

## Notes for New Allotment Tenants

### Introduction

Taking on a new allotment can be an exciting opportunity to grow your own fruit and vegetables, meet people and get plenty of fresh air and exercise. However, a certain level of commitment is going to be necessary for it to be successful. At the very least you will have to visit for several hours a week come rain or shine to ensure your tenancy starts well.

Think very carefully about the size of plot that you can reasonably prepare for cultivation and maintain in a good state of cultivation throughout the year. Take on half or quarter of a plot first. Master this and then plan for a larger plot.

All tenants must complete a 3 month probationary period before being recommended for tenancy. Once you have signed the tenancy agreement, you have committed to maintaining the allotment in a good state of cultivation and to keep it clean and free of weeds.

Allotments are primarily for the growing of vegetables, fruit and flowers. Areas of grass or hard standing must be kept to a minimum and occupy no more than 25% of the total plot area. There may be physical obstructions, such as trees which prevent the cultivation of parts of some allotments, however, larger areas of grass will only be permitted where there is a good reason and approved by the Allotment Officer.

### Sources of Information

The following websites offer very useful information regarding taking on an allotment and starting to cultivate it.

<http://www.digmyplot.co.uk/start/html>

<http://www.gardenaction.co.uk/allotment/allotment-design-02asp>

<http://www.rhs.org.uk/Gardening/Grow-Your-Own>

Many books have also been published in recent years on Allotment gardening and growing your own vegetables. Please contact your local library who may stock them. They include:

- Allotment Gardening: An Organic Guide for Beginners (Susan Berger)
- The Allotment Keeper's Handbook: A down-to-earth Guide to Growing Your Own Food (Jane Perrone)
- The Allotment Book (Andy Cleverly)
- The Gardening Which? Guide to Growing your own vegetables (Liz Dobbs)

You will find that other allotment holders are willing to help you with horticultural advice and many of the allotment sites have trading sheds where you can obtain seeds and other supplies that you need on your plot.

### Equipment Needs

To get started you will need a digging spade and fork, hoe, rake and a bucket or trug for collecting weeds.

## **Starting to Cultivate**

Your priority upon taking on a new allotment must be to cut back the existing vegetation as close to ground level as possible, regardless of the intention to use traditional or deep bed or “no dig” or other permaculture cultivation methods. A petrol strimmer is perhaps the best tool to cut back existing vegetation to ground level. Grass and most weeds (except perennials like docks, thistles, buttercup, bindweed and couch grass) can be placed on a compost heap to rot down. Any woody material can be burned subject to local rules and Council guidelines on lighting bonfires.

## **Weed Control**

The main ways of clearing an allotment infested with weeds are:

- Digging
- Covering with a permeable membrane
- Using weed killer

Whatever method you choose to use, the best advice is to start at one end of the plot and systematically work back to the other end, removing all perennial roots that you find.

### **Digging**

The traditional way of clearing a plot is to dig it over by hand and remove every piece of perennial root (Couch Grass, Bindweed etc) that you find. This method is labour intensive and time consuming, but it is probably the most successful way to clear weeds. Annual weeds such as groundsel or chickweed can simply be dug into the soil.

Using a rotovator is a much quicker way to dig over the soil, but its blades cut up the roots of perennial weeds and spreads them around the plot, which could make the problem worse. Rotovators or the smaller soil tillers are best used after all the roots of perennial weeds have been removed by hand.

### **Covering with a permeable membrane**

If much of the plot is affected by perennial weeds such as couch grass, bindweed or horsetail (ask your Site Secretary) then use a petrol strimmer or other suitable tool to cut down the existing vegetation to nearly ground level. Cover the plot with a weed suppressing black membrane, plastic sheeting or cardboard and start to dig and weed a small area at a time, thoroughly removing all the perennial roots that you find.

Carpet should not be used for this purpose as the chemicals used in the manufacture of modern carpets may leach into and contaminate the soil.

### **Using weed killer**

Haringey Council and the Haringey Allotments Forum are committed to minimising the use of weed killers to control weeds and actively encourage good environmental and sustainable practices including the use of organic alternatives in preference to fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides.

