

OVERSTRAND PARISH COUNCIL ALLOTMENT HEALTH & SAFETY GUIDANCE

Allotment sites and the activity of gardening is 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. Please read and consider the following points before allotment gardening:

1. Physical Exercise

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.

2. 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 for further advice and assistance.

3. 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.

4. Skin Irritations

Wear gloves and a long-sleeved shirt when pruning plants that can cause skin irritations.

5. Garden Tools

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.

6. Pesticides and Fertilisers

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 fertilisers ensure to wear suitable clothing.

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. If in doubt please contact North Norfolk District Council for advice.

7. First Aid Kit

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

Some power tools e.g. chainsaws need specific safety and handling training and if that is the case please do not use them unless you have received the appropriate training. A large rotavator can be a bit of a strain to control, so take a while to get used to it. Power trimmers, shredders, all have their dangers as well. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions.

9. Legionella

In very hot weather, especially in green houses, it is possible, although very rare, for Legionella to multiply in warm water to potentially harmful levels. Avoid storing potting media in greenhouses or spraying fine mists.

10. Hazards for Wildlife on Allotments

These include: litter, low level fruit netting, use of pesticides, 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.

11. Vermin

Rats carry 70 diseases including Weil's Disease, which can cause human death via contaminated water. Plot holders must be vigilant and deal with any signs of infestation, which include burrows, tracks, droppings and observing the vermin, promptly. A separate guidance document is on our website that details the measures to take to discourage rats from allotment plots.

12. 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 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.

Always wash your fruit and or vegetables thoroughly before eating them.

13. 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 what time you will be back. If you have a mobile telephone take it with you. Shut the gate behind you upon entering and leaving your plot.

Be aware of weather conditions that can affect walking surfaces such as hardcore, grass. Use sunscreen to protect you from over exposure to the sun.

14. Bonfires

There is no law preventing bonfires, or specifying the time that you can have them. The Environmental Protection Act (1990), however, prohibits a statutory nuisance being caused by smoke.

Check weather conditions to ensure that there is not significant wind and do not leave a fire unattended and ensure that it is completely put out with water before you leave. If there has been a significant dry spell please avoid having a bonfire, as this may get out of control.

Check your bonfire for wildlife before lighting it.

This document must be read in conjunction with the Allotment Tenancy Agreement (which all Allotment Holders must sign).