



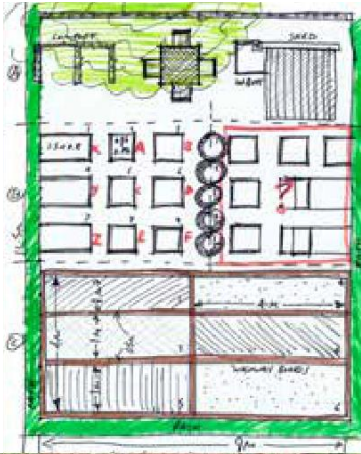
Allotment Handbook

Elstree & Borehamwood Town Council

2021 Version



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About this handbook

This handbook has been compiled as a useful and handy resource filled with key information to help you get the most from your plot.

It also highlights essential rules, advice and guidelines in your tenancy agreement as well as from other agencies, to provide a wide range of benefits to tenants, communities, the environment, and to wildlife.

These benefits can include providing tenants with an opportunity to produce their own inexpensive food, take physical exercise, learn new skills, build knowledge, make new friends, and promote a greater sense of wellbeing, to name just a few.

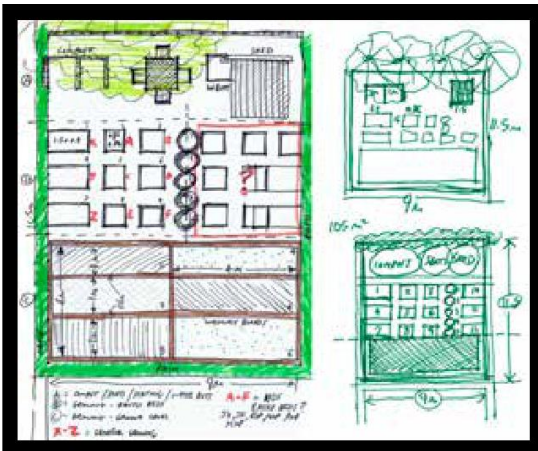
Our aim is to continue to build on good practices and positive improvements through the allotment sites and services by working in partnership with tenant groups, individuals and other agencies.

This handbook is provided in conjunction with a bi-annual Allotment Newsletter which is produced for and with plotholder contributions.

We hope that you will find this handbook useful and that you will use it to refer to throughout your tenancy. We would like to wish you every success with your allotment tenancy.



- ✓ Take time to plan the layout of your plot for ease of use
- ✓ Develop a yearly plan of what you will grow
- ✓ Think about shade, ease of access, growing space, watering, etc.
- ✓ Create narrow planting beds to allow easy access to the soil
- ✓ Use crop rotation to keep your soil healthy
- ✓ Manure your plot regularly to maintain soil fertility
- ! Always use gloves and wash your hands after handling manure
- ! Ensure you have good paths and keep paths clear of hazards
- ! Don't do too much in one go but maintain steady and regular progress



Planning Your Allotment

To get off to a good start with your allotment a planned approach and a little determination is all that's needed. Before you start work on your plot draw up a plan of what you would like to grow and where you think it should go; don't worry if this changes over time as you develop more experience.

Drawing up your plan

When drawing up your plan you need to consider:

- Situation and light levels
- Ease of access for maintenance and watering
- Soil condition and drainage
- The space needed for plants to grow and flourish
- Permanent planting areas
- Permanent features such as paths, raised beds, storage, etc.

There are plenty of books and internet resources to help you with planning your plot and guidance on the best conditions for different plants to flourish. You could also talk to other plottolders.

Planning should help you to organise your growing to make the best use of the space available to you throughout the year.

Allowable Uses

When planning the layout of your allotment please be aware of the following:

- At least 75% of the total area of your plot must be used to cultivate fruit and vegetables
- Lawns, sheds, compost heaps, paths, when added together, must not take up more than 25% of the total area of your plot (see Structures section on page 24/25)
- Greenhouses/Polytunnels count as space used for cultivation (see Structures section on page 24/25)

Paths and Access

Communal paths should be kept clear of vegetation and potential hazards such as tools or discarded rubbish/arisisngs.

Maintaining good paths can also help make it more difficult for some weeds to spread from one planting area to another. Paths should be wide enough for a wheelbarrow (at least 75cm, ideally 100cm) and be as level and even as possible to avoid trip hazards.



Planting Areas

Planting beds can be any shape or size. You may need to consider access by means of paths to ensure you can easily reach into the middle of the planting area.

A maximum recommended width is 120cm (4 feet) to enable you to reach the middle from both sides; remove weeds entirely from your planting area and dig over the soil.

The prongs of your fork should eventually go easily into the bed to turn the soil, don't forget to remove larger stones or other debris that could impede your plant growth.

If you mark the edges of your planting area with wood or other materials from your plot, this will help to prevent accidental walking on the area and compaction of the soil. A useful tip is to work off a plank to spread your weight.

Getting Help

If you need help with your plot don't be afraid to ask.



Other plot holders are often willing to give you advice, or sometimes even to help you with your plot.

The Site Wardens may also be able to advise you.

Some chargeable services may also be available from the Town Council – contact the Site Wardens for more information.

Raised Beds

You may also need to consider the height of the planting area. For people with disabilities or back pain, raised beds can be more accessible.

Raised beds are also useful if you have poor drainage or if you want to grow something that does not do well in the soil type you have.

If you need to bring in soil from a reputable source, you need to seek permission from the Town Council. (Manure and compost does not need permission)

Cultivation of plot

- A minimum of 75% of the plot area must be cultivated for growing produce.
- A maximum of 25% of the plot area may be put to other uses such as sheds, structures or paths.
- It is not permitted to keep an allotment plot or a portion of it, which in the opinion of the Town Council is in an untidy, overgrown, unkempt or seemingly abandoned state.
- Weeds must be controlled to prevent seeds spreading to other plots. Pernicious plants must be eradicated.
- No new trees are allowed to be planted on an allotment plot without written permission.
- Children's play equipment such as swings and paddling pools are not permitted.
- Business or trade use of an allotments plot is forbidden.

