



# HANDBOOK

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# INTRODUCTION

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

This handbook has been written by members of the Leominster Allotment Association and offers all tenants useful advice about allotment life as well as additional information about key terms and conditions of our allotment tenancy.

Initially, it may be helpful to explain the roles and responsibilities of our Town Council, our Site Manager and the Allotment Association.

The Town Council is our landlord and is represented by our Town Clerk who:

- Formulates the tenancy agreement
- Sets the rental charges
- Manages the allotment budget
- Insures the allotment boundaries, track ways, pathways and composting toilet
- Provides a venue for allotment meetings
- Has responsibility for the Site Manager

The Site Manager is accountable to the Town Clerk and is responsible for the operational management of the allotment site and its tenants.

The Site Manager:

- Advises new tenants on plot availability, plot sizes, and offers general information about our allotment site
- Receives rental dues
- Ensures tenancies are signed and handbook given



- Receives deposits for allotment gate keys and refunds deposit when key is returned at the end of a tenancy
- Offers and allocates mentors to new tenants
- Monitors the allotment site monthly
- Co-ordinates the help scheme
- Ensures that vacated plots are cleared and in good order for re-letting
- Provides an interface between the Town Council and the Allotment Association
- Represents the Town Council at the allotment meetings
- Answers queries and helps resolve any problems which tenants present
- Produces the allotment newsletter
- Maintains the allotment data base
- Updates allotment website
- Liaises with service providers e.g. groundsmen, water company etc
- Organises the annual awards and supper evening

The Leominster Allotment Association (LAA) has an elected committee who works with and on behalf of our allotment gardeners. Committee members may be contacted through the Town Council office.

**The L.A.A:**

- Provides an interface between tenants and the Town Council
- Affiliates all association members to the National Allotment Society (N.A.S) formerly NSALG
- Represents all association members at the quarterly regional meetings of N.A.S

- Insures all association members plots for Public Liability for injuries sustained by any persons on their plots
- Insures the allotment site for Public Liability when holding any social events
- Initiates and participates in developments and projects which aim to improve the allotment site
- Aims to secure funding to enable delivery of project plans
- Organises annual seed orders from Kings Seeds Ltd
- Negotiated discounts of 5% from Hintons and Philpotts for all allotment gardeners on showing allotment card
- Contributes to content of newsletter
- Liaises with Probation Service
- Organises allotment events e.g. open days

We all work in harmony to make our allotment environment as good as it can be and we are always eager to hear your thoughts and suggestions on how we can make further improvements.

We wish you a long, happy and successful allotment gardening experience.

## **OUR ALLOTMENT COMMUNITY**

One of the many benefits of having an allotment is being part of a richly diverse group of people with a common purpose, to grow and produce vegetables, fruit and flowers within a friendly gardening community.

At this point let us say that we recognise that we all aspire to varying levels of involvement, and for some there will be no desire whatsoever to interact socially. That said, most allotment holders wish to be friendly and supportive towards each other.

## COMMUNICATION

Perhaps the most important requirement for any community and probably the most difficult to achieve is effective communication.

Meetings are held every 2 months at the town council offices and everyone is welcome. It is an opportunity to meet with the Site Manager and together share news and views and to ensure that issues concerning the allotment are addressed in a fair and democratic manner.

The allotment association A.G.M. is held in August, also at the town council offices and is a forum at which the allotment year is reviewed, committee members are elected and seed catalogues are circulated. As with any association or society we are always looking for new committee members to re-invigorate the team!

In collaboration with the Site Manager we produce a news letter in January, May and September. Contributions are always welcome such as your stories about allotment life, topical tips and seasonal recipes. A copy will be placed on the notice board. You can also receive it by e-mail or request a copy at the town council. The minutes of the meetings are also similarly distributed.

On the allotment site there is a glass fronted notice board on which relevant notices are placed. You are invited to add any notices of gardening news.

