

# Horticulture in Healthcare Frequently Asked Questions

If you have any questions or comments contact IPC at [ipcsurvstdadmin@ahs.ca](mailto:ipcsurvstdadmin@ahs.ca).

Refer to the Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) [Horticulture in Healthcare](#) best practice recommendation for details.

## Frequently asked questions

Questions	Responses
<b>What everyone needs to know about infection prevention and control for horticulture in healthcare</b>	
1. Why were IPC best practice recommendations on horticulture in healthcare developed?	<p>Infection control professionals may be consulted to evaluate patient risk and provide best practice recommendations to support safe participation in horticulture activities and reduce the risk of infection.</p> <p>These best practice recommendations support a provincial approach while allowing zone/site flexibility in implementation. Their purpose is to help healthcare workers assess patient risk and implement infection prevention and control (IPC) measures so patients can safely enjoy the benefits of therapeutic and recreational horticultural activities.</p>
2. What is horticulture in healthcare?	Horticulture in healthcare includes therapeutic and recreational horticultural activities such as preparing and maintaining garden beds and potted plants, indoors and outdoors, as well as horticultural activities carried out by AHS staff and contractors for aesthetic purposes and in recreational spaces, e.g., living walls, green roofs.
3. Who can use these recommendations?	Units and clinical areas can use these recommendations for assessing patient risk prior to implementing horticulture activities and assigning responsibility for various tasks. For example, there may be restrictions of access for immunocompromised patient units, e.g., cancer care; or individual patients such as those on additional precautions. For many other patients the benefits outweigh the risk when infection prevention and control measures are in place, e.g., mental health and addiction.
4. What do patients, families and visitors need to know before bringing flowers or plants in for a patient or healthcare setting?	<p>Check with the unit manager before bringing in flowers or plants into a healthcare setting. If you get approval, you may also need to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh cut flowers, plants and bouquets with smell, scent or odour may impact a patient or their roommates with sensitivities. AHS asks for everyone's help to keep the air we share healthy and fragrance free.</li> <li>• Space is available for the flowers or plants.</li> <li>• If care can be provided for the plant or flower as required; for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Flower vases should be emptied and filled with fresh water every 2 days.</li> <li>○ Potted plants need ongoing care to remain healthy and free of disease and pests.</li> <li>○ Do not bring any plants planted in manure or non-commercial soil.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Clean your hands after touching flowers, plants or soil. If your hands are visibly soiled wash them with soap and water.</p>
5. What is an IPC RA and why is it included in this BPR?	The IPC RA is a tool to assess the risk of infection of horticultural activities based on patient population, e.g., unit or individual patients. It uses the chain of infection to illustrate how an organism is transmitted. There is no beginning and no end, so the chain can start at any of the links. Infectious illnesses can be prevented by applying infection prevention and control practices that break one or more of the links in the chain. The best practice recommendations

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Questions	Responses
	<p>describe risks related to horticulture activities, use the information to evaluate patient risk; and outline the infection prevention and control measures required to promote patient safety. For more details refer to AHS <a href="#">Routine Practices</a> webpage.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid #0056b3; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Infection Prevention and Control Risk Assessment (IPC RA) Action Worksheet</b></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p><b>Portal of Exit</b> from reservoir through puncture wounds, ingestion, e.g., thorns, standing water</p> <p><b>Reservoir</b> equipment, soil, plants, water</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%; text-align: right;"> <p><b>Modes of Transmission</b> contact with soil or plants</p> <p><b>Portal of Entry</b> mucous membrane, open skin, wounds, medical devices, electrical/other invasive lines, or catheters</p> <p><b>Susceptible Host</b> severely immunocompromised, e.g., transplant unit</p> </div> </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin: 10px 0;"> <p><b>Every person, every task, every environment, every time!</b></p> </div> <p>Use this chain of infection worksheet to identify risks of transmission. Plan your actions to protect yourself and others.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: flex-end;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p><b>Organism</b> disease causing organisms from dirt, soil, such as fungus</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%; text-align: right;"> <p><b>Protect yourself Protect others</b></p> <p><small>CC BY-NC-SA For more information contact ipcsurvstdadmin@ahs.ca https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0 Original date: July 2022 Revised date: February 16, 2023</small></p> </div> </div> </div>

## Version history

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<b>Version</b>		
V1	2023-11-27	Issued for information to support the IPC best practice recommendations for horticulture in healthcare.



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