



Bristol Allotment

**Tenants
Handbook**

Introduction

Welcome to the world of allotment gardening!

Whether you are new to running an allotment or an experienced gardener, this handbook is intended to provide all the information you are likely to need to help you on your way. Please bear in mind that what follows are guidelines only and that all gardeners find their own way of doing things which works for them.



This handbook has been written and designed by a group of volunteers who are all Bristol plot holders. We have tried to structure it so that information can be located as easily as possible and we hope you find it a helpful resource. It has been produced as a PDF document with hyperlinks to help you navigate the content, as well as links to websites where you can find more in-depth information.

If you have already managed an allotment in another part of the country, you will be familiar with the basic rules and requirements for running a plot. However, please read on, as what follows is ‘the Bristol way of doing things’. If you have any questions, please get in touch with your Site Rep who may know the answer and if not, will suggest where to turn for advice. It is always better to ask than be in doubt.

The content has been approved by Bristol City Council’s Allotments staff who have been very supportive to us in producing the handbook, and to who you should address

any questions you have concerning your tenancy, or managing your plot.

All the information is correct at the time of going to print and text only copies are available for those without digital access. This handbook and can be read with an accessibility screen reader.

As you settle into the routine, and fun, of allotment gardening, bear in mind that even the most experienced gardeners suffer crop failures and disappointments. Stick at it and it won’t be long until you take home your first delicious produce.



Authors:

Ruth Hecht | Judy Furber

John Holland | David Griffiths

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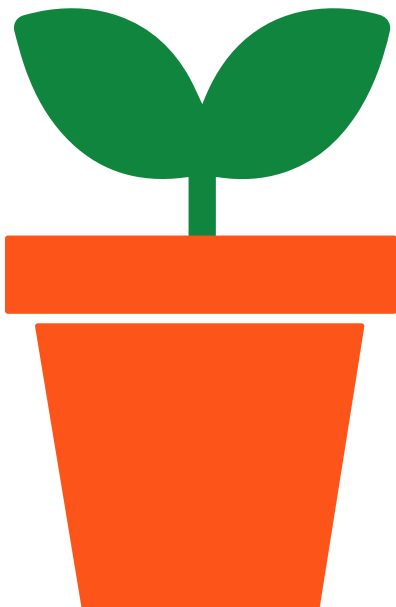
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Getting Started and Growing

Taking over a new allotment plot can be a daunting task.

When plots are re-let, they are in a variety of states, from the well-cared for which may have a few crops still growing, to the totally neglected, a jungle of grass, weeds and brambles with a dilapidated shed.



Much depends on the time of year when you sign your tenancy agreement. In the Autumn you'll have a few months to prepare your plot ready for the start of the main growing season in late Spring. In Spring or Summer and you may find yourself feeling overwhelmed as plot holders nearby are busy tending their rows of beautiful plants and harvesting their crops. In Winter when it is often wet and cold and nothing is growing you will wonder what can be done.

Don't despair! In the following section you will find helpful advice to get you started and build your confidence. This is not intended as a comprehensive guide to allotment gardening – just a few helpful suggestions, including where to look for more detailed information.

Only grow the vegetables Take a look at other plots near yours to see what others are growing.



Getting Started

Welcome to your allotment - you now need a plan!

If your plot is in good condition you can get started straight away. If it is overgrown we suggest you clear the plot in manageable chunks. Start digging over and removing weeds from say a quarter of your plot. Cover the rest with larger sheets of cardboard or as a last resort black plastic to suppress the weeds. After about three months you will be able to remove the cover, the weeds will have died (except some perennial weeds like bindweed and mares tail) and you can start to cultivate.

There are a number of things to think about whilst starting work on your plot:

- Take time to plan the layout of your plot for ease of use
- Develop an annual plan of what you will grow
- Think about shade, ease of access, growing space, and watering.
- Create narrow planting beds to allow easy access to the soil
- Method: Dig or No Dig? Organic growing? Permaculture?
- Use crop rotation to keep your soil healthy
- Compost and manure your plot regularly to maintain soil fertility
- Are you going to grow plants from seed or buy seedlings?
- Ensure you have good paths and keep paths clear of hazards
- Don't do too much in one go but maintain steady and regular progress
- Get into the habit of working little and often

When making your plan you will need to consider:

- Situation and light levels
- Ease of access for maintenance and watering
- Soil condition and drainage
- The space needed for plants to grow and flourish
- Perennial planting areas (in other words plants that grow year after year and only occasionally need replacing such as rhubarb and soft fruit bushes)
- Where to put your Compost
- Permanent features such as paths, sheds, greenhouses and polytunnels

Getting Started continued

If you are new to having an allotment and want success there are lots of ways for beginners to learn:

- Read [books](#)
- Search the internet and social media
- Talk to your [Site Rep](#) and other plot holders for advice
- Go on courses and attend talks
- Watch TV programmes

The [National Allotment Society](#) web site has an excellent guide to planning your plot:

[How to plan an allotment](#)

[The Royal Horticultural Society](#) and the [The National Allotment Society](#) have advice on how to get started, the use of chemicals and monthly tasks.

[Jack Wallington](#) 13 tips to help new allotment plot holders.

[Garden Focused](#) has lots of information about growing vegetables, and you can create your own bespoke sowing calendar

[Bean News](#) is a Bristol plot holder's photographic diary of their first year clearing the plot and getting started

See also: [Books](#), [Site Reps](#), [Useful Websites](#)



Crop Rotation

The concept behind crop rotation is to keep your plants and soil healthy.

By dividing your crops into three groups, roots, brassicas and others, you can plan to sow them in a different bed each year so you get a three year cycle. The theory is that if you grow the same crop in the same bed year after year it can lead to a build-up of soil-born diseases and an imbalance in the level of nutrients.

ROOTS for example beetroot, carrot, parsnip, potato

BRASSICAS for example broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, kale,

OTHERS for example beans, celery, leek, marrow, onion, pea, sweet corn, tomato.

A simple rotation system would be:

YEAR 1: ROOTS | BRASSICAS | OTHERS

YEAR 2: BRASSICAS | OTHERS | ROOTS

YEAR 3: OTHERS | ROOTS | BRASSICAS

ROOTS don't need compost or manure as they prefer soil not to be too rich.

BRASSICAS need a rich humus (dark, organic material that forms in soil when plant and animal matter decays), so if necessary dig in well-rotted manure or compost in the Autumn or Spring. Never manure just before planting

OTHERS need generous amounts of manure or compost added before planting.

Some perennial plants like fruit bushes, rhubarb and asparagus require a permanent place on your plot as they come up every year. Many salad crops like lettuce can be planted anywhere as catch crops, as can courgettes and squashes, as long as you don't plant them

too often in the same place. (Catch crops are crops which are very quick to grow that fill a gap after harvesting or grow quickly alongside more slow growing crops).

One school of thought believes it is not necessary to rotate crops on an area as small as an allotment. As long as you keep the soil healthy with compost and manure it should also reduce pests and diseases as soil quality improves. So if you are pushed for time, or just getting started, it is not essential to do crop rotation. Equally the system assumes you are growing equal amounts of each type of crop. There is an excellent article on this topic here at [Dig My Plot](#).

While crop rotation is considered by most experts as essential good practice, with good soil management you can still produce flourishing crops without it - and many do!

Pollination

To grow good crops you need pollinators such as insects and birds which take the pollen between plants so they can make seeds and reproduce. Allotment sites are particularly good places for pollinators because they provide a mix of fruit and vegetable flowers. If you have room also grow some flowers (such as marigold, lavender and sunflowers) and allow native weeds, such as nettles, to flourish in a corner of your plot to attract pollinating insects and butterflies.