The chalkboard on the locked cube-which incidentally houses mainly open day equipment such as plastic tables and chairs - is for all of us to use. Chalk is usually available in the loo.

Probably the most effective mode of communication is by word of mouth- not usually a problem!

We are affiliated to the National Allotment Society (N.A.S.) which hold quarterly regional meetings throughout the West Midlands. We hosted our first regional meeting here in May 2012; it was a great success on the catering front (the home made cakes were enjoyed by all). Affiliation gives us insurance



for our plots, and a quarterly magazine, available on line. Copies of the magazine are also placed on the allotment site, currently in the loo, but when a communal hut is built any gardening literature will be housed there. We also have access to Kings Seeds at greatly reduced prices. Catalogues are available in August, and you can also view the catalogue on line, download an order form and leave it at the Town Council office to be collected by our seed secretary. Early orders give the association an additional discount which is used to benefit the allotment site. The regional meetings are open to everyone and are an effective way to network with other allotments gardeners and to appreciate the wider picture of 'all things allotment'.

## CHILDREN

You are most welcome to bring children to your allotment. It is so important that we share the delights of growing our own produce with a future generation.

Their safety is of the utmost importance, and because an allotment can appear to be a potential adventure playground to some children, continuous supervision by adults is vital in order to minimise risks of incidents or accidents.

Remember that there are numerous vehicles coming and going and so obviously playing in and around the car parks is to be avoided.

Please do not allow children to enter other plots without the consent of the allotment holder.

On your plot there can be many opportunities for children to engage with allotment gardening. Try allocating them their own area to work on where they can grow their own vegetables and flowers. Younger children may need child-size tools to make life easier. Children could start by sowing seeds which are easy and reliable such as pumpkins, runner beans, beetroot, and radish and add to these flowers, such as sunflowers and sweet peas.

Apart from the achievement of growing fresh vegetables, and hopefully eating them, and picking and enjoying beautiful flowers, it is also an educational

experience, encompassing biology and ecology and can be great fun exploring their creative talents for instance making scarecrows, bug boxes or pretty and decorative bunting.

## EVENTS

The social side of allotment life can be an enjoyable diversion from the rigours of food production! The programme has varied in the past depending on the level of enthusiasm, commitment and support of fellow gardeners. However we hope in the future to establish a regular pattern of events.

Previously we have held events which reflect the seasonality of allotment life. For example, we have participated in the seed swap

organised by the Transition Group in late winter, held Open Days, Barbeques and Produce shows in the summer and during the autumn we have had a stall of fresh produce and preserves at the Apple Fair,

held Pumpkin and Scarecrow competitions and ended the season with an Awards and supper evening where prizes are awarded for the best kept allotments and, we take the opportunity to celebrate (and sometimes commiserate!) the allotment year.

## SWAP TABLE

The swap table is situated in the first car park. It is where we share our surplus plants and produce with our fellow gardeners.

## THE COMPOSTING TOILET



This beautiful structure was constructed in oak and cedar by a local woodsman. The instructions are clearly displayed on the loo walls. Please read and follow them carefully. If you have any queries contact the Site Manager.

## **COMMUNITY FLOWER BED**

This lies to your right as you enter the allotment site. We are planting this primarily to attract pollinating insects, which hopefully will progress towards our crops! Also we hope that it's a colourful addition to the car park area. Any offers of help to weed the border are most welcome.

## **LINKS WITH WEST MERCIA PROBATION TRUST**

We have developed close links with the community service in recent years which utilises their wide range of skills.

Under supervision the team have assisted in building our compost toilet, dug the community flower border, planted blackthorn and hawthorn whips, trimmed existing hedges and built us a brick barbecue. They lead a project to create a number of mini-plots for established plot holders wishing to downsize and for new gardeners who either wish to cultivate a small plot or who are interested in sampling allotment gardening for the first time.

