

## ALLOTMENT AND COMMUNITY GARDEN HANDBOOK

This handbook provides you with information about some of the terms of the tenancy agreement, as well as some additional useful information and important safety advice required when licencing an allotment plot.

Ebbsfleet Garden City Trust (hereafter referred to as EGCT or Trust) owns the allotment site and is your landlord. Your Tenancy Agreement is with the Trust.

Plans are in place to establish a Community Garden and Allotment Association. Once established the Community Garden and Allotment Association will be in charge of the Tenancy Agreements, as well as managing the oversight and use of the allotment plots and community garden. The Trust will remain as the Landlords, leasing the site to the Association, who in turn will create the Tenancy Agreement with the plot holders.

Allotment plot holders and Community Gardeners are invited to become part of, or help to run, this Association. This will ensure it meets the needs of the users. Some terms laid out in this handbook may be revised by the Association, with the agreement of the Landlord and plot holders.

The tenancy will be renewed annually. The rent and any other charges are fixed annually, and payable in advance. Failure to either sign and return the Tenancy Agreement or to pay the rent by the agreed due date may put your tenancy renewal at risk.

If you know you are going to be away before the renewal date, you should make arrangements to ensure you renew your allotment tenancy beforehand, or have your mail forwarded to you.

### DEFINITIONS

**Cultivation** – the whole cycle of activities needed to produce a crop, from digging it over in the winter, manuring, sowing, weeding, watering and harvesting.

## CONTENTS

1. Tenancy Guidance
2. Allowable uses of the Allotments
3. Livestock
4. Security
5. Visitors and Pets
6. Paths and Access
7. Access to water
8. Sheds, Greenhouses and Other Structures
9. Composting, Manure and Waste
10. Health and Safety
11. Chemicals, Pests, Disease and Vermin
12. Fuel and other Flammable Material
13. Miscellaneous
14. Managing Disputes

## Tenancy Guidance

All Tenancy Agreements will be renewed on the same date each year, this will help to keep admin costs low, thus ensuring the annual charge for the allotment will be minimised. The annual charge can be divided into a maximum of 2 payments, again ensuring we keep the costs as low as possible.

Plot inspections will be carried out twice a year to ensure the plot holders are meeting the terms of the Tenancy Agreement, the measures laid out in this handbook and in the H&S Risk Assessment. Plot holders failing an inspection will receive a written warning, if there is evidence that their allotment is not being cultivated in line with the tenancy agreement. You will receive a warning letter outlining any areas of concern and given an opportunity to explain your circumstances and make any necessary adjustments. Failure to comply with the tenancy agreement may lead to the termination of your tenancy.

Please read section 5 of your Tenancy Agreement to understand the rules around cultivation and use of your plot. We recognise that sometimes you may have difficulty cultivating your plot, for a limited period. Should this happen, you must let us know as soon as possible. We aim to work with you to overcome challenges and avoid the termination of your tenancy.

Your plot number must always remain clearly visible.

If you wish to vacate your allotment plot, send an email to [info@egctrust.org.uk](mailto:info@egctrust.org.uk). You need to provide 3 months notice.

If you change your address, please inform us in writing, by emailing [info@egctrust.org.uk](mailto:info@egctrust.org.uk)

## Allowable uses of the Allotments

The plot can only be used to grow vegetables, fruits and flowers for the consumption or enjoyment of you and your family. The Tenancy Agreement (section 5) contains further details on the use of your plot and how much of the plot must be cultivated by crops.

Poor standards of cultivation can negatively impact other plots, for example, by allowing the spread of weeds, other vegetation, and disease.

Produce cannot be sold from your plot, and the Trust will not be selling seeds. As mentioned in the introduction, this will be reviewed when the Association is managing the site.

Plot holders must not use their plot for long-term storage, or for the hoarding of materials. This will make the site appear unsightly.

## Livestock

You cannot keep birds, chickens, bees or other livestock on your allotment plot. Ponds are not permitted.

## Security

Rules regarding the sharing of access codes or keys for the locked gates of the allotments are contained within the Tenancy Agreement.

All plot holders and their guests are responsible for keeping the allotments secure, in order to provide a safe environment. We advise, where possible, that you keep your tools off site. We are not responsible for the security of or the loss of, or damage to, tools or other contents on your plot.

We encourage you to report any incidents of theft or criminal activity to the police.

## Visitors and Pets

The plot holders are responsible for the behaviour and safety of any guests or helpers they bring onto site. Children are welcome on the allotments, it is a wonderful environment for children to learn about planting and growing, however it is a requirement that they are always supervised by a responsible adult. The plot holder must ensure their visitors do not go onto another plot without the express permission of the plot holder.

Dogs must be kept on a lead at all times. Any faeces are to be removed and disposed of off-site, by the Plot holder.

## Paths and Access

Plot holders are responsible for ensuring the paths are kept clear at all times. Paths between plots must be kept wide enough for wheelbarrows.

EGCT will be responsible for the maintenance of the gravel paths, turfed areas around the plots and the wildflower meadows.

## Fences, Hedges and Trees

The Tenancy Agreement contains rules regarding the use of fences, hedges and trees. The fencing and hedges that act as a perimeter to the allotments provide security as well as an attractive visual aspect to the site.

EGCT are responsible for the maintenance of the trees, hedges and fences. If you notice any damage, please inform us as soon as possible. As stated in your Tenancy Agreement you may plant dwarf fruiting trees, with a max height of 1.8m. Please speak to us if you wish to plant more than 1.