Plot Preparation

When you are getting started it's advisable that you don't use a rotavator before tackling weeds, as some, particularly the more persistent i.e., bindweed, docks, couch grass, nettles will be chopped up, spread and multiply as a result. (see page 13 – Weeds)



Instead, cut back to stubble height and dig out. See 'liquid fertilizer's (page.11) as an alternative way of dealing with these weeds as opposed to taking and disposing off site.

Crop rotation is an essential component of soil nutrition. This is explained in more detail on page 7.

Remember

Only work your soil when it is in the right condition –

If it sticks to your boots it is too wet and you will do more harm than good.



Tools and Equipment

- ✓ Make sure you know how to use your tools effectively
- ✓ Keep your tools clean and sharp
- ✓ Store tools away from your plot or keep them in a lockable storage
- ✓ Only use tools you are confident with
- ! Be careful when using power tools and follow instructions for use

Tools & Equipment

To start with you might only need a few basic tools but you will quickly find that a wide variety are available, many for specific tasks.

Essentials include a spade, fork, hoe, rake, hand trowel/fork and gloves.

You may also want to invest in secateurs, a pruning saw, shears or loppers, dibber, watering can and wheelbarrow... the list is endless!

To save money you could buy good quality secondhand tools or share with friends.

Occasionally the Town Council may have tools available from previous plotholders. Contact the Site Wardens to find out what is available.

Power Tools

Only use power tools if you are confident in their use. Read, understand and follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully and if necessary, make sure you have had appropriate training. For security reasons do not store power tools in sheds.

Power Tool Safety

Always wear appropriate personal protective clothing, including safety goggles. We also recommend sturdy footwear, if possible, with steel toe caps and soles. It is usually a good idea to have a means of emergency contact, such as a mobile phone, close by in case of accident.

Safety, using and storing your tools

- Store all tools safely in a lockable unit and out of the reach of children
- Do not store any power tools or fuel on your plot
- Keep tools clean, sharp and well maintained for ease of use
- Make sure you know how to use tools effectively to avoid injury or strain
- Always wear appropriate personal protective clothing
- Follow instructions for use and/or seek appropriate training for using power tools
- Check the allotment noticeboards for Community Safety and Security advice
- We advise you to security mark tools to make them easier to identify



Water is essential for plants to grow. It is particularly important that seedlings get sufficient water until they become established and roots can find some of their own moisture deeper in the ground.

All plots will hugely benefit from tenants collecting and storing water on their plot. This is easier on sites that allow sheds, but there are other ways this may be done. You may wish to discuss with Site Wardens ways to achieve this.

If you are recycling an old container to collect water, ensure you know where it has come from and that it did not previously contain any harmful substances.

Rainwater is also collected off the roofing of Council tool shed and garages and is available to all.

Mains water is available on each allotment site, whether as standing pipes, or water tanks. If overused, it may be necessary in future to divide charges between plottolders.

If you use a hosepipe (Stapleton Gardens only) – this must be put away after use and not left on pathways.

The Town Council does not permit the use of sprinklers or other water spraying devices.



Organic matter can be dug into the ground and a thick layer of mulch placed around established plants to help retain moisture in the soil. Water your allotment in the morning or evening to reduce risk of evaporation or scorching.

Give plants a thorough soaking (not the area around which only encourages weed growth) to encourage deep rooting. Also, remember that over-watering can be just as unproductive as under-watering!



- ✓ Be careful of trip hazards when using hosepipes and never leave them on pathways or grass areas
- ✓ Use mains water sparingly and only when needed
- ✓ Sprinklers and other water spraying devices are not allowed
- ✓ If you have a shed or greenhouse, use a rainwater collection system
- ✓ Check what was previously contained in recycled water containers
- ✓ Report any leaks you may find to the Town Council immediately

- ✓ You must use 75% of your plot for growing vegetables and fruit
- ✓ Start with easy vegetables that your family will like to eat
- ✓ All plots are inspected at least twice a year

What Can I Grow?

It is a requirement of your tenancy agreement that you keep your plot in a good state of cultivation. This means that you must use your plot to grow mostly vegetables and fruit* on an annual basis. Please see the section on 'Getting Started' for allowable uses and information on what you can grow.

*Fruit trees are only permitted if they are dwarf variety and you have written permission from the Warden

Where to Begin

If you have not grown fruit and vegetables before then you will probably need to learn as you go along. There is lots of advice available from books and websites. If you are struggling, try attending a vegetable growing course or getting in touch with other tenants via WhatsApp groups or other external organisations.

To start with you could grow easy vegetables that you know your family will like such as early potatoes, peas, runner beans and French beans, salads, onion sets, beetroot, courgettes, carrots, tomatoes and squashes.

Steps Towards Cultivation

After 3 months we would expect to see parts of the plot cleared and dug over.

After 6 months we would expect to see some crops in place (depending on the time of year) and the plot substantially dug, or uncultivated areas covered with weed fabric.

By the end of the first year of your tenancy we would expect to see the plot in a reasonable state of cultivation. If you have difficulty achieving this please make contact with us.

Inspection Process

Allotment sites are inspected at least twice a year and if your plot is not well maintained you will be given warnings and may be asked to give up your tenancy. No advance notice of inspection will be required or given.

It is therefore important that you develop a regular cultivation routine. You are required to maintain visibility into your plot or allow access for inspections to occur.

Please contact the Site Warden if you are struggling or unable to attend to your plot for any reason so we can provide advice and support.



Crop Rotation

Crop rotation involves dividing your crops into groups to plant in designated beds which address their preferred growing conditions.

You can establish your own system to set out in your plan, and have fun choosing the fruit and veg you like eating and growing.

We recommend that plotholders use crop rotation to avoid the build-up of pests and diseases, and to keep the soil in good condition.

There is plenty of online information, and many books are available.