Organic Growing

Many tenants are now trying to grow as organically as possible, which means not using any chemical fertilisers or pesticides. Organic methods can benefit your plot, the environment and wildlife by improving and maintaining soil fertility. Companion planting, which means planting mutually beneficial plants alongside each other, can repel pests and encourage beneficial insects – for example planting marigolds near vegetables susceptible to black fly, helps prevent them from being a nuisance. Look for seed suppliers who sell organic seeds.

See also [No Dig](#)

[Avon Organic Group](#)

Royal Horticultural Society: [Grow Your Own](#)

Garden Organic: [Garden Organic](#)

No Dig

As the name suggests this minimises the amount you dig in order to improve the soil health, particularly supporting micro-organisms, fungi and worms which help feed plant roots. The key principals of No Dig are that you initially clear the area of weeds by applying a layer of cardboard covered in a 10-20cm layer of organic matter such as compost or horse manure. In subsequent years you put on a layer of 3-5cm of organic matter. Over time this creates a soil that is well structured but firm, free draining but also moisture retentive that can be sown or planted into. The most respected proponent of No Dig is [Charles Dowding](#) who runs on and off-line courses, has free YouTube videos, books and more.

Permaculture

“Permaculture is a sustainable design system stressing the harmonious interrelationship of humans, plants, animals and the Earth. The core of permaculture is design and the working relationships and connections between all things.”

(Bill Mollison, Permaculture pioneer).

The core values of Permaculture are 12 ‘design principles’ which, if followed on a plot, can be applied to both the design of the site and what you grow. Plots following Permaculture principles often look more ‘messy’ than traditional plots, so make sure others understand what you’re doing.

See [The Permaculture Association](#), [The Bristol Permaculture Group](#) (Facebook), or email Mike Feingold, a Bristol plot holder who is a Permaculture expert, mikefeingold@blueyonder.co.uk

Raised Beds

There are advantages and disadvantages to using raised beds which means creating a bed on top of the existing soil, usually surrounded by wooden edges usually about 30 cm in height. It's important to have the size right so you can access all of it easily. Some advantages of raised beds are: they are easy to weed; they create soil depth; they can be used for a particular soil type; they can contain soil on a sloping site; and they can make growing easier for people with specific access needs. Some disadvantages are: they can be costly to put in; they are a refuge for slugs and snails; they need more watering than normal beds; they need to be maintained or they will degrade and need to be replaced.

Seeds and Seedlings

Think carefully about how you source your seeds and what variety you want to grow. For example do you want to buy organic or non-organic seeds? Do you want to buy from small companies in the UK which produce their own seeds, such as [Real Seeds](#) or the [Seed Cooperative](#) rather than seeds produced in multi-national seed houses?

Companies, such as [Victoriana Nursery](#) and [Garden Organic](#) specialise in 'heritage' varieties which might otherwise be lost, or you can buy from specialist companies such as [Jekka's Herb Farm](#) or [Incredible Vegetables](#) (perennial vegetables). Some companies such as [More Veg](#) sell very small packets of seeds to save waste, and some retailers which only sell online such as [Premier Seeds Direct](#) are cheaper than buying seeds in garden centres. Each year [Bristol Seed Swap](#) provides an opportunity to buy or swap seeds from growers across Bristol; [Windmill City Farm](#) has a Seed Fair and Potato Day every January with a large variety of seed potatoes from [Pennard Plants](#). Many Allotment Associations in Bristol sell seeds at a discount price and some sites have a shop. – see [Community growing groups and organisations](#).

One of the best sources of seeds are those you collect yourself or swap with other plot holders– here's advice on how to save and store your own seeds.

If you don't feel confident about growing from seed, or don't have the time, there are many places which sell vegetable seedlings online,

or in Bristol you can buy them in person from [Bristol City Council's Blaise Nursery](#), [Riverside Garden Centre](#), [Henleaze Garden Centre](#), and the [Propagation Place](#) at [St Werburghs City Farm](#). Remember that seedlings will be sold as seasonally available.

Fruit Trees

You are allowed to grow some fruit trees on your plot provided they are grafted on dwarf rootstock to restrict their overall height and spread. When you purchase a fruit tree, please seek advice about rootstock from the supplier. Plots are only allowed a maximum of 3 dwarf rootstock trees and cover no more than 25% of the total plot area: you cannot plant an orchard! Do not plant trees near plot boundaries. Before planting a fruit tree, consider its position relative to neighbouring plots. They must not cause a nuisance in terms of shading nearby beds and the size of the area the roots will cover. Fruit trees should be well maintained and regularly pruned for shape and to control vigour. You need to get permission to plant a fruit tree on your plot by filling in the [Web form](#) on the council web site. Wildlife and Ponds

Wildlife and Ponds

Allotment sites are the ideal location for a variety of habitats for birds, small mammals, amphibians and insects. Many creatures are beneficial to gardeners as they prey on pests such as aphids, slugs and snails. Where possible do your best to encourage local wildlife and share your plot with it. See also [Organic Growing](#) and [Permaculture](#)

Get to know the bugs and wildlife on your allotment so you can distinguish between those that are beneficial and those that can be a nuisance. This could be a fun activity for children to encourage them to take part.

Birds can be encouraged with nest boxes and feeders placed in trees (but avoid bird food falling on the ground as this encourages rats). If your plot has a hedge round it, remember to check for nesting birds before cutting.

A small wildlife pond in a corner of your plot will create a habitat for amphibians (which will eat slugs and snails) and insects. Please make sure that the pond is clearly delineated to avoid accidents and covered with sturdy mesh if small

children are about. Slow worms are commonly found under leaves, soil, plastic or cardboard. They look like small snakes but are in fact legless lizards and are a protected species. If you find one remove it to a safe place if it is on an area you need to work on.

For a comprehensive guide on how to encourage beneficial wildlife as well as deal with wildlife which might do your crops harm see Natural England's publication '[Wildlife on allotments](#)' [Wildlife on Allotments](#)

Soil Care

If you look after your soil by nurturing it, feeding it and weeding it, it will produce healthy vigorous crops.

The soil type you have is important. Is it clay, sand, loam, silt, peat or chalk? The type of soil will determine its ability to hold water, nutrients and the passage of air. Whatever your soil type, it's vital to add organic matter to improve the soil structure, feed the soil, and help it to hold water.

The organic approach to feeding the soil is to use well-rotted [manure](#), [garden compost](#) and / or leaf mould. As these break down they produce a rich loamy soil, perfect for growing vegetables and far better for the soil, your crops and you, than chemical additives, which is why many plot holders are now committed to [organic growing](#).

See [Getting Started](#), [Weeds](#), [No Dig](#) and [Compost](#) for more information about how to start the process of improving your soil to create a structure where the layers support micro-organisms and worms that in turn will support healthy growth. It's often recommended to plant potatoes immediately as they will help to break up heavy soil.

Once you have improved your soil you can plant, taking care to retain the living soil structure. Use a hoe to remove surface weeds and break up the top soil, and a rake to establish a fine 'tilth' for seedbeds - this refers to a suitable soil condition for seeds to germinate and roots to establish – it means the soil is 'crumb-like, easy to slice (like cutting butter), and spongy.'

Try not walk on the soil as this will compact it, preventing the passage of air and making it difficult to plant; if you have to walk on it then use a plank of wood to distribute your weight.