Please note you may not construct a fence on your plot as it is not private property, or use barbed wire anywhere on your plot.

## Access to Water

Watering is one of the largest costs of an allotment, so plot holders should use water responsibly, utilising water butts where possible. Hosepipes, sprinklers, and other irrigation systems are not permitted.

Please try to stick to the following guidelines:

- (a) water in the evening to reduce water loss by evaporation
- (b) collect and store rainwater where you can
- (c) mulch to retain moisture
- (d) report leaks to us straight away
- (e) Ensure you always turn off the taps

Please note - it is better to do a big watering once a week, rather than frequent small watering.

The Trust reserves the right to add a surcharge for water. This will be based on the water usage for the site.

### **Sheds and Greenhouses**

We recommend using a lockable storage box for tools if you choose to keep tools on site. However a shed or greenhouse can be installed if it meets the criteria listed below. We strongly encourage you to discuss the position of your shed or greenhouse with your neighbours to ensure they have no objections.

If storage is installed that does not meet this criteria you will be asked to change it, at your expense.

- It is a temporary structure, and not built of brick or concrete.
- The base cannot be made of poured concrete or any other hard core. Concrete slabs or bricks that are not fixed to the ground are permissible. We strongly recommend you do not use a wooden pallet base as they rot, and over time can become uneven, attracting mice and rats.
- The size must be proportionate to the size of the plot. The maximum size for a 125m<sup>2</sup> plot would be 2m x 2m. The maximum height is 1.5m
- If you are installing a greenhouse, only glass substitutes such as polycarbonate, or Perspex can be used.

We are not responsible for the security of or the loss of, or damage to, tools or other contents of your shed or greenhouse.

At the end of your tenancy you will be required to remove your structure, at your expense, unless agreed otherwise.

### **Health and Safety**

#### **Fire**

In case of fire or serious accident, phone 999 on a mobile phone if available.

In the case of fire, Plot holders, community gardeners and visitors should leave the allotment site immediately, and gather at the main gate. Allotment plot holders should ensure that all people working on their allotment garden are accounted for. Allotment plot holders and Community Gardeners are encouraged to look out for other gardeners or visitors on adjoining allotment plots to ensure their safety.

The site contact should also be notified.

### **Risk Assessment**

The Trust's Health and Safety Policy specifies that a Risk Assessment will be carried out every six months by the Trust. Plot holders will be informed if there are any actions they are required to take.

### **Accidents and Incidents**

If there is an accident deemed as serious, or a serious near miss, notify the site contact, who will then log the incident in the incident log. Where it is deemed necessary, follow up actions will be carried out.

If 999 is called, the address of the site is located in the notice board.

### **Composting, Manure and Waste**

Plot holders are expected to keep their plot, any communal pathways and other communal areas, such as the Central Facility, clear of rubbish and waste.

You may keep manure or compost in quantities reasonably required for cultivation of your plot. You must cover any manure on your allotment which has not been dug in.

Vermin like compost, especially if it has food scraps, so for this reason the plot holders are strongly encouraged to use the communal compost bin for their waste and avoid using household waste. Guidelines for suitable materials will be provided on site. Compost heaps should be turned regularly, every 6 to 8 weeks is recommended, to deter vermin from using them as a home.

You must remove all non-compostable waste from your allotment. If a plot holder wishes to use their own compost bin, it must be a solid sided compost bin.

Carpets, underlay, and artificial grass must not be used on your allotment. Many contain toxic chemicals which breakdown into the soil and can be taken up by vegetables and fruit, or man-made fibres which do not breakdown.

Please bag up your rubbish and take it home or to the refuse and recycling centre.

### **Chemicals, Pests, Disease and Vermin**

As the Tenancy Agreement states, commercially available products can be used to control pests, diseases or vegetation, as can organic homemade products.

When using products that you have purchased, please use the minimum effective amount for the size of your plot. Handle, use and store them with care and in accordance with the maker's instructions. Never pour them into unmarked containers.

If you see evidence of vermin (e.g. rats), make sure you wear disposable gloves when dealing with the problem, and harvesting your vegetables. Please notify the site contact, who will report it to the council pest control team.

Remember to thoroughly wash (and peel if appropriate) any food you harvest as rats urinate wherever they go. Vegetables with signs of rat damage should be destroyed as rats carry risk of diseases such as Weil's disease and Salmonella.

Ensure your allotment plot does not become overgrown or allow rubbish to build up as this provides cover for rats to live under.

### **Fuel and Other Inflammable Material**

Fuel such as petrol and diesel must not be stored on site.

Oil, lubricants or other inflammable liquids (except for fuel)

- (a) must be for use in garden equipment only
- (b) must be stored in a locked shed, and
- (c) must be kept in an approved container of no more than 5 litres capacity.

### **Miscellaneous items**

BBQs and bonfires are not permitted on the allotments.

We have a noticeboard near the entrance, which contains a map of the plot layouts. We will use it as a way to keep in touch and provide useful information.

Vehicles are not allowed on site, and must be left in the parking spaces provided.

### **Managing Disputes**

If there is a disagreement between plot holders about the allotments, the Trust site contact should be notified to act as a mediator and will aim to work with you to reach a reasonable agreement. We will investigate the dispute by talking to all parties involved, and our decision is final and binding.

Acting in an abusive or aggressive manner towards another plot holder or guest will not be tolerated and will lead to termination of the tenancy.