



## Health and Safety Guidance – General safety for Plotholders

### Health and Safety Guide to Allotments

Allotment sites and the activity of gardening is relatively risk free if people are aware of the hazards and make steps to ensure that themselves, other people and wildlife are not put at risk. Hart Allotments undertakes risk assessments on the allotment site. Please read and consider the following points before allotment gardening

#### 1. Physical exercise

1.1. Digging the soil is one of the most physically demanding tasks in gardening, as it involves continued bending and straightening of the back when lifting a spade of soil. It needs to be approached with care, particularly if you are not used to heavy work. Sensible shoes are essential to save you from a forked foot or worse.

#### 2. Hazardous rubbish

2.1. Ensure that you do not leave broken glass and other hazardous materials on the allotment.

#### 3. Tetanus or Lockjaw

3.1. This is a serious infection caused by bacterium that lives in the soil and especially manured soil. It enters the body through the tiniest abrasion, scratch, thorn, puncture or cut and a few days or weeks later the illness hits. Please make sure that you have a vaccination that can protect you against tetanus.

#### 4. Skin irritations

4.1. Wear gloves and a long-sleeved shirt when pruning plants that can cause skin irritations.

#### 5. Garden tools

5.1. Garden tools can be a hazard if they are not stored properly or are left lying around the plot when not in use. For example upturned spades and forks.

#### 6. Pesticides and fertilisers

6.1. If you must use chemicals, please keep them to your own plot and do not put them on your neighbour's plot. They may garden organically and will not thank you for it!

6.2. When using pesticides or fertilisers ensure to follow the manufacturer's instructions and wear suitable clothing.

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

6.4 Storage of chemicals and fertilizers on site is not permitted.

#### 7. First aid kit

7.1. A first aid kit is provided on site in the shed. If you use any items please replace them so they are there for others to use.

#### 8. Power Tools

8.1. Most power tools need specific safety and handling training e.g. power chainsaws, strimmers, lawn mowers with metal blades and rotavators. A large rotavator can be a bit of a strain to control, so take a while to get used to it. Power strimmers, shredders, all have their dangers as well. Always follow the manufactures instructions.

#### 9. Legionella

9.1. In very hot weather, especially in green houses, it is possible, although very rare, for Legionella (Legionnaires' Disease) to multiply in warm water to potentially harmful levels. Avoid storing potting media in greenhouses or spraying fine mists



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### 10. Ponds and water

10.1. People at most risk of drowning in ponds are children under three years of age. Risk from drowning decreases as a child's age increases and so their understanding of the danger. Children should be supervised on allotments at all times and must not go on other people's plots without their express permission.

### 11. Hazards for wildlife on allotments

11.1. These include: litter, low-level fruit netting, use of pesticides, open drains, slug pellets, mowing, strimming and broken glass. Certain wildlife e.g. badgers, slowworms, some birds of prey and reptiles have specific legal protection concerning their management. Contact English Nature for advice about protected species.

### 12. Vermin

12.1. Rats carry 70 diseases including Weil's Disease, which can cause human death via contaminated water. Plotholders must be vigilant and report any signs of infestation, which include burrows, tracks, droppings and observing the vermin. Contact a member of the committee if any rats are seen.

### 13. Risk of infection

13.1. Humans are at risk of infection from handling animal manure. Always wear gloves when handling any type of manure. Fresh manure should be heaped for 6 months, giving time for e-coli to break down. It is the responsibility of the plot holders for basic hygiene and to check tetanus boosters are up to date.

13.2. Stopping for a lunch break helps restore energy after lots of digging but don't forget to wash your hands first. Keep a hand-sterilising gel handy or in the shed.

13.3. Always wash your fruit or vegetables thoroughly before eating them.

### 14. Personal safety

14.1. Allotment gardeners often spend long periods of time on their own on site: take personal safety seriously and tell another person where you are going and what time you will be back. If you have a mobile telephone take it with you. Always close the gate behind you upon entering and when leaving the site ensure that you lock the padlock.

14.2. Be aware of weather conditions that can affect walking surfaces such as hardcore or grass. Use sunscreen to protect you from over exposure to the sun.

This document must be read in conjunction with the Allotment Tenancy Agreement and the relevant Policy and Procedures. Please refer to the risk assessment log on the Hart Allotments website for further information.