



## Metro Blooms

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# Metro Blooms COVID Policies

Updated: July 27, 2022

The health and safety of the community and our staff is utmost in our minds. Metro Blooms has determined our occupational risk for COVID-19 to be low risk. We are therefore allowing employees the option of returning to in-person work at our office. Metro Blooms is not currently requiring any staff member to work in the office full time. We encourage employees to consider their health risks, ability and desire to continue working from home in determining their return to a shared workspace. We are addressing potential exposure risk through engineering and administrative controls as well as safe work practices and personal protective equipment (PPE). We are following [CDC recommendations on safe work practices](#).

## Safe Work Practices and PPE

### Personal Protective Equipment:

#### **Masks:**

- Metro Blooms will follow federal, state, and local regulations and guidelines from the CDC regarding mask usage. Masks will be available at the office for staff and clients that do not have their own.
- At the request of a client, we expect our employees to wear a mask, no questions asked.

### Safe Work Practices:

1. Metro Blooms directors will stay informed about the most current CDC guidelines for COVID-19, and will communicate with employees, our clients, and our community as appropriate about any changes to policies, procedures or protocols.
2. We encourage virtual meetings with partners and clients whenever possible, though recognize the importance of on-site meetings in relation to landscape design and engagement and take appropriate precautions during these interactions.
3. To maintain the safety of our staff, clients, and community, we rely on our employees to self-report any COVID-19 symptoms and to stay home if they have a known contact with someone who is COVID-19 positive, or have otherwise been in a high-risk exposure situation.

*Self-Reporting: It is extremely important to self-report and stay home if feeling ill.*

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- **Employees who are showing signs of fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, have a new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, or other COVID-19 symptoms, or who have been in direct contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 are prohibited from coming to work, and should alert their supervisor as soon as they are able.**
  - Sick pay is available for all employees whether they are showing symptoms of illness, caring for a sick family member, or under quarantine.
4. Social distancing of at least 6 feet is recommended when possible.
  5. Staff are expected to wash hands frequently with soap and use hand sanitizer as needed. Touchless faucets, paper towels, and garbage bins are available in Metro Blooms bathrooms. Hand sanitizer will be available throughout the office.
  6. Metro Blooms strives to provide space and equipment for each individual staff member but staff may need to share equipment and common areas such as the conference room and kitchen areas. EPA approved disinfectant wipes, spray and disposable towels will be provided for staff to disinfect equipment and common areas.
  7. Due to the nature of COVID-19 and likelihood for asymptomatic patients, employees must follow guidelines at all times. If someone you have been in direct contact with is sick, you are expected to work remotely until you have finished a quarantine or have tested negative, on a timeline determined by the CDC (Use their [Quarantine and Isolation Calculator](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html)): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html>

## Engineering Controls

1. Metro Blooms has installed a new central air heating and cooling system that was designed to increase the efficiency of our ventilation.

## Administrative Controls

1. We encourage staff to follow CDC guidelines to limit exposure to COVID-19. If staff are in a high-risk exposure situation such as a large gathering or travel to a location with a high community infection rate, we ask that staff work remotely until they are safe to return to an in-person work environment.
2. Metro Blooms encourages all staff to be vaccinated for COVID-19 and provides paid time off for vaccination and recovery. Staff can find available vaccine appointments here: <https://mn.gov/covid19/vaccine/index.jsp>
3. See COVID-19 response plan below for guidelines on staff who are ill or have been in direct contact with someone who may have COVID-19.

## Public Operations

Metro Blooms does not have regular office hours. As always, we can be reached by [telephone and email](#).

## Workshops, Consultations and Design

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## Blue Thumb Resilient Yard Workshops

Our annual resilient yards workshops are being offered as **webinars** as a virtual alternative to in-person workshops. The webinars happen in real time on the Zoom platform, allowing for interaction among the presenters and attendees. [Learn more.](#)

## Site Consultations and Design

Metro Blooms is currently performing virtual consultations (\$75) and in person site consultations (\$125).

The following are guidelines for designers in proceeding with designs for virtual consultations.

Design Proposals: During a virtual consultation, a client can request a design.

- If client requests a design, designer will provide a design proposal that includes time for travel to and from the client's property as well as the time needed to take measurements for the design.
- Once the client signs and pays for the design proposal, then designer can make a site visit to take measurements, following the site visit guidelines outlined below.

