

Brickhill Allotment Gardener's Handbook



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INTRODUCTION

Brickhill Parish Council would like to introduce this revised Allotment Gardener's Handbook. This booklet has been prepared using plain English. It explains the rules of the tenancy agreement and what can and can't be done on our allotment site. It also explains how the allotment site is managed and who to contact if you have any problems.

There are also some tips on allotment gardening. For those of you who are novices there is some basic advice on getting started, safety and composting. For those of you who are experts—you might not need that part of the handbook!

We would like to encourage as many people as possible to take up allotment gardening, so please tell your friends about the benefits of growing your own produce—the exercise, the fresh air and the satisfaction of eating fresh fruit and vegetables that you have grown.

Brickhill Parish Council would like to thank the following individuals and organisations for their help in producing this booklet:

The Allotments Regeneration Initiative
Bedford Borough Council and Arlesey Town Council
Richard Callaghan, Bedford & District Gardeners' Association



BRICKHILL ALLOTMENTS

There is a long tradition of allotment gardening in Brickhill, on several different sites within the parish. The site now in use was formerly agricultural land which was converted for allotment use. There are currently 122 full plots and 18 half plots and an area of fallow land which houses several rare species of wild orchid. Part of the original site has been given over to a nature reserve and community orchard both managed by the Borough Council. With the creation of the Brickhill Parish Council in 2004 the allotment land was formally vested in the newly created parish and since April 2005 the site has been managed by Brickhill Parish Council.

The allotments are situated near the Manton Heights end of Brickhill Drive and close to Curlew Crescent. Turn right off Brickhill Drive at Foster's Brow and go up the track beside the open area of grass. The allotments are on your right.



WHO CAN APPLY FOR AN ALLOTMENT?

Anyone who lives in Brickhill can apply for a plot.

HOW DO YOU APPLY FOR A PLOT?

Contact the Allotments Officer (details at the back of this booklet) and we can add you to our waiting list. Once a plot becomes available we can arrange for you to look at the site and ask any questions. If you decide to go ahead you will need to complete a tenancy agreement, provide proof of status (if you are applying for a concessionary rate) and pay your initial rent, plot deposit and key deposit.

HOW BIG ARE THE ALLOTMENT PLOTS?

Each full plot is 1/16 of an acre (i.e. 10 poles) which is approximately 8m x 32m (256m²) and we have 122 plots this size and 18 half plots on the site.

WAITING LIST POLICY

If all the plots are occupied Brickhill Parish Council will keep a waiting list for those who are interested in renting a plot. When a plot becomes available it will be offered to the person who has been on the waiting list the longest. Priority is given to residents of the Parish. If a plot becomes vacant then this can remain vacant for up to 3 months before offering to a non-resident of the Parish.

REGISTERING AN INTEREST IN A SPECIFIC PLOT

If someone is only interested in a particular plot, he/she must join the waiting list and when he/she reaches the top of the list he/she can decline any other plot offered and remain at the top of the list until the desired plot becomes available.

Existing tenants will only be offered a plot if there are no other persons on the waiting list.

WHAT CAN YOU GROW?

You can grow any vegetables, fruit and flowers which do not take more than 12 months to mature. If you want to plant a fruit tree you must have written permission from the Parish Council. **You are permitted a maximum of 3 fruit trees per plot (revised November 2017).** Please contact the Clerk with details of the tree you want to plant. Large trees are not permitted because they will cast shade over a wide area and take nutrients and water from neighbouring plots. **It is your responsibility to ensure the trees are pruned and maintained so they do not become overgrown or cause a nuisance to neighbouring plots.**

MAINTENANCE OF PATHS

Brickhill Parish Council is responsible for the maintenance of the main tracks on the site. There should be a small path between each allotment plot and each allotment tenant is responsible for keeping their half of the paths clear and reasonably free from weeds. In addition tenants must keep the grass verge directly in front of their plots clear to enable our contractor to cut the main pathways.

