

**Welcome to Allotment Gardening**

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This welcome pack has been put together by the Glebe Road Allotment Association (GRAA) to help new allotment gardeners get started, and to get the best from their plot.

Glebe Road Allotment Association leases the site from Darlington Council. The association is responsible for letting plots and managing the site. Day to day management is carried out by committee members. The committee is elected at the Annual General Meeting which is held in January. The committee meet monthly and there are two general meetings per year. All members are invited to the general meetings and may send suggestions or problems to the committee via email or by using the post box outside the shop. Contact details for the officers are on the last page of this pack.

Contents Page

Ground 3

Cultivation 4

What to grow 4

First Aid & Sheds/Greenhouses 5

Fruit Trees 6

Compost 6

Allotment Water 6

Change of Address 6

Allotment Rental 7

Vacating an Allotment Plot 7

Rules and Regulations 7

Volunteer Group 8

Useful Books & Websites 8

Glebe Road Allotment Association Contact & Social Media 9

Fire Policy 10

Rats Guidance 11

Congratulations on getting your allotment – now the hard work begins!

If you already know what you are doing then you might want to skip some sections of this welcome pack, but if you are a first-time gardener then this will be useful.

Ground

Hopefully you have taken the opportunity to meet the secretary and have visited your allotment plot before taking it on, so you know what condition your plot is in. Many allotment plots are vacated because the outgoing plot holder has been struggling to maintain it, this means that newly let plots are often in an uncultivated state. This doesn’t mean that the plot has been uncultivated for years, but maybe a few months and the weeds have grown.

If it is autumn or winter you can turn the ground cover over with a spade and leave it for the weather to break down (although you will need to clear the weeds eventually!) Growing potatoes is good for clearing ground as well.

Once the ground is clear, then rotovating will help to break up the earth into a tilth ready for sowing and planting. This can also be done with a fork and rake. Adding well-rotted manure will help ensure that your plot is fertile.

It is best to either use a weedkiller such as glyphosate then dig the plot over, or if you would prefer to avoid chemicals to cover the plot with black plastic to kill the weeds and then dig over sections of the plot removing any remaining weeds (including their roots).

Cultivation

All new allotment holders are given a 3 month probationary period during which time the tenant must keep the plot in good condition as set out in the Tenancy Agreement. The tenancy will not be renewed if the plot has not been cultivated properly. The tenancy may be terminated (at the discretion of the committee) after 3 months if the tenant fails to keep the plot in good condition. Plots are considered cultivated when 80% or more of the plot is in productive use, i.e. perennial fruit, flowers or vegetables. Plot inspections are carried out each month, dates are on our website and given out at the AGM each year. The Committee will follow the lettings procedure of any plot found uncultivated. If you believe that you fall under one of the valid mitigating circumstances for not cultivating your allotment plot then please contact the Secretary as soon as possible to discuss the matter.

**Valid mitigating circumstances are:-**

* **Hospitalisation for surgery or other serious complaint**
* **A short-term medical complaint where advice has been given by a medical practitioner that physical work is not advisable**
* **Death of a close family member (partner, parent, offspring or sibling)**

Ensuring that allotment plots are fully cultivated is important because of the allotment waiting list and so neighbouring plot holders are not caused problems with weed seeds blowing on their plot.

What to grow

Obviously it’s entirely up to you but it’s a good idea to see what gardeners near you are doing, most allotment holders are ready to share their knowledge and experience. GRAA offer discounted seeds from Kings Seeds, and we also have a local company called Budget Seeds which is in Darlington and they also offer a discount. (Use discount code GR10) One of the most enjoyable aspects of having an allotment is choosing seeds for the coming year.

On some sites where the ground is very heavy it may be worthwhile propagating your plants at home and putting them in the ground when they are established rather than sowing seeds straight into the ground, again, find out what others are doing.

Shop

We have a shop on site and this sells compost, fertilisers etc. The shop is open on a Saturday and Sunday 11am – 12pm

First Aid

There is a first aid box on each lane. If you do use any items from the first aid box, please let the secretary know so it can be re-stocked. Eye baths and eye dressings are located in a clear box on the outside of the shop.

Sheds/Greenhouses/Fences

If there isn’t a shed or greenhouse on your allotment plot and you would like one you will need to get written permission from the Committee before putting one up, please see below for rules regarding this. To get written permission the allotment holder will need to write in either via post or e-mail with details of the structure which you plan to erect including its size and the location on your allotment where you plan to site it. All structures and personal belongings brought onto an allotment site are the responsibility of the allotment holder, and are therefore not covered by your insurance. You therefore might want to consider insuring your belongings that you bring onto the allotment site in case they get damaged or stolen.