Neighborhood Consultations: As part of our Neighborhood of Raingardens program, designers may conduct virtual consultations and visit properties to measure areas for raingardens and native plantings. If the consultation is virtual, the following apply:

- The initial virtual consultation will be limited to 45 minutes with the specific goal of locating a raingarden/native planting as applicable to the neighborhood project.
- The participant will be asked to do homework for these consultations, and be prepared to discuss opportunities in their yard for a planting.
- Designer will make a site visit to measure the area where the raingarden/native planting will be installed. Designers will follow the site visit guidelines outlined below. It is preferable that the designer measure multiple neighborhood participant locations on one visit to the neighborhood.

*When our designers visit properties for onsite consultations, they follow these safe practices:*

- We only visit a client's property with permission from the client.
- Vaccinated staff are permitted to work without a mask on. If the client comes outside during the site visit, the designer will ask the client if they would like us to wear a mask. If a mask is client's preference, staff will wear a mask, no questions asked.
- Designer should maintain 6' from the client.
- The designer will be prepared to take measurements without the help of the client, i.e., holding the end of the tape measure.
- If clients do not follow social distancing guidelines, designer should feel comfortable stating Metro Blooms requires social distancing and that they need to leave.

## Safe Outdoor Work Policy

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We have implemented protocols to protect our staff and the public during our outdoor work. In addition to the operational guidelines above, these include:

1. ***Ability to Work: Employees are continuing outdoor work as long as they are following safe working practices described above, feel well and are not showing any COVID-19 symptoms.***

- If you or anyone in your household feels sick or shows signs of Covid-19 plan to stay home and alert your supervisor per [CDC guidelines](#). Sick pay is available to all employees.

2. ***Travel: Best social distancing practice is for employees to arrive to job sites via non-motorized transit, in their own vehicle, or as solo driver of Metro Blooms truck***

- When necessary, employees may ride together in the Metro Blooms work truck. Employees that ride together should discuss the risk of COVID-19 directly and decide for themselves if this is something that they feel safe doing, and agree what if any precautions they would like to take (i.e. keeping the windows down, wearing masks, etc.).
- Employees who commute using their own vehicles are eligible for mileage reimbursement only when driving between job sites. Trips from home to the day's first site, and from the day's last site to home are not eligible, unless travel is farther than an employee's typical work commute, in which case the additional mileage is reimbursable.

3. ***Equipment: Crew members do not share equipment, as much as is logistically possible***

- Sometimes sharing equipment is unavoidable. For example, carrying heavy objects or demonstrating how to use a tool. Wash or sanitize hands any time that you interact closely with another crew member.
- Do not share cigarettes, drinks, or food items.

4. ***PPE: Personal protective equipment and hand and equipment sanitizer will be provided by Metro Blooms at every work site***

- Hand sanitizer will be available for use at all times.
- Face masks will be provided to all employees. Outdoor masking is not required, unless requested by another staff member or client, no questions asked.
- Each crew member will receive several pairs of gardening gloves at the beginning of the season.
- Sanitizing solution for shared equipment will be available at every job site, to be used as needed.

5. ***Social Distancing: Field employees strive to maintain 6' space between themselves and other people at all times***

- We recommend that employees adhere to the 6' requirement while taking breaks, as well as while working.
- Employees should all be spatially aware, and should do their best to stay out of other people's space.
- We encourage non-contact methods of greeting one another.

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6. *Communication + Tracking: Crew safety policies are communicated routinely from landcare manager and crew leader to field staff*

- Crew leader and landcare manager, along with Metro Blooms directors, will stay informed about the most current CDC guidelines for Covid-19, and will communicate any changes to policies, procedures or protocols.
- Crew leader and landcare manager will facilitate regular crew check ins and provide reminders about safety and best practices.
- Crew members should feel safe in their work environment. If there are any concerns about safe distancing, protocols or field activities, it is important to communicate concerns with the crew leader or landcare manager.
- Reminders and important updates will be sent to all crew members through text message or Slack
- Staff continuously track their time in Quickbooks Time to provide daily work logs and ease employee contact tracing

