trellises, cages, supports, etc. should be removed or laid flat on the ground and secured, so they won’t be blown by the wind.
6. Stepping-stones and boards used for internal paths do not need to be removed, but boards should be stacked neatly and secured against strong winds.

Since there is no garbage pick-up at BCG, items that a gardener wishes to discard must be taken home. Do not, under any circumstances, place trash in the dumpsters or bins of our neighbors.

### **Cover Crops:**

Though not required, planting green manure or cover crops such as buckwheat during the growing season and winter rye or winter wheat in the fall are strongly recommended to protect the soil from erosion and compaction. These crops also increase water infiltration and help break up clay to improve soil tilth. Turning these crops into the soil before spring planting or succession planting adds organic matter. The Middleton Farmers Co-op carries buckwheat, winter rye, winter wheat, and other cover crop seeds that may be purchased by the pound.