While we benefit from all the teams hard work we hope that the time spent in the beautiful environs of the allotment site will have a positive impact on their rehabilitation.

## **HELP SCHEME – TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR ALLOTMENT HOLDERS**

We developed this way of assisting gardeners who are temporarily indisposed, for example illness, injury or personal difficulties. When problems arise the Site Manager will organise support volunteered by fellow allotmentees.

The kind of help needed may be, watering crops, deadheading, planting, sowing, weeding, digging, harvesting, grass cutting, tip runs, turning compost or giving a lift to the allotment.

Each allotment holder will be asked which task, if any they are able to contribute to; we estimate about one hour a week will be sufficient in order to ensure a plot is well maintained.

The need to call upon each others support will probably be infrequent but when required the help given could enable an absent gardener to return undaunted, rather than having to consider giving up an overgrown allotment.

## FRIENDLY MENTOR

We offer all new allotment holders the option of a mentor or buddy who, as an established and experienced allotmentee can provide you with advice, encouragement and support. We estimate that probably a three month period will suffice, but the system is flexible.

You may already have contacts on the allotment site and plentiful previous experience of allotment gardening and feel this is not for you; the choice is yours.

If in the future you wish to be a mentor, then contact the Site Manager at the Town Council Offices who manages this facility.

## CONTACT DETAILS

Please inform the Site Manager of any change of address, telephone and e-mail so that we may keep you updated about allotment business.

## **STARTING OUT ON YOUR ALLOTMENT GARDEN**

### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

When taking over your new plot you may be fortunate in that its design and features are just to your liking and that you can adjust and adapt it to your changing needs at a gradual pace.

It is most usual to inherit a plot which really needs some planning on your part and in a way this can be an advantage in that you can create an allotment garden to your own specifications.

Most books on the subject start with advice about how to clear your overgrown plot, which really isn't what you wish to read! Most of us just want to be able to get on with growing our vegetables.

On our allotment site we are working towards an improved standard of cultivation which means when plots become vacant, new tenants will be able to cultivate immediately with minimal preparation. However, there are occasions for example, if a plot has remained vacant for some time, where a considerable amount of hard graft and spadework will be in order. For these kinds of situations a rent-free period will be considered by the Site Manager.

If your allotment suffers from a surfeit of weeds; it may help to work the ground in manageable sections. You can weed and prepare a small area and grow a crop in a relatively short time whilst weed growth is arrested on the remaining ground by covering it with weed suppressant.

Recommended suppressants are cardboard, thick plastic sheeting or commercially available woven matting. Please do not use thin plastic because over time it becomes brittle and disintegrates and the particulates will pollute the soil. Also carpet can leach chemicals into the soil, for example organophosphates and formaldehyde.

Initially you may wish to assess your plot for soil types, condition and drainage, the direction of prevailing winds, light and shade and surrounding views before deciding where to position your permanent features. These may include paths, raised beds, storage areas, a pond and shed. Remember we are not allowed concrete bases, so if you choose to have a shed, think about placing loose slabs underneath to help extend its life.

Whether you choose to create individual beds or garden without distinct pathways, it helps not to tread on your soil, especially when wet. The soil becomes compacted and the soil structure is destroyed.

If you make vegetable beds, make them no more than four feet wide so that you can easily reach the middle of the bed to weed and plant. If you don't intend to have beds, then aim to use a plank to work from, again to avoid compaction.

Grass paths between beds look attractive but do demand considerable care, although the clippings can be added to your compost heap. If you wish to have lower maintenance paths, you could lay weed suppressant, cardboard or several layers of newspaper and cover with wood chippings.

Consider suitable areas for your permanent planting such as rhubarb, asparagus, and perennial flowers.

