



Allotment Handbook

2021/22



Cultivating Hixon's Future, Growing for Fun



Welcome from the Chair

A warm welcome! We hope that you will enjoy growing and harvesting your vegetables, fruit and flowers on this beautiful allotment site.

The benefits of allotment gardening to individuals, families and 'the environment' have come into sharper focus over recent years. Their main function remains the production of relatively inexpensive, healthy fruit and vegetables, but at the same time they also provide an opportunity for people to exercise outdoors, learn new skills and make new friends. They can also contribute to broader environmental aims such as; reducing food miles, encouraging organic gardening practices and providing space for wildlife.

This Handbook has been produced for anyone who rents an allotment from Wellington Fields Allotment Association and should be read in conjunction with your Tenancy Agreement. The Handbook covers the basics to get you started!

- The Committee
- The tenancy agreement
- Staying safe and risk assessments
- Getting to know your soil and plot
- Tools and equipment
- Gardening tips and hints
- Organising your allotment
- Composting: how to do it right!

In addition to this there are many other sections designed to guide and help you. Please read through this carefully and enjoy your gardening!

Simon Ellin

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The Committee

Chairperson - Simon Ellin.
Treasurer - Karen Appleton.
Secretary - Jane Garner.

Committee Members: -
Barry Williams;
Mark Connell;
Chris Hilton;
Alan Hartley;
Nick Brookes;
Suzanne O'Farrell.

Contact Details for Jane Garner, Secretary - fjanegarner@hotmail.com



The Tenancy Agreement

Our tenancy agreement is a legally binding contract made between you and the Allotment Association, which outlines what is expected from both parties. It is important that you read and understand the terms and conditions attached with your agreement.

We will contact you when you are at the top of the waiting list and a plot becomes available. Usually we will arrange a site visit and if you want the plot, we will issue you with a tenancy agreement for signing at this point. Once you have paid the invoice and signed the agreement we will issue you with a code for the gate and you can get started on the plot. Please ensure that you close the gate if you are the last one on the site.



Working Safely

Allotment sites and the activity of gardening is relatively risk free if people are aware of the hazards and take steps to ensure that they, other people and wildlife are not put at risk.

Allotments and gardening provide you with a lot of physical exercise. Digging the plot is one of the most physically demanding tasks in gardening, as it involves continued bending and straightening of the back when lifting a spade full of soil. It needs to be approached with care, particularly if you are not used to heavy work.

Appropriate clothing and footwear are essential to save you from a forked foot or worse. Do not do too much work in one go, have regular rests, and never carry out dangerous jobs when you are tired, as this is often when accidents happen. All

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gardeners should be aware of the risk of Tetanus. This is a serious infection caused by bacterium that lives in the soil and especially manured soil. It enters the body through cuts and abrasions and a few days or weeks later the illness hits. Please make sure that you have a vaccination that protects you against tetanus.

Wear gloves and other suitable protection when in close proximity to plants and insects that can sting, bite or cause other skin irritations. Never drink water from water butts or tanks and avoid leaving bottled water on site from one visit to the next.

Assessing the Risks

Every tenant should make themselves aware of any potential hazards which may exist and should be vigilant in ensuring that the site is maintained in a clean and safe condition. This includes reporting any risks to the Secretary who will update the Association. Every tenant shall comply with all relevant Health and Safety laws and exercise a 'Duty of Care' towards themselves and others at all times. **Please see the provided risk assessments and our Health and Safety policy.**



Tools and Equipment

Tools & equipment Garden tools can be a hazard if they are not stored properly or are left lying around the allotment when not in use. For example, upturned spades and forks! Always reserve that little bit of time to put things away after a day's work. An untidy allotment is a dangerous one. Making sure your tools are the right size and style for you and are kept in good condition will help prevent a lot of aches and pains. Most power tools need a reasonable amount of knowledge and training to be able to use them efficiently and safely e.g. Chainsaws, Strimmers, Lawnmowers and Rotavators.



Gardening Tips

If you are just getting into gardening and need some expert advice, you'll find plenty of knowledge to help you get the most from your plot. Alan Hartley one of our committee members has vast experience in gardening and he would be happy to advise you.

Use our website to get many ideas on gardening where there is excellent gardening advice. www.wellingtonfieldsallotments.org/hixonpages

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Our Facebook group has file attachments full of information.

www.facebook.com/WellingtonFieldsHixon

Our newsletters also contain regular seasonal gardening advice and there is a monthly guide to planting and gardening jobs.

Getting to Know the Soil

Understanding your soil and you'll will helps to get the best from your plot.