Non-Cultivation

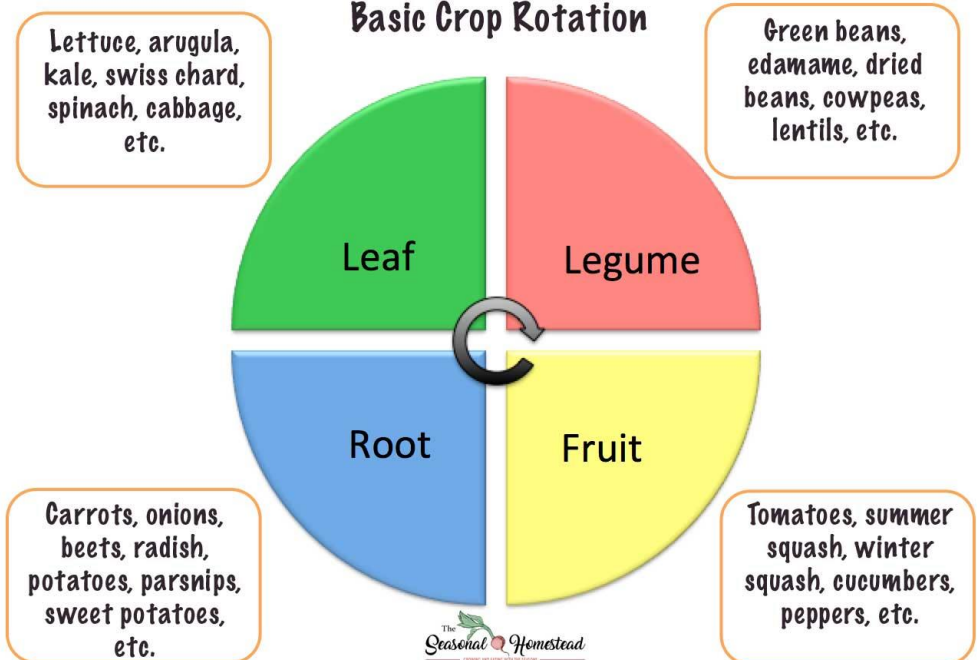
If you are given a letter for non-cultivation you will be allowed 14 days to make significant improvements.

If you fail to do so you will be sent a further letter. Following a second warning, if there is no progress, we will ask you to give up your tenancy.

If you receive two letters for non-cultivation within two years you may be asked to reduce the size of your plot to a more manageable half size plot.

Alternatively, a tenant may request that their plot be divided to form another plot that can be offered to the waiting list.

Basic Crop Rotation



- ✓ Compost will help you save money, improve your soil, help you grow healthy, strong plants and look after the environment
- ✓ Try to compost as much green waste as you can
- ✓ Creating your own leaf mulch will improve soil texture
- ! If composting perennial weeds, make sure the roots/plants have been destroyed and seed heads removed first
- ! Do not compost any animal products or cooked food as this may contain harmful bacteria or disease and can attract vermin.
- ! Always use gloves and wash your hands after handling compost



Why Compost?

Compost is a natural, nutrient-rich, soil-like medium of decayed organic matter.

It is a product of the natural breakdown of dead plants and other organic matter such as fruit and vegetable matter.

With time and a little bit of care and attention, this organic matter decomposes with the assistance of micro-organisms and earthworms to produce a valuable source of compost.

This can improve and enrich the soil, helping to feed your plants and to encourage them to grow strong and healthy.

Using Multiple Bins

Some people use multiple bins for distinct types of compost (regular compost, slow compost like woody plants, and leaves collected in the autumn). Others like to have a three-bin system for the turning purposes.

Move the compost from one bin into the next, allowing it to turn. Then you can start a pile in the newly vacated bin. By the time the compost makes it into the third bin, it is ready for use.

Others find that a single bin is adequate for their needs, and just go out to stir it throughout now and then.

Making Compost

Making compost is not hard. The easiest method is to purchase a compost bin specially designed for the purpose. If you prefer the DIY approach, you can build your own compost bin.

To do this you may want to contain the heap using reclaimed timber and four wooden posts to make a bottomless box; covering will also help to retain moisture.

Plotholders must ensure that compost does not cause a nuisance to other plotholders, including by emitting an unpleasant smell.

Digging or 'turning' your compost occasionally will help to speed up the process.

- **Hertfordshire County Council has discount schemes for compost bins – visit www.hertfordshire.gov.uk and search for 'composting' for more information.**



Leaf Mulch

Creating leaf mulch (leafmould) is completely free and can help to improve your soil texture, suppress weeds and reduce the need for watering.

To create leaf mulch gather up autumn leaves (not evergreens and not from roads where they may contain contaminants or under hedges where wildlife may be hibernating) and place them in a big heap.

By using four posts and some chicken wire you can create an area that will contain the leaves but still allow air to circulate around them.

It will take about two years for most leaves to breakdown fully but digging over occasionally with a fork will help to speed up the process.

To use the mulch spread a thick layer on top of the soil around your plants to suppress weeds (allowing worms to eventually pull it down into the soil) or dig it directly into the soil (with your compost) to improve your soil texture.



- ✓ Organic methods can benefit your plot, the environment and wildlife
- ✓ You should focus on improving and maintaining soil fertility
- ✓ Companion planting can repel pests and encourage beneficial insects
- ✓ Seek expert advice from your local library or internet
- ✓ Minimise the use of pesticides, herbicides or fertilisers
- ! When using pesticides, herbicides or fertilisers follow the advice given in this handbook



Growing Organically

Many people are moving towards a more organic approach to gardening.

For some people this simply means not using slug pellets or other pesticides.

Other people feel more strongly and will use only natural products and materials, buy only organic seed, and the whole idea becomes part of a wider lifestyle choice to live in harmony with nature.

Wherever you fall within the organic spectrum we advise all allotment holders to try to minimise their use of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides.

We encourage you to consider more organic approaches for the benefit of local wildlife and the wider environment.

For example, planting marigolds next to carrots will help deter carrot fly.