SHEDS: approval will only be given if the sheds are constructed to the following specifications:-

* Maximum floor size to be 6x8.
* Walls and roof must be timber and of quality construction and appearance.
* Under no circumstances will any shed be constructed of old doors, windows, bits of metal etc. be approved and any second hand sectional sheds must be of good condition and providing permission is granted for them to be erected a detailed inspection will be carried out to make sure it conforms with the Committees requirements.

GREENHOUSES

* All green houses will be of proper design, i.e aluminium frame or sectional timber frame.
* Under no circumstances should be built out of old doors and windows.
* Polytunnels will be approved providing they are of proper construction and that they are maintained at all times.

FENCING

* There is no requirement to erect fences.
* No individual plot fencing is to be erected without previous permission from the Committee.
* Fencing must be of post and rail or post and wire design.
* Under no circumstances should any corrugated sheets, old doors, old windows, or bit of metal be brought onto the site.

WATER SAVING

* Sheds and green-houses must be to be fitted with gutter to send rain water to storage butts.

Fruit Trees

Trees should not to be planted without consent of the committee. And trees must not shade adjoining plots.

Compost

It would be very wasteful not to start a compost heap – or three! Almost everything can go onto it (except diseased stuff) and in a year or so you will have a good supply at no cost! 3 or 4 pallets make an ideal bin and can be joined together with wire. Alternatively the previous allotment holder might have left an old compost heap which you can continue using. Remember, any green waste is your responsibility to recycle or dispose of in a legal manner. Waste should not be dumped anywhere on the allotment site and any bonfires must only be lit according to the GRAA’s Code of Practice for bonfires. (See page 10)

Allotment Water

Sheds and green-houses must be to be fitted with gutters to send rain water to storage butts, This will ensure that you have water in early spring and you will have a water supply on your own plot.

The allotment water is switched off over the winter period to avoid frost damage and is turned back on in the spring once the cold weather has passed. If there are any problems with the water supply please contact someone from the Committee. Please be considerate when using water, it is out biggest cost at the Association. Water is not an infinite resource – please use it wisely.

Change of Address

Please do not forget to let us know of any change of your contact details.

Allotment Rental

Allotment rents are payable in January at or after the AGM of each year, this covers the period from 1st January to 31st December. Please don’t pay before the AGM. You can pay by cash, cheque or banks transfer, but bank transfer is preferred. Any allotment tenant with rent outstanding for 30 days or more will be issued a Notice to Quit letter to vacate the plot. Any plot holder who receives a second Notice to Quit letter for non-payment within a three year period will have their allotment tenancy terminated. If you are having difficulty in paying you allotment fee please contact the Secretary or Treasurer.

Vacating an Allotment Plot

If you are no longer able to work your allotment plot and would like to give your plot up, please write into the Committee either via e-mail or letter to terminate your allotment tenancy agreement. The sooner that we are aware that you wish to vacate your allotment, the sooner we can re- allocate it to somebody on the allotment waiting list.

Rules and Regulations

Remember to read and comply with your allotment tenancy agreement which is included in this pack. This has all the terms and conditions which you need to be aware of whilst you have your allotment plot. Please see below for a breakdown of rules.

It is hard work to have a productive allotment. The first 1-2 years are the hardest, but don’t let that put you off as the rewards you will reap through eating fruit and vegetables which you have grown yourself are enormous. The main thing is to enjoy the experience.

CONSTRUCTION OF SHEDS, GREEN HOUSES, POLYTUNNELS, FENCES AND PLANTING TREES: requires the prior permission of the committee.

SECURITY: Lock the entrance gates at all times.

FIRES:- Please follow Association rules on fires – the policy is found at the end of this document on page 10.

WATER USE: Water is metered and expensive, please use economically and save rain water from shed & greenhouse rooves. Use water timers provided and turn taps off and disconnect hoses after use. Sprinklers are permitted but must not be left unattended.

WEEDS: Avoid letting weeds mature and seed, in a way that causes nuisance to others. If using weedkillers/insecticides only do so on calm days.

RATS: Advice and guidance on rats can be found at the end of this document on page 11.

CARPETS: Do not use carpet or underlay to suppress weeds – use proper weed control membrane, available from the shop.

DOGS: Keep dogs under control and pick up faeces.

CHILDREN: supervise children carefully.

REFUSE: do not bring on site or deposit on site.

Refuse includes but not limited to carpets, tyres, furniture, steel sheeting, masonry,

and wood except for limited amounts of wood for building raised beds, fences etc.