Most annual weeds can be dug into the soil and simple but regular hoeing or hand weeding will be quite sufficient to keep your plot weed free. Perennial weed roots are best removed by hand.

Weed killer should only be used as a last resort. Please consult your Site Secretary before using weed killer. Indiscriminate use of weed killer can cause a nuisance to other tenants and you may be refused the tenancy.

## **Composting**

You are encouraged to compost as much allotment green waste as possible. A good tip is to mix equal amounts of “**greens**” rich in nitrogen such as nettles, grass clippings, vegetable waste, young weeds, urine diluted 20:1 and “**browns**” rich in carbon such as shredded paper, cardboard, straw, woody hedge clippings, old bedding plants. Avoid weeds with seed heads; the roots of perennial weeds such as couch grass, bindweed and horsetail; meat, fish and other cooked food; faeces (human and animal).

The roots of perennial weeds can be successfully composted but not in the same compost bin as general allotment green waste. An effective method is to place the roots in a strong black plastic bag and leave to thoroughly rot for up to one year before adding to the general compost bin or digging into the soil. Other methods include drowning the roots.

Twigs and branches from pruning disease-free fruit trees and bushes can be set aside and used as pea and bean supports rather than burned.

## **Your responsibility as a tenant**

A sheet detailing your responsibilities as a tenant is attached.

## Allotment Tenants Responsibilities

The Tenant must adhere to the rules of the Tenancy Agreement, failure to do so could result in the loss of your Tenancy.

### 1.1 Health and Safety

- Tenants are responsible for their health and safety and for those with whom they come into contact on the allotment.
- Tenants are responsible for the safety of their guests and for ensuring that guests do not enter any plot other than their own.
- Tenants are responsible for ensuring that all pesticides, herbicides and chemicals are stored safely and securely and are used in an appropriate manner so as not to cause any adverse effects to the public, wildlife or neighbouring plots. The usage and storage of pesticides and herbicides must comply with current legislation (see Tenancy Agreement - Appendix 1).
- Tenants must comply with the guidelines on bonfires (see Tenancy Agreement - Appendix 2). Only garden waste that cannot be composted can be burned on your allotment.
- Tenants must ensure that all water receptacles are safe and securely covered.

### 1.2 Maintaining your plot

- Tenants are responsible for erecting a clearly visible number board on their plot.
- Tenants are reminded that the purpose of an allotment site is predominantly for the cultivation of vegetables, fruit and flowers. It is expected that 75% of the total plot area will be cultivated.
- Plots must be kept clean and not be allowed to become overgrown with weeds and other vegetation.
- Tenants must maintain all footpaths immediately bordering their plot, these should be kept clear and accessible at all times.
- Tenants must not use the site to store or dispose of items which the Parks Service may consider detrimental to the upkeep of the site. If you bring any item onto the site, you need to consider how you will dispose of it.
- Tenants must not bring items such as glass, plastic waste and synthetic carpets which do not degrade naturally, onto the allotment site.
- Green waste which has been generated on the site must be kept within the confines of your plot and should be composted.
- Tenants must take away all non-organic waste from the allotment plot and recycle off-site where possible.

### 1.3 Sheds and other structures

- Provided consent is given by the Parks service, Tenants may erect a garden shed, greenhouse or poly tunnel. The use of corrugated metal sheets or bricks for constructing such is prohibited.
- The maximum size for a garden shed is 2.5m x 2.0m (8ft 3inches x 6ft 6 inches).
- The maximum size for a greenhouse is 2.5m x 2.0m (8ft 3inches x 6ft 6 inches).
- The maximum size for a poly tunnel is 3m x 5m (10ft x 16ft 6 inches).
- Tenants must keep all permitted sheds or structures in a reasonable and safe condition.

Tenants must adhere to the size restrictions; otherwise you may be asked to remove any sheds or structures which do not meet the size and safety requirements outlined by the Parks Service.