The amount of acidity in the soil is measured by a pH number. The optimum pH for growing vegetables is a neutral pH of between 6 and 7. You can test your soil with a kit to find its pH value. The more you work your plot with the regular addition of [compost](#) and [manure](#), the more neutral the pH will become. It takes time to make a change and so it's best to focus on regular mulching (covering) with compost. Some plants like heathers and blueberries will only grow and thrive in acid soil - you may want to grow these in tubs or a special bed using bought bags of acid rich soil.

For more about understanding pH and pH testing see [RHS Soil pH](#)

Manure

You are allowed to use manure on your plot. Buy well-rotted manure that has been composted for up to 12 months, but if you buy fresh you must compost it yourself for 12 months as fresh manure can harm your plants. Ask the supplier to confirm the manure is not contaminated with Aminopyralid weed killer which can be ingested by horses through hay and can seriously affect crops, stunting growth for up to three years.

Spread the manure as a mulch (layer) and allow it to be broken down, or dig in the manure before planting. The best time to apply is in the autumn or spring when the soil isn't frozen, although it will help the soil structure at any time.

Manure must be stored properly and not cause a nuisance to others and wash your hands after contact and after picking crops.

You often find adverts for manure supplies on the site notice board or attached to the allotment gate. Ask other plot holders for sources of manure they have used, and if

they have had no problems it is a good indication the source is healthy. It is cheaper to buy in bulk and share a load with other tenants.

Composting

Why compost? Composting will help you save money, improve your soil, help you grow healthy, strong plants and look after the environment.

Compost is a natural, nutrient-rich, soil-like medium of decayed organic matter. It is a product of the natural breakdown of dead plants and other organic matter such as fruit and vegetable peelings. With time and a little bit of care and attention, this organic matter decomposes with the assistance of micro-organisms and earthworms to produce a valuable source of compost. This can improve and enrich the soil, helping to feed your plants producing strong and healthy crops.

Making compost is not hard. The easiest method is to purchase a compost bin specially designed for the purpose. If you prefer the DIY approach, you can build your own compost bin.

To do this you may want to contain the heap using reclaimed timber and four wooden posts to make a bottomless box; covering will also help to retain moisture and heat. Alternatively, just heap all your organic matter into a big pile in a corner of your plot. However this method looks less attractive, can suffer from a lack of firmness and can lose the heat generated internally unless covered. Digging or ‘turning’ your compost occasionally will help to speed up the process.

- Try to compost as much green waste as you can e.g uncooked kitchen waste
- Creating your own leaf mulch will improve soil texture – collect leaves in a strong bag and leave to rot for several months
- Don’t compost perennial weeds (such as bindweed and mares tail) because these are not killed by composting and will grow and spread in the compost bin
- Do not compost any animal products or cooked food
- Always use gloves and wash your hands after handling compost

Consider having two bins. When one is full cover and leave it to break down while using the second for new compost.

Weeds

When taking on a new plot there are likely to be plenty of weeds, both annuals and perennials. Annual weeds are new ones which come up every year, and tend to be spread by seeds from the previous year’s plants; they include weeds like dandelion, fat hen and cleavers. Perennial weeds are the same plants which come up every year, and tend to spread under the soil; these are much harder to eliminate and include bindweed, couch grass, mares tail (or horsetail) and ground elder.

Be prepared for lots of hard work to clear the plot of weeds, especially initially, but it is a job worth doing. Careful weed removal and preparation of the soil at the start will reap future benefits! To keep on top of weeds you need to make frequent visits to your plot, especially during the main growing season, and make weeding a regular task. Digging over the ground and removing roots is one really effective organic way to remove weeds, but there are other methods, such as No Dig.

Annual weeds and vegetation can be composted. Perennial weeds should not be composted. Try not to let weeds set seed or the cycle of growing will start all over again. To identify different types of weeds and how to deal with them see: Sharpen your spades RHS Common Weeds

Hoeing

Regular hoeing during the growing season will help prevent weeds from taking root. It loosens the roots of weeds that have already taken and also helps break up lumps in the soil.

Invasive species

A small number of plants, insects and other wildlife are termed ‘invasive non-native (alien species)’ by Defra and are subject to legislation and stringent control. Examples of invasive species include Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam, Harlequin Ladybird, Rosemary Beetle and Asian Hornet. If you find an invasive species on your site tell your Site Rep and/or other tenants. For more information: UK Government Invasive Species

Recipes, preserving produce and surplus produce

The whole point of having a plot is to grow food to eat, and there are dozens of books and loads of information online specifically aimed at allotment growers, including information about preserving fruit and vegetables.

Most plot holders will have a glut of something at some point in the year, which gives a chance to preserve and store it for a future time, for example by bottling, fermenting, freezing, drying, or turning into jam or chutney. These also make great presents!

Many books can be bought second hand online or in charity shops; Bristol's libraries have about 100 books on allotments, many of which include recipes. Ask your fellow plot holders for their tried and tested ideas.

Many sites encourage sharing of produce. If your allotment site doesn't already have a table or place for surplus produce, then why not set one up? Some fruit and veg shops will exchange your surplus produce for other goods and/or pay you for it. Some sites give surplus

produce to food banks. It's also fun to share with your neighbours and friends.

See also [Selling Produce](#)

Selling Produce

You cannot use your plot to grow and sell produce for any trade or business, however you can sell extra produce from your plot, including jam or chutney at markets, local events or flower shows.

Find out about renting a [Council market pitch](#). Contact the [Allotments Office](#) for clarification and advice.

Social Media

Facebook and WhatsApp

Some sites have their own Facebook or WhatsApp group to share information (your [Site Rep](#) should tell you about when you take on your plot). If your site doesn't have one, consider starting one yourself. Always make sure you're aware of the Privacy Settings of any group to which you belong. Follow allotmenters

on Twitter, YouTube and Instagram.

Books

Recommended reading from the people who wrote this Handbook!

- *A Vegetable Gardener's Year* by 'Dirty Nails' of the Blackmore Vale Magazine (Spring Hill)
- *Allotment Month by Month* by Alan Buckingham (Dorling Kindersley)
- *RHS Growing Vegetables* by Tony Biggs (Mitchell Beazley)
- *The Allotment Book* by Andi Clevely (Collins)
- *Creative Vegetable Gardening* by Joy Larkcom (Mitchell Beazley)
- *Organic Gardening: The natural No Dig way* by Charles Dowding (Green Books)
- *Pruning* by Christopher Brickel (Royal Horticultural Society).



What else do you need to know about your allotment site and plot?

*Want to put up a greenhouse?
Planning to keep chickens?
Time to burn all those prunings?*

Answers to these and other similar questions can be found in this section. Especially important is the section which deals with Health and Safety on allotment sites, so please be sure to read this.



Site Representatives

(aka Site Reps!)

The Site Rep is a plot holder just like you - they have volunteered to be a Site Rep to help other tenants with access to Council Allotments staff, and general information on how things work.

The Site Rep should be your first point of contact if you have any plot related queries. If they don't have the answer they may help you find out who to ask.

Most Site Reps have a fair amount of veg growing knowledge, and are happy to share their experiences of growing on your particular site.

Unfortunately not all BCC sites have a Site Rep – if you are interested in taking on the role then contact the [Allotments Officer](#) who can tell you what's involved – one incentive of becoming a Site Rep is that you get free rent!

If you don't have a site rep and you notice any problems with the site on which you have your plot e.g broken fences, overgrown trees, gate lock failure or fly tipping, please report it to the [Allotments Office](#).

Respect and conflicts

Allotment sites are communal spaces, so it's vitally important that you respect other people on the site. There will always be occasions when disagreements happen or problems arise, but all plot holders should maintain an ethos of open communication and mutual respect.