Expert Advice

There is plenty of expert advice readily available in books and on internet sites to find out more. The Town Council Allotment web page has links to useful websites - here are two to get you started:

Royal Horticultural Society:
www.rhs.org.uk/growyourown

Garden Organic:
www.gardenorganic.co.uk

See Page 31 for more useful contacts

Pesticides, Herbicides and Inorganic Fertilisers

Pesticides, herbicides and inorganic fertilisers can be helpful when clearing and cultivating an allotment, however they can also be hazardous and have environmental implications.

We recommend trying to minimise the use of pesticides, herbicides and inorganic fertilisers, or reduce the levels of use over time.

If you do use them, remember they are not a quick fix and should only be used in specific situations - try to keep use to a minimum and always be mindful of the important safety advice.

Natural fertilisers

You will be able to find information online on how to make and use various natural fertilizers such as:

- **COMFREY** – as liquid tea diluted or concentrate, or as leaves dug in
- **BANANA PEEL** – as liquid tea
- **WEEDS** – as liquid tea, especially useful to get rid of those with tap roots, such as dock, comfrey, dandelions or wild fennel

Natural pest control

Garden Organic website www.gardenorganic.co.uk describes numerous ways to deal with pests and diseases.

Pure soap flakes diluted in water is one example that can deter greenfly and aphids when sprayed.

Safety When Using Commercial Products

- Always keep products in their original containers
- Follow the instructions for use carefully
- Do not estimate amounts - measure them carefully
- Use personal protective clothing and gloves
- Wash hands after use and wash off any splashes immediately
- Store out of the reach of children and locked away securely
- Ensure you are not contaminating your neighbours' plots or local watercourses
- Consider the potential harm to wildlife, pets and children before use
- Check old products to ensure they have not been banned
- Contact your local waste management and recycling centre for disposal advice

- ✓ Contact us for permission and advice before planting new fruit trees
- ✓ Ensure nesting birds are not disturbed
- ✓ Report any issues or hazards to the Town Council



Hedges & Trees

Maintenance of perimeter trees, hedges and shrubs is the responsibility of the Town Council.

Perimeter hedges and shrubs are generally maintained out of growing season, during autumn and winter months.

The Town Council carries out tree work following informal and formal inspections as and when necessary.

Tenants are encouraged to report any issues spotted to the Town Council or Site Wardens, as soon as they arise.

It is an offence to disturb nesting birds and therefore important to be aware of this.

Fruit trees

Plotholders are allowed to plant fruit trees grown from dwarfing root stock, only after they have obtained written permission from the Town Council via Site Wardens.

The restricted height of dwarfing root stock ensures mature trees only grow up to 6 – 7 ft and don't shade neighbouring plots.

If you don't like using chemical sprays to control disease, disease-resistant varieties are important considerations.

Pollination is another consideration, but in an allotment situation you can usually assume there will be other apples, pears, and plums nearby - although not necessarily cherries.

- ✓ Keep your plot free from weeds
- ✓ Don't let weeds set seed
- ✓ Cover areas with weed matting until you are ready to work them
- ✓ Annual weeds and vegetation can be composted
- ✓ Be sure to remove all roots of perennial weeds
- ! When strimming overgrown areas be aware of hazards such as holes, bricks, rubbish, glass, etc. and wear protective clothing

Removing Weeds

When taking on a new plot there are likely to be plenty of weeds. Be prepared for lots of hard work to clear the plot properly, but remember it is a job worth doing. Careful weed removal and preparation of the soil at this stage will reap future benefits!

Regular Weeding

To keep on top of weeds you need to make frequent visits to your plot, especially during the main growing season, and make weeding a regular task. Digging over the ground and removing roots is the only really effective organic way to remove weeds but other methods can help.

Weedkillers (Herbicides)

These generally fall into two types: contact and systemic.

Contact herbicides can be useful for large areas of annual weeds and usually work on contact with foliage. They have minimal impact on perennial weeds, such as nettles or brambles, and are best avoided on allotments, save your money and use a hoe instead!

Systemic weedkillers, such as glyphosate, destroy plants from within, including their roots, usually following a spray application to the foliage. They are therefore useful for controlling perennial weeds such as bindweed, couch grass, ground elder and bramble.

We advise restricting their use to the initial clearance of plots, after which any regrowth can be tackled by hand weeding.

It is important that you check any old products you may have stored away. Many commonly used products have now been withdrawn from sale due to their adverse impact on the environment and their use is now banned. If you continue to use such products you will be breaking the law.



Weed Matting (woven porous polythene or geotextile)

Weed matting is relatively inexpensive and can be really useful under paths within your plot and as a temporary cover to suppress weeds until an area can be worked. It is also possible to grow some crops (eg. courgettes) through holes in the matting.

Carpet is NOT permitted on the allotments

Mulches

Examples of mulches are compost and leaf mould, all of which need to be applied in a layer 50 - 75mm (2-3 inches) thick. Placed on top of the soil, surrounding your plants or over weed matting, these will act as an effective weed suppressor.

Disposing Of Weeds

You can compost annual weeds (avoid seed heads) but roots of perennial weeds will grow again if they are composted before they are killed. (or use as weed fertilizer tea – see page 11)

Use the internet or a good gardening book to help you identify common annual and perennial weeds.

Only burn vegetation (at the appropriate times) if absolutely necessary and read the section on 'Bonfires' first.

Weeds can also be disposed of at Household Recycling Centres at Allum Lane and Potters Bar, or in your domestic green bin.

How to Weed Safely

- Don't tackle more than you can manage in one go
- Use appropriate, sharp and well-maintained tools
- Be aware of plant species that cause irritation or are poisonous
- Wear suitable clothing, including gloves and long sleeves
- Don't use old carpet to suppress weeds - it is difficult to remove and can potentially leach hazardous chemicals into the soil
- Remember that vegetation which has grown out of control can hide hazards such as potholes, bricks, rubbish, glass, etc.
- If you are strimming, check for and remove any hazards hidden in the vegetation
- Use weedkillers only when needed and always sparingly

If using herbicides or weed killers please follow the additional safety advice:

- Always keep products in their original containers
- Use only for the specific purpose indicated on the product label and follow instructions carefully
- Measure amounts carefully for maximum effectiveness and use only the amount required for that application
- Use personal protective clothing and gloves
- Wash hands after use and wash off any splashes immediately
- Store locked away securely, out of the reach of children
- Ensure you are not contaminating your neighbours' plots or local watercourses via airborne drift or improper disposal
- Contact your waste management and recycling centre for disposal advice
- Check old products to see if they have been banned

Invasive Species

Please inform us immediately if you have any invasive species on your plot as you may need specialist advice to remove them.

