



How To Run A Garden Tour

1. Finding your gardens is the first step. Gardens can be any style and size. Look for gardens that have a particular focus (shade beds, flowers, dwarf conifers, vegetables, wildflower/native plants, hydrangeas etc.) or those with a strong “personal style.”
2. If you will have three or more gardens open on the same day be sure that it’s possible to drive from garden to garden and tour them all within the 10 AM to 4 PM period. An organization might decide to group four gardens that are near each other on one tour, and have three others that are in another part of the Cape open on another day.
3. Create a garden tour committee and divide up responsibilities among the members. Typical roles depending on how your tour will be run are: chair/CCHF-liaison, staffing, description writing, publicity, sponsorships, refreshments, and add-on activities/fundraising.
4. Provide a list of the addresses of your gardens and descriptions to Greta Georgieva by April 15th or sooner if possible.
5. Decide what order to list your gardens – people will be free to visit them in any order, of course, but most people will follow a suggested route or the directions given. Get directions from the property owner, map out a route, and have at least three different people follow that route to make sure it is clear and easily drivable.
6. Decide where visitors will park. In residential areas visitors are often requested to park only on one side of a road so that traffic won’t be blocked. Decide if you’ll need a volunteer or two to direct parking.
7. You can have a theme for your open gardens or not. Examples: Classic Cape Cod, Made In The Shade, Seaside Retreats, Jewel Box Landscapes, Edible Landscaping, Flower Power, Organic Gardening, The Ornamented Garden, Heaven in Harwich, etc.
8. Non-profits with fewer volunteers may wish to have gardens open on different days. It is also possible to have a garden/gardens open on several days during the Hydrangea Festival – this is up to the property owners and the non-profit who is providing the staffing and benefiting from the entry fee. One garden might be open on four or five days, or a non-profit could have a group of gardens open for one day only. Of course the more gardens that are open and the more often they are open, the more money the non-profit is likely to make.

9. All gardens will need at least three people on duty there at all times. Two people should staff the entry and another should be available to help the homeowners keep an eye on visitors etc. Larger gardens might need four or five volunteers. Most non-profits will want to schedule a morning shift and an afternoon shift for these workers. Get a group of volunteers in place as soon as possible and make a list of their cell numbers so that they can be in contact on the day of the event.
10. Confirm with the homeowner about details such as possible bathroom access for the volunteers, available chairs, tables for plant or other sales, whether refreshments will be offered, shade umbrellas for ticket takers etc.
11. In general, visitors to the gardens don't go into the houses, however I have been on some garden tours where the homeowner wants people to either walk through or welcomes visitors in certain areas. This is up to the property owner.
12. Think about the location of public restrooms where visitors to the gardens can be directed. In general, most property owners do not wish to have people using the facilities in their homes. Public libraries, some restaurants, town buildings etc. usually have restrooms. When gardens are located in isolated areas the non-profit might consider renting a Porta-Potty for the public's use.
13. Non-profits are encouraged to find local sponsors for their tours that will help defray any costs. Usually such sponsors get listed on any of the non-profit's promotional materials, handouts, website etc. Decide if your group will look for sponsors and if so, how much they will ask for donations. Donations can be used for any desired additional promotional materials (posters, postcards, flyers etc), rental of portable restrooms, refreshments, special insurance riders, etc.
14. Decide if any other fundraising will be done at the gardens that are open. For example, a group might decide that their theme is Garden Crafts and have handmade pots or garden ornaments for sale. Another group might wish to sell plants, baked goods, bottled water or souvenirs of some kind. (Note that since this is the first year for the CCHF it's impossible to know how many people will tour the gardens. This is an event that will undoubtedly build over time.)
15. Decide if you'd like to offer free refreshments of some kind – this can be listed in the description of your gardens to entice more people to come. (“Stroll this flower-filled landscape while sipping ice water or lemonade,” or “Enjoy a homemade cookie and beverage as you walk through the vegetable garden.”)
16. Some garden owners like to be available for answering visitors' questions but others will prefer not – either is fine. If a garden is maintained by professional landscapers or has been designed by a professional those people may wish to be on-site or have their promotional materials available.
17. Garden tours will happen rain or shine, so think about how ticket-takers and other staffers might be protected in rainy weather. Fortunately, the Cape Cod weather is usually clear in July so the odds are with us.

18. As early as possible (February or March?) the non-profits should work with the garden's owners to write up a compelling description of the gardens on tour. Describe what a visitor will see: what makes that garden special? What can visitors learn from touring this garden? These descriptions can be longer for the organization's own promotional materials (website, print, press releases, newsletters etc) but should be condensed to no more than 100 words (not including address or directions) for the CCHF materials and website.
19. Non-profits might want to partner with local businesses or organizations to add on other events or activities that will entice visitors to your tour. A church might want to offer coffee and pastries, or other refreshments before the tour, for example, or they could sell prepared foods and have a craft-fair that is open before, during and after the tour. Breakfasts, lunches, cocktail hour wine-tastings, art shows, hydrangea lectures etc are just a few ideas.
20. Many homeowners wonder about insurance for such events. All non-profits are encouraged to speak with their existing insurance companies about this. It's often possible to get an inexpensive rider for insurance policies that will cover special events such as a garden tour.
21. Tickets will be printed by the Cape Cod Hydrangea Festival/Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce. Tickets can be purchased in advance and used at any of the open gardens. Non-profits may want to encourage their followers to buy tickets in advance but they can also take the \$5.00 donation at the gate. Those staffing the gardens should keep a record of the numbers of people who come as this will be important information for the CCHF in the future.
22. In order to be listed as a part of the Cape Cod Hydrangea Festival a non-profit needs to be a member of the event. The cost is \$50 for non-members of the CC Chamber, and free for those who are already Chamber members. Fees help pay for the website and promotional materials.
23. When setting up the day or days your gardens will be on tour, you may want to coordinate with C.L. Fornari as she will know when other tours are happening. This year we'll make an effort to spread tours out over the ten-day festival, but in the future it's likely that many tours will happen on the same day. This is fine in that most Cape visitors will focus on one area of the Cape or another and there will be plenty of visitors in all areas.

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