

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Introduction

All activities carry an element of risk and allotment gardening is no exception. Everyone needs to take health and safety seriously, but it is also important not to become 'litigation paranoid'. This policy is based on recommendations from ARI (The Allotments Regeneration Initiative) and used with permission. Good gardening is safe gardening, and many risks to both ourselves and others can be easily prevented.

Our Obligations

Under civil law, and as set out in the Occupiers' Liability Act 1957, all plot-holders have a duty of care to anyone accessing their plot, and the pathways for which they are responsible. This includes both authorised and unauthorised visitors. As the land owner, the parish council has a communal duty to ensure that common areas, such as the car park and main access paths are safe. The law requires that in all these areas we exercise at least a 'reasonable' level of care regarding safety. Although unlikely, a claim could be made for negligence when an individual suffered an injury because we didn't take reasonable precautions. It is not possible in English law to exclude liability, for example by way of a notice. We are also obliged to comply with other laws, such as those regarding environmental and wildlife protection.

Our Policy

Our Health & Safety Policy, although summarised in this document, is implemented through our Tenancy Agreement, Newsletters, Web site and introduction to the site by Allotments Officer. In addition, once a year, a risk and hazard assessment will be carried out by the Parish Council, and appropriate action taken both to minimise hazards and risks, and to update this policy.

A hazard is something that can cause injury, for example the road access, the parking area, power tools, exposed sharp edges. Hazards can sometimes be removed, but may be inevitable. Risks are the potential threats caused by the hazards, for example injury from a hidden sharp edge, a vehicle accident. Risks can usually be avoided.

Injuries and "near-misses", and any other safety-related issues must be reported to the Parish Council so that any existing hazard or risk can be eliminated and prevented in the future.

The Parish Council will ensure that plots are free from any hazards on leasing to new plot-holders, and to advise them of this policy.

Here are some safety rules:

- It is recommended that, particularly at quiet times, plot-holders inform someone where they are, and their likely return time.
- Office contact details will be posted on the allotments gates so that tenants can advise the council of any issues at the site.

- Plot-holders should ensure that their plot and associated accesses are free from hazard: hazards may include sharp edges, exposed nails, improperly stored tools, hazards hidden within undergrowth such as discarded tools, improperly stored dangerous materials such as those listed below. Please remember that you are legally responsible for the safety of anybody who may enter your plot.
- Plot-holders must acquaint themselves with, and adhere strictly to, the guidelines regarding storage, usage and disposal of hazardous materials such as glass, pesticides, fertilisers, asbestos cement, oil, and fuel. These must be securely stored in the proper containers, and well away from possible reach by children.
- Plot-holders should acquaint themselves with the safe use, and storage, of tools, particularly power tools.
- Plot-holders should be vigilant for rats, rabbits and other vermin, and inform the parish council if evidence of vermin is observed.
- Plot-holders should report vandalism or other evidence of intruders to the police by calling 101.
- Plot-holders should ensure that the gate is kept locked at all times.
- Bonfires must be supervised at all times, do not leave a bonfire unattended and always ensure bonfires are extinguished before leaving the site.

Risk Assessment

Once a year, the Parish Council will carry out a risk assessment of the site. This usually involves two people touring the site, identifying hazards, assessing risks, and deciding on actions. Risk assessment involves listing potential risks caused by these hazards, assessing the frequency that people are exposed to those hazards, the probability of injury and the impact of such injury. Some risks are so great that immediate action must be taken, some are severe enough that some action needs to be considered, and others may need no action.

Most injuries are easily prevented. Good gardening is safe gardening and it is everyone's responsibility to ensure that we garden in a safe way.

Brickhill PC

Adopted 15th November 2017