## **SHEDS, GREENHOUSES AND POLYTUNNELS**

Each tenant is allowed to have a shed on their plot which does not exceed 6ftx4ft. In the case of greenhouses and polytunnels the situation is a little blurred, because although planning permission isn't initially required, these structures must be proportional to the size of the plot and 'in the spirit of allotment gardening'. This means for instance, if you cover half your plot with a polytunnel, this would be disproportionate and you could be required to seek planning permission from Hereford Council. For this reason any intended structure other than a shed must first be discussed with the Site Manager who will give advice and clarification before permission is granted.

Sheds are primarily used for storage and shelter, but can also add character to your plot as well as providing a useful resource for rainwater collection. The sides of your shed can be incorporated into your planting scheme for example growing flowers which benefit from shelter and support, or for fan-trained fruit.

Greenhouses and polytunnels can extend the growing season considerably and are especially useful as we experience increasingly unpredictable weather patterns. The range of produce grown can be widened to include more exotic fruit and vegetables. The structures also help to minimise the risk of tomato blight.

Greenhouses and polytunnels must be kept clean to avoid a build up of pests and help achieve optimum performance.

All structures need to be of sound construction and able to withstand occasional high winds, though be mindful that we are not allowed to erect any building with permanent foundations. It is also a requirement that all sheds, greenhouses and polytunnels are maintained in a safe and intact state of repair.

## TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT

Most gardening books advise that you have a number of essential tools; spade, fork, hand trowel and fork, rake, hoe and secateurs. Plus we all need a watering can! There is a huge range of tools to tempt us and you will decide what best suits your needs.

New tools are not necessarily the most durable and can be much more expensive than second hand items. Try local car boot sales, newspaper or auction websites, or charity shops.

If you like old garden tools you could consider 'Tools for Self Reliance' a voluntary organisation whose function is to recondition tools destined for the poorest countries in Africa. However, they also recycle lots of garden tools and sell them from their workshops at festivals and other events, including the Hereford Seed Swap. These tools though familiar to us are not needed in Africa and the money from sales is put back into their work for rural

communities in Africa. Probably our nearest workshop is in Crickhowell, Powys.

Taking care of garden tools will extend their life, so don't leave them outside, but keep them clean and lightly oil them regularly after use. Tools such as secateurs, shears and hoes need to be sharpened too.

There is no electricity on the site so any power tools need to be battery operated and used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. These tools tend to be expensive so don't risk storing them in your shed.

When working on your plot do wear good strong boots or stout shoes and gardening gloves for your own safety.

## WHAT TO GROW

The best advice really when it comes to growing your fruit, vegetables and flowers is to select those which you know will be enjoyed by you, your family and your friends.

Your 'friendly' mentor if you choose to have one, will be able to give advice if you're new to allotment gardening about easy crops to grow. This will hopefully ensure early success and give you confidence to be more adventurous!

Other considerations may be to grow those crops which are expensive to buy at the shops and to experiment with unusual varieties.

## ORGANIC OR NON-ORGANIC

Our Town Council thoroughly supports the practice of organic gardening. However, we have a choice and the way in which we garden is for each tenant to decide, although we are encouraged to minimise the use of pesticides, herbicides and synthetic fertilizers.

It is important we recognise that we are custodians of the land we use for productive gardening and that we need to conserve and enrich the biodiversity around us.

Organic gardening can benefit our crops, our wildlife and the environment. Improving soil fertility can help to control pests and disease and the use of companion planting will attract beneficial insects and repel some pests. Having a pond or shady area will provide a suitable habitat for frogs and toads that can reduce slug population.

There are many sources of information and advice on organic gardening including our local library and gardening organisations such as the Royal Horticultural Society and Garden Organic.

## USE OF CHEMICAL POISONS

The allotment land is leased to the Town Council who aims to ensure that the site is not affected adversely with contaminants.

If you choose to use chemicals, only use products from garden or horticultural suppliers and always use in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

There are many other chemical products which are now banned due to their profoundly negative impact upon our environment and it is unlawful to use any of these chemicals poisons.