If you have a dispute with another plot holder try and sort it out between you, respectfully and politely. If you still can't resolve the issue then tell your [Site Rep](#) and ask them to mediate. If you don't have a [Site Rep](#) or can't involve them, then use the Web form and 'report a problem' on the dropdown menu.

Be aware that plot holders who behave in an anti-social manner, including making racist or other abusive remarks, risk losing their tenancy.

See also [Rules](#)

Locks, Keys and Security

Most Allotment sites will have access via gates to the site; these should have a key, padlock or Digilock. Whichever system is in place it is your responsibility to make sure you lock the gates after entry and again on leaving; this is vitally important for your safety and also that of other tenants. If the lock is broken you must let your [Site Rep](#) know, so that repairs or replacements can be organised. Consider security at all times - all tenants have a responsibility for maintaining security on their site. Don't leave any valuables on site; if possible take all tools with you when you leave. Any tools left on your plot should be security marked – note you are not covered by [insurance](#) from the Council. Please make the Site Rep and the Allotment Office aware of any incidents. Report any serious incidents to the police (using 101 for non-emergencies or 999 for emergencies).

Plot Numbers

You **must** have a clearly visible sign or number board on your plot or shed. This is because your plot needs to be easily found by council officers, your Site Rep and council workers. It also helps to avoid disputes. Plot numbers are easy to make from a wood board with a painted number, or you can buy them online. Display the number where it can easily be seen. If you have a shed you can put the number on your shed door.

Notice Board

Your site should have a notice board, which is there for everyone to use, as it's one of the best ways to communicate with fellow plot holders. If it's locked and the key has been lost, inform your [Site Rep](#) or [Allotments Office](#)

Insurance

You are not covered by The Council for any insurance or liability claims. If you are concerned then they recommend you take out your own Public Liability Insurance; insurance is included in [The National Allotments Society](#) membership.

Children

Children are encouraged to learn about growing plants and wildlife, however they must be actively supervised by you at all times and stay on your plot. Allotment sites can be dangerous. They are not playgrounds, and everyone must be mindful of other tenants and their plots.

Dogs on allotment sites

Dogs are allowed on allotment sites, subject to the following:

- Your dog must be on a lead and under your full control at all times. Please don't assume that everyone likes dogs
- You must remove the health risk associated with dog mess - clear up after your dog and remove any waste from the allotment site. Dog mess must not be put into a compost bin
- For health and nuisance reasons you mustn't let a dog stray on to anyone's else's plot

Trees and Hedges

No large or ornamental trees are allowed on a plot. If you notice seedling trees take them out. If you take over a plot which already has a large or ornamental tree on it, please speak to your [Site Rep](#). Removal of a large tree must only be carried out by a qualified person - the Council might be able to arrange for a tree to be removed. You don't have to get permission to remove a tree if it's small – as a rough guide, if you can fit your hands around the trunk you don't need permission. If in doubt contact your Site Rep or if you don't have one contact the [Allotments Office](#).

See also [Fruit Trees](#)

You are not allowed to plant hedges, erect fences or create any additional access points to your plot without getting permission from the [Allotments Office](#).

It is an offence to disturb nesting birds so please check your hedge/s before cutting.

Greenhouses and Polytunnels

As well as providing the ideal growing conditions for a range of plants such as tomatoes, aubergines, peppers and chillies, a greenhouse or polytunnel is the perfect place in which to germinate seeds and extend the growing season. Be aware that plants in greenhouses and polytunnels require a lot of watering so may not be for you if you don't have a lot of time. You have to let the allotment office know via their [web form](#) that you want to put one on your plot. Maximum size allowed for a greenhouse is 6ft x 8ft and for a polytunnel it's 10ft x 20ft. No concrete or permanent foundations are permitted. Once erected you are responsible for keeping it in good repair.

Greenhouse and polytunnels are very susceptible to wind damage even if they are well secured.

If you are putting up a polytunnel make sure:

- It's made of horticultural grade polythene (the green plastic ones degrade quickly and will pollute the soil)

- You fix it securely into the soil so it doesn't blow away with the first storm of the season

Ask advice from other plot holders about the best ones to get.

Water

Water is a precious resource so please do your best to conserve it. If you have a shed, greenhouse or polytunnel, it makes sense to fit a simple system of guttering and a large container to harvest and store rainwater. There are a number of sources of recycled containers which can be used for storing rainwater like old wheelie bins but always check the previous contents before putting a discarded container to use. Cover a water butt to help prevent contamination and water loss through evaporation.

If your allotment site has a mains water supply with water troughs and taps, please use water sparingly and don't leave taps running.

Using a hosepipe, sprinkler, syphon or seep hose for watering is strictly forbidden, as is replenishing a water container on your plot from the mains supply.

Water troughs must not be used for washing vegetables, plant pots and other containers or hands! Please use a bucket. If you bring children to the allotment site, they must not be allowed to play with the communal water troughs and taps.

Advice on watering crops

- Help retain moisture in the soil by adding a thick layer of organic matter as a mulch around your plants. Digging organic matter into the soil is also beneficial
- On hot or sunny days, water your crops in the early morning or evening to reduce water loss through evaporation
- Give plants a thorough soaking – rather than a sprinkling - to encourage deep rooting
- Remember that over-watering can be just as unproductive as under-watering
- Learn how much water different crops need, as they need different amounts of water at different points of their growing cycle, and some crops need much more water than others – see [nsalg - Water Use On Allotments](#)

Paths

Under your Tenancy Agreement you are responsible for maintaining paths which surround your plot, which should be kept to a minimum width of 18 inches (450 mm).

You will need a strimmer or lawn mower to cut the grass. Talk to your neighbours and work out a shared rota, as you have joint responsibility for the paths. There may be shared tools on your site that you can access. Wood chip can be used on paths inside plots.

Sheds

A shed is a great place in which to shelter when it rains, as well as for storing tools and other gardening essentials. If you wish to put up a shed, you must have permission before starting (use the relevant part of the [web form](#)); the maximum dimensions allowed are 6ft x 4ft. No concrete or permanent foundations are permitted. Most allotment sheds have either an apex or pent roof, covered with roofing felt. Your Site Rep will be able to offer advice.

It is the responsibility of tenants to keep sheds and other structures in sound condition and

carry out repairs as and when necessary. Your shed should be given a coat of suitable timber preservative every other year and rotten/damaged timber and torn roofing felt replaced when necessary. If you share a shed with another tenant, it is important that you reach an agreement as to who does what for its general maintenance and running repairs.

When putting up a shed, please ensure that it has guttering which feeds rainwater into a barrel or other suitable container to collect the water. You may wish to fit a lock to the door but a determined thief is likely to break the door, thereby causing further damage. It is not recommended to keep power tools or batteries in your shed.

See also [Tools and Equipment](#).

Beekeeping

Beekeeping is a very rewarding hobby and a colony of honeybees will certainly enhance local biodiversity. However, beekeeping can be expensive, with costs including installing a hive and bees, purchasing other equipment and protective clothing, as well as training and insurance.

Although The Council supports responsible beekeeping on its allotment sites, no tenant has the absolute right to keep bees and written permission must be obtained from the Council by using the drop-down menu on the council tenants' [web form](#).

It may not be possible to allow tenants to install bee hives on some allotments – either because of their location or because there are hives there already - and the Council therefore reserves the right to refuse permission.

If want to keep bees on your plot a number of conditions have to be met first, for example you have to be a member of the [British Beekeepers Association](#) and have done a recognised course.