## **Job Hazard Analysis**

Metro Blooms staff have low exposure risk to COVID-19. Social distancing measures are strict and enables us to carry out the majority of our work without direct contact with others. Instances where social distancing may not be possible, and associated mitigation strategies are below:

- Sometimes sharing equipment is unavoidable. For example, carrying heavy objects, crew members demonstrating how to use a tool, or computers that multiple part time staff must use. Anytime equipment is shared, employees should wash or sanitize their hands prior to and upon completion of using the equipment.
- When necessary, employees may ride together in the Metro Blooms work truck. Employees that ride together should discuss the risk of COVID-19 directly and decide for themselves if this is something that they feel safe doing, and agree what if any precautions they would like to take (i.e. keeping the windows down, wearing masks, etc.).
- While low risk, there is potential exposure from coworkers and the general public at the office, in person consultations and meetings.

## **COVID-19 Response Plan**

*In the event that a Metro Blooms employee shows symptoms of being infected by the Covid-19 virus, or has been in direct contact\* with someone who is showing symptoms, the following actions will be taken:*

***\*Contact is considered direct and staff at risk if they have been within 6 feet of the patient for more than 10 minutes during the 48-hour period before the onset of symptoms or while the patient was experiencing symptoms.***

- Employees who are showing symptoms of COVID-19 [as defined by the CDC](#) or who have been in direct contact with someone showing symptoms should leave work immediately and notify their direct supervisor.
- Employee should schedule a COVID-19 test for 3-5 days, or longer, post-exposure. [Testing centers can be found here.](#)
- The employee's direct supervisor alerts Metro Blooms' Associate Director, who will notify other staff Directors as needed, retaining staff privacy and anonymity. Metro Blooms Associate

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Director will reach out to the symptomatic employee and ask them to identify all other staff they were in direct contact with (see above definition) in the 48-hour period before the onset of symptoms. Metro Blooms' Associate Director will notify staff that have been in contact with the employee. Metro Blooms ensures the privacy and anonymity of staff.

- All staff who have been in direct contact with the symptomatic person within the 48-hour period before the onset of symptoms will be sent home from work immediately.
- Staff may work from home if they feel up to it but are prohibited from returning to the office, visiting clients, or returning to field work until they are cleared to exit quarantine or isolation determined by the CDC's Quarantine and Isolation Calculator:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html>.
- Metro Blooms employees that have not been in direct contact with the person showing symptoms may continue to work in the field or at the office.
- All shared surfaces, equipment and vehicles that the employee with symptoms has come in contact with in the 48-hours preceding the onset of symptoms will be disinfected before additional use.
- Clients will be notified if an employee tests positive and has been in direct contact with the client in the 48-hours preceding symptoms or a positive test.
- Metro Blooms will not discriminate against anyone who has had symptoms of COVID-19. Employees are allowed to return to shared work spaces two days following the conclusion of all virus symptoms, or upon approval by a physician, whichever is later.

## Sick Pay

- Metro Blooms will cover time off for symptomatic or exposed employees to be tested for COVID-19, in addition to accrued PTO. Symptomatic employees should seek physician input and a COVID test. If an employee or someone an employee is caring for tests positive for COVID-19, Metro Blooms will cover their time off in addition to accrued PTO, up to a maximum of 40 hours total for testing, quarantine, and sick leave related to COVID-19. They should utilize the "COVID Leave" service item in Quickbooks Time to track leave. After that, employees may take unpaid leave or utilize accrued PTO. While employees may continue working remotely, they are forbidden from working in shared work spaces (include outdoors with other crew members) for a minimum of ten days and at least two days following the conclusion of all virus symptoms.

*Lack of income should not require an employee to return to work before they are feeling well and symptom free. Employees should contact Metro Blooms' Associate Director to explore options if they are experiencing financial hardship and are unable to return to work.*

*Employees working more than 30 hours per week average are covered under our short-term disability policy after 2 weeks of absence.*

- If an employee with symptoms tests negative for COVID-19, they can use their accrued PTO until they feel well enough to start working again.

*We ask that all staff feeling ill, whether positive for COVID-19 or not, work remotely until they are symptom free.*

## Time off for Vaccination

Metro Blooms will cover time off for any employee to be vaccinated against COVID-19, including travel time to vaccination appointments.

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