Possibly the least environmentally harmful herbicide is glyphosate which is effective when used on perennial weeds such as couch grass, nettles and creeping buttercup and should be applied only when initially clearing a weed infested plot. It is most effective when weeds are in full growth (young vegetative growth will be more resilient), and is applied through spraying the foliage. The chemical is taken down to the roots but is deactivated on contact with the soil. Subsequent weeding can be easily achieved by hand.

Only use liquid and fine granular poisons on a dry, still day. Aerosol spray can readily drift outside your allotment in breezy or windy weather conditions. There must be no contamination of your neighbours plot or water tanks.

Protective clothing and gloves must be worn during application. Store the products securely and dispose of containers at the recycling centre.

## CROP ROTATION

Crop rotation is the practice of growing vegetables in a way which helps to avoid a build up of soil borne disorders by interrupting the lifecycles of pests and diseases. It is a particularly beneficial method of growing crops for the organic gardener.

The principle of crop rotation is to make sure that no group or individual vegetable occupies the same bed in two consecutive years. The more beds or areas you have through which to rotate your crops means that a greater length of time elapses before crops return to their initial site, but traditionally a three or four bed system is used.

Crops with similar needs are grouped together, typically, roots, legumes and brassicas. Often gardeners will, in addition, have a bed solely for a main crop of onions or potatoes, or allow one or more beds to remain fallow for green manure crops, thus extending the number of beds in the rotation scheme.

You can adjust this yearly rotation system to meet your own needs. There are many books available which can provide much more information.

## 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.

The L.A.A. produced a paper ‘Fruit Trees on Plots’ which includes information about root stocks. You can ask the Site Manager for a copy. We also aim to list it on the allotment website. Information is also available from local nurseries and in the town library.

Consider training fruit as cordons, step-overs or espaliers. They can look very attractive, are productive while taking up less space and give a great sense of achievement.

## COMPOST AND MANURES

Composting is an essential component of allotment gardening. It is a wonderful, nutritious plant food and soil improver and can be made for free.

There are lots of books on the subject, but it is basically a mix of green garden waste and fruit and vegetable peelings with brown waste such as shredded paper, newspaper and cardboard. You may wish to take your pernicious weeds for example docks, couch grass, nettles to the tip where compost is made at a much higher temperature. The resulting soil conditioner is also sold there.

You can build a compost bin from un-returnable pallets or reclaimed timber, preferably two so that you can easily turn your compost. Plastic compost bins can also be bought from the council or garden centres.

If you don't wish to make your own compost, ask a neighbour if they would like your garden waste or take it to the tip for recycling. Perhaps you don't have your own transport to move garden waste or other rubbish from the site. Usually another gardener will help out, but dumping your garden waste in any of the communal areas is not permitted.

Comfrey is easy to grow and will thrive in just about any aspect of your plot. It is grown for its leaves which can be harvested for making liquid tomato feed, a potato fertiliser or compost activator.

Try to avoid wild comfrey which sets seeds and spreads readily, but instead look out for sterile strain, Bocking 14 which was developed by L.D Hills, founder of the Henry Doubleday Research Association (now Garden Organic).

There is sure to be plenty around the allotment, so if you need some, write a message on the chalk board, it divides easily.

Do wear gloves when handling comfrey as the leaves are hairy and can cause irritation. The wilted leaves of Bocking 14 contain as much nitrogen and phosphorous as farmyard manure and about four times the level of potash.

Being in a rural area we have easy access to horse, cow and poultry manure.

Well rotted horse and cow manure is what you need for your crops. Fresh manure is very high in nitrogen which will be unsuitable for your plants.

Be aware of Aminopyralid. It is a weed killer sprayed on grasslands upon which cattle and horses graze. The weed killer is excreted by the animals, and the subsequent application of animal dung to vegetable crops results in their failure to thrive.

