



Not Far From The Tree 2020 COVID-19 Guidelines (Fruit Pickers)

Not Far From The Tree (NFFTT), recognizes the grave, unprecedented challenge that the COVID-19 virus presents to the City of Toronto. NFFTT supports the decisions made by authorities to adopt stringent containment measures to flatten the curve and protect lives. Urban fruit picking and sharing involves small groups of volunteers coming together to pick fruit from a tree and share it between themselves, the tree registrant, and social service agencies in the community. These programs provide thousands of pounds of fresh fruit to hundreds of people each season.

Fruit picking is a form of fresh food access. Fresh food access has been deemed an essential service by the Government of Ontario. To proceed with the 2020 picking season, we have outlined the following COVID-19 protocols and best practices to ensure the safety of our program participants. This document has been developed in consultation with fruit picking and sharing organizations across North America, with information from local and national health authorities.

All fruit pickers and tree registrants must review the COVID-19 Guidelines in order to participate in the 2020 season.

Fruit Picker Mandatory COVID-19 Guidelines Summary

1. If you are feeling unwell, or have exhibited symptoms of COVID-19 within 14 days, you are not allowed to attend a pick. Please conduct the [Ontario Government self-assessment tool](#).
2. You must secure an official spot on the NFFTT's Fruit Picking Portal in order to attend a pick. The number of participants at each pick is limited to 6. Do not bring unregistered guests to a pick, or attend a pick as an unregistered guest. See Attendance Protocols for exceptions. The Government of Ontario currently restricts gatherings to 10 people or less.
3. Masks are mandatory on the pick site, and are BYO - Bring Your Own.
4. Physical Distancing is in effect at all times: Unless members of the same household, you must maintain at least 2m or 6ft of distance with all other individuals at all times on the pick site.
5. You must sanitize your hands upon arrival and departure of the pick site, and if cross-contamination occurs. Hand sanitizer will be provided by NFFTT, but you are encouraged to bring your own, or a thermos of hot soapy water.
6. You are to sanitize the equipment you use before and after use, and are not to share equipment with other fruit pickers.

7. You are to bring your own bag(s) for your share of the fruit (we recommend bringing more than 1).
8. You are to follow the instructions of the Pick Leader, who is trained in detailed COVID safety protocols.
9. Under no circumstances are you to dispose of garbage/personal PPE on the pick site.

FRUIT PICKING AND SHARING GUIDELINES

Mandatory Pre-Registration Practices

The following Pre-Registration Practices must first be met in order for a fruit pick to proceed:

1. All fruit pickers and tree registrants must review the COVID-19 Guidelines in order to participate in the 2020 season.
2. **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 a pick or attend a pick.**
 - a. Prior to fruit picks both homeowners and fruit pickers must review the [Ontario Government self-assessment tool](#) and ensure they “do not seem to have symptoms or be part of an at-risk group”. Please note if anyone at a pick site displays symptoms, they will be given public health contact information and asked to leave.
 - b. Contact information for all tree registrants and fruit pickers will be collected via the Fruit Picking Portal. Attendance at each pick will be taken and recorded. This can help public health with tracking if anyone becomes infected.
 - c. Cancellation policy adjustment: volunteers will not be penalized for not attending the harvest if they develop any symptoms or an increased risk of COVID-19 prior to the harvest event.
3. **No more than 6 individuals are allowed to register for a Fruit Pick (as per NFFTT’s Fruit Picking Portal)**
 - a. Currently the Ontario Government allows for groups of 10 or less: 6 is the maximum to account for the potential unexpected arrival of an additional person(s) on the site (i.e. the tree registrant, an accessibility provider, or children - [see full attendance policy below](#)).

It is important to note that people may be infected with COVID-19 and not show symptoms immediately. Even if participants appear to be healthy and have had no contact with someone who is at risk, it is still absolutely essential to follow physical distancing and sanitation practices.

Attendance Policy:

It is required that everyone attending a pick **register and secure an official spot** on the fruit picking portal. **Do not bring additional people with you to the fruit pick or attend a fruit pick without registering an official spot.**

Exception: Children Attendance Policy

If you are planning on bringing your child(ren), please ensure your children are able to adhere to physical distancing guidelines. If they are too young to do so, we recommend they are not brought to picks. Keep in mind our Pick Leaders have significant added responsibilities this season. You will be responsible for ensuring your children are adhering to the distancing and safety guidelines (cleaning their equipment, etc.) and are entertained and occupied. If you are planning on bringing your children, please send a note to picks@notfarfromthetree.org beforehand to confirm attendance numbers.

Exception: Accessibility Policy

If you have a care provider or transportation provider they are able to attend the pick with you. If possible, please have them register via the portal and secure a spot if they will be on the pick site with you (we can waive membership fees if requested at picks@notfarfromthetree.org). If they aren't able to get a spot on the pick, please let NFFTT know and we will inform the Pick Leader.

On-Site Best Practices

Fruit Pickers and tree registrants then must follow the guidelines below for controlling the spread of COVID-19, which includes measures to be taken: **Before the Harvest, During the Harvest, Equipment and Sanitization, Fruit Sharing & Donation.**

Before the Harvest

Pick Leaders will be trained to sanitize the equipment and cargo bike prior to the fruit pick. Proper sanitization procedures have been communicated to Pick Leaders, and the equipment sets are stocked with cleaning products. If cross-contamination occurs (i.e. touching or adjusting of equipment en route), the equipment will be sanitized upon arrival at the pick site prior to sharing with the volunteers.