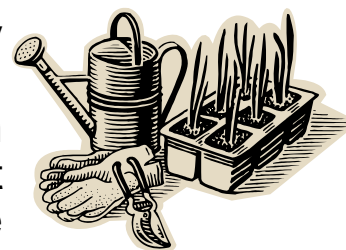
MAINTENANCE OF FENCES

Brickhill Parish Council is responsible for the fences and gates on three sides of the allotment side. The fencing on the North East boundary is the responsibility of the property owners in Curlew Crescent. You should ensure that you leave at least a 2m gap for residents to maintain their fences and ensure this area is kept free from weeds to prevent them encroaching onto our neighbours property. Please do not put rubbish up against fences as this will cause them to lean and rot. Also, we ask you not to site compost heaps against the fences for the same reasons and because it can be unpleasant for our neighbours who want to enjoy their gardens.

Some tenants have constructed fences and barriers around their plots. ***Please inform the Allotments Officer if you want to construct a fence and advice type of materials that would be used. Please note that the use of barbed wire and corrugated iron is prohibited.***

SHEDS, GREENHOUSES AND POLYTUNNELS

If you want to erect a shed on your plot or any other built structure (eg a cold frame, greenhouse, timber compost heap, chicken coop) please contact the Parish Council first and do not begin construction until you have permission in writing. Sheds should not be larger than 8' x 6' and must be positioned so that they do not shade neighbouring plots and must be sited at least 2m away from the boundary fence with our neighbours gardens. All structures must be safe and sound and are erected at your own risk. Asbestos must not be brought on to the allotment site. Permission will only be given for 1 shed, and either a greenhouse or polytunnel per plot.



For new tenancies offered after 1 November 2011 only glass substitutes such as polycarbonate, perspex or other alternatives may be used in any permitted structures.

WATER

Water is provided at various locations around the site. Water will be available from April to September/October and will be turned off no later than the end of October. Please be considerate towards your fellow gardeners and share the taps amicably. The use of hosepipes is only permissible in order to fill up water containers but not for direct watering of plots. Tenants must adhere to any water restrictions imposed by Anglian Water. Overnight watering, the use of sprinklers and irrigation systems is strictly prohibited. Water is a precious commodity and must be used sparingly. If the water bill and/or usage rises the Parish Council reserves the right to pass on the additional cost through the rent. Tenants are encouraged to install their own water butts. These should be of stout materials, covered where possible and positioned high enough to be out of reach of small children. Stagnant water should be discarded as it poses a health risk and is not beneficial to plants.

REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

If you see a broken padlock, damaged fence, leaking water tap or any other problem on the site please report it to the Parish Council on 01234 271708 as soon as possible so that repairs can be carried out promptly.

BONFIRES AND RUBBISH DISPOSAL

Bonfires are permitted on the allotment site but you must be very careful not to create a “statutory nuisance” under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Do not start a fire on a windy day and please be mindful of our neighbours especially the residents of Curlew Crescent. Smoke drift can present a real hazard to drivers, pedestrians and householders. Fires should be kept to a minimum and should only be lit during daylight hours. Please only burn garden refuse and NEVER leave a fire unattended. **Firework parties are not permitted on site. BBQ’s are not permitted. You are not permitted to bring materials to bonfire from your home or place of work.**



You must make your own arrangements to dispose of your rubbish. Green waste can be made into compost but other waste must be removed from the site. The nearest refuse disposal site is located at Barker’s Lane.

BRINGING COMPOST/MANURE ONTO THE SITE

Gardeners may bring green waste such as grass and hedge cuttings onto their plot for making into compost for their own use. Manure may also be brought onto the site in appropriate quantities provided it is stored and used appropriately. Please remember that humans are at risk of infection from handling animal manure (e-coli bacteria is especially prevalent in fresh manure) and always wear gloves when handling any type of manure. If taking delivery of manure please ensure that you are on site to oversee the delivery and ensure that vehicles do not drive onto neighbouring plots causing damage to the plot and soil compaction.