### 1.4 Site Security

- Tenants are responsible for keeping entrance gates locked at all times, on arrival and departure at the site even if they have been found open.
- Tenants are responsible for the safekeeping of the site keys and must not pass them on to other persons.
- Tenants must report any incidents to the Site Secretary (if you have one) or alternatively to the Allotment Officer or Administration Officer.
- Tenants must not store any items of value on the allotment and are responsible for insuring and marking any items which are kept on the site.

### **1.5 Use of site**

- Tenants must not use their allotment plot as a place of residence or sleep on the allotment overnight.

### **1.6 Nuisance**

- Tenants must not cause any nuisance, harassment or annoyance to other plot holders, to any neighbour adjacent to the site or any council employees or engage in any activities that may be considered anti-social.
- Tenants must not cause any damage to other Tenants property or crops, nor to the infrastructure of the site.

### **1.7 Disputes**

- In the event of a dispute between two Tenants, that cannot be resolved by the Site Secretary, the matter must be referred to the Allotment Officer. The decision of the Allotment Officer shall be final.

### **1.8 Water Usage**

- Tenants are required to conserve water and where possible use water butts to capture rain water.
- Tenants will comply with any water use restriction imposed by the relevant Water Authority.

### **1.9 Dogs**

- Tenants are responsible for any dogs brought onto the site and for ensuring that they are kept securely on a leash and not allowed to stray onto other plots.
- Tenants are responsible for the removal from site of any dog faeces created by their dogs.

### **1.10 Termination of Tenancy**

- Tenants must remove any items or derelict structures from their plot before the end of the Tenancy
- Tenants must return the site keys to the Parks Service on termination of the Tenancy.

Using pesticides on allotments should be avoided. However, if you choose to use them, you are responsible for using them safely and in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. Allotments must be kept safe for other tenants, their visitors and wildlife.

### **Consider alternatives to pesticides**

Before you buy or use any pesticide, you must ask yourself, is it really necessary to control the pest, disease or weed? Or is there is a safer alternative to traditional chemical use?

Organic gardening methods are one way that you can reduce pesticide use and get nature to help control any pests or diseases. For example, could you remove problem weeds by using a knife or trowel instead? Why not remove slugs or snails when they come out at night, or use a physical barrier to discourage them?

The following websites may be helpful in providing information on alternative methods to pesticides and encouraging nature to help control the problem:

- Royal Horticultural Society [www.rhs.org.uk](http://www.rhs.org.uk),
- Garden Organic [www.gardenorganic.co.uk](http://www.gardenorganic.co.uk),
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds [www.rspb.org.uk/advice/gardening/](http://www.rspb.org.uk/advice/gardening/)

### **What are pesticides?**

The term 'pesticide' covers a wide range of products, all of which are used to control plant 'pests'.

Pesticides for plant protection purposes include:

- Weed killers (herbicides), slug pellets (molluscicides), insecticides, fungicide sprays and animal repellents.

### **Which pesticides can I use on my allotment?**

Before you buy any more pesticide, do you already have some that you can use up?

- If yes, read the label and check if the product will control the problem you have.
- You can then check whether your stored pesticides can still be legally used at the following webpage; <https://secure.pesticides.gov.uk/garden/prodsearch.asp>
- If the product is not listed on the database it is probably no longer authorised and so will be illegal to use.
- In this case, residents of Haringey should call the Hazardous Waste Collection Service operated by the Corporation of London on 020 7332 3433 to arrange a collection.

•

### **Choosing and buying a pesticide**

If you need to buy some pesticide you can see a list of products that are authorised for use on particular plants or areas in the garden on the HSE website. Never buy more than you will need for one year. You may end up with pesticide that you will have to dispose of if the product is withdrawn and becomes illegal to use.

**Do not buy pesticides from the internet or when abroad until you have checked the HSE website that they are legal to use in the UK.**

If they are not authorised in the UK they may not have been assessed for safety to humans or the environment. You could face prosecution for illegal use and storage of such pesticides.

### **'Amateur' and 'Professional' use**

Most of the pesticides that you can use on your allotment are approved for amateur use. This means that you do not need specific training to use them. The label will be worded so that the instructions are easy to follow, to ensure that the product is used safely. These products are most likely to be found in your local garden centre, DIY store or supermarket. Many other pesticides, such as those used on farms, or in public areas are approved for use in much larger commercial situations. The labels of these 'professional' products can be more complicated, and by law must only be used by those who have had the appropriate training.