- Is it heavy or light? (Clay/sandy)
- How well does it drain?
- What's the pH level?
- How much sun does it get?



Start with a good fertiliser. One way to feed your soil is to dig in some good, old fashioned manure. It's free on the site and the benefits to your crops are superb. You could of course make your own compost. (Please see our composting section)

Look after your soil and your soil will look after you – it's that simple. All starts with the quality of your soil. We get regular horse manure deliveries that can be found in our composting area.

Weeding Regularly (At least 10 minutes each day.)

Weeds can be a gardener's nightmare. Keeping unwanted greenery under control is essential if you're going to get the best from your allotment plot, but weeding often feels like a never-ending chore. If you are at the end of your tether with keeping them down, don't despair. Experts have some surprising advice that could change the way you look at weeds forever. If you're faced with a plot that's gone back to nature and is choked with weeds, the only thing to do is blitz them. Once you have tackled the weeds, it's time to keep them under control.

Regular weeding is the best way to do this. Little and often is a great mantra. In dry weather, try and get around with the hoe as often as you can – **10 minutes** weeding with a hoe can save 2-3 hours hand weeding.

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Organising Your Allotment

As a new allotment holder it can be a little overwhelming knowing where to start but like everything in life, the best results come from planning out your ideas. Take time to consider your new plot and what to grow and nature will reward you.

Please see the National Allotment Society Website. They give you excellent guidance on how to plan and prepare your allotment plot. Wellington Fields are members of the society and you have access to the resources provided.

<https://www.nsalg.org.uk/>

FRUIT TREES

We are permitted to grow fruit trees but only on dwarfing root stock. The reason for this is that while we may wish for productive fruit trees, we must also be considerate towards our allotment neighbours. Consider training fruit as cordons, step-overs or espaliers. They can look very attractive and productive while taking up less space and give a sense of achievement. Trees should not grow beyond 2 metres in height.

WATER USE

We have mains water supply to water tanks which are conveniently situated around the allotment site. The water supply is turned on around the beginning of **March** and off approximately at the end of **November**. It is essential that we use mains water sparingly but effectively, not only for the sake of conservation but also because of water charges. We are not permitted to use hosepipes. You can maximise the effectiveness of watering by doing so either early in the morning or in the evening. Watering in the heat of the day will increase evaporation and plant leaves may be scorched, this will prevent water reaching the roots of your crops. The most water retentive soil is one which is rich in organic matter such as manure and compost. When using the water tanks please ensure that you do not contaminate with chemicals, as other plots will be affected as well as wildlife.

Rainwater is preferable to mains water on your crops. You can easily capture rainwater into a water butt. If you have a shed on your plot you can attach guttering. If your water butt is a recycled container, check its previous use and that it does not contain harmful substances.

Wild life

Look at your garden through the eyes of prospective wildlife visitors. Do you have a tree/fruit bushes? If not, consider planting some. Or if space is a problem, make existing structures work for birds and insects. Shrub-like plants like lavender or fuchsia give off a lot of smell and still carry pollen for our pollinators. The bees are grateful for the early food. (Set up bee hotels- <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/bees/bee-hotels-solitary-bees-simple-guide>)

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Composting

Composting is a cheap and easy way of providing your plot with an environmentally friendly garden conditioner. Rich in plant nutrients, compost is a crumbly, brown, soil-like material, which forms from the decomposition of organic matter. The addition of compost to your soil will improve its structure and increase the level of biological activity both of which are vital for successful plant growth.

DO COMPOST

- Fruit and vegetable peelings
- Grass cuttings,
- Autumn leaves and annual weeds
- Tea leaves and coffee grounds (but no tea bags as they contain plastic.)
- Soft prunings and clippings, finely cut hedge clippings
- Shredded paper and card



DON'T COMPOST

- Products soiled with oil
- Metal, glass or plastic
- Meat and Cooked Vegetables
- Bread
- Cat/dog litter
- Sauce covered foods
- **Woody Material** (Raspberry canes etc....)
- Please check your materials carefully before putting them in the compost bin. It is not a rubbish dump; we are producing compost to be used on our plots. **For greater detail please read the signs in the composting area.**

DOGS

Tenants may bring their dogs onto the allotment site but must keep them on a lead and strictly on their own plot. Ensure that you clear up after your dog, having consideration for other tenants. As a tenant if you have any problems with dog fouling, please report this to a committee member.

