

Warmsworth Allotments

Health and Safety Guidance – General Safety for Plot holders

This document must be read in conjunction with the Allotment Rules and any relevant Policy and Procedure documents. This advice is for your guidance only. We are not here to enforce this guidance onto any individual except where we believe that others might be at risk from your negligence.

All activities carry an element of risk and allotments are no exception. Everyone needs to take health and safety seriously, but it is also very important to approach the issues sensibly and not become paranoid about the possibility of litigation. Let common sense prevail! New and existing plot holders have a responsibility (duty of care) to anyone on their plot regardless of whether they have been given permission to be there. You should act responsibly and comply with any health and safety instructions provided to you or displayed on site.

Health and safety only becomes unmanageable when responsibilities are neglected.

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. Please read and always consider the following points before allotment gardening and have them in mind.

1. Personal safety

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 roughly what time you will be back. If you're delayed, give them a quick call to tell them you're ok and give them another time. Be mindful of the time especially as dusk approaches. Don't be left on site after dark where hazards become more acute.

If you have a mobile phone take it with you and make sure it's fully charged.

Be wise when you are invited into an enclosed space, like a shed, where you cannot be seen. Do you know the person well or are you new to the site and just don't want to offend your fellow plot holder? Allotments are as much about community as growing veg but don't lose your common sense – your personal safety is your responsibility. Report any perceived harassment to the Parish Council immediately where it will be dealt with appropriately.

If at any point you feel unsafe when approached by another individual, known or unknown to you, do not hesitate in shouting over another plot holder or ring 999 and ask for the police to attend.

Also, your plot boundary is where other individuals must stay unless you invite them onto your plot.

Always close the gate behind you upon entering and when leaving the site and lock the gate when you know you are the last out. Always carry your gate key and fully charged mobile phone.

Be aware of weather conditions that can affect walking surfaces such as paths, hardcore or grass.

In sunny weather, take sunscreen to protect you from over exposure to the sun and try to remember to drink lots of fluids

You are advised to be extra vigilant on the site during extremely bad weather, storms and high winds.

2. Physical Exercise

Digging the soil is a physically demanding task as it involves continued bending and straightening of the back when lifting a spade of soil. It needs to be approached with care and moderation, particularly if you are not used to heavy work. Take regular breaks and try to sit down and rest before commencing again. Sensible footwear is also essential to save you from a forked foot or worse.

3. Hazardous rubbish

Ensure that you do not leave any hazardous materials on the allotment and that weed killers, fertilisers etc are stored safely and disposed of in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. It is advisable not to have piles of rubbish on your plot which will attract vermin, insect nests or trip and gash hazards. Clean your plot as regularly as you can.

4. Tetanus or Lockjaw

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 ensure that you are up to date with any **tetanus injections**.

5. Skin irritations

Wear gloves and a long-sleeved shirt when pruning plants that can cause skin irritations.

6. Garden tools

Garden tools can be a hazard if they are not stored properly or are left lying around the plot For example, upturned spades, forks and rakes. Canes should have cane covers whenever possible.

7. Pesticides, weedkiller and Fertilisers

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! Be extra careful when spraying between boundary lines. When using any of the above ensure you follow the

manufacturer's instructions and wear suitable clothing. You must ensure that any chemicals are disposed of responsibly. They should never be included in household rubbish, burnt, placed in skips or poured into any kind of drainage system or watercourse. Follow the disposal instructions on the manufacturers' instructions.

8. First aid kit and Accident book

A first aid kit is provided on site in a sealed box in the toilet. Please ensure that you know the code for the lock even if you never use the facility. You may need the code for yourself or another plot holder, so please ask for it. Accidents should be recorded in the accident book at the time of the incident. We also advise that you keep **your own first aid box** on your plot for minor cuts and abrasions, along with hand gel.

9. Power Tools

If you are using any power tools, on your plot, make sure you are familiar with the manufacturers' safety handling instructions and wear the appropriate safety wear such as gloves, goggles, footwear (no open toes) long trousers / sleeves, etc. Also, check for stones before strimming and check round for insect nests. We advise that strimming does not take place if there are children in the vicinity. A child's eye level is much lower and a thrown up stone could easily blind a child.

10. Legionella

In very hot weather, especially in green houses, it is possible, although very rare, for Legionella (Legionnaires' Disease) to multiply in warm water and compost to potentially harmful levels. Avoid storing potting compost in greenhouses or spraying fine mists. It's advisable to wear gloves when using compost especially if you have any cuts or abrasions. The elderly or anyone with a suppressed immune system are most at risk. Also, water in the pipes leading to the taps can get very warm on a hot day so run the water until it's cold and make sure the tap end is clean.

11. Ponds and water

People at most risk of drowning in ponds or unlidded water butts 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 **always** be supervised on allotments and must not go on other people's plots without their express permission.

12. Hazards for wildlife on allotments

These include: litter, low-level loose fruit netting, use of pesticides, open water butts, slug pellets, mowing, strimming and broken glass. 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.

13. Rats

Rats carry about 70 diseases including Weil's Disease, which can cause human death via contaminated water from rat urine. We advise that no water is stored without the use of a properly fitted lid. Pooled water anywhere on your plot should be dealt with immediately. Compost bins should not contain any meat, fish, cheese, milk, or any faeces from meat eating animals such as cats or dogs. The Parish Council have a contract with a Pest Control company and any rat activity should be reported to the manager who will then ask for a visit. Any recommendations by the company, to any plot holder, must be carried out and is non-negotiable. Refusal to carry out any recommendations will result in written warnings and ultimately loss of tenancy. Our aim is to reduce the numbers of rats on the allotments, we will never eradicate them fully. If you have chickens on your plot please don't give rats free food by not disposing of feed properly or by leaving feed bins broken or open.

14. Risk of infection

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 ecoli to break down. It is the responsibility of the plot holders for basic hygiene and to check tetanus boosters are up to date. Stopping for a lunch break helps restore energy after lots of digging but don't forget to wash your hands first. Keeping a hand-sterilising gel handy on your plot is a good idea.

15. Gas bottles and cookers

Having a good old cuppa is highly advisable on any allotment site. If you do use gas canisters on the new style cookers please dispose of them at home. If you have a gas bottle in your shed make sure it's switched off when you are not using it. Having a small caravan type fire extinguisher would be advisable.

16. Bonfires and fires

During the two weekends when bonfires are allowed please be extra careful. Don't leave a bonfire unattended. If you need to leave, douse with water until the fire is out. A breeze can easily reignite a bonfire and a full blown fire on our site would be catastrophic to all the vegetation, sheds, etc and all the surrounding properties. If you have a bonfire have a hose connected nearby but make sure it's not a trip hazard in the dark. If you have a small plot, consider investing in a metal bin or incinerator. Before lighting a fire check for wildlife and only burn wood or dried vegetation. Plastics melt and produce toxic fumes and seep into the soil. Fireworks are not allowed on site but sparklers for the kids are fine. Follow the packet instructions and dispose of them off site.