**Professional products should never be used on allotments.**

### **Withdrawn pesticides**

Each year, manufacturers may withdraw some pesticides for a variety of commercial reasons. Pesticides may also be withdrawn as a result of review by the European Community (EC).

When a pesticide is withdrawn, the Chemicals Regulation Directorate (CRD) allows a period of time for the product to be used up safely until a specific expiry date, after which it cannot legally be used. You can check the HSE website for expiry dates of products.

### **How do I use a pesticide?**

The label will explain how to use the product safely and any special precautions you need to take. For example, you may need to keep children and pets out of treated areas, or you may need to wait for a certain length of time before eating the fruit or vegetables you have treated.

- Always read the label before you buy the product, and again before you use it.
- Always follow the instructions carefully.
- Where appropriate, dilute the product with water and apply it evenly.
- Never make up more than you will need on that day.
- Do not be tempted to add extra pesticide/product to make it stronger – this isn't necessary and could even damage the plant or lawn that you are treating.
- Apply slug pellets thinly to avoid the risk of poisoning wildlife and pets, particularly dogs.
- When the job is finished, always wash your hands before you do anything else.

### **Storing pesticides**

- Always store pesticides in their original container. This is for safety reasons and is a legal requirement.
- After you have used a pesticide, make sure that the packaging is tightly closed or sealed to avoid spillage.
- Store pesticides in a safe place, out of reach of children and pets.
- Take particular care to store slug pellets safely to avoid accidental poisoning of children and pets – particularly dogs.
- Sheds and greenhouses are not ideal for storing pesticides as they can get very hot in summer or cold in winter. Pesticide products are best stored at an even temperature.
- If you store it carefully, any remaining pesticide will be effective for some years to come.
- Never store diluted pesticides.
- It is also illegal to store pesticides that are unlabelled and not in their original container for safety reasons. Remember to only dilute enough for that day's use.

### **Disposing of pesticides**

- Whether you've diluted it or not, never pour pesticides down a drain or any other water drainage system (e.g. sink or toilet) because of the risk of contaminating water and harming wildlife. You could face prosecution.
- Pesticide containers that have held concentrated product (i.e. requiring dilution before use) should be rinsed three times adding the washings to the final spray solution. The empty container can then be placed in household waste.
- Empty pesticide containers that have held Ready-to-Use product (i.e. trigger sprays) can be disposed of directly into your household waste.
- Other empty pesticide containers e.g. bags and cardboard boxes can also be disposed of in your household waste.
- Check the label for any other advice on disposal of the product or empty container.
- Do not burn any pesticide packaging.
- Residents of Haringey can call the Hazardous Waste Collection Service operated by the Corporation of London on 020 7332 3433 to arrange a collection of unwanted pesticide.

### **Appendix 2: Bonfires**

**Bonfires are NOT permitted between 1<sup>ST</sup> April and 30<sup>TH</sup> Sept each year.**

This covers all fires, including incinerators, but does not include barbeques, using charcoal.

It is always preferable to compost as much allotment waste as possible; it is environmentally friendly and will provide you with free compost for your garden. If you require a compost bin, the Recycling Department at Haringey Council can advise you on where to obtain one.

We appreciate that you may have allotment waste which is non-compostable and may need to have a small bonfire. If this is the case we ask that you remember the following:

- Bonfires may only be lit where they cause no nuisance to any neighbour, tenant or otherwise.
- If you are asked to extinguish a nuisance bonfire by a neighbour, Tenant or otherwise, you must do so immediately.
- Only dry natural materials may be burnt, e.g. dry diseased plants, perennial weeds, stalks and prunings.
- Bonfires are not permitted at any time for the burning of manufactured materials such as plastics and rubber.
- A quick hot fire will produce minimum smoke
- Do not light a bonfire within one hour of sunset or leave alight later than one hour after sunset. Climatic conditions at these times may increase the smoke problem
- A bonfire should never be left unattended; make sure that when leaving the plot the fire is completely extinguished.
- Notice must be paid to Council guidelines, the law and other protocols that may exist on individual sites.