During the Harvest

The following guidelines must be adhered to while on the picking site. *Due to the severity of the circumstances, if volunteers disobey the following guidelines, they must be asked to leave the pick site. If asked to leave a second time, their access will be revoked from NFFTT's Fruit Picking Portal for the remainder of the season.*

1. Physical Distancing Is in Effect At All Times

- a. Unless picking with members of the same household, everyone on a fruit pick must maintain a physical distance of 2 meters/6-feet whenever it is possible to do so **while maintaining physical safety.**
- b. If volunteers arrive on a site and find they cannot safely maintain 2m or 6ft, they must leave the site temporarily and rotate in and out (at least 6ft of distance must also be maintained while waiting your turn to pick). Volunteers must listen to the instructions of the Pick Leader, and if asked to rotate out if it is deemed unsafe, they are to do so.
- c. 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.
- d. There are times that physical distancing will not be possible due to safety concerns, such as holding a ladder - these occurrences are to be limited to only as-needed.
- e. *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.*

2. PPE and Hygiene Requirements for Fruit Pickers:

- a. **Wear a face mask or face cloth to prevent droplet spread. Masks are “Bring Your Own”.**
- b. Sanitize your hands during the following: upon arrival on site, any time cross-contamination happens (i.e. after accidentally touching your face or unsanitized items) and departure of site
- c. Practice proper hygiene practices (avoid touching your face, ensure sneeze/cough etiquette, properly sanitize hands). Hand sanitizer will be provided on site. We also encourage you to bring your own or a thermos of hot soapy water.
- d. All volunteers must have clean, sanitized hands, when handling fruit¹
- e. Bring and use your own gardening gloves, if desired, for cleaning the site of compost materials. If gloves are used, hands should be sanitized before and after using gloves. NFFTT will not be providing communal gardening gloves.

¹ 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

- f. Under no circumstances leave any garbage or personal PPE at fruit pick. You are responsible for packing out your own garbage and disposing of it properly.
- g. Do not enter the tree registrant's home. Volunteers are encouraged to use the bathroom prior to attending a pick. Please also bring your own water and snacks. An exception is if access is required through the house, during which physical distancing must be adhered to. Avoid touching any items in the tree registrants home.

3. Equipment use and Sterilization:

- a. Fruit picking equipment provided must be sterilized before each pick AND after each pick with provided sanitization materials in the equipment bin. The Pick Leader will be trained to ensure proper sanitization of equipment has occurred. *The virus is easily inactivated by using simple disinfectants such as store-bought disinfectants, and alternatively diluted bleach solution prepared daily.*²
- b. Volunteers will be required to disinfect surfaces on equipment before and after use, including: picking poles and hand shears. Volunteers will be instructed to remove all dirt and organic matter from the surface of tools before sanitizing. Tools must be dry before sanitizing, or the sanitizer will be diluted.
- c. There is to be no sharing of equipment between pickers. 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. Pick Leader will oversee equipment to ensure there is no sharing between pickers.
- d. Ladder use is at the discretion of the individual, and ladder safety procedures must be in effect at all times. Ladders over 6' tall must be secured by a second person holding the base of the ladder. Ladders under 6' tall can be used by one person alone, if it is possible to do so safely. If there is only one ladder, then only one volunteer will climb to the top of the ladder, and only one volunteer will secure the base of the ladder, for the duration of the event.
- e. Under no circumstances is garbage from cleaning products to be left on the site. It must be properly disposed of.

After the Harvest: Fruit Sharing & Donation

- 1. Volunteers will be expected to bring their own bags to take home their share of the fruit. It's recommended to bring more than one.
- 2. The homeowner's share of the fruit will be left on their porch or where appropriate, to ensure contactless transfer. Under no circumstances will it be handed directly to the homeowner.
- 3. Sanitize your equipment and hands upon departure from the site.
- 4. Thoroughly wash the fruit before consumption.

² <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/assumptions.html>

Tree Registrants will be asked to adhere to the following:

- a. If you or anyone in your household are feeling unwell, or have exhibited symptoms of COVID-19 within 14 days, you are not allowed to request a pick at your property. Please conduct the Ontario Government self-assessment tool.
- b. If you have a small yard where you think 6 people won't be able to maintain physical distancing, we encourage you to indicate this on your pick request so we can reduce volunteer numbers. If access to your yard is required through the house, please indicate this on your pick request.
- c. Stay in the house during the pick and minimize interaction with the volunteers. If absolutely necessary, any directions or instructions must be provided from at least 6 feet away. Physical distancing of 2m or 6ft from all individuals must be adhered to at all times.
- d. Make sure your pick site is ready in advance. Open any gates, locks, doors, etc. and make equipment easily accessible to volunteers. Please do not require volunteers to go hunting for items (i.e. green bins, waste bags, ladders). Minimize the need for volunteers to touch areas of your property where possible.
- e. Sterilize high-touch points on your ladders and any garden equipment (i.e. rakes) before the event for use by volunteers.
- f. Have a green bin or compost bag ready and in an easily accessible location. Sanitizing the bin and/or compost bag will be the responsibility of the tree registrants post-pick.
- g. Have your bowl or bag where you would like your share of the fruit ready and in an obvious place for volunteers to fill. They will leave the fruit where indicated, and not hand it directly to you.
- h. You are encouraged to sanitize your hands and thoroughly wash the fruit after receiving your share.
- i. Sterilize any equipment/touch points on their properties once volunteers have left their property.

Key Resources Used in the Development of NFFTT Protocols

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](#)

Work Safe BC: [Glove removal procedure](#)

Workers Health and Safety: [Gloves at Work - Safeguards for workers for confronting COVID-19?](#)