

# Unity Allotment Association

## *Health & Safety Guidelines*

Allotment gardening is relatively risk free providing people are aware of the potential hazards and take steps to ensure that they, other people and wildlife are not put at risk. The Committee of the Association has a responsibility to ensure the safety of all members of the public while they are on site. The Committee carries out its responsibilities by:

- a) taking action to reduce the risk from hazards that are reported to them;
- b) carrying out Health and Safety reviews twice a year;
- c) issuing instructions for the use of equipment owned by the Association; and
- d) keeping a log book of Health and Safety issues. The log book will be kept in the Site Shop so that members can report any issues.
- e) Ensuring that all members are aware of their own responsibilities regarding Health and Safety issues

Health and Safety guidelines are based on the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) which states that

*It shall be the duty of every employee while at work—*

*(a) to take reasonable care for the health and safety of himself and of other persons who may be affected by his acts or omissions at work; and*

*(b) as regards any duty or requirement imposed on his employer or any other person by or under any of the relevant statutory provisions, to co-operate with him so far as is necessary to enable that duty or requirement to be performed or complied with.*

For the purposes of these guidelines all members are regarded as employees of the Association and, as such, must follow the requirements of the law. All members have a duty of care towards themselves, fellow plot-holders and members of the public who enter the site, whether by invitation or otherwise. The guidelines have been produced after consultation with our insurers who have made it clear that they will be less inclined to honour a claim if the guidelines have not been followed. All members should

- a) ensure that, on their own plots, the risk of injury to themselves and others is minimised
- b) follow guidelines when working on the rest of the site.

They are expected to carry out their own H & S checks on a regular basis. They need to identify hazards and risks. A hazard is defined as something with the potential to cause harm while a risk is the likelihood that the hazard will cause damage. Broken glass is a hazard. If it is covered and stored safely the risk of it causing damage is much less than if it is left exposed near to where children play. In addition they should

- i) report any hazards elsewhere on the site by recording them in the log book provided or by speaking to a member of the Committee;
- ii) ensure that any children for whom they are responsible are made aware of potential dangers and are properly supervised.

All members should be aware of the following advice and requirements:

### **1. Physical exercise**

Digging soil is one of the most physically demanding tasks in gardening as it involves continued bending and straightening of the back. It needs to be approached with care, particularly if you are not used to heavy work. Sensible shoes are a basic essential if you want to minimise the chances of an accident happening.

## **2. Hazardous rubbish**

Ensure that no broken glass and other hazardous materials are left on the site. In line with the Tenancy Agreement. Plot-holders are responsible for removing such materials.

## **3. Tetanus or Lockjaw**

Tetanus or Lockjaw is a serious infection caused by bacteria that live in the soil and especially manured soil. It enters the body through the tiniest abrasion, scratch, thorn, puncture or cut and a few days later the illness hits. Please make sure that you have a vaccination to protect you against tetanus.

## **4. Skin irritations**

Wear gloves and a long-sleeved shirt when pruning plants that can cause skin irritations. Examples of such plants are ivy, euphorbia and rue.

## **5. Garden tools**

Garden tools can be a hazard if they are not stored properly or left lying around when not in use. Please ensure you store your garden tools safely.

## **6. Pesticides , fertilisers, Fuel**

When using pesticides or fertilisers make sure you wear suitable clothing.

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.

Ensure that any fuel or other combustible items are safely stored.

Please ensure that pesticides or fertilisers are disposed of responsibly. Pesticides should never be included in household rubbish, should never be burnt, placed in skips or poured into any kind of drainage system or watercourse. If in any doubt regarding the safe methods for pesticide disposal please contact the Council.

Garden Organic ([www.gardenorganic.org.uk](http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk)) provide advice and publications on methods of pest control that do not require pesticides and gardening methods that reduce pest attack.

## **7. First aid kit**

A first aid kit is a wise addition to the tools kept in the garden shed. The Association has its own First Aid Kit which can be found in the Site Shop and contains the following items.

- A small selection of adhesive plasters
- antiseptic ointment
- a pair of tweezers for removing thorns and splinters
- a gauze or lint pad to use as a compress to stop bleeding if you are badly cut

## **8. Power Tools**

Most power tools need specific safety and handling training. The committee requires all members who use power tools owned by the Association to read the instructions provided for each piece of equipment before using them for the first time and then to sign the log book to show that they have done so. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions. Members who bring their own tools onto the site do so at their own risk and should take the sensible precautions when using them. The wearing of strong footwear is essential when using all power tools. Members who, for whatever reason, need to bring heavy equipment (e.g. mechanical diggers) onto the site should inform the Committee well in advance as the Committee have the responsibility to inform other members of any potential inconvenience.

Please also be aware that Members who bring heavy equipment onto the site do so at their own risk and are also liable for any damage to the structure of the site and to other members' plots.

## **9. Legionella**

In very hot weather, especially in greenhouses, it is possible, although very rare, for legionella (legionnaire's disease) to multiply in warm water to potentially harmful levels. Avoid storing potting media in greenhouses or spraying fine mists in hot weather.

## **10. 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. Members wanting to build their own ponds on their plots should not make them more than 50 centimetres in depth, should build them with sloping sides and should consider covering them if they judge they may pose a potential hazard. Those most at risk of drowning in ponds are children under the age of three. Risk of drowning decreases as a child grows older. However all young children should be supervised at all times while on site and must not go on other member's plots without express permission.

Local Wildlife Trusts, Froglife ([www.froglife.org.uk](http://www.froglife.org.uk)) or the Pond Conservation Trust

([www.pondconservation.org](http://www.pondconservation.org)) can be contacted about the construction and maintenance of wildlife ponds.

## **11. Hazards for wildlife on allotments**

Hazards for wildlife include litter, low-level fruit netting, use of pesticides, open drains, 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 ([www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)) for advice on protected species.

## **12. 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 actual sightings. Particular attention should be paid to waste storage areas and compost bins

## **13. Risk of infection**

Humans are at risk of infection from handling animal manure. Fresh manure should be heaped for six months, giving time for e-coli to break down. Plot-holders must ensure that they follow basic hygiene guidelines and that they keep their vaccinations up to date. Hand-washing is important before consuming food and drink after working on the site. Using a hand-sterilising gel is recommended. Fruit and vegetables should be thoroughly washed before they are eaten.

## **14. Personal Safety**

Allotment gardeners often spend long periods of time on their own on site and should, therefore, take precautions to ensure their personal safety. It is important to tell another person where you are going and what time you will be back. Take a mobile with you when you go to work your plot. Always lock the side gates behind you when you leave the site. Be aware of weather conditions that can affect walking surfaces such as hardcore and grass. Use sunscreen where necessary. Leave gates as you find them.

## **15. Bonfires**

The Committee will inform plot-holders of the designated dates for holding bonfires. No roof felt, plastics or household rubbish is to be burned. All waste burned is to be generated onsite. Excess smoke can be an irritant and nuisance to our neighbours.

**16 Bees and chickens (thereafter known as livestock).**

The livestock is relatively safe but pose certain risks to humans when handling or in close proximity. These being - stings and bites, infection and disease. We recommend that protective clothing be worn when handling the livestock and suitable disinfectant procedures used to avoid contamination. Only authorised access by suitably qualified persons and that the public be kept at a safe distance and excluded should an infectious outbreak occur. Swarms of bees from either the kept livestock, or incoming swarms must be left well alone and removed by a qualified person.