There is no law prohibiting anyone from having a bonfire. However, a smoky bonfire which causes a nuisance to local residents may be in contravention of Section 16 of the Clean Air Act 1956.

It is also in contravention of the allotment agreement and could result in loss of your tenancy.

**The Environmental Protection Act 1990** prohibits a **statutory nuisance** being caused by smoke, fumes, gases or odour. Whether a **statutory nuisance** is caused depends on how often the problem occurs, the amount of smoke produced, and how the smoke affects the person complaining. To be a nuisance the smoke must either be a cause of material harm or must substantially interfere with the enjoyment of land.



### **Appendix 3: Bee keeping on allotments**

Honey bees play a vital part in crop pollination, not just for our food but also for that of many other plants and animals. They are the primary pollinators of fruit crops such as apples, pears, plums, etc as well as soft fruits such strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, etc. The increasing prevalence of diseases in bees means that they need support from man to help them survive.

Notwithstanding the above, it is essential that public safety is carefully considered when deciding to site beehives on allotments. The principle concern is the potential for stinging incidents and how they can be minimized. Therefore, it is essential that beekeepers are qualified, adequately insured and manage their hives in line with best practice.

Under the terms of the tenancy agreement, bees can be kept on allotments with the written permission of the Council. Before applying to the Council, tenants must first notify and obtain the approval of their site association and the adjacent plot holders.

Site associations will be required to provide the Council with details of beekeepers, their beekeepers association, affiliated British Beekeepers Association (BBKA) membership number, location of hives (i.e. plot number) and number of hives on site.

**Qualifications:** All beekeepers must have taken a recognised course of a Bee-Keeping Association affiliated to the BBKA or hold the 'Basic Assessment' qualification. This will not be required for Beekeepers who can prove that they have more than five year's previous experience of Beekeeping.

**Insurance:** Beekeepers must hold public liability insurance to cover all beekeeping activities and not just stings. A minimum of £5m public and produce insurance cover will be required. The Council does not consider that a normal Household Insurance policy gives the required cover.

**Location of Hives:** Hives must be sited to minimise nuisance to other tenants. They should be placed away from footpaths (at least 1m) and ideally in places with limited public access. Where appropriate, such as in a case of nuisance, site associations may require that a bee fencing fly screen be erected around hives, to a height of 1.8m (6 feet), in order to cause bees to enter above head height.

**Number of Hives:** Hive density must be limited and be in relation to the size of the site. Site associations can impose a maximum number of hives it wishes to have on their sites. No more than 3 hives can be installed on a plot.

**Identification of Hives:** All hive equipment must have identification number/name placed on it by the beekeeper and that reliable contact information for the beekeeper(s) is available and known by the site association and at a communal point on the allotment site.

**Inspection of Hives:** Hives must be inspected once a week during the 'swarming season', (April to July) and maintained throughout the rest of the year as per best practice.