A complete list can be found in the Health and Advice section on the following website <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prevent-the-spread-of-harmful-invasive-and-non-native-plants>.

Ones to watch out for on allotments include: Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and Giant Hogweed.



Storing materials and waste

- ✓ Keep stored materials on your plot to a minimum
- ✓ Take care when handling rubbish - wear gloves and appropriate protective clothing
- ✓ Dispose of rubbish thoughtfully and recycle materials where possible
- ✗ Do not leave rubbish in communal areas
- ✗ Please do not bring tyres and carpets onto plots as they are difficult to dispose of

Inflammable Substances

Inflammable substances include inflammable oil-based liquids such as petrol and creocote, and all varieties of bottled gas.

Inflammable substances should only be brought onto allotments if they are required.

Care should be taken to ensure inflammable substances are stored safely and securely on your plot.

Inflammable substances must be handled and used strictly in line with manufacturers' guidelines, transported and stored in containers specifically designed for this purpose.



Storing Materials on Your Plot

Allotments must not be used for storing materials. Having excessive quantities of materials on plots reduces the area available for cultivation and can pose a hazard to yourself and others.

Please only bring materials onto your plot if you intend to use them immediately and, if necessary, store them safely and tidily.



Excessive Amounts of Material

We will write to tenants who are storing excessive amounts of materials on their plot.

By law we can recover the cost of removing excessive waste materials from a plot either during or at the end of a tenancy.

Remember you must not bring rubbish on site.

Waste Disposal

When you take on a plot you may find rubbish and other debris, which we ask you to remove and dispose of carefully.

Many materials can easily be transported off-site for recycling or safe disposal at one of the Council's waste recycling facilities.

Materials such as wood or bricks can be reused on the plot, saving the need to send materials to landfill.

If you come across material on your plot that is difficult to dispose of, we ask you to try to remove as much as possible safely before contacting us for further assistance.

Waste Management

Plot holders are wholly responsible for correct handling and proper disposal of waste from their allotment plot. It is strictly forbidden to bring waste or other harmful material onto an allotment site. Fly tipping, dumping of waste or adding to dumped waste on any part of an allotment site is strictly forbidden and will result in immediate termination. The use of old carpets as a weed suppressant is not permitted.

Safety

- Please take extra care with certain materials, such as wood with protruding nails or broken glass
- Please read the sections on 'Asbestos' and 'Assessing Risks' before you start clearing your plot
- Wear gloves, sturdy footwear and protective clothing when removing waste
- Excessive materials stored on site can pose a hazard to yourself and others
- Materials on your plot must be stored safely.



- ✓ Tenants have a duty of care to everyone on their plot, regardless of whether they have permission to be there
- ✓ Assessing risk is an ongoing process
- ✓ High risks must be removed immediately
- ✓ Always bear in mind your health and physical ability
- ! Being aware of a particular risk does not remove the risk it may pose to others
- ! Be aware there may be particular risks for children on allotment plots

Assessing Risk

Health and safety on allotments is everyone's responsibility and as a tenant you need to make sure that your plot is as safe as possible for everyone.

Tenants have a duty of care to anyone on their plot, regardless of whether they have given permission for them to be there.

We may also enforce action to remove health and safety concerns. When thinking about hazards you need to look at the potential risks to: yourself, your family, co-workers, visitors to your plot, intruders (including children), wildlife.

Hazards

To assess dangers on your plot you first need to identify hazards that have the potential to cause harm. We have listed some common hazards here but you may also have others on your plot. Common allotment hazards include: buildings, fire, hazardous materials (asbestos, fuel, combustibles, refuse, scrap metal, glass, chemicals, manure, compost, etc.), trees, vegetation (overgrown, irritant or poisonous), tools, ponds, water, fences and vermin.

Reducing Risk

Once you have a list of hazards you need to look at potential risks. Risk is the likelihood that the harm from a hazard will happen (e.g. a sharp blade concealed in overgrown grass is more likely to cause harm than one stored away in a locked shed).

Levels of Risk

You need to identify risks as potentially being 'high', 'medium' or 'low'. High risks must be removed immediately before removing or minimising any medium risks.

If you have a high risk hazard on your plot that you feel unable to deal with please contact the Town Council as soon as possible.



Health

- **Tetanus** - Tetanus is an illness caused by bacteria present in soil and manure, which can enter the body through the tiniest abrasion, scratch, thorn, puncture or cut. Your GP may be able to offer a vaccination.

- **First Aid** - A first aid kit is always a wise addition to the tools kept in the garden shed. A small selection of adhesive plasters, antiseptic wipes to clean wounds, sting cream, a pair of tweezers for removing thorns and splinters and a gauze or lint pad to use as a compress to stop bleeding if you are badly cut are useful contents.

- **Exercise** - Having an allotment can be hard work so please be mindful of your own capabilities and physical limitations and build up slowly, particularly if you are not used to it! If you have a known medical condition you may want to seek medical advice before starting work on your plot. Thrive is an organisation to help people who have ill health or a disability to garden and more tips and advice can be found on their website at: www.thrive.org.uk

Personal

- **Wash Hands and Use Gloves** - There is a risk of illness from bacteria (such as E.coli) which can be present in animal manure and even home made compost. Please wash your hands regularly and always wear protective gloves when handling potentially harmful substances.

- **Sun Protection** - If you are spending long periods on your plot then please ensure you have adequate sun protection and limit your exposure to strong sunshine. Also, keep yourself hydrated by regularly drinking water or other soft drinks and avoid physical exertion during the hottest part of the day.