Formal permission to keep bees on an allotment plot will only be granted once the Council is satisfied that all the necessary measures are in place – you need to provide a copy of your Beekeeper Association membership and insurance. You are fully liable for any nuisance or harm the bees may cause.

Livestock - chickens and rabbits

Permission is needed to keep chickens or rabbits on your plot; these are the only livestock (other than bees) you are allowed to keep. Livestock require continuous attention to keep them fed, secure and free from disease. Feed must be stored securely to avoid attracting rats and mice.

Chickens must be given decent welfare conditions, for example ample space and a suitable and fox proof hen coop. You are allowed up to 12 chickens, depending on your plot size. You are not allowed cockerels. Chickens are not allowed on any plots of less than 75 square metres. There may be some local restrictions on certain sites.

You may keep up to 2 rabbits on your plot, they must be safely housed in appropriate and humane conditions.

You are responsible for the animal's care and welfare, and for any nuisance, health risks or damage caused. The Council alerts all plot holders to prevalent diseases for which you'll need to take immediate action. If you want to

keep chickens you need to get permission from the Allotment Office via their [web form](#).

For advice about keeping chickens see:
Chickens - Allotment Garden.org

Pesticides,

- herbicides and non-organic fertilisers

Although some pesticides, herbicides, chemicals and non-organic fertilisers can be helpful for growing on your plot, many are now classed as hazardous and have environmental implications. If you really must resort to using approved pesticides etc., bear in mind that they are not a quick fix and should only be used for specific purposes. It is therefore strongly recommended trying to minimise the use of pesticides, herbicides and nonorganic fertilisers and consider the alternatives.

See [Organic growing](#)

The use of chemicals for weed control is discouraged and on some sites are not allowed at all. If you do use chemicals on common ground like car parks, paths and driveways to

eradicate weeds you must inform all tenants of the hazard and health risks via the site notice board, social media and [Site Rep](#).

Safety advice

- Always keep products in their original containers
- Follow the instructions for use carefully
- Do not estimate amounts - measure accurately
- Wear personal protective equipment (gloves, goggles etc.)
- Wash your hands after use (but never in the communal water troughs) and wash off any splashes immediately
- Do not use in windy conditions
- Store out of the reach of children
- Ensure you are not contaminating neighbouring plots or water source
- Consider the potential harm to beneficial wildlife, pond life pets and children before use
- Check old products to ensure they have not been banned
- If in doubt, dispose of products at your local recycling centre

Animal pests – rats, pigeons, rabbits, foxes, badgers, deer, wasps and mice

See also [Dead animals](#)

It is inevitable that various types of creatures which might be considered pests are found on allotment sites and what follows provides information about the main ones which you may encounter on your site.

Rats and Mice are classed as vermin and can be a nuisance on allotment sites. Allotments provide the perfect environment for them to nest and thrive - lots of hiding places and a convenient supply of foodstuff in compost containers. You can reduce the likelihood of vermin activity on your plot by taking the following simple steps:

- Disturb rotting compost by turning it on a regular basis with a digging fork or similar tool. Poke a long cane or rake into the void beneath a shed to disturb or destroy a rats' nest

- Avoid leaving food lying about. Dairy and cooked foods should never be put into allotment compost bins. If you have a bird feeder on your plot, hang a tray under it to prevent seed dropping on the ground below. If you keep hens, ensure that their food is stored in a sealed non plastic container and use feeders which cannot be reached by a rodent
- Block holes used by rats in [sheds](#), fences etc.

If you are especially concerned about vermin activity on your plot, please discuss the problem with your [Site Rep](#) who may be able to offer advice.

Please note: the use of rodent poison by tenants is forbidden on allotment sites.

If you have a serious problem with rats on your site contact [Bristol City Council Pest Control](#) or council allotment office via their [web form](#)

Pigeons can be a problem, particularly on sites located close to woodland or the edge of the city. The best way to ensure protection for your crops – brassicas in particular - is to cover them with netting. Nets must be properly secured so

that birds do not become trapped in loose netting; be sure to check from time to time. Netting is susceptible to damage caused by strong winds or heavy snowfall.

Rabbits, foxes and badgers are regular visitors to allotment sites, even those in the heart of Bristol.

Rabbits can be a serious nuisance and there are no simple solutions to keeping them from eating tasty young shoots and leaves. Netting your most precious crops certainly helps.

Foxes generally do not cause too many problems, the main issue being unwanted digging, particularly if animal-based fertilisers such as blood, fish and bone and chicken manure are used. The best way to avoid this is to minimise the use of such products and to cover areas of freshly-dug soil. Do not feed foxes. If you keep chickens or rabbits on your plot, make sure their housing is sturdy enough to withstand potential attacks by foxes.

Badgers are strong and determined creatures who are adept at climbing and digging and

once they have an established route across a piece of land, they tend to stick to it, regardless of barriers. If you experience a problem with badger intrusion, seek advice from your Site Rep, but bear in mind that badgers are protected by legislation and there are limits to what can be done to deter them. Badgers are renowned for eating sweetcorn before you get to harvest them.

Deer occasionally escape from parkland on the edge of the city and find their way onto nearby allotment sites where their hooves can cause considerable damage to serried ranks of beautiful vegetables! Another ‘pest’ to report to your Site Rep.

Wasps and hornets are wonderful pollinators to some people but a real nuisance to many, especially when you get stung! Wasps and hornets love to nest in sheds on allotment sites, making it really tricky for the poor tenant. Both these insects die off when the temperature falls in autumn and the nest can be removed but if you cannot wait that long, your Site Rep may be able to offer advice.

Dead animals (rats, birds etc.)

If you find a small dead creature (such as a mouse, rat or bird), please wear gloves to remove it from the site and dispose of it in your black bin at home. Dead animals and birds must not be added to a compost heap. If you find dead birds, a large animal such as a badger, deer or fox use the [web form](#) to contact the Council. If you are concerned about a spate of deaths contact Avon Wildlife Trust who might investigate for you.

Storing Materials – Junk

Please do not use your plot for storing materials which might ‘come in handy one day’. An accumulation of junk material on plots reduces the area available for cultivation and can pose a hazard to you and others. Only bring materials onto your plot if you have an immediate use for them and, if necessary, store them safely and tidily. Recycled materials such as bricks, roofing tiles and timber can be reused on the plot, saving the need to send materials to landfill.

See also [Health and Safety](#)

Rubbish – waste disposal and recycling

In theory having a plot should not generate much waste material. One of the problems faced by new tenants is waste inherited from previous tenants who have not cleared the plot - such as remains of old sheds, polytunnel frames, baths, children’s play things, plastic, car tyres, scraps of old carpet, broken bottles, glass, unused pesticides and chemicals. Please help by removing and disposing of rubbish items in an appropriate way. Many materials can easily be transported off-site for safe disposal via your [local waste recycling centre](#).

Please note that carpet and artificial grass must not be brought on to allotment sites as it nearly all contains harmful chemicals, plastic or other non-organic fibre which will damage the eco system as it breaks down and contaminates the soil – even those made of wool. If you discover remains of carpet in use as covering for a compost heap or to suppress weeds, please dispose of it as above.

No tyres of any kind can be brought onto the allotment site.

When you leave your plot you are expected to clear all your belongings and remove waste of any description - do not leave it for the next tenant to deal with.

Skips The Council will not order skips for sites, so if you need a skip you can collaborate with other tenants to hire your own. This must be at your own expense and liability. Check width of driveways and liability for damage to neighbouring properties. It might be cheaper and easier to hire a van for smaller items to take to the nearest Household Waste Recycling Centre.