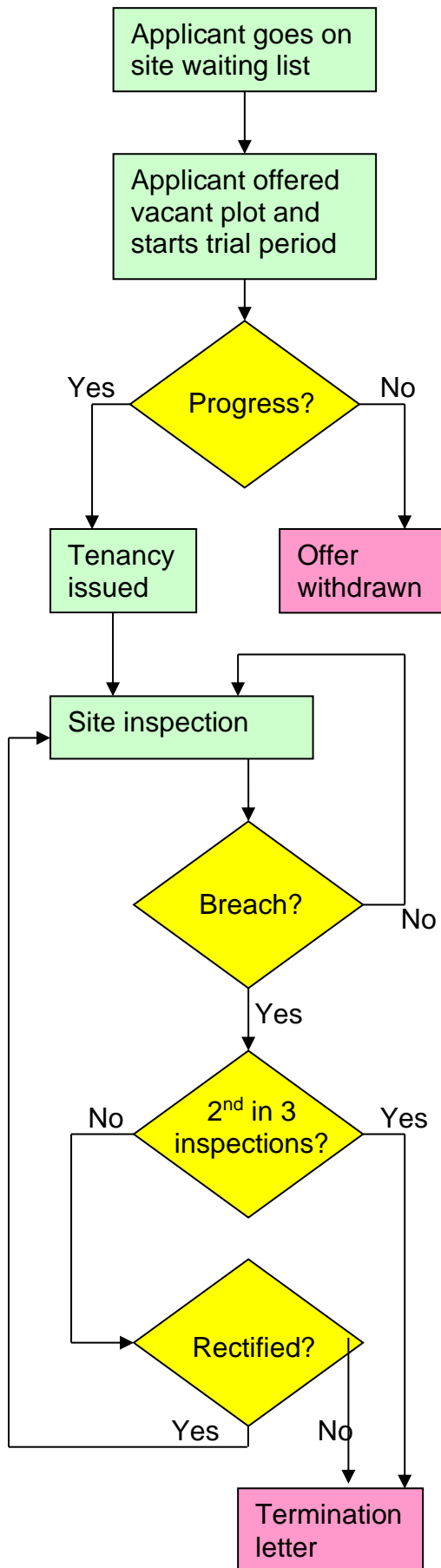
**Unattended Hives:** Beekeepers should not use allotments as storage space for equipment that does not contain bees (used but exposed beekeeping equipment can spread disease).

**Emergencies:** Beekeepers must display near their hives and on a communal notice board at least two telephone numbers of qualified Beekeepers to contact in the event of a swarm or an emergency.

**Mistreatment of Bees:** The Council reserve the right to inspect hives with the assistance of an independent beekeeper or the FERA Regional Bee Inspector, if it believes bees are being mistreated.

### **Appendix 4: Allotment charges for 2020**

# Haringey Allotments Tenancy Management Procedures



The applicant obtains a list of sites from Haringey Helpline or website, selects a suitable site, and **applies for their name and address to be added to site waiting list** (which may be managed either locally by site committee or centrally by allotments office, depending on whether that site has a secretary).

When the applicant reaches the top of the waiting list and a plot becomes vacant, the allotments office or site secretary contacts the applicant, and arranges to **show the applicant the vacant plot**. The applicant may choose not to proceed at that time and keep their place at the top of the waiting list; the vacant plot is then offered to the next person on the list.

When the **applicant accepts a plot**, the allotments office sends them a starter pack including a standard letter offering a tenancy on the condition that a three month probationary period must be successfully completed before they can be recommended for a tenancy.

During the trial period, the probationer's **progress is reviewed** by the allotments office or site secretary, and the probationer may be offered a tenancy. This decision is usually mutual; however, in borderline cases, or when there is a disagreement, the allotments office has the final say.

At the end of the trial period, subject to receipt of proof of tenant's postal address, the allotments office notifies the applicant by standard letter, and either **issues a tenancy agreement or withdraws the offer of a plot**. If the applicant is unsuccessful, they lose their place on the waiting list; if they wish to try again, they must start by re-joining the list at the bottom.

Routine site inspections are conducted by the allotments office at least three times a year, in order to check the condition of the site and make sure all tenants are complying with the tenancy agreement. **If a breach is identified, the allotments office issues a notice of non-compliance stating that the tenant must rectify the breach within 30 days or the tenancy will be terminated**. This notice specifies which aspect of the agreement the tenant has failed to comply with; it will be sent by recorded delivery, and copied to the site secretary (if there is one).

At the end of the 30 days notice, the **rectification is reviewed** by the allotments office or site secretary to see if the tenant is now complying with the tenancy agreement. This decision is usually mutual; however, in borderline cases, or when there is a disagreement, the allotments office has the final say.

If the tenant has rectified the breach in accordance with the tenancy agreement, no further action is normally taken.

**If the tenant fails to rectify the breach, the allotments office will issue a termination letter, stating that the tenant has 28 days to remove their belongings and vacate the plot in accordance with sec 10.24 of the Tenancy Agreement.**

**If a tenant commits any breach of the tenancy agreement twice within any 3 consecutive inspections, the allotments office issues the tenant a termination letter forthwith.**