

Managing Your Allotment

What Constitutes a Cultivated Allotment

The planting, tending, production and harvesting of crops or plants.

The preparation and maintenance of ground to promote their growth.

The time frame for cultivation is conventionally set at:

- 25% of the plot to be cultivated within three months of the start of the tenancy.
- This provides an early warning of likely failure and will be monitored carefully.
- 75% over the first 12 months of the tenancy, an achievable aim if actively managed.

A judgement will be taken by the Service as a consequence of the condition of the plot when the tenancy begins. A realistic assessment would be made by officers auditing these sites.

As a minimum requirement, allotments should be cultivated in a way that does not interfere in any material way with the enjoyment of neighbouring tenants.

Good Housekeeping – Key Elements

Allotment Holders will demonstrate good management practices on their plots by ensuring:

- Removal of weeds, before seed heads have set.
- Control of pernicious weeds, such as those that spread through the extension of rhizomes, (e.g. couch grass and ground elder) or through the production of unwanted plants from growing tips in contact with the soil (e.g. brambles).
- Removal of long grass or detritus that is likely to harbor slugs and snails (which may forage next door).

Communal roads and paths should be kept free of hazards, to allow unrestricted access.

Communal grass paths should be maintained to a satisfactory level.

Removal of damaged surplus allotment items e.g. (fencing, netting, wood & glass) that are beyond practical repair or use.

All waste from an allotment must be dealt with by each allotment holder within their own allotment.

Composting Waste

- Compost bins are ideal for this and there are various styles of compost bins. The next best thing is to make a heap of the compost material in a corner of your allotment. An old carpet to cover the heap will help the composting process and stop more weeds growing on top.

- Some material is difficult to compost such as Brussel Sprouts and Sweetcorn stems which are a bit woody. The Brussel Sprout stems can be bashed with a hammer to break them down prior to composting and the Sweetcorn stalks can be dried and burnt. Some material such as hard wood prunings and soft fruit canes (e.g. Raspberries) can also be burnt. The Fire Brigade must be notified of any controlled bonfire.
- If there is anything which shouldn't be composted such as, old potatoes, brassica with clubroot, onion with allium rot, couch grass and pernicious weeds like ground elder, you should dispose of them at home in the appropriate domestic wheelie bin or at a Council recycling facility.

General Waste

- Wood, corrugated iron, stones, glass and plastic in all forms, should be removed from your allotment and disposed of at a Council recycling facility.
- Whatever you do, please do not dump waste elsewhere on the site.

Allotment Audits

Please Note: Aberdeen City Council's Allotment Auditor will carry out three Audits of all the City's allotment sites during the months of April, July and October. Photos will be taken of all allotments which are not being worked.

If allotments are identified as not being worked, a letter will be sent out from the Service to the allotment holder, requesting that the allotment holder, within 21 days, brings the allotment up to a reasonable standard as stated in the **Conditions of Allotment Let (Clause) 10:**

- ***The subjects shall be kept tidy and clear of weeds and/or accumulated rubbish all to the reasonable satisfaction of an Authorised Officer.***

Please Note: If, after 21 days, and following a site visit, it is found that the allotment is still not being worked, this will result in a Termination process of the Allotment Lease.

In between the above audit periods, sites which have Allotment Representatives will have random monitoring in place, and those plots which are not being worked will be brought to the attention of the Service.

This additional information is helpful and may be taken into consideration by the Authorised Officer.

When an Allotment Holder's Lease is terminated, he/she will not be considered for another allotment.

Illness or Change of Circumstances

In the first instance please do not hesitate to contact the Service or your Allotment Representative if, illness or a change of circumstance is preventing you from working your allotment. This will bring the matter to our attention and will be taken into consideration when the Audits are being carried out.

Specific advice will also be given to the Allotment Holder by the Service or Allotment Representative during these situations.

Water Supply at Sites

Where a water supply is provided on sites, it is for the use of all allotment holders equally and therefore, no permanent hose connections must be attached to the tap.

Where no water supply is provided on site, every effort should be made to harvest rain water.

Wildlife Areas/Bio-Diversity

Whilst the service is happy for allotment holders to encourage bio-diversity on their plots, this must be done within the constraints of good allotment management. It will not be accepted as an excuse for poor cultivation practices.

Allotment Plot Identification

To enable the Allotment Auditor to carry out an accurate Audit of Sites, all Allotment Holders must ensure that the plot is clearly marked with the plot number given to them and visible to the Auditor.

General Plot and Site Safety

Fences & Gates/Sheds/Greenhouses/Polytunnels/Other Items

The allotment holder will maintain and keep in good order any fence, gate, shed, greenhouse or polytunnel on their allotment. Health & Safety should be a priority regarding the upkeep of these features.

Fences can be built using different types of commercially available materials however, where the use of recycled materials is proposed e.g. wooden pallets, then approval from the Service will be required. The use of **Barbed Wire** on a plot is not permitted.