Recycling Some things you no longer require may be useful to other tenants like old tools, pallets for building compost heaps and even old polytunnel frames can be re-used. Try to recycle where possible by advertising what you have to other tenants.

See also [Social Media](#) and [Noticeboards](#)

See also [Asbestos](#) and [Storing Materials](#)

Asbestos

At one time, building material made from cement with a low asbestos content was in common use for the construction of garages, sheds and fence panels, some of which are still in use on allotment sites. Providing such structures are in sound condition, they can still be used safely. However, asbestos is now classed as a hazardous substance so do not drill or fix screws or nails into a panel which might contain asbestos and avoid breaking it.

If you discover a panel which you believe might contain asbestos is cracked or broken do not attempt to remove it yourself. If in doubt report its position to the Allotments Office and inform the Site Rep as soon as possible so that it can be removed and disposed of safely.

From time to time, smaller pieces of broken asbestos may turn up in the soil on your plot.

If you come across what you think is asbestos:

- Do not break up the item/s
- Wear gloves and a face mask and carefully place the piece/s in a strong plastic bag –

then inside a second bag which should be sealed with tape. Label the bag and take it to one of The Council's Household waste Recycling Centres

- Report your find to the Site Rep
- If you have a lot of asbestos then contact the Allotments Office at the Council who should remove it. Provide the site name, plot number, location in plot and photo if possible

Bonfires and Barbecues

Currently bonfires and barbecues are only permitted from 1 November to 31 March.

Bonfires Burning waste on your allotment should only be carried out as a last resort and then only dry, organic matter such as prunings from fruit trees and bushes. Please compost as much as possible or remove items, such as rotten timber, from the allotment site and dispose of them at the nearest [Household waste Recycling Centre](#). Under no circumstance should any materials be brought to your plot for burning. Before lighting a bonfire consider wind direction and be mindful of other tenants and nearby properties. If it's a nice day

neighbouring properties may have windows open and washing drying in their gardens. Smoke can be a serious health hazard to other tenants and neighbours. If need be, wait for another day. Smoke nuisance from bonfires generates a number of complaints to the Council each year and bonfires will be banned on allotment sites where there is a persistent problem. Preferably use an incinerator as this burns more efficiently. Never leave a bonfire unattended and make sure it is extinguished before you leave your plot.

Barbecues: Although it would be nice to have a barbecue on a Summer evening they are not allowed on allotments. The smoke can be a nuisance to other plot holders and neighbours to the site, so the same rules apply to barbecues as to bonfires.

See the council web site [Bonfires, barbecues and incinerators](#).

Health and Safety

The onus is on all tenants, their helpers and other visitors to take appropriate steps to ensure their own safety. The following guidelines are based on a risk assessment carried out on an allotment site in Bristol.

- 1. Vehicles:** Pedestrians have priority, so please observe the 5mph signs at all times.
- 2. Clothing:** Please wear clothing which is appropriate for the task – especially footwear and gloves. Be aware of uneven ground on allotment sites and plots. Avoid open sandals especially for children.
- 3. Digging:** When digging, reduce the risk of back strain and similar injury by using the correct tool, utilise leg and arm strength to the full, and avoid twisting.
- 4. Sharp objects:** Protect the tips of bamboo canes, poles and other sharp objects with an empty pot, tennis ball or similar to avoid injury to the face – especially your eyes.
- 5. Paths:** To avoid trips, slips and falls, paths

should be kept in good condition and free from obstacles eg. discarded tools.

6. Poisons: The use of weed killer and pest control products which might be harmful to humans, pets and wildlife is discouraged. If in use, chemicals should be stored in clearly labelled containers and out of the reach of children. Always follow the manufacturers' instructions. Wash all cans, sprayers etc. used for chemicals away from the communal taps and water troughs to avoid contamination and risk to others.

7. Power tools: When using power tools, for example strimmers and rotavators, wear personal protective equipment – earmuffs, goggles/visor, gloves, boots and leg covering. Always consider the proximity of others before and during the operation of any power tool.

8. Ponds: If you have a pond on your plot, ensure that it can be clearly seen, its edge delineated and nearby trip hazards removed.

9. Children should be safe and enjoy gardening. They should be supervised at

all times by a family member or friend and not allowed to play where they might be at risk from cars or other vehicles. Please do not allow children to play with the water supply points, troughs and taps or on neighbouring plots.

10. Glass: please dispose of broken glass safely by removing it from the site.

11. Wasps, hornets and bees: if you discover a wasps' or hornets' nest, stay away if possible and report its location to the Allotments Office and your Site Rep so that appropriate action can be taken. A few tenants have permission to have a beehive on or near their plots. Unlike wasps, honey bees are generally docile and only sting when threatened; however, please stay away from bee hives. During summer months, honeybees may swarm. If you see a swarm, stay away and report it to the [Site Rep](#).

12. Greenhouses and polytunnels: if you have one on your plot and need to work inside it on a hot day, ensure it is well ventilated and only stay inside for the shortest time.

13. Lone working: lock the gate after you; if you believe that you are the only person working on the allotment site, please take extra care to avoid injuring yourself as no one will be available to provide first aid or other assistance, such as opening the gate to allow access to an ambulance.

14. Personal safety: above all, assess risks before undertaking even the most simple task on your plot and take due precautions as a result. It is suggested that you keep a supply of basic first aid equipment in your shed. Minimise the risk of infection from cuts by ensuring that your anti-Tetanus protection is up to date. All accidents and injuries sustained on one of our allotment sites should be reported to the Allotments Office and your Site Rep.

15. Woodburners: No Woodburners are allowed on site. This is a fire risk and any plot holders found to have one will be asked to remove it.

In the event of an emergency the following advice assumes that you know the post code for your allotment site. Have the post code

prominent on your allotment notice board. If you don't then consider using the What 3 Words app. If you or another person suffers a serious injury or are suddenly taken ill and need urgent medical assistance:

- Call out to attract attention from anyone in the vicinity
- Use a mobile phone to dial 999
- Ensure that the call handler has the post code and location of the allotment site
- Ask someone to go and open the allotment gate and direct the ambulance when it arrives

Tools and Equipment

Garden tools can be expensive, but over time they also become trusty friends and a favourite spade is irreplaceable. It is recommended that you do not store anything of value in a shed or storage box, especially power tools. Flammable materials (such as petrol and batteries for a strimmer) must never be stored on site. Tools kept in your shed should be stored safely so they don't present a trip or other hazard.

See also [Health and Safety](#).

It's easy to buy tools, often really good quality at car boot sales, on Ebay, etc. On some sites people share tools and wheelbarrows, particularly expensive items such as strimmers.

Power tools: Only use a power tool if you are confident how to operate it. Read, understand and follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully and, if necessary, make sure you have had appropriate training. Always wear appropriate personal protective clothing, including safety goggles and sturdy footwear. It is a good idea to have a means of emergency contact, such as a mobile phone, close by in case of an accident. Note that you are not covered by insurance by the Council. You might want to let someone know if you are going to be strimming on your own. Allotments Forum

The Forum's focus is on city wide generic allotment related items of interest and concern to all plot holders and sites for example rents, land disposal, Tenancy Agreement policy changes, water and security. It is not for individual tenant's issues, which should be dealt with by the Site Rep and/or the Allotments Officer. To contact the Forum for any allotment related queries, to join the forum and to be put on their mailing list email: allotmentsforum@outlook.com. More information can be found on the council Allotments Forum web page.



Allotments Forum

The Allotments Forum is open to all allotment plot holders, with meetings four times a year, on the fourth Wednesday of January, April, July and October. It is run independently by plot holders, not the Council, although Council allotment staff and councillors attend meetings.

