



HEALTH & SAFETY GUIDE TO ALLOTMENTS

Allotment sites and the activity of gardening is relatively risk free if people are aware of the hazards and make steps to ensure that themselves, other people and wildlife are not put at risk. The Council undertakes risk assessments each year on their allotment sites. Please read and consider the following points before allotment gardening.

1. **Physical exercise**

1.1. Digging the soil is one of the most physically demanding tasks in gardening, as it involves continued bending and straightening of the back when lifting a spade of soil. It needs to be approached with care, particularly if you are not used to heavy work. Sensible shoes are essential to save you from a forked foot or worse.

2. **Hazardous rubbish**

2.1. Ensure that you do not leave broken glass and other hazardous materials on the allotment. If you discover a significant amount of rubbish underneath the soil, such as broken glass, plastics etc, then please contact the Council who can offer some assistance in removing it from the plot.

3. **Tetanus or Lockjaw**

3.1. This is a serious infection caused by bacterium that lives in the soil and especially manured soil. It enters the body through the tiniest abrasion, scratch, thorn, puncture or cut and a few days or weeks later the illness hits. Please make sure that you have a vaccination that can protect you against tetanus.

4. **Skin irritations**

4.1. Wear gloves and a long-sleeved shirt when pruning plants that can cause skin irritations for example ivy, euphorbia or rue.

5. **Garden tools**

5.1. Garden tools can be a hazard if they are not stored properly or are left lying around the garden when not in use. For example upturned spades and forks.

6. **Pesticides and fertilisers**

6.1. Ensure that chemicals are kept securely locked in their own cupboard in your shed, away from children and in clearly marked containers. Do not keep them in lemonade bottles or other food containers or leave them lying around your plot. If you must use

chemicals, please keep them to your own plot and do not put them on your neighbour's plot. They may garden organically and will not thank you for it!

6.2. When using pesticides or fertilisers ensure to wear suitable clothing.

6.3. Please ensure that pesticides or fertilisers are disposed of responsibly. Pesticides should never be included in household rubbish, burnt, placed in skips or poured into any kind of drainage system or watercourse. If in doubt please contact the Council.

6.4. Please note that Garden Organic provide advice and publications on methods of pest control that do not require pesticides and gardening methods that reduce pest attack.

7. First aid kit

7.1. A first aid kit is a wise addition to the tools kept in the garden shed. A small selection of adhesive plasters, antiseptic ointment, a pair of tweezers for removing thorns and splinters and a gauze or lint pad to use as a compress to stop the bleeding if you are badly cut.

8. Power Tools

8.1. Most power tools need specific safety and handling training e.g. power chainsaws, strimmers, lawn mowers with metal blades and rotavators. A large rotavator can be a bit of a strain to control, so take a while to get used to it. Power strimmers, shredders, all have their dangers as well. Always follow the manufactures instructions.

9. Legionella

9.1. In very hot weather, especially in green houses, it is possible, although very rare, for Legionella (Legionnaires' Disease) to multiply in warm water to potentially harmful levels. Avoid storing potting media in greenhouses or spraying fine mists

10. Ponds and water

10.1. Ponds that are planned and maintained properly pose a tiny risk, far outweighed by the numerous benefits to wildlife and enjoyment to people of all ages. Contact your Wildlife Trust, Froglife or The Pond Conservation Trust about construction and maintenance of wildlife ponds.

10.2. People at most risk of drowning in ponds are children under three years of age. Risk from drowning decreases as a child's age increases and so their understanding of the danger. Children should be supervised on allotments at all times and must not go on other peoples plots without their express permission.

10.3. Aim to make ponds shallow and seasonal; 30-50cm at the deepest point is sufficient for biodiversity and sloping sides also prevent drowning of mammals that come to drink water. In winter use a float to prevent icing-over, otherwise children may be tempted to walk on ice and pond-life will be starved of oxygen.

11. Hazards for wildlife on allotments

11.1. These include: litter, low-level fruit netting, use of pesticides, open drains, slug pellets, mowing, strimming, broken glass and prestacked bonfires. Certain wildlife e.g. badgers, slowworms, some birds of prey and reptiles have specific legal protection

concerning their management. Contact English Nature for advice about protected species.

12. Vermin

- 12.1. Rats carry 70 diseases including Weil's Disease, which can cause human death via contaminated water. Plotholders must be vigilant and report any signs of infestation, which include burrows, tracks, droppings and observing the vermin. Contact the Environmental Health team at the Council for advice and to report problems.

13. Risk of infection

- 13.1. Humans are at risk of infection from handling animal manure. Always wear gloves when handling any type of manure. Fresh manure should be heaped for 6 months, giving time for e-coli to break down. It is the responsibility of the plot holders for basic hygiene and to check tetanus boosters are up to date.
- 13.2. Stopping for a lunch break helps restore energy after lots of digging but don't forget to wash your hands first. Keep a hand-sterilising gel handy or in the shed.
- 13.3. Always wash your fruit or vegetables thoroughly before eating them.

14. Personal safety

- 14.1. Allotment gardeners often spend long periods of time on their own on site: take personal safety seriously and tell another person where you are going and what time you will be back. If you have a mobile telephone take it with you. Always lock the gate behind you upon entering and leaving the site.
- 14.2. Be aware of weather conditions that can affect walking surfaces such as hardcore, grass. Use sunscreen to protect you from over exposure to the sun.

15. Bonfires

- 15.1. There is no law preventing bonfires, or specifying the time that you can have them. The Environmental Protection Act (1990), however, prohibits a statutory nuisance being caused by smoke.
- 15.2. Check weather conditions to ensure that there is not significant wind, do not leave a fire unattended and ensure that it is completely put out with water before you leave. Please see the Council's *Guidelines on Domestic Bonfires* for more information.
- 15.3. Check your bonfire for wildlife before lighting it.

This document must be read in conjunction with the Allotment Tenancy Agreement which can be found on the Council's website at www.welhat.gov.uk/allotments. Further copies are available on request from the Allotment Officer.