Composting is encouraged but we ask you not to site compost heaps or bins against our neighbours fences but to

leave a 2m gap because it can be unpleasant for our neighbours who want to enjoy their gardens.

RIGHT OF ENTRY

Councillors, Officers of the Parish Council and others employed by the Parish Council have the right to enter the allotment site to inspect and carry out work without notice. The allotment gardens are frequently inspected to ensure that all tenants are complying with the terms of the tenancy agreement.

KEEPING OF LIVESTOCK (including BEES)

The Parish Council does permit tenants to keep chickens (not cockerels) on the site. The maximum number per tenant per plot is 4 hens and there may be an additional charge for keeping livestock on site. Please contact the Allotments Officer for further information and a factsheet if this is something that is of interest to you.

The keeping of bees on the allotments is at the discretion of the Allotment and Open Spaces Committee. There are strict recommendations as to the maximum number of hives which can be allowed over the whole of the allotment land. For further information please visit the link below. Also look at the Allotment Beekeeping Agreement on the website. If you are still interested, please contact the Allotments Officer in the first instance.

<https://www.nsalg.org.uk/allotment-info/hens-bees-and-other-animals-allotment-beekeeping/>

DOGS

Tenants are permitted on the allotment site but they must be kept on a lead and strictly on your own plot. Please ensure that you clear up after your dog.

VERMIN

Vermin infestation is a very serious threat to health because of the numerous diseases which rats carry and the Parish Council is very keen to keep the site free of vermin. Please be careful to avoid any practices which might encourage vermin. **Open composters**

are fine for grass cuttings and weeds but not for kitchen waste which should be put into a covered compost bin.

Overgrown plots and piles of rubbish will also attract rats so it is important to keep your plot tidy. If you see rats or any sign of infestation including burrows, tracks or droppings please inform the Parish Council so that Pest Control can be called.

USE AND STORAGE OF CHEMICALS

You are free to use sprays and fertilisers on the your own plot in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. In doing so you must take care that you do not affect any adjoining plots, hedges, trees etc. You should use chemicals that will cause the least harm to members of the public, game birds and other wildlife (other than vermin or pests) and you must comply with the law about use of pesticides and chemicals. You should be aware that game birds in particular are protected by law. Chemicals should be kept in appropriate containers and stored in a locked shed or store.

KEYS AND SECURITY

In return for a deposit you will be issued with a site key which fits the lock on all the gates to the site. This key is for your own use but remains the property of the Parish Council and it must be returned if you give up your allotment. Your key deposit will be returned when the key is surrendered. **You must lock the allotment gate every time you enter or leave the site.** If you are worried about any aspect of site security please contact the Parish Council immediately. Occasionally we have experienced theft of belongings from the site (especially from sheds please report any such incident to the Police. For crimes in progress ring 999 for less urgent matters ring Bedfordshire Police on **101**.

Brickhill Parish Council will try to ensure that the allotment site is as safe as possible but we rely on tenants keeping us informed if there are any problems. Brickhill Parish Council takes no responsibility for the loss of tenants' belongings through criminal activity. You are advised to have your own insurance and to take reasonable precautions to keep your belongings safe.

SALE OF PRODUCE

You can sell surplus produce from your allotment provided that you can show that the allotment is ~~being~~ mainly used to cultivate

produce for your own personal consumption. However, running a business or trading from an allotment garden is prohibited.

LIMITS ON THE USE OF YOUR PLOT

Your allotment must only be used for growing fruit, flowers and vegetables and for no other purpose. Tenants must ensure that 1/3 of the plot is cultivated within 3 months of joining the site and 2/3 within 12 months of taking over the plot. **Children's play equipment is not permitted on the allotment site.**

OPENING HOURS

Tenants must only visit the site during daylight hours and are not permitted to enter the site after dusk. **In the Summer months we ask that tenants are not on site after 9:00pm.**

DISPUTES

You must not cause a nuisance or annoyance to other tenants on the allotment site. The Parish Council will not tolerate bullying or harassment on the site. In the unlikely and unfortunate event of any disagreements or disputes between tenants, the matter must be referred to the Parish Council whose decision shall be final.

