

Thorrington Parish Council

HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDE TO ALLOTMENTS

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH YOUR ALLOTMENT TENANCY AGREEMENT.

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 consider the following points before allotment gardening.

Physical Exercise: Digging the soil is one of the most physically demanding tasks in gardening, as it involves constant 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.

Hazardous Rubbish: 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.

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 make sure that you have a vaccination that can protect you against tetanus.

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

Garden Tools: 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.

Pesticides and Fertiliser; 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! When using pesticides or fertiliser ensure you wear suitable clothing. Please ensure that pesticides and fertiliser 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. 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.

First Aid Kit: A first aid kit is a wise addition to the tools kept with you. 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.

Power Tools: 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 use to it. Power strimmers, shredders, all have their dangers as well. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions. **Legionella:** 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 green houses or spraying fine mists. **Hazards for Wildlife on Allotments:** These include: litter, low-level fruit netting, use of pesticides, open drains, slug pellets, mowing, strimming, broken glass and pre-stacked 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.

Vermin: Rats carry 70 diseases including Weil's Disease, which can cause human death via contaminated water. Plot holders must be vigilant and report any sign of infestation, which include burrows, tracks, droppings and observing vermin. Contact the Environmental Health Team at Braintree District Council (01376 552525) for

advice and to report problems to the Thorrington Parish Clerk. 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 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. Stopping for a lunch break helps restores energy but don't forget to wash you hands first. Keep a hand-sterilising gel handy or in the shed. Always wash your fruit and vegetables thoroughly before eating them.

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 when you will be back. If you have a mobile take it with you. Be aware of weather conditions that can affect walking surfaces. Use sunscreen to protect from over exposure to the sun.

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