

Managing Theft and Vandalism



Build Community and Take Action

- Be active in the garden – Know who your fellow gardeners. If you see someone you do not recognize, politely introduce yourself and ask how they know the gardener. If they do not know the person/have permission to harvest, ask them to please stop and suggest they look in the sharing box (if available) for free vegetables or let them know of a local pantry.
- Let them know how they can join the garden. Direct them to the Garden Project's phone number (517.853.7809) or website.
- If they do not stop or are doing damage to garden property, call the police. If appropriate, take a picture. Always consider your safety before taking action.
- Get to know the kids and families in your neighborhood – This could be through community potlucks or just talking with people that pass by. Even if they are not the thieves, they can be extra eyes.
- Personalize the plots by adding cute signs with the gardeners' first names and even pictures. This can remind potential thieves that there is a real person or family relying on the space. It's also a nice way to connect gardeners to each other. Combine a sign-making party with a spring orientation potluck at the garden and turn it into a fun get-to-know-each-other activity.

Maintain and Constrain

- Keep up with harvesting ripe veggies. If you have more than you can use, give to a friend, put in the sharing box, or donate to a food pantry.
- Construct small fences around your plot. Consider using natural plants as barriers. Keep in mind the balance of security and enjoyment.
- Place a “do not pick” sign outside your garden or in your plot. Sometimes people do not know that a community garden is not for everyone. A couple sign options are linked [HERE](#)
- Have an area where free produce is available (preferably away from the garden plots).
- Signs saying, “This Garden is being monitored”. Maybe an old camera or black box hung in a tree or on a building nearby.
- Hide your prized vegetable plants from plain sight and easy access.

Be Creative and Compassionate

- Sprinkle white flour liberally over prized produce. People might think it's laden with pesticides and won't take it. Keep a stash of white flour in your garden (maybe in a sealed plastic container) and re-apply as soon as possible after a rain.
- Plant varieties others won't want – Sometimes a deliciously twisted heirloom tomato will stay longer than your market tomato.
- Plant extra and assume those that are taking have a real need. Feel good that you are helping others that are less fortunate or capable.

