

Explanation of Fee Chart Changes

Prepared by the Gardens Network, Dec 2019

In 2020, the Gardens Network will replace the stand-alone fee chart with a plot fee calculator on the demographics form. This update adjusts plot fee income brackets for inflation and simplifies the registration process.

Background on sliding scale fees:

- Equity measure to ensure community garden access for all Madison residents.
- First set by the Community Action Coalition, then the Urban Ag Working Group of the City of Madison.
- Originally based on Dane County Median Family Income levels,¹ but has not kept pace with changes in these levels.
- Demographic forms now collected by many gardens also include income information, leading to redundancy complaints from garden leadership.

New Chart: To deal with these issues, plot fees will now be based on the income brackets of the Gardens Network demographics forms.¹ This transition will increase or decrease plot fees by up to \$25, but is based on calculations modelled on the original plot fee structure. This simplifies registration and establishes an automatic process for future plot fee changes.

The demographics form will remain anonymous. The income portion of the form should simply be used during registration to determine plot fees. The rest of the form can be filled out and collected anonymously. Gardens that are not collecting demographics information can simply use the income portion of the form as a fee chart when registering gardeners.

1. The original sliding scale plot fees and the Gardens Network demographics form use income limits set by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. These income levels are defined as extremely low, very low and low income and were originally based on 30, 50, and 80% of the median family income (MFI), a county-level statistic estimated by the US Census Bureau, though they have become more complicated over time because of changes in the way these terms are defined (<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il/il2019/2019summary.odn>).

2. Previous year's MFI are used, because the current year's numbers are not reported until April, after registration for that year has already begun.