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION/HELP

The following organisations offer help and information about allotment gardening and associated issues:

National Association of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG)

O'Dell House, Hunters Road, Corby, Northants NN17 5JE

Tel: 01536 266576

Website: www.nsalg.org.uk

You receive a quarterly magazine, discounted seed scheme, Insurance scheme and advice and guidance

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA)

Advice on making gardening safe

Tel: 0121 248 2000

SITE MANAGEMENT

The Parish Council has an Allotments Officer who co-ordinates the running of the site, renewals and general enquiries. Any business relating to the Allotments is considered by the Allotments & Open Spaces Committee who meet quarterly. There is a public open session (**15 minutes**) during the meeting when you may speak to the council, you may also observe the remainder of the meeting. Any serious complaints or concerns should also be expressed in writing to the Allotments Officer. All maintenance work on the site is contracted out to an independent contractor appointed by the Parish Council.



VEHICLES ON SITE

You may drive your vehicle on to the site but you must lock the gate behind you each time and stick to the tracks. The Parish Council takes no responsibility for any damage caused to your vehicle on the site. Please exercise care and drive slowly bearing in mind that there may be children on site. Please avoid using vacant plots as a turning circle as this compacts the soil and makes the ground extremely difficult to work. Whether you park your vehicle on site or outside the gates you are advised to keep your vehicle locked at all times.

YOUR ALLOTMENT AGREEMENT

The annual tenancy agreement is between Brickhill Parish Council and you, the Tenant. When you sign the agreement you are agreeing to pay the rent, to take on the plot, to look after it and to abide by the tenancy agreement and the conditions and rules explained in this handbook. The ownership of the plot stays with Brickhill Parish Council throughout the period of the tenancy. Failure to adhere to the terms and conditions of the agreement may result in a notice to quit being issued.

CONDITIONS OF TENANCY AGREEMENT

This part of the Handbook explains some of the most important aspects of your tenancy agreement. Please read this carefully.

CHANGE OF CIRCUMSTANCES

If your personal circumstances change please inform the Parish Council, eg if you change address, reach the age of 60 or become unemployed and want to claim the concessionary rate. Existing gardeners who become eligible for a lower rate mid way through the year will be entitled to the concessionary rate from the next renewal date.

YOUR RENT

By signing the agreement you agree to pay the annual rent. Renewals are issued on the 1 April. The rent is reviewed by the Parish Council in September every year and if there is to be a change in the rent amount you will be given six months notice. New tenants who join with less than 6 months of the allotment year remaining will pay a pro-rata rent.

PLOT DEPOSIT

The Parish Council charges a £50 plot deposit for all new tenants. This deposit is refundable at the end of your tenancy provided the plot is returned in a condition ready to be let to the next tenant. If the plot is overgrown and requires any work the deposit will be retained to pay for this. ***In addition the Parish Council is entitled to charge for any additional costs incurred for plot clearance at the end of a tenancy.***

CONCESSIONARY RATES

Concessionary rates are offered to allotment holders who are over 60 years of age or in receipt of benefits. Proof of personal circumstances will be required. Existing gardeners whose circumstances change will be entitled to the concessionary rate from the following April.

Multiple plot holders (**for existing tenants only**) will only be

entitled to the concessionary rate for the first plot the full rate will be payable on any additional plots.

HOW TO PAY YOUR RENT

An invoice will be sent to you and this can be paid by cheque through the post or by cash or cheque at the Parish Council offices. Alternatively you can make a BACS transfer but please quote your name and plot number when making your payment. Please do not send cash through the post for security reasons.

