

Newhall Allotment Association

Health and Safety Guidance

At Newhall Allotment we all want to enjoy our allotments and avoid injuries and anything else that would harm members, visitors or the environment. The aim of our Health and Safety Guidance is to help our members maintain and improve their safety as well as looking after others.



General Health and Safety Issues

It is the plot holder's responsibility to ensure their own safety and that of others while at Newhall Allotments. An allotment site by its very nature is a very hazardous place. It is imperative that everyone using or visiting the site takes health and safety, both their own and that of family and visitors, extremely seriously. All members of the Association have a duty of care to themselves and others (whether a person is legitimately on their allotment or not), this includes the use of all shared facilities and services supplied by the Association.

Some General Do's and Don'ts

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. Ensure that you have the correct tools for digging which also includes knees pads for support. Take breaks in between and drink water regardless of weather conditions.

Medication

When on site always ensure that you have you medication with you i.e. inhalers or any allergy injections that you may need in the event of an emergency.

Sun Protection - If you are spending long periods on your plot then please ensure you have adequate sun protection and limit your exposure to strong sunshine. Also, keep yourself hydrated by regularly drinking water or other soft drinks and avoid physical exertion during the hottest part of the day

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. If you find tools please move these to a safe place. Avoid leaving any tools lying around, particular tools with points and sharp ends. Always lock tools away and leave not on hanging on sheds etc.

Power Tools

Most power tools need specific safety and handling training e.g. power chainsaws, trimmers, 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 used to it. Power trimmers, shredders, all have their dangers as well. Always follow the manufactures instructions. Always store power tools in a locked areas.

Always wear appropriate personal protective clothing, including safety goggles. We also recommend sturdy footwear, if possible with steel toe caps and soles. It is usually a good idea to have a means of emergency contact, such as a mobile phone, close by in case of accident.

Safety, using and storing your tools

- Store all tools safely in a lockable unit and out of the reach of children
- Do not store any power tools or fuel on your plot
- Keep tools clean, sharp and well maintained for ease of use
- Make sure you know how to use tools effectively to avoid injury or strain
- Always wear appropriate personal protective clothing
- Follow instructions for use and/ or seek appropriate training for using power tools
- We advise you to security mark tools to make them easier to identify

Paths and Access

Paths should be kept clear of vegetation and potential hazards such as tools or discarded rubbish. Maintaining good paths can also help make it more difficult for some weeds to spread from one planting area to another. Paths should be wide enough for a wheelbarrow to pass through.

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 handles these with care. In the event that you discover any asbestos please contact a member of the committee team.

Skin irritations

Always wear gloves and a long-sleeved shirt when pruning plants that can cause skin irritations for example ivy, euphorbia or rue. Nettles leave a terrible irritation so always make sure that you wear gloves when managing weeds.

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 the Council.

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 in the garden shed. It is advisable to keep 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.

Composting

Compost is a natural, nutrient-rich, soil-like medium of decayed organic matter. It is a product of the natural breakdown of dead plants and other organic matter such as fruit and vegetable peelings. With time and a little bit of care and attention, this organic matter decomposes with the assistance of micro-organisms and earthworms to produce a valuable source of compost. This can improve and enrich the soil, helping to feed your plants and to encourage them to grow strong and healthy.

Compost will help you save money, improve your soil, help you grow healthy, strong plants and look after the environment. Try to compost as much green waste as you can. Creating your own leaf mulch will improve soil texture.

If composting perennial weeds, make sure the roots/plants have been destroyed and seed heads removed first. Do not compost any animal products or cooked food. Always use gloves and wash your hands after handling compost.

Ponds and water

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. Contact your Wildlife Trust, Froglife or The Pond Conservation Trust about construction and maintenance of wildlife ponds.

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 without their express permission.

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.

Hazards for wildlife on allotments

These include: litter, low-level fruit netting, use of pesticides, open drains, slug pellets, mowing, strimming, broken glass and plastic. 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 signs of infestation, which include burrows, tracks, droppings and observing the vermin.

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 or 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 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.

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.

Bonfires

Bonfire on sites are not permitted other than the **November** bonfire that is planned by committee members.

Inspection Process

Allotment sites are inspected at least once a year and if your plot is not well maintained you will be given warnings and may be asked to give up your tenancy. It is therefore important that you develop a regular cultivation routine and manage and maintain your plot.

Waste Disposal

When you take on a plot you may find rubbish and other debris, which we ask you to remove and dispose of carefully. Many materials can easily be transported off-site for recycling or safe disposal at one of the Council's waste recycling facilities. Materials such as

wood or bricks can be reused on the plot, saving the need to send materials to landfill. If you come across material on your plot that is difficult to dispose of, we ask you to try to remove as much as possible safely before contacting us for further assistance.

Asbestos

Asbestos was once a common building material and has found its way onto most allotments. The overwhelming majority of asbestos found on allotments is in the form of asbestos cement sheeting used for sheds/buildings and their roofs. This has a minimal asbestos content, usually of around 1% but sometimes up to 15% depending on the type

Structures Containing Asbestos Provided the structures are of sound construction and in good condition, there is no need to remove them and you can continue to use them safely. As a precaution do not hammer or drill into the structures as this could cause the release of asbestos fibres. It is the inhalation of these minute fibres, and not the material in solid form, which is harmful to health.

Removing Asbestos

Occasionally you might find small amounts of asbestos-containing material loose on the plot. Where you come across undamaged pieces of asbestos, such as corrugated sheeting or pipes, the following guidelines will help you deal with them safely and effectively:

- Identify whether the materials contain asbestos
 - Handle only solid and unbroken pieces of asbestos - do not break or damage when handling
 - Dampen the asbestos with water to reduce the risk of fibres being released if damaged
 - For personal safety wear protective gloves and a dust mask
 - Double bag the asbestos using fully sealed plastic bags and tape shut
- If you follow the above guidelines you should have no problems removing asbestos cement products safely from your plot.

On no account should you seek to remove structures without guidance from an approved asbestos removal contractor. In all cases, if you have any concerns about asbestos, please contact the committee. It is vital that the material is correctly identified prior to its removal and disposal.

Mental well being

There is a growing awareness of the role that gardening plays in both preventing and alleviating mental ill-health. Many allotment gardeners will tell you that a spell on the plot nurturing plants and contemplating nature makes them feel calmer and more hopeful. Allotment gardening is not only good for your physical health but for your mental health too, providing a sense of purpose and an ideal opportunity to get outdoors and be active at all times of the year. Allotment and gardening is also a place where people come to get away from a busy working environment and to have a work life balance.

Conduct on site

Allotments should be places of calm and tranquillity. How we interact with others is a key part of this. All plot holders are expected to treat each other with respect and tolerance. It is key to Newhall's values and ethos and that all plot holders respect this. Put simply be kind.

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