Volunteer Group

We have a volunteer group called the Help me Out Group where tenants can help other tenants and also help with the up keep of the site. We have working parties and you get a cuppa and homemade cake as a thank you for your time. If you would be interested, please contact the secretary.

Useful Books & Websites

For those new to gardening other plot holders will be happy to advise. There are also lots of gardening books and websites for useful information:-

The Royal Horticulture Society – This has useful and authoritative information on all aspects of gardening. <https://www.rhs.org.uk/>

Budget Seeds – A local company, we get a 10% when using the following code – GR10 This can be used online and also in the shop which is on John Dobbin Road in Darlington. <https://budgetseeds.co.uk/>

Grow Veg YouTube Channel – This is very good, and he has videos on just about every fruit and vegetable. <https://www.youtube.com/growveg>

Step by Step Growing Veg Book. <https://www.amazon.co.uk/RHS-Step-Step-Veg-Patch/dp/0241412412>

Allotment Month by Month Book. <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Allotment-Month-Grow-Fruit-Vegetables/dp/0241360005>

Glebe Road Allotment Association

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Facebook – Private Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1096508934855156>

Facebook – Public Page: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61553496880978>

Instagram: <https://instagram.com/glebe_road_allotment?igshid=OGQ5ZDc2ODk2ZA==>

POLICY - RULES & GUIDANCE – FIRES

**PLEASE NOTE – FAILURE TO FOLLOW THIS GUIDANCE, COULD**

**RESULT IN YOUR TENANCY BEING TERMINATED**

RULES

The Committee has agreed that fires must not be lit on any allotment plots. Please use the designated area if you must have a fire, and please ensure the following:-

* That the smoke is blowing away from neighbouring houses.
* Only burn matter arising from the plot, keep smoke to a minimum, vegetation should be dried before being burnt.
* No plastics, roofing material, old carpets etc. to be burnt.
* No material to be brought on site with intention to burn.

Our insurance company requires the following:

* The bonfire is attended by a responsible adult at all times
* No accelerant is used.
* Within the designated area where there is a shovel nearby and water available to extinguish it.
* In the designated area which should be a cleared area with minimal grass and scrub and a safe distance from buildings, equipment fences and vehicles.
* 10 metres from any property outside the allotment site
* The bonfire is fully extinguished with water when you have finished with it. You must not use sand or dirt for this purpose instead.

The council has received complaints about allotment bonfires from nearby residents. The council has urged us not to have fires but to compost vegetation and take other material to the Waste Re-cycling Centre. If fires cause a persistent nuisance the council has the power to issue an Abatement Notice.

**If you have material to burn but not able to take to the designated area, please contact the committee who will be happy to arrange for this to be moved for you.**

**PLEASE DO NOT DUMP RUBBISH OR WOOD IN THEDESIGNATED FIRE AREA**

GUIDANCE - RATS

RATS:-If you see rats let the committee know.

Discouraging rats at the allotment site is everybody’s responsibility - help prevent them

making your plot their home.

* Turn the contents of your compost bin regularly (at least twice per year). This not only disturbs any rats that have taken up residence but also aerates your compost heap which speeds up the process of digestion and reduces the amount of methane (a greenhouse gas) your heap emits. Have a shovel ready to hit any escaping rats as you do it.
* Plastic compost bins should be given a small gauge wire mesh lining at the base or can be placed on paving slabs to prevent rats from burrowing in underneath. Regularly kick your compost bin to ensure it is not a peaceful place for rats to sleep and check they are not taking up residence in your greenhouse.
* Never put meat, dairy, bones, cooked foods or other inappropriate items in your compost bin. This will attract rats and make your bin smell.
* Harvest ripe fruit and vegetables promptly and take them home to enjoy. Rats particularly enjoy sweetcorn cobs, as many of us know to our cost. Do not put unwanted cobs on the heap, take them home to the wheely bin.
* Do not leave discarded fruit and vegetables on the ground; clear them away to your compost bin, as these are a source of food for rats and other pests.
* Do not feed wild birds or other animals to excess – you may be feeding rats as well.
* Remember to thoroughly wash (and peel if appropriate) any food you harvest. Vegetables with signs of rat damage should be destroyed. Rats carry risk of Weil’s disease, Salmonella and Leptospirosis among other things and they urinate wherever they go! It is good practice to wear gloves when handling compost and soil.
* Ensure that your allotment does not become overgrown or allow rubbish to build up e.g. timber, stockpiled materials etc. as this provides cover for rats to live under.

**Please report specific problems with rats to members of**

**the allotment committee.**