Children

The health and safety of children on an allotment plot must be considered carefully as allotments can pose particular risks to children. Remember you must never leave children unsupervised on an allotment site.

Young children may also eat soil or plants so please ensure that they are watched closely until they are old enough to know what to eat and what to avoid. It is particularly important that young children wash their hands regularly, especially those prone to putting their hands in their mouths. Please ensure your children do not wander around the site or cause a nuisance to other plotholders.

Hazards for Children / All

Before allowing children onto your plot remove/reduce any hazards. As well as those highlighted previously, particular hazards for children include:

- Glass or other debris lying around your plot
- Garden canes which could cause an eye injury
- Hazardous chemicals and sharp tools stored incorrectly
- Historic glass structures such as greenhouses
- Ponds and uncovered water containers
- Vegetation that can cause harm or irritation
- Sun exposure

- ✓ Consider security at all times - all tenants have a responsibility for maintaining security on their site
- ✓ Please respect tenants, neighbours and other members of the public on your site
- ✓ Report any incidents to the police (using 101 for non-emergencies or 999 for emergencies)
- ✓ Please make the Town Council aware of any incidents
- ✓ Please keep dogs on a lead
- ✗ Do not visit other plots without permission or cause a nuisance to your neighbours

Security on Allotments

Many of us find that time on allotments is both tranquil and enjoyable. Plot holders spend a considerable amount of time on their plots and put in a lot of effort, keeping their plot well maintained and productive. It can therefore be very distressing if your site suffers from incidents of vandalism or anti-social behaviour. The tips on the following page are aimed at increasing plot security and reducing vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

Respect

As an allotment holder you are expected to be courteous and respectful to other users of the site and neighbouring properties.

Everyone is entitled to enjoy their plot.

Do not use other people's tools or equipment without their permission.

Dogs

If you own a dog then out of respect for others we request that:

- the dog is kept on a lead
- you must clean up after your dog
- dogs must not cause a nuisance – for example by constant barking

Nuisance

- A plot holder must not cause or permit any nuisance to any other plot holder or to the owners or occupiers of any adjoining or neighbouring property.
- A plot holder must not obstruct or encroach onto any path or roadway used or set out by the Town Council or used by the owners or occupiers of any adjoining or neighbouring property.
- Bonfire rules **MUST** be followed at all times.
- The Town Council will not tolerate any threatening, violent or intimidating behaviour by plot holders under any circumstances.

Security Checklist

- **Keep your plot well maintained**

A well-tended plot is a lot less likely to attract vandals than one that looks uncared for.

- **Don't leave any valuables on site**

If possible take all tools with you when you leave. Any tools left on your plot should be security marked.

- **Don't use or keep combustible or dangerous materials on your plot**

- **Dispose of rubbish appropriately**

A site that is well presented and looks used and cared for can help to reduce anti-social behaviour such as fly-tipping.

- **Lock the Allotment Site Main Gate**

Ensure the main gate is locked at all times – when you arrive and when you leave.

- **Join your allotment WhatsApp group**

Sharing information with other plotholders and being vigilant whilst you are on the allotments.

- **Be aware of personal safety when working on your own**

Always let someone know where you are and, if possible, have a means of contact such as a mobile phone.

- **Razor wire or similar are not allowed under any circumstances**

- **Be a good neighbour**

Looking out for one another will help make your site feel safer. Don't cause a nuisance to your neighbours and don't visit other plots without permission.

- **Report all incidents**

The police target resources at areas where crime is most often reported. Please report all incidents using the 101 number (or 999 if someone is at risk or it is an emergency). Please let the Town Council know of any incidents but please note we are not able to report them to the police on your behalf.



- ✓ Only have a bonfire if absolutely necessary
- ✓ Composting is a much better alternative for disposing of organic waste
- ✓ Be considerate to your neighbours
- ✓ Never leave a fire unattended
- ✓ Do not bring any materials on site to burn
- ✓ Do not burn anything that could produce toxic or noxious fumes
- ! Always follow the essential precautions and guidance below

When to Have A Bonfire

Bonfires are only permitted during the 'Bonfire Season' at each allotment site. (see opposite)

Burning must be kept to a minimum and composting should be used wherever possible.

Although bonfires can be a good way of disposing of some materials, such as diseased prunings, they can cause major problems for you, your family and friends and also for neighbours.

Smoke nuisance from bonfires generates a number of complaints to the Town Council each year and the Office reserves the right to ban or restrict bonfires on sites where there is a persistent problem.

Bonfire Seasons

Melrose – 15th Sept – 15th March

Allum Lane – All Year

Stapleton – All Year

Alternatives

Green waste should be composted where possible. Non-green waste, such as plastics, should never be burned, disposal should be through your nearest Household Waste Recycling Centre. Recycle materials whenever practical.

If You Need To Have A Bonfire

Think first before burning. If you do need to have a bonfire, you must follow the precautions and guidance. Under no circumstances should material be brought onto a site to be burned - this is a breach of your tenancy.



Bonfire Guidelines (based on Hertsmere Borough Council's guidance)

Materials

- Only burn dry material – freshly cut material causes more smoke.
- Never burn anything that could produce noxious fumes including (but not limited to):
 - × household rubbish
 - × green or damp materials as they produce more smoke
 - × garden chemicals
 - × rubber
 - × plastic
 - × foam (including furniture)
 - × carpets
 - × batteries
 - × paint
- Avoid lighting in unsuitable weather conditions. These include:
 - × damp, still days
 - × very windy days
 - × during the nights or within an hour of sunrise and sunset (wind speeds typically drop during these period, reducing the dispersion of any smoke)
 - × If the wind direction is going to blow it towards neighbours property

When lighting your bonfire

- Keep your fire away from trees, fences and buildings
- Never use oil, petrol or other flammable material to light a fire
- Don't set light to a large amount of waste all at once. It is better to have a small fire, make sure it is burning well, and then add small amounts of material at a time. This will minimise the amount of smoke
- Never leave a fire unattended, or leave it to smoulder overnight – make sure it is completely out
- Locate the bonfire away from houses to minimise the possibility of smoke affecting neighbours. Modern estates tend to have smaller gardens and neighbours' houses are much nearer than for older properties. The possibility of causing a nuisance is increased as a result

- ✓ Permission is needed for any NEW structures or MODIFICATION to existing structures.
- ✓ All structures should be sound, well maintained and of good appearance

Sheds & Polytunnels

You may wish to think about putting a shed or polytunnel on your plot.

