



ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL



Our Advice to New Allotment Holders 'Quick Start Guide'

Welcome to your new allotment. Please ensure that you thoroughly read the Allotment Rules sent to you with this document. Should there be anything which you do not understand then contact the allotments manager listed at the bottom of this document immediately for clarification, any misinterpretation could lead to your tenancy being terminated so it is wise to make sure you understand what is required of you at an early stage. The information below has been compiled as a basic introduction to the allotment service to give you the best possible start on your allotment.

Please read your tenancy agreement. You will have received 2 copies of your tenancy agreement, one for you and one for us. However, you must sign and return both copies witnessed by an independent person but not a family member along with proof of address, as they will need to be signed by our solicitor to make the contract legal and binding. Your copy will be returned to you when our solicitor has signed it. Please take time to read your agreement carefully. We realise that it may not be easy to understand because of legal jargon, if you are unsure of anything, just ring, write or email for assistance.

Looking after your plot. You will be given 3 months to prove you are a keen grower. Ideally, we would expect you to have cultivated (digging and growing); Full Plots; at least 25% of the plot should comply within 3 months, 50% within 6 months and 100% cultivated by 12 months of taking up the tenancy. Half plots; 50% within 3 months and 100% within 6 months of taking up the tenancy. Please do not waste your first 3 months building a shed or fences as opposed to growing. You are allowed 20% of your allotment for structures (non-cultivated land) i.e. shed, and/or a lawn & leisure area including essential paths, compost bins, greenhouse or poly tunnel. The cultivated area is for crops and ornamental growing areas, but not a lawn or fruit trees planted in a lawn. The publication 'A Plotolders' Guide' offers helpful advice. Visit www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari for a free download. If you do not have access to a PC, we can provide a copy for a small administration fee.

Arriving at your new plot. Unfortunately, you may have been given a plot that a previous tenant has left waste on, if this is the case, you can gather the waste and place it in a suitable location. Contact us to find out where. Once you have deposited the waste, please advise us immediately so we can arrange to have it removed. Do not block pathways and do not include any organic material such as weed roots, which can be composted.

Keep your allotment safe and secure. Do your bit to keep the site secure and safe. Always lock the gate immediately after your arrival and departure. Minimise the number of valuables you keep on your plot including those stored in your shed. Put a secure lock on your shed. Report any break-ins or vandalism to the Police immediately and notify us as well. Keep your plot tidy and rubbish-free. Use products that are environmentally friendly and free from harmful chemicals. Remember you are responsible for the security and safety of your plot.

Mulching. You may cover some of your growing area with a porous woven mat, such as Mypex, to suppress weeds. This is an excellent way of preparing soil for cultivation as it will kill off weeds and allow the soil to breathe. Carpet is not acceptable. If you bring carpet onto the allotment, you will be issued with a termination notice.

Sheds and other structures. If you want to erect a shed and/or greenhouse you must apply in writing and wait until you receive written permission before building. You must also apply in writing for polytunnels and/or any other structures ie fences. But please make sure you have achieved a decent level of cultivation before building any structures. Please refer to Allotment Rule 10.2 for permitted structure sizes.

Storing materials on site. Only bring crop production materials onto the site. If you bring any polluting materials onto the site, such as scrap metal, painted timber, tyres, carpet or glass bottles you will be issued with a termination notice.

Trees and large shrubs: The only trees you are only allowed to plant are fruit trees. These can only be planted within the 20% area given to non-cultivated land. Fruit trees should be grafted on dwarfing root stocks to reduce their size. No trees should grow to over 2 metres in height. You will need to write for permission before planting any trees.

Keeping hens on horticultural plots. Providing you use your plot for mainly vegetables and fruit, you can keep up to 6 hens (cockerels and waterfowl are not allowed), but you must apply for written permission first. You will be issued with guidelines on looking after your hens and when we inspect your plot we will also check the welfare of the animals.

Fires. Are not allowed under any circumstances. All unwanted material that cannot be composted must be removed from site.

Being a good neighbour. As a plotholder you will have much in common with neighbouring plotholders and the social benefits can be very rewarding. You may want to take advice from more experienced allotment holders or share your own gardening tips with others. All this benefits the site and encourages a community spirit. There are however, some matters of social politeness to consider when taking on an allotment. Some things such as playing your radio or letting children become rowdy, may impact on another plotholder's enjoyment. We appreciate you may want to show off your hard work and produce to friends and family, but please give your own visitors firm ground rules as to what they can and can't do on your plot. Show them where your plot boundaries are and tell them that other people's plots are strictly off-limits. Remember that their time on site might be the only quiet time some plotholders have to themselves. Also be sensitive to people's cultural practices and their space.

Site Representatives. Most of our allotment sites will have an Allotment Association with elected Committees. These are plotholders who have formed an Association for their site and have elected a Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer. They work on behalf of the plotholders and in partnership with us, to get the best for both the plotholders and the allotment site. It gives them the opportunity of applying for funding that we, as the Council, would not be eligible for, to improve and develop the site. For those sites where an Association has not been set up, there will still be a site representative. When you first start work on your plot, a member of the Committee or the site rep will no doubt introduce themselves to you. These people are there to help you and to offer advice about the site. If you are unsure who your representative is, please contact the Council so we may put you in touch.

Rent. The annual rent is based on the size of your plot. You will be made aware of the price at the time of offer. If you take a plot on part way through the year, you will receive an invoice shortly afterwards. Future invoices will be issued in April of each year. Only pay your rent once you have received your invoice. Failure to pay your invoice will result in the termination of your tenancy agreement. The rent will increase slightly each year. When the rent increases a notice will be displayed in the site notice boards. If your site does not have a notice board, your site rep will advise you of the increase.

Plot Inspections. We will inspect your plot on a quarterly basis (January, April, July and October). If you have made little progress with cultivation within the first 3 months, you will be served with a warning letter only. However, if insufficient improvement has been made by next inspection, you will be placed on 28 days notice. Once a notice has been served, you will be expected to bring your plot up to standard within 28 days, at which point the plot will be re-inspected. If the plot still does not meet the required standard, your tenancy agreement will be terminated and we will allow you up to 7 days to remove your belongings. However, if there is a valid reason for not cultivating your plot sufficiently ie illness, bereavement etc, you must telephone or write to us within the 28 day period to explain your reasons, so we can consider a suitable extension of time.

Co-workers. You may want to work the plot with a member of your family or a close friend. Ideally you should mention this when accepting the offer of the plot, so we may include them as a co-worker on your tenancy agreement. If you decide at a later date to have a co-worker, please advise us immediately, so we may put their details on our records. However, it is you, the tenant who will take responsibility for the plot and the tenancy. Should you decide to surrender the plot; the co-worker can only be considered for the tenancy if they have been co-working for a period longer than the person at the top of the waiting list.

For general enquiries, information about your tenancy or queries relating to your plot and inspections, please contact the Administration Office via the Council Contact Centre on 01744 676789. You can also email your enquiry to groundsmaintenance@sthelens.gov.uk