Managing Your Tenancy

The Tenancy Agreement which you signed when you took on your plot is a contract with Bristol City Council which owns the allotment site. Like all such contracts, the Tenancy Agreement sets out a number of conditions which must be fulfilled by you as a responsible tenant. If some of these conditions are not met, your plot may be taken away from you.

As well as explaining the important parts of the Tenancy Agreement so that you have a clear idea about the basic requirements of being a tenant of an allotment plot, this section also contains other information relating specifically to renting a plot from the Council.



Allotment Office

If you have a Site Rep they should be your first point of contact. They will often be able to help and advise you, or tell you if you need to contact the council.

Familiarise yourself with the allotment section of the council web site [Bristol City Council Allotments and Gardens](#)

Currently there are 4 people in the Allotment Office: The Allotments and Smallholdings Manager, the Allotments Officer, and two part-time Administrators (Monday-Wednesday).

If you have specific issues or questions relating to your allotment or tenancy you may need to contact them, for example:

- To end your [Tenancy Agreement](#)
- To apply to put up a [shed](#) or [polytunnel](#)
- To keep [chickens](#) or [bees](#)
- To ask to plant [fruit trees](#)
- To ask about an [invoice](#)

Web Form: For any of these issues and more go to the council web site and use their online form. If you can't find what you're looking for in

the dropdown menu, then use the 'report a problem' option. Link to The Council's web form: Contact [The Allotment Office](#)

Telephone: You can telephone the council switchboard 0117 9222000 and ask to speak directly to a member of the Allotment Office.

Tenancy Agreement

The Tenancy Agreement which you signed when you took on your plot is the legal contract between you and Bristol City Council which owns and manages your allotment site. Like all such contracts, the Tenancy Agreement sets out a number of conditions which must be fulfilled by you as a responsible tenant. If some of these conditions are not met your plot may be taken away from you. If you have any questions about your Tenancy Agreement, please get in touch with your Site Rep or the [Allotments Office](#). It is always better to ask than be in doubt.

Benefits – rental discounts

If you are in receipt of Council Tax reduction or Housing Benefit you can apply online for a

Benefits Discount on your rent of 50%.

The Allotments Officer writes to all tenants explaining how they can apply including if you don't have access to the internet. Applications need to be done between 1st July and 1st August each year. Discounts are not applied to plots in Band A (in other words a very small plot – see Plot size). The discount is applied to your annual invoice sent out in the Autumn, not to the initial rent payment you make when you take on the plot. You have to apply for this discount every year. Details and online application: [Apply For Your Allotment Discount](#)

Rent including bands/costs/discounts

When you first take on a plot you pay a proportion of the year's rent depending on the time of year you take it on. The rental cost is dependent on the plot's size and which band it's in (see [Plot size](#)). If the plot is in a very bad state when you first take it on in other words if it is full of shrubs, bushes, trees, and brambles (not if it is just overgrown with grass and weeds) then, before you receive your site offer, your Site Rep may notify the Council on your behalf and recommend that you should qualify for a

50% Plot Condition Discount. This can be for one or two years depending on the severity of the condition. This discount will be applied to your first full year's rent, not your first proportional rent. If you don't have a [Site Rep](#) then use the Web form and 'report a problem' in the dropdown menu.

If you are in receipt of certain benefits you can claim a 50% discount - this has to be done every year (see [Benefits – rental discounts](#)) and doesn't apply the first part-year that you take the plot on.

Invoices for rent are issued annually in September which you have to pay within 40 days or you are in breach of your [Tenancy Agreement](#) and you'll be sent a [Notice to Quit](#) letter; there is no appeals process, but you can make a formal complaint via the Council's complaints' process: bristol.gov.uk/complaints-procedures.

If you dispute the [plot size](#), and thus the rent you've been charged, you should pay the lesser amount 'without prejudice' until the correct rent is confirmed.

Cultivating 75% of your plot

The [Tenancy Agreement](#) states that you have to cultivate 75% of your plot – in other words you need to be actively growing fruit/vegetables/flowers/herbs and if you have more than 25% covered in [weeds](#) or not in use for growing then you may lose your plot (see Notice to Remedy). If you have a polytunnel or [greenhouse](#) you have to have things growing in it as part of your 75% cultivation. NOTE: Any areas covered in black plastic will not be accepted as cultivated.

Co-workers

When you first take on your plot you can nominate up to two Co-workers; if you give up the plot, then one can become the official tenant. If you don't nominate someone at the start of your tenancy then the person you want to be a Co-worker has to add themselves to the site's waiting list, and can only be added as a Co-worker when they reach the top of the Waiting List. If your original tenancy is terminated by the Council (for example if you break the rules or haven't paid your rent), then the Co-worker/s won't be offered the plot.

A Co-worker is the only person who can tend the plot without you being present and have access to a key or gate code. Historically some [Tenancy Agreements](#) have a Co-Tenant named. The same rules apply to Co-Tenants as to [Co-Workers](#).

Helpers

Helpers on the plot are allowed. If the same person is regularly going to help you, and you have given them independent access to the site (only allowed in exceptional circumstances – normally a Helper should only be there with the tenant present), then the [Site Rep](#) must be given their contact details and at the time of writing you will need to sign a form with the Helper's details; this is because the Site Rep needs to keep a log of all 'key holders'. You are responsible for your Helper and must make sure they follow all the rules. In exceptional circumstances, for example, if you are ill the helper may be permitted to have access and tend their allotment for them during their illness.

Sub-letting

You are not allowed to sub-let your plot in any circumstances – in other words no-one other than you or a registered [Co-Worker](#) or official Helper can tend the plot without you being present. If you think – or know - that someone is sub-letting a plot tell your [Site Rep](#) or if you don't have one contact the [Allotments Office](#).

Inspections

Your plot will be regularly inspected throughout the year, and if it is not kept within the current guidelines for [cultivation](#) you will be sent a [Notice to Remedy](#) which means you will have 28 days in which to rectify the situation; if you fail to cultivate your plot within this time you will be sent a [Notice to Quit](#) your plot.

Tenants are not normally told when inspections are due. If you have a valid reason for not being able to tend your plot you must notify the [Allotments Office](#) through the web form and your [Site Rep](#) for special consideration.

If you have been sent 3 Notices to Remedy within a 3 year period and your plot is still not

being cultivated satisfactorily, you'll automatically be sent a Notice to Quit if you haven't made any changes after 28 days of being sent the 3rd Notice to Remedy.

Notice to Remedy

You will receive a 28 day notice to remedy if at least 75% of your plot is not at a good level of cultivation. This means you have 28 days to show that you are properly cultivating your plot in other words:

- You are undertaking a regular level of work, with crops planted or ground prepared ready for planting and a virtually weed-free plot
- If you have fruit bushes/trees then the area around them is maintained to a high standard and has not become overgrown and covered in weeds
- Your plot has not become covered in weeds and/or grass that seeds or spreads

See also [Bristol City Council Dos and Don'ts document](#)

Notice to Quit

When you sign your Tenancy Agreement you agree to abide by the rules. These are in Plain English in the [Bristol City Council Dos and Don'ts document](#).