Poultry manure because of its high nitrogen level is also unsuitable for direct application to your crops but is a great activator for the compost heap. The same applies to guinea pig and rabbit manure.

## **WATER USE**

### **WATER TANKS**

We are fortunate in having mains water supply to tanks which are conveniently situated around the allotment site. The water supply is turned on between the beginning of April and turned off at the end of September.

It is essential that we use water sparingly, not only for the sake of the environment through conservation, but because water is expensive, and impacts upon our rental charges.

We are not permitted to use hosepipes and are encouraged to maximise the effectiveness of watering by doing so either early morning or evening. Watering in the heat of the day will increase evaporation and scorching of plants and 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 our dogs and wildlife.

## **RAINWATER COLLECTION**

If you have a building on your plot you are requested to attach guttering and a rain butt. However, if you are recycling an old container for your rain water do check its previous use and that it does not contain any harmful substances. Please keep rain butts covered (birds can easily drown in them) and make sure they are on level ground.

Rainwater is preferable to mains water for your crops. If you have a pond, rainwater is also beneficial for wildlife and pond plants. Remember to check how much water your crops require. It can be just as unproductive to overwater as underwater.

If you have a greenhouse or polytunnel consider installing an internal rain butt as well. Greenhouse plants dislike cold water. The rain butt would solve this problem as well as acting as a heat store through absorbing heat during the warmth of the day and releasing it at night.

## **DRINKING WATER**

This can be accessed at the water tank situated between plots 10 -11.

## **CULTIVATION**

It is necessary to set standards for plot cultivation to ensure that allotments are used to their full potential and so that collectively we can be proud of our allotment community.

Your tenancy states that you are required to cultivate at least 75% of your plot. This includes areas such as an actively managed composting area, green manure beds or a comfrey patch.

The remaining 25% may be used for your shed, a storage area for items such as pots, watering can and bean poles, access paths and the all important seating area. It is very important to sit and admire your work!

While it is a requirement that each plot is well cared for, it is also essential that individuality of our plots is encouraged, a characteristic so attractive on any allotment site.

We are aware that plot holders circumstances, abilities and needs change and we can now offer flexibility in plot sizes from mini-plots, quarters, half and full size plots, enabling you to both up and down size according to your requirement – all of which are subject to availability.

## ALLOTMENT MONITORING

We have monthly monitoring of the allotments and communal areas carried out by our Site Manager and Allotment Association chairperson or their deputies.

The purpose of monitoring is to promote a productive, caring and safe allotment environment.

The communal areas are checked for boundary security and the composting toilet is monitored for sawdust, toilet paper and hand cleansing gel. The grass paths and gravel track ways are checked that they are in good order, and the whole site scanned for rubbish dumping.

The team monitors the level of cultivation on the plots and checks that weed seed heads are removed, preventing seed dispersal to neighbouring plots. Also any invasive crops and weeds such as raspberries, blackberries, couch grass and creeping buttercup are checked for containment. It is important that the plots are free from debris and maintained in a tidy and safe state.

A plot holder may be contacted by the Site Manager if their plot is considered to be borderline, just to ask if they have problems and need assistance through the help scheme.

If there is still a problem the next month, a letter will be sent, formally asking if there are problems, again offering assistance and also giving advice on action required.

The following month if no improvement is evident a second letter is sent, requesting that the plot holder contact the Site Manager and to return the plot to an acceptable level of cultivation.

A third and final letter is sent where no positive action has occurred and which serves as a notice of termination of tenancy.

This process is not intended to be scary or threatening, but a tool to identify and help with problems as well as ensuring the plot doesn't become neglected and overgrown and presenting a huge challenge for a future tenant.

## **HEALTH, SAFETY AND SECURITY**

Health, safety and security are a high priority in all public places, and allotments are no exception. We wish to offer some sound advice, but we don't want to cause you unnecessary anxiety. Accidents and incidents are thankfully few and far between.