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VERMIN

Vermin infestation is a very serious threat to health because of the numerous diseases which rats carry and the committee is very keen to keep the site free of vermin. Please be careful to avoid any practices which might encourage vermin. Open composters are fine for grass cuttings and weeds but not for kitchen waste. Overgrown plots and piles of rubbish will also attract rats so it is important to keep your plot tidy. If you see a rat or any sign of infestation including burrows, tracks or droppings please inform the secretary immediately so that the Pest Control contractor can be called. Do not use poison yourself as this will affect wildlife within the allotments.

SALE OF PRODUCE

The sale of surplus produce from your allotment is prohibited as the allotment should be used to cultivate produce for your own personal consumption. Running a business or trading from an allotment garden is also prohibited.

CARING FOR YOUR ALLOTMENT PLOT

The most important responsibility as a tenant is to look after and maintain your plot. This means you must keep your plot cultivated and free from weeds (as per your tenancy agreement) and you must keep the plot safe and tidy by removing rubbish. The plot must be kept free of hazards e.g. broken glass and scrap metal. If you are not cultivating your entire plot you can cover part of it with polythene membrane to keep the weeds down.

If your personal circumstances mean you cannot cultivate your plot (e.g. you are unwell, go away temporarily etc.) please inform the Secretary so this can be taken into account when plot inspections are carried out.

Please remember that as an allotment tenant you have a duty of care to make sure that your plot does not present health and safety hazards to any people accessing the allotment site e.g. other tenants, visitors, contractors even unauthorised intruders. We have a number of tenants who like to bring their children with them to enjoy the allotment site and we need to make sure the site is safe for all users including curious children.

CHANGE OF CIRCUMSTANCES

If your personal circumstances change please inform the Secretary, e.g. if you change address, or leave the Parish.

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Useful Links

<https://www.nsalg.org.uk/>

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?pid=84>

<https://www.allaboutallotments.co.uk/general-interest>

<https://www.allotment-garden.org/>

Further reading

- The Veg Grower's Almanac – Month by Month Planning – Martyn Cox – Gardeners' World
- Close to the Veg by Michael Rand
- Growing Space by Lesley Acton
- Of Cabbages and Kings by Caroline Foley
- One Man and His Dig by Valentine Low
- The Allotment Handbook by Sophie Andrews



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Our Rules

(a) The allotment garden must be properly cultivated throughout the growing season and free from weed, noxious or illegal plants and gardening waste not contained in a composter.

(b) The allotment plot is let for the use of non-commercial gardening, growing and cultivating, the keeping of livestock or poultry is not permitted.

(c) The Tenant shall maintain in decent order all pathways bordering their allotment and shall trim and keep in decent order all hedges and verges forming any boundary of the same allotment. Any disputes over boundaries, etc. shall be settled by the WFA Committee.

(d) The Tenant shall not erect any building or any other structure exceeding 1.8m length x 1.2 m width x 2.1 m height and without the written permission of the WFA Committee.

(e) The Tenant shall not cause any nuisance or annoyance, in any manner whatsoever, to any other tenant and on any part of the allotment site.

(f) The Tenant shall not obstruct or permit the obstruction of the paths of the allotment site set out for the use of the tenants of the allotments.

(g) Fires must be contained in an incinerator with a lid and supervised while alight. Portable barbecues are permitted, as is the use of burners, but consideration must be given to other plot holders and the neighbouring community. Fires must not be left unattended and all must be extinguished before the Tenant leaves the site.

(h) The Tenant shall not bring any dogs on to the allotment site unless they are on a leash and under close control at all times and they follow the code of conduct for dogs as displayed on the WFA noticeboard at the site.

(i) The Tenant shall park their motor vehicle in the designated parking area to the left and right of the main entrance. Vehicles may be parked adjacent to individual plots for unloading purposes only and then returned to the designated parking area.

(j) The Tenant agrees to ensure that they shut the gate and lock the combination padlock to secure the site when they are the last person to leave the allotment site.

(k) The tenant may water their plot using a watering can only. Hose pipes may not be used as they restrict water use for other tenants.

(l) Any fencing between plots must be of an open construction and a maximum height of 0.6 m. Barbed wire is not allowed.

(m) The use of non-organic pesticides and herbicides is not permitted, although organically certified controls are allowed. Systemic weed killer (i.e. Glyphosate) is permitted for use on paths, but applications elsewhere should only be with prior

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permission from the committee.

(n) Any trees must be of a dwarfing root stock and must not reach more than 2 metres in height. Consideration must be given to neighbouring plots with shading and root invasion.

(o) The tenant shall permit the inspection, at all reasonable times, of the allotment garden by any officer of the WFA Committee.

(p) Observe any amendments or additions to the rules which are brought to the attention to tenants in writing at any time by the WFA Committee.