Polytunnels extend your growing season and increase the range of crops you can grow.

Sheds can be used for shelter and storage at Melrose Avenue only.

Fences

You may erect a fence (up to 1.2m high around your allotment plot without asking permission.

The use of plastic fencing is discouraged, as is brightly coloured fencing.

The path width must be maintained, ideally at 1m wide.

Care should be taken to ensure any fence made of netting or wire is protected to prevent damage when the paths are maintained. Ideally, netting or wire should be attached on the inside of the fence.

You may need to ensure that the fence line is kept weed-free.

The Town Council cannot be held responsible for any damage caused to fencing by site maintenance works.

What is a Structure?

To clarify any confusion, the Town Council define a structure as:

- Any man-made construction that protrudes from the ground that has 1 or more sides (or roof) which is non-permeable at any point

This includes structures such as:

- Sheds, Greenhouses, Polytunnels
- Wind breaks
- Pergolas
- Decking Areas
- Fences over 1.2m high

Items such as bean poles, fruit cages (made of netting), and other such seasonal temporary items made from poles to aid cultivation are NOT considered to be a structure.

IF IN DOUBT – CONTACT THE WARDENS

Safety

- Do not store glass on your plot and be aware of any broken glass
- Ensure safe construction and regularly check and maintain all structures
- Do not store dangerous tools, combustibles or chemicals on site, even in a locked shed
- If you have an issue with a derelict or dangerous structure on your plot, please contact us

Security

- If you intend to store tools in your shed please ensure you have secure, lockable storage areas and do not store power tools or flammables
- We recommend that you do not store anything of value in sheds on allotments

Historic Structures

Over the years, the restrictions on various forms of structure at our allotment sites have changed which can be confusing for plotholders as historic structures exist which do not meet the current restrictions (and do not have written permission) – but are permitted for the life of the structure as long as they are kept in a good state of repair.

Plotholders will be notified if any structure they have is defined as historic.

Repairs are permitted to historic structures, but plotholders are not to modify or replace the structure without permission.

Permitted repairs may include:

- Replacing felt roof
- New door (in same style)
- Replacement window (same size)
- Replacement Shiplap (same style)
- Perspex replacement for glass

Unauthorised modifications may include:

- Changing colour
- Changing materials
- Adding/Removing extension

If in doubt, please contact the Town Council for further guidance.



New / Modified Structures

ALL ALLOTMENT SITES

- You **MUST** complete the Structure Permission form and submit this to the Town Council. The form is available online and from the Site Wardens.
- You must not begin construction until you have received permission in writing from the Town Council
- Polytunnels up to 240cm (8ft) length x 210cm (7ft) height x 180cm (6ft) width will usually be permitted as long as they will not cause a nuisance to other plots
- Larger polytunnels may be permitted if they are made of clear materials
- Glass Greenhouses (or any structure made of glass) are not permitted
- No permanent structures are permitted. No concrete bases, No foundations, Posts must not be concreted into ground
- Retrospective permission may not always be granted.

MELROSE AVENUE ONLY

- Sheds must not exceed 240cm (8ft) length x 210cm (7ft) height x 180cm (6ft) width and must be well maintained
- Sheds should be stained brown or painted green



- ✓ Wildlife is often beneficial and should be encouraged
- ✓ Good cultivation and keeping your plot tidy can avoid problems with unwelcome wildlife
- ✓ Only use commercial products (poisons, slug pellets, etc.) as a last resort
- ✓ Always follow instructions for use when using commercial products
- ✓ Use netting to avoid pigeon damage



Beneficial Wildlife

Allotments provide a range of habitats for birds, small mammals, amphibians and insects, to name but a few.

Many animals are beneficial to gardeners as they prey on pests such as aphids, slugs and snails.

As far as possible, tenants should look to share their allotments with local wildlife.

Birds can be encouraged with nest boxes and feeders placed in trees. Remember not to disturb nesting birds.

Beehives

Only designated individuals approved by the Town Council may carry out Bee Keeping activities at any Council site, and only within the designated areas set aside for this purpose.

Each of the Town Council's three allotment sites have designated areas provided, in recognition of the importance of bees for the environment, the educational benefits and the leisure value of keeping bees.

Bee warning notices are visibly placed on site entrance gates, allotment notice boards, and around designated area perimeter fencing, containing relevant information.

Contact and speak to the Site Wardens if you need further information.



Unwelcome Wildlife

Rats are attracted by uncultivated areas, spaces under sheds, piles of debris and open compost heaps as well as available food, such as unharvested crops and excessive stored items.

Keeping your plot tidy and well cultivated helps deter them. If further action is required, products for dealing with rats are available from DIY stores but only use in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

The Town Council will only take action if there is a severe infestation which cannot be contained by the above measures and which impacts on the wider community.

Pigeons & Rabbits can be a problem, particularly on sites located close to woodland or agricultural land. The only way to ensure protection for crops is to cover them with netting.

Please be mindful to secure nets properly so that birds do not become trapped in loose netting. It is advisable to check netting after heavy snowfall or strong winds which may cause it to collapse.

Foxes generally do not cause too many problems and the main issue is unwanted digging, particularly if animal-based fertilisers such as blood, fish and bone are used.

The best way to avoid this is to minimise the use of such products and to cover areas of freshly-dug soil.



Pest Control

Pest control on allotment sites is the responsibility of plot holders not the Town Council.

The Town Council will take action against plot holders who fail to adopt good husbandry practices in order to deter rodent infestation.

The Town Council will pass on remediation costs to plot holders at fault.

Safety around Wildlife

- Contact with animal faeces can be harmful - always wear gloves and wash your hands regularly.
- If using commercial products to control wildlife follow the safety advice given.