### **HEALTH**

#### ***EXERCISE:***

Regular exercise such as gardening is one of the health benefits of having an allotment. However, it can feel like very hard work, especially if you are not used to manual labour! Assess your own physical abilities and limitations and pace yourself accordingly.

As your stamina increases, you will be able to adjust your level of activity.

### ***TETANUS:***

It is important to know your vaccination and immunity status and if you are unsure, check with your G.P. Tetanus can be life threatening.

It is caused by bacteria which live in soil and manure and which enter the body through puncture wounds, cuts and abrasions.

### ***FIRST AID***

There is a first aid box on a shelf in the loo. We ask that you replace any contents which you use. This does not always happen so it is reassuring to have one of your own.

You just need a few essentials which include anti-septic ointment or tea tree oil or gel which is anti-bacterial, anti-viral and anti-fungal, gauze to cover a wound, tweezers for removing thorns and splinters, tape and a few adhesive plasters. Lavender oil is effective for insect bites and stings.

Clean water can be accessed at the water tank situated between plots 10 and 11.

### ***SAFETY***

#### ***SUN PROTECTION***

In hot sunny weather think about protection from the sun. Consider wearing a hat and a long sleeved top or applying sunscreen as well as limiting your exposure to the sun's rays. Also in hot weather maintain good hydration and drink plenty of water or soft drinks.

## ***GLOVES***

Gloves are recommended when handling animal manure and compost as there is a risk of bacterial infection. Also gloves are strongly advised when handling chemicals and fertilisers to prevent absorption through the skin or causing irritation.

## ***FOOTWEAR***

Wear sensible protective footwear when gardening to avoid injury, especially when using a garden fork or spade.

## ***ON YOUR PLOT***

It is a requirement that your plot is free from hazards. You have a duty of care to anyone who may enter your plot whether or not you have given your permission.

Common hazards include many of the recyclable items which we bring to the plot such as scrap metal, glass, fences, posts and asbestos.

Other hazards include overgrown vegetation, tools, protruding nails, combustibles and chemicals.

## ***BAMBOO CANES***

Bamboo canes are frequently used as marks of crops or as plant supports, but at 3 or 4 feet in height can also pose a potential danger if their tips are not protected. When in a hurry or through a lapse of concentration it is so easy to scratch your face or worse injure an eye. There are many cane protectors available commercially but you can improvise using empty yogurt drinks bottles or drinks cans.

Reduce the levels of risk which may arise from such hazards by correct storage of tools, chemicals and manure, or by removing hazardous items.

## ***BONFIRES***

Unlike many allotment sites we are permitted to have bonfires on our plots, but it is expected that we act responsibly. Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, it is an offence to cause a statutory nuisance. This includes smoke, fumes or gases “emitted from premises so as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance”. This can include nuisance created by bonfires.

Initially consider the alternatives. Green garden waste if burned creates excessive amounts of smoke and is much better for the environment if it is composted. Any non-organic materials (non plant waste) such as plastics, household rubbish and old carpets must be removed from the site and taken to the recycling centre.

Bonfires are an effective way of disposing of diseased vegetation, most commonly vegetation of tomatoes and potatoes affected by blight.

Be considerate towards fellow allotment workers. Ask if they mind or whether smoke will adversely affect their health. It is best to avoid windy conditions as smoke will affect a greater number of people, and the bonfire may be difficult to control.

Before you light a bonfire check the vegetation for frogs, toads and hedgehogs. If you have a dog, make sure that it is kept at a safe distance. Only burn dry vegetative material. Do not use accelerants such as petrol, paraffin, old engine oil or methylated spirits. Any of these substances may cause an explosion, resulting in possible injury or fire spreading uncontrollably.

Bonfires should never be left unattended and must be fully extinguished before you leave your plot.

Douse with water if necessary.

