



# **BOGNOR REGIS TOWN COUNCIL**

## **HEALTH & SAFETY GUIDE FOR ALLOTMENT HOLDERS**

**Adopted by the Allotments Sub-Committee at its Meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2024**

Allotment sites and the activity of gardening are relatively risk free if people are aware of the hazards and make steps to ensure that they, other people and wildlife are not put at risk. The Council undertakes risk assessments on the allotment sites. Please ensure you read this document and understand the risks of allotment gardening.

This document provides guidance only. You do not have to follow the advice contained therein (unless otherwise **indicated**, or if specified in your Tenancy Agreement or Information Leaflet), but you are strongly advised to do so. You are responsible for your own safety and actions on the Allotments, as well as the safety of any person(s) accessing your Plot, whether by invitation or otherwise.

This guide is not comprehensive of all the risks present at the Allotments. Plot Holders must take responsibility for their own actions and their consequences. Plot Holders, visitors and all persons entering the Allotments do so at their own risk. A copy of the Town Council's risk assessment is available upon request.

## 1. Physical exercise

- 1.1. Digging the soil is one of the most physically demanding tasks in gardening, as it involves continued 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.

## 2. Hazardous rubbish

- 2.1. **Ensure that you do not leave broken glass and other hazardous materials on the allotment.**
- 2.2. If you discover a significant amount of rubbish underneath the soil, such as broken glass, plastics, etc., then please contact the Town Council.

## 3. Tetanus or Lockjaw

- 3.1. 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. You are advised to have a vaccination that can help protect you against tetanus and be careful about scratches and abrasions.

## 4. Skin irritations

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

## 5. Garden tools

- 5.1. Garden tools can be a hazard if they are not stored properly or are left lying around the plot when not in use. For example, upturned spades and forks. Please **keep all tools securely stored away when not in use.**

## 6. Pesticides and fertilisers - ALWAYS follow the instructions.

- 6.1. **Organic ferric phosphate slug pellets are the only permitted chemical for use at the Allotments. All other chemical weedkiller or pesticides are strictly forbidden.**
- 6.2. You should ensure that you read any labels and have a copy of the MSDS (Material Safety Data Sheet) available in case of accident as this will help anyone treating you.
- 6.3. **Ensure that chemicals are kept securely locked in your shed, or preferably off site,** away from children and in clearly marked containers. Do not keep them in drinks 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.

6.4. When using pesticides or fertilisers ensure to wear suitable clothing.

6.5. Please ensure that pesticides or fertilisers 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.

6.6. 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.

6.7. Tenants should report rats to the Allotments Officer rather than try to deal with the matter.

**Anyone purchasing more than 150g of rodenticide must be appropriately certified.**

## **7. First aid kit**

7.1. A first aid kit is a wise addition to the tools kept in the garden shed. 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.

## **8. Power Tools**

8.1. Most power tools need specific safety and handling training, e.g. strimmers, lawn mowers with metal blades and rotavators. Always follow the manufactures instructions.

## **9. Legionella**

9.1. 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 greenhouses or spraying fine mists.

## **10. Ponds and water**

10.1. Ponds that are planned and maintained properly pose a tiny risk, far outweighed by the numerous benefits to wildlife and enjoyment to people of all ages.

10.2. People at most risk of drowning in ponds 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 be supervised on allotments at all times and must not go on other people's plots.

10.3. Aim to make ponds shallow and seasonal; 30-50cm at the deepest point is sufficient for biodiversity and sloping sides also prevent drowning of mammals that come to drink water. In winter use a float to prevent icing-over, otherwise children may be tempted to walk on ice and pond-life will be starved of oxygen.

10.4. Water can be a breeding ground for various pathogens, including Weil's Disease and Legionnaire's Disease. Take care around any standing water.

## **11. Hazards for wildlife on allotments**

11.1. These include: litter, low-level fruit netting, use of pesticides, open drains, slug pellets, mowing, strimming, broken glass and piles of rubbish. All wildlife is protected by law.

## **12. Vermin**

12.1. Rats carry 70 diseases including Weil's Disease, which can cause human death via contaminated water. Plot holders must be vigilant and report any signs of infestation, which include burrows, tracks, droppings and observing the vermin. Contact the Town Council to report problems.

### 13. Risk of infection

- 13.1. 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.
- 13.2. Stopping for a lunch break helps restore energy after lots of digging but don't forget to wash your hands first. Keep a hand-sterilising gel handy or in the shed.
- 13.3. Always wash your fruit or vegetables thoroughly before eating them.

### 14. Personal safety

- 14.1. 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 what time you will be back. If you have a mobile telephone, take it with you. Always lock the gate behind you upon entering and leaving the site.
- 14.2. Be aware of weather conditions that can affect walking surfaces such as hardcore or grass. Use sunscreen to protect you from over exposure to the sun.
- 14.3. Wear appropriate footwear and clothing for the weather conditions.
- 14.4. Be aware of light levels, particularly during autumn and winter, when it becomes dark early. If you are on the Allotments after dark, keep a torch handy to reduce the risk of trips, slips and falls.
- 14.5. Keep an eye out for other Plot Holders.
- 14.6. In an emergency always call 999 immediately. For non-emergencies call 101 (Police) or 111 (NHS). Only report incidents to the Town Council after contacting the emergency services, and once it is safe to do so.
- 14.7. In an emergency, ensure that the nearest gate is left open to allow the emergency services access to the site. Close and lock the gate once the emergency has been dealt with.

### 15. Bonfires and Barbeques

- 15.1. There is no law preventing bonfires or specifying certain times you can have them. However, nuisance from smoke is an offence under the Environmental Protection Act (1990).
- 15.2. **Do not light bonfires or barbeques close to fences, structures or under trees. Do not have open flames close to dry vegetation, especially in hot or dry weather.**
- 15.3. Always check weather conditions before lighting a fire or barbeque, and **never** light one in strong winds (above 20mph).
- 15.4. **Never leave a bonfire or barbeque unattended at any time and always ensure all embers are extinguished before leaving.**
- 15.5. **Do not have bonfires or barbeques during significant spells of dry weather and/or drought.**

### 16. Illegal Activities

- 16.1. **Make sure your actions do not contravene any aspect of your tenancy agreement**

**This document must be read in conjunction with the Allotment Tenancy Agreement and Information Leaflet.**

**Further copies are available on request from the Allotments Officer.**