- ✓ Read and become familiar with the rules of your tenancy agreement which is legally binding
- ✓ If you have a co-worker, inform the Town Council so this can be recorded
- ✓ Please notify us if any of your details change (e.g., address & phone number)
- ✓ At the end of your tenancy, you must remove all items from the plot, or discuss with Site Wardens where this is not possible (item removal charges may be made)
- ✓ Please let us know if you wish to give up your tenancy, or if there are any issues that prevent cultivation (e.g., illness)
- ✓ Council Officers must be allowed access to your plot
- ✓ All problems should be reported to Site Wardens
- X You cannot sublet your plot
- X You cannot use your plot for any trade or business



Allotment Tenancy Agreement

Allotment use is subject to legislation. It is therefore important that you read your tenancy agreement carefully and follow the rules set out in it. To help you we have included some basic do's and don'ts throughout this booklet.

Remember that your tenancy agreement is a legally binding document and if you do not adhere to the rules you may lose your tenancy.

Rent

Allotment rents must be paid by the 1st October each year.

An invoice will be sent out to all plotholders approx. 1 month before with instructions on how to pay.

Sharing and Co-working

You may wish to be assisted on your plot by someone else. If you would like the person you are assisted by to have rights with regards to the tenancy agreement then you must register them with the Town Council as a helper.

You cannot sublet your plot (let others use it) and any tenant found to be doing this will have their tenancy terminated.

Concessions

A concession of 50% on rent is available to plot holders who are of state pension age.

Swapping Plots

Transferring to another plot may be possible provided you leave your current plot in a re-lettable condition.

Please contact the Site Wardens if you are interested in swapping plots.

Transfer Tenancy

Transfer of tenancy between immediate family members is allowed at the discretion of the Town Council, and only if they have been registered as helpers on the plot for at least two years.

Change of Address

If you move within the WD6 postcode area you are required to inform the Town Council of your change of address. This will not affect your tenancy agreement.

Moving out of area

If you move out of the WD6 postcode area, you may only renew your tenancy for one additional year.

Please let the Site Wardens know that you will be moving, have a change of address, and if you would like to continue your allotment tenancy for a further year.

Motor vehicles

Cars and vans of plottolders driven onto the allotment site must be parked in the car parking area.

When wider grass paths are firm, it may be possible to drive onto these to provide access for direct delivery of items to your plot, after which vehicles must be removed to the car park for the remainder of your visit.



Working with others

You must be respectful to other plottolders and Council staff at all times.

If you wish to borrow equipment – always ask first – most plottolders are more than happy to help.

If you have a concern regarding another plottolder, please contact the Site Wardens. Do not attempt to deal with it yourself.

Site Maintenance

Do not attempt to perform any site maintenance without speaking to the Site Wardens first.

This includes works to trees, hedges, water services, ditches, gutters, buildings, gates and any part of the allotments which is not part of your plot.

The only exception would be in an emergency – such as a major water leak or when life is at risk. You must inform the Site Wardens and/or Town Council offices as soon as practicably possible.

Ending your Tenancy

If you wish to end your tenancy you **MUST** let the Site Wardens know as soon as possible.

The Site Wardens will liaise with you to ensure the plot is handed back in an acceptable condition.

You may incur charges if you abandon your plot and it is not returned to the Council in an acceptable condition.

- Identify whether the materials contain asbestos
- Handle only solid and unbroken pieces of asbestos - **do not break or damage when handling**
- Dampen the asbestos with water to reduce the risk of fibres being released if damaged
- For personal safety wear protective gloves and a dust mask
- Double bag the asbestos using fully sealed plastic bags and tape shut

If you follow the above guidelines you should have no problems removing asbestos cement products safely from your plot.

If you are in any doubt, have concerns about an unidentified material on your plot, or if you require help with the safe removal of asbestos, please contact the Town Council for further guidance and assistance.

For further detailed guidance on handling and disposing of asbestos: www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/



Asbestos

Asbestos was once a common building material and has found its way onto most allotments.

The overwhelming majority of asbestos found on allotments is in the form of asbestos cement sheeting used for sheds/buildings and their roofs.

This has a minimal asbestos content, usually of around 1% but sometimes up to 15% depending on the type.

Structures Containing Asbestos

Provided the structures are of sound construction and in good condition, there is no need to remove them and you can continue to use them safely.

As a precaution do not hammer or drill into the structures as this could cause the release of asbestos fibres. It is the inhalation of these minute fibres, and not the material in solid form, which is harmful to health.

Removing Asbestos

Occasionally you might find small amounts of asbestos-containing material loose on the plot.

Where you come across undamaged pieces of asbestos, such as corrugated sheeting or pipes, these guidelines will help you deal with them safely and effectively:

On no account should you seek to remove asbestos structures without guidance from an approved asbestos removal contractor.

In all cases, if you have any concerns about asbestos, please contact the Town Council. It is vital that the material is correctly identified prior to its removal and disposal.

Allotment Wardens

Elstree and Borehamwood Town Council: www.elstreeborehamwood-tc.gov.uk

Warden Mobile: 07598 598057. Office: 020 8207 1382

Email: warden@elstreeborehamwood-tc.gov.uk

Allotment Information

Allotment Garden: www.allotment-garden.org

Borehamwood & District Garden Craft Society: deubug1955@gmail.com

Garden Organic: www.gardenorganic.co.uk

National Allotment Society: www.nsalg.org.uk

Permaculture: www.permaculturenews.org

Royal Horticultural Society: www.rhs.org.uk/growyourown

Thrive: www.thrive.org.uk

Conservation

Butterfly Conservation: www.butterfly-conservation.org

Bee Count: www.friendsoftheearth.uk/bee-count

Hertfordshire Bee Keepers Association: www.hertsbees.org.uk

The British Bee Keepers Association: www.bbka.org.uk

Manure & Straw

Elle Dani Stables: 020 8953 2045

An up-to-date list of Website and Contacts is can be found on the Council website

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