## **SECURITY**

### ***CRIME PREVENTION / REDUCTION***

We have worked closely with our regional crime Prevention Officer and have achieved considerable improvements to the security of the allotment perimeter. In 2009 the northern boundary had a native species hedge planted by the Boy Scouts and a group of allotment volunteers. The established hedges had any gaps planted up with hawthorn and blackthorn which is an effective deterrent against potential intruders.

Following a successful grant application the field gates have been replaced with security gates including pedestrian access and we have a recommended locking system of padlock and keys.

### ***HOW WE CAN HELP***

Allotment sites do suffer nationally from episodes of low level crime and therefore it is important that we all work together in order to minimise risk. Be alert to anyone who is acting in a suspicious manner but do not approach an intruder if you feel it might put you at unnecessary risk; observe from a safe distance and record it so that you can report the incident to the police.

Remember that sheds are not designed for secure storage so do not leave anything of value in them or any chemicals or inflammable liquids. We are also advised by our police team not to lock sheds as a potential thief could ruin your shed door no matter what is stored inside.

When on your plot it is prudent to let someone know where you are and about how long you expect to be. It is advisable to take a mobile phone with you in case of an emergency. If you think that you may be alone on the site, especially in the evening you may wish to push the gates closed.

It really helps to look out for each other for instance by reporting anything unusual such as shed doors left open or the spoiling of crops. A well occupied tidy site with a high level of activity and people gardening is known to deter intruders.

## GIVING UP YOUR ALLOTMENT GARDEN

We hope that you will enjoy many happy years of productive gardening on your plot.

However, if you decide to leave allotment gardening, you are required to give notice to the Site Manager either in writing or by e-mail, and you will need to return your key in order to claim your deposit.

You are requested to remove all equipment, structures and rubbish from your plot. If you wish to donate any items to the allotments, the Site Manager will be pleased to discuss this. Also, you may wish to harvest your produce and lift any perennial plants to take with you.

Please leave in place your boundary fence, posts and gate for the benefit of future tenants.

If you have been given notice to leave, you will not be offered a refund because, if your plot has not been cultivated to the required standard, it may need to be re-let for a rent free period to the next tenant, as crops cannot be grown until the ground is cleared.

Where the tenant needs to give up their plot and where more than six months rent has been paid, then it may be refunded at the discretion of the Site Manager.

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND CONTACTS

The Royal Horticultural Society

80, Vincent Square,  
London,  
SW1P 2PE

[www.rhs.org.uk](http://www.rhs.org.uk)

Tel: 0845 2605000

National Allotment Society

(Formerly known as: National Society of Allotment & Leisure Gardeners Ltd)

O'Dell House,  
Hunters Road,  
Corby,  
Northamptonshire,  
NN17 5JE

[www.nsalg.org.uk](http://www.nsalg.org.uk)

Tel: 01536 266576

Garden Organic

Garden Organic Ryton,  
Coventry,  
Warwickshire,

CV8 3LG

[www.gardenorganic.org.uk](http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk)

Tel: 024 7630 3517

National Vegetable Society

5, Whitelow Road,

Heaton Moor,

Stockport,

SK4 4BY

[www.nvsuk.org.uk](http://www.nvsuk.org.uk)

Tel: 0161 442 7190

Kings Seeds

Monks Farm,

Coggeshall Road,

Kelvedon,

Essex,

CO5 9PG

[www.kingsseeds.com](http://www.kingsseeds.com)

Tel: 01376 570 000

Leominster Town Council,  
17 West Street,  
Leominster  
HR6 8EP  
[deputyclerk@leominstertowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:deputyclerk@leominstertowncouncil.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01568 611734

Allotment Postcode: HR6 9AH

The Site Manager at the Town Council office can give you copies of:

- Allotment Handbook
- Mentoring Protocol
- Help Scheme Protocol
- Allotment Monitoring Guidelines
- Fruit Trees on Allotment Guidelines

The Site Manager also has details of Leominster Allotment Association Committee members.