SUBLETTING/SHARING YOUR PLOT

The plot can only be let to one person and the tenancy agreement will be made out in the name of that person. You are not permitted to sublet the plot. This shall not prohibit the Tenant from electing to share the plot, but if this is done it shall remain a private arrangement between Tenant and sharer and shall confer no tenancy rights on the sharer. The Tenant on giving up the tenancy must notify the Parish Council and must not attempt to transfer the plot on to the sharer.

GIVING UP YOUR PLOT

If you decide you no longer want your plot you need to tell Brickhill Parish Council in writing. You will be asked to complete a termination form and this will end your agreement on the date we agree (even if this is a few months away). We will make every effort to have your plot taken over as soon as possible so that it does not become overgrown. However, the Parish Council is unable to refund any rent which has already been paid.

CARING FOR YOUR ALLOTMENT PLOT

Your most important responsibility as a tenant is to look after and maintain your plot. This means you must keep your plot cultivated and free from weeds (as per your tenancy agreement) and you must keep the plot safe and tidy by removing rubbish. The plot must be kept free of hazards eg broken glass and scrap metal. If you are not cultivating all of your plot you may cover part of it with polythene membrane to keep the weeds down. **The use of carpets for weed control is prohibited.**

It is really important to keep your plot tidy so that it does not interfere with the successful gardening of other tenants. If your personal circumstances mean you cannot cultivate your plot (e.g. you are unwell, go away temporarily etc) please tell the Parish Council so this can be taken into account when inspections are carried out. Please remember that as an allotment plot holder you have a duty of care to make sure that your plot does not present health and safety hazards to any people accessing the allotment site e.g. other tenants, visitors, contractors even unauthorised intruders. We have a number of tenants who like to bring their children with them to enjoy the allotment site and we need to make sure the site is safe for all users including curious children. **All new tenants will be given a copy of the parish council's health and safety guidance notes for allotment holders.**

SITE INSPECTIONS/NOTICE TO QUIT

The site is regularly inspected and if your plot is not cultivated or is not tidy and free from weeds you will receive a warning letter. You will be given 4 weeks in which to clear the plot of any weeds and to remove any rubbish. If after this time you have not cleared the plot **or contacted the parish council** then the parish council will instruct its contractor to carry out the work in order to prevent a nuisance being caused to neighbouring plots. The parish council will invoice you "the tenant" for this work and if you fail to pay or keep your plot tidy and free from weeds or if you break the terms of the tenancy agreement in some other way you will then be given notice to quit. If a tenant is served with notice to quit then the Parish Council is able to recover the allotment plot after the notice period has been served. Your plot deposit will be retained and the Parish Council will not refund any rent to the tenant. The Parish Council does not want to serve notice to quit on any tenant and will always try to negotiate to resolve any problems before taking this drastic step. However, it is unfair on other tenants who do adhere to the terms of their tenancy agreement to allow other tenants to consistently allow their plot to become overgrown, tidy them up and then neglect them again.

CLEARANCE OF PLOTS

It is your responsibility to clear your plot when you give up your tenancy and leave the land ready for the next tenant. If you leave

your plot in an untidy state so that it is not fit to be re-let to another tenant the Parish Council will retain your plot deposit and in addition is entitled to recover from you any additional costs it incurs in making the plot fit for cultivation again. This includes removal of rubbish and dismantling of unsafe structures.

COMPLAINTS

If you are unhappy about any aspect of the way the site is being managed or if you have a complaint about the way you have been treated you should put your complaint in writing and address it to the Parish Clerk. All complaints will initially be referred to the Allotments & Open Spaces Committee and you will be kept informed about the way your complaint is being handled.

PERSONAL SAFETY AT THE ALLOTMENTS

We are always working to make sure that the allotment site is as safe and secure an environment for tenants as possible. However it is not possible to make an allotment site a “risk free zone” so please note the following safety advice:

- Ensure that you keep your tetanus injections up to date
- Observe basic hygiene rules when handling manure, soil and chemicals.
- Please do not wash gardening tools directly in the water butts
- Lots of gardeners often spend long periods of time on their own on site, make sure that you tell someone where you are going and how long you expect to be
- Report any hazards on the site (e.g. broken glass/asbestos) to the Parish Council as soon as possible
- Always store sharp tools and chemicals securely
- Supervise your children at all times and ensure they do not stray onto other people’s plots and do not play with the taps/ water butts.
- Report any crime or suspicious behaviour to the police 101 for non emergency and 999 for crimes in progress. Please also keep the Parish Council informed.