The height and location of certain fences may cause concern to fellow allotment holders, accordingly please contact the Service or your Allotment Representative for advice before erecting your new fence.

The maximum sizes of the above structures will not exceed the sizes as detailed below, and allotment holders must seek permission from the Council prior to approval.

- Fences & Gates - Between neighbouring plots 4ft high (1.22m) : Other fences 6ft high (1.83m).
- Sheds & Greenhouses - Length - 8ft (2.44m) : Width - 6ft (1.83m) : Height - 6ft 8in (2.03m).
- Polytunnels - Length - 12ft (3.66m) : Width - 6ft (1.83m) : Height - 7ft (2.33m).

Play Structures such as Trampolines on allotments are not permitted.

Asbestos

Under no circumstances will the use of Asbestos sheeting or Asbestos based materials be permitted within the Allotment Site or individual Plots.

Ponds

Plot holders **must** ask for permission before building a pond and this will be granted or declined at the discretion of the Service, subject to conditions as to fencing or maintenance as the Service determines. A proposal with sizes will require to be submitted prior to approval.

Allotment holders can contact the Wildlife Trust or Froglife or The Pond Conservation Trust for useful information in the construction and management of ponds.

The suitability of the site and the level of open access and users will be contributory factors in the application of building a pond on one of the allotment sites.

Plot holders **must** ask for permission before building a pond and this will be granted or declined at the discretion of the Service, subject to conditions as to fencing or maintenance as the Service determines.

Where ponds are permitted, children should be supervised at all times and warning signs on site will be required.

Heaters/Stoves

Tenants may use and store liquid gas heaters and gas cooking equipment, paraffin and similar greenhouse heaters as long as the manufacturer's instructions are followed.

The use of the above within Council owned sheds is not permitted.

Livestock & Bee Keeping

The keeping of Livestock on plots is not permitted.

The keeping of Honey Bees on plots will be considered at the discretion of Aberdeen City Council. Should the Council agree to the keeping of Honey Bees then a separate agreement between the Council and Tenant will be completed.

Micro Plots

Definition of a Micro Plot

Aberdeen City Council's view is that the term "Micro Plot" remains the status quo as it is inappropriate to categorize them as Starter Plots.

As such, the Service have duties, both moral and statutory, to ensure we are not discriminating. Consequently this generic name for our smaller plots is explained below:

Micro Plot - Starter Plot

Micro Plots can be used as a starter plot to enable the new allotment holder to test their interest and ability to manage an allotment and to enable the Allotment Site Representative and Aberdeen City Council to assess whether the new allotment holder would be able to progress to either a ½, ¾, or full sized plot as they become available.

When a new allotment holder is allocated a Micro Plot they will be given a maximum period of tenancy of one full rental season subject to satisfactory audit assessments. This allows for one full growing season to demonstrate their commitment and ability to manage the Micro Plot.

At the end of the full rental season, the Allotment Site Representative and Aberdeen City Council will take a decision on whether or not to offer the Micro Plot holder a larger plot based on the audit assessment. (Micro Plot holders will have a 'Right of Appeal' which can be submitted to the Service).

If the Micro Plot is not being worked satisfactorily, the Micro Plot holder will not progress to a larger plot and the assessment could result in the plot being re-claimed.

If no ½, ¾, or full sized plots are available at the progression stage, the Micro Plot holder will be able to continue using the Micro Plot until one becomes available.

Micro Plot - Downsizing

Micro Plots can also be acquired by allotment holders who have worked a plot for a number of years and who now feel that they are unable to continue with their plot and may benefit from downsizing to a Micro Plot should one become available.

Additional Information

Micro Plots were created for 'Starter' and 'Downsizing' use, however in very exceptional cases and with the full discretion of the Council these Micro Plots can be used on longer term tenancies.

What is not Permitted on a Micro Plot

The following are not permitted on a Micro Plot:

- Garden sheds and greenhouses.
- Trees & Shrubs (Other than fruit bearing trees on dwarf rootstocks and fruiting bushes). These fruit bearing trees & fruiting bushes should be removed when the plot is vacated.
- Permanent pathways.
- Carpets cannot be used as a weed suppressant or to provide a surface for paths.
- Machinery left on site.
- Fences (unless appropriately authorised by the Council). The relevant Micro Plot Holders are responsible for the maintenance of any outer perimeter fencing of the allotment the Micro Plots are located on.

What is Permitted on a Micro Plot

The following will be permitted on a Micro Plot:

- Compost area not exceeding 1 cubic metre
- Compost bin up to 1,000 litres.
- Garden storage unit up to 1.5m wide x 1m deep x 1m high.

Vacating a Micro Plot

Following progression to a larger plot, Micro Plots should always be left in an appropriate condition for the next potential Micro Plot Holder.

Please Note:

This guidance document has been produced by Aberdeen City Council's, Communities, Housing & Infrastructure (Allotment Service), to deal with frequently asked questions and issues and are not definitive of all matters arising and should not be construed as regulations.