You will be sent a 31 day Notice to Quit:

- If you persistently break any of the rules
- If you fail to pay your rent within 40 days
- If you fail to improve the condition of your plot following a Notice to Remedy
- If you have been sent 3 Notices to Remedy within a 3 year period and your plot is still not being cultivated satisfactorily you will automatically be sent a Notice to Quit if you haven't made any changes after 28 days of being sent the 3rd Notice to Remedy

Plot Size

The size of your plot should be in your [Tenancy Agreement](#). The Council divides plot sizes into six bands for rent purposes which can be found here. You can query the size of your plot by contacting your [Site Rep](#) or the [Allotments Office](#). If you have a small plot (much smaller

than 150m²) you can take on another available plot to bring the total size up to 150m². You will need to pay the additional rent for the chosen plot plus £15 admin fee, as it needs a new Tenancy Agreement. If your plot is 150m² or larger and you want an additional plot you need to go on the site waiting list; you can only take on an additional plot when there are no new people on that waiting list.

Swapping plots

If you want to swap from one plot to another plot on the same site, then rent paid for the original plot doesn't get transferred over. You will need to pay the additional rent for the chosen plot plus £15 admin fee, as it needs a new [Tenancy Agreement](#). If you want to swap to a plot on a different site, then you need to go on the [Waiting List](#) of that site. Talk to your [Site Rep](#) if you want to swap and they will advise you or if you don't have one contact the [Allotment Office](#).

Waiting List

Even though you already have a plot, you have to go onto the [Council's Allotment Waiting List](#) if you want to move to another site.

If you want a [Co-worker](#) added to your [Tenancy Agreement](#) then they need to add their name to your site's waiting list. From the Waiting List link above you can also find out how many people are on the waiting list for your site (some have much bigger waiting lists than others).

Ending Your Tenancy

If you want to end your tenancy you have to inform the council. Use the Web form and choose "To end your Tenancy Agreement" from the dropdown menu. If you have a [Site Rep](#) please let them know that you are leaving. Once you have informed the council you have 14 days to remove all your tools and belongings. You must remove any rubbish and leave the plot in a tidy condition ready for the next tenant. You won't get any rent rebate.



Rules

When you pay your first rent, you are agreeing to abide by the Council's allotment rules.

You will be sent the legal rules that govern your plot and Bristol City Council's Allotments "Dos and Don'ts".

This document is a simplified version of the rules and is meant as a guide to interpreting the legal speak of the actual rules. It is important however to also read the legal rules as the Do's and Don'ts document does not cover all of your legal obligations.

To help with this we have separated this list of rules into Hard Rules and Soft Rules. Hard Rules are those rules which if you break you are at very serious risk of having your tenancy terminated. Soft Rules are those which if you break consistently you might lose your tenancy. We have quoted the rules as they are at the time of writing (January 2022).

Hard Rules

1. To pay the rent hereby reserved without deduction in manner hereinbefore mentioned.
2. To use the allotment garden as an allotment garden only and in particular not to use the allotment garden for any trade or business whatsoever.
3. To keep the allotment garden clean, free from weeds and well manured and otherwise maintain it in a good and proper state of cultivation and good condition.
4. Not to cause or permit or suffer to be caused or to arise any nuisance or annoyance to the occupier of any adjoining or neighbouring property or any obstruction of or encroachment on any path or hauling way intended for the use of the occupiers of any adjoining or neighbouring property or use barbed wire for a fence adjoining any such path or hauling way.
5. Not to assign underlet or part with the possession of the allotment garden, the hut or any part of the allotment garden.
6. Not to stay overnight on your allotment garden.
7. Not to use any form of violence or harassment on-site be it physical or verbal.
8. Not to bring firearms onto allotment gardens.



Soft Rules

1. Not without the previous written consent of the council as landlords (whether or not consent of the council in any other capacity has been given or is required) to erect or place on the allotment garden any building structure or erection of any kind whatsoever (other than the hut) and in particular not to use, place or bury any corrugated or sheet iron (or similar object) for any purpose on or near any boundary of the allotment garden provided that where such written consent is granted any building or hut shall be maintained in a good and sufficient state of repair and condition to the complete satisfaction of the council failing which the council may require the Tenant to remove such building or hut from the allotment garden.
2. To leave a clear unobstructed and of at least (450mm) 18 inch division path on each side of the allotment garden and to maintain the path in a safe condition, keeping any grass mown on a regular basis.
3. To permit any officer or member of the council or any other person authorised by any such officer or member otherwise entitled to enter and inspect the allotment garden and the hut at any time.
4. Not without the previous written consent of the council as landlords to plant or permit or suffer to grow any trees (other than any trees which the council may require to be preserved).
5. Not to deposit or permit to suffer to be deposited on the allotment garden any refuse or decaying matter (except manure and compost in such quantities as may reasonably be required for use in cultivation on the allotment garden) or place any refuse or matter elsewhere on any adjoining or neighbouring property.
6. Forthwith to provide and fix and thereafter to maintain in good condition in a conspicuous position in the front of the allotment garden a small board bearing clearly the number of the allotment garden.
7. Forthwith to inform the council of any changes in his or her address.
8. To observe and perform any covenants, conditions and provisions contained in any deed or document under which the council hold or derive title to the allotment garden.
9. To yield up the allotment garden and the hut if provided by the council on the termination of these tenancies respectively in such condition as shall be in compliance with the agreements herein contained.
10. To observe and perform any regulation which may be endorsed on this agreement or annexed hereto.
11. Not to use hoses and sprinklers for watering crops on allotments.
12. Not to use or bring on site any carpets or tyres.
13. Not to have smoky bonfires that cause a nuisance.
14. Not to trespass on other people's allotment gardens unless previously given permission.
15. If your site has gates you **MUST** always ensure you **LOCK** them behind you.



Useful Websites

Community growing groups and organisations

[Avon Organic Group](#)

[Avon Wildlife Trust Feed Bristol](#)

[Bristol City Council's Blaise Plant Nursery](#)

[Bristol East Allotment Association](#)

[Bristol Food Network](#)

[Easton Community Garden](#)

[Golden Hill Community Garden](#)

[Hartcliffe Health and Environment Action Group \(HHEAG\)](#)

[Horfield and District Allotments Association](#)

[Hotwells and District Allotment Association](#)

[Incredible Edible Bristol](#)

[Knowle West 'Let's Grow'](#)

[Lawrence Weston Community Farm](#)

[National Allotment Society](#)

[Sims Hill Shared Harvest](#)

[South West Counties Allotment Association](#)

[St Werburghs City Farm](#)

[Windmill Hill City Farm](#)

Other useful organisations

[Avon Wildlife Trust](#)

[Bristol Permaculture Group \(Facebook\)](#)

[British Beekeepers Association](#)

[Chickens - Allotment Gardens](#)

[Garden Organic](#)

[National Allotment Society](#)

[Permaculture Association](#)

[Royal Horticultural Society](#)

[The Soil Association](#)

Bristol City Council

[Allotments Forum](#)

[Allotments Office](#)

[Allotment Waiting List](#)

[Blaise Nursery](#)

[Complaints Procedures](#)

[Household waste Recycling Centre](#)

[Renting a Council market pitch](#)

Garden Centres

[Almondsbury Garden Centre](#)

[Henleaze Garden Centre](#)

[Riverside Garden Centre](#)

Seeds

[Bristol Seed Swap](#)

[Garden Organic](#)

[Incredible Vegetables](#)

[Jekka's Herb Farm](#)

[More Veg](#)

[Pennard Plants](#)

[Premier Seeds Direct](#)

[Real Seeds](#)

[Seed Co-operative](#)

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[Benefits](#) - Information and discounts

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[Books](#) - Recommended Reading

[Brassicas](#)

[Bristol City Council's Allotments Office](#)

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and recycling

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Bristol Allotment

Tenants Handbook

Authors:

Ruth Hecht | Judy Furber

John Holland | David Griffiths

Design:

Andy Degg

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