RECYCLING

Many allotment gardeners make use of recycled materials for gardening purposes, eg railway sleepers, oil drums etc.

The Parish Council encourages tenants to be inventive and to re-use old materials but reminds tenants that all structures must be safe and secure. Please do not bring anything on to the site unless you have a specific use for it and the project will be completed within a short timeframe. Piles of recycled materials will encourage rats and rabbits who will quite happily live above ground providing there is sufficient shelter. **Please do not bring old car tyres onto site.**

COMPOSTING

Composting is a cheap and easy way of providing your plot with an environmentally friendly garden conditioner. Rich in plant nutrients, compost is a crumbly, brown, soil-like material, which forms from the decomposition of organic matter. The addition of compost to your soil will improve its structure and increase the level of biological activity both of which are vital for plant growth.

DO COMPOST

- Fruit and vegetable peelings
- Grass cuttings, autumn leaves and annual weeds
- Tea bags/leaves and coffee grounds
- Soft prunings and clippings, finely cut hedge clippings
- Hair and Pet fur, pure wool jumpers

DON'T COMPOST

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| • Fat or bones | Coal |
| • Ash | Products soiled with oil |
| • Paper | Metal, glass or plastic |
| • Nappies | Meat |
| • Cooked Vegetables | Bread |
| • Cat/dog litter | Sauce covered foods |
| • Woody Material | |

If you are using an open composter please do not bring fruit and vegetable peelings as these will attract vermin and attract flies in the warmer months. Please use a compost bin with a lid for fruit and vegetable peelings.

TIPS FOR NEW PLOT HOLDERS

- 1 Plan your plot. A well-planned plot is more likely to be successful. Good gardens don't just happen.
- 2 Decide what you want to grow. Grow what you enjoy eating, what your children enjoy eating—getting children involved at a young age is a great way of promoting healthy eating. Find out what your crops require with regard to soil type, sunlight or whether they require a greenhouse.
- 3 Do not be afraid to ask. As a rule, gardeners are friendly and helpful, so ask the person who seems to have the best plot or the most successful one. It is worth remembering that no two plots are necessarily the same.
- 4 Do not try to do too much at once. Do a bit at a time. A little done well will likely be more successful than a lot done hurriedly. Patience is definitely a virtue in the garden.
- 5 Be prepared to accept a failure. It happens to EVERYONE!
- 6 Try to have the right tools for the job and look after them, as it will make life easier.
- 7 Enjoy your plot. If you enjoy it you will look after it. If you look after it, your chances of success are likely to be higher. If you allow your plot to become a chore, then you can almost guarantee to fail.

Good luck and happy gardening!

The following photos are an example of what can be achieved with some hard work and determination.



Next comes the planning



Some examples of plots (September 2011)



ALLOTMENT CONTACT DETAILS

BRICKHILL PARISH COUNCIL

c/o St Mark's Church Community Centre

Calder Rise, Brickhill

Bedford MK41 7UY

Allotments Officer - Sue Bottoms

Telephone: 01234 271708

Email: clerk@brickhillparishcouncil.gov.uk

The offices are open Monday-Thursday between 10am and 2pm although it is best to telephone beforehand as staff might be out on appointments throughout the parish.

BEDFORDSHIRE POLICE

If you need to report crime in progress at the allotments ring 999, for non urgent problems ring 101.

ANGLIAN WATER

If you need to report a problem with water ring
08457 145145

BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE SERVICE

Always ring 999 if you need to report a problem with fire at the allotments

The allotments are located off Fosters Brow, Brickhill, Bedford MK41 7QQ