

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 leasing 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.

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Tenancy Guidance

Where possible, 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 admin costs as low as possible. Tenancy Agreements do not need to be signed each year, payment of the annual rent will be taken as agreement to continue the tenancy.

The Community garden will not be under lease as this is a public space open for everyone to participate in and enjoy. However, as the Community Garden will be part of the Association the expectation regarding maintenance, usage and upkeep of the Community Garden remains the same as with the allotments.

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 Health and Safety (H&S) Risk Assessment. Plot holders failing an inspection will receive a written warning, including 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 will 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. You need to provide 3 months notice.

No business or trade may be carried out by any individual on any allotment site or within the Community Garden.

If you change your address, please inform us in writing, by emailing info@egctrust.org.uk

Allowable uses of the Allotments and Community Garden

The plot can only be used to grow vegetables, fruits, herbs 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 may 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.

The Community Garden raised planters, and the community garden allotment plot based at Ebbsfleet Green, can only be used to grow vegetables, fruits, herbs and flowers for the consumption of the Community Gardeners and the wider community. Harvesting of the Community Garden and Orchard must be carried out collectively at a time previously agreed by the Community Gardeners. It is up to the Community Gardeners to agree how and when they wish to share the harvest. However this should be done in line with the core values of the Community Gardeners, and for the benefit of the wider community where possible.

Livestock

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

Security

You will be provided with the keycode to access the gates to the allotments. As stipulated in the Tenancy Agreement, you cannot share this information with anyone other than a person you have authorised to work on your allotment. Community Gardeners will also have access to the allotments area.

The communal shed is accessed using a key and is there for everyone to use (allotment plot holders and Community Gardeners). You may not create a replica of the key, and you may not give it to anyone else, other than persons you have authorised to work on your allotments. If you lose the key, there will be a charge of £6 to have a new key provided.

All plot holders and their guests are responsible for keeping the allotments secure, in order to provide a safe environment. Please ensure you lock the gate whenever you leave the site. 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 or in the Community Garden.

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

Visitors and Pets

The allotment 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. Paths between or around allotments cannot be dug up or blocked.

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 act as a perimeter to the allotments providing 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 or use barbed wire on your plot as it is not private property.

Access to Water

Watering is one of the largest costs of an allotment, so plot holders and Community Gardeners should use water responsibly, utilising water butts where possible. Hosepipes, sprinklers, and other irrigation systems are not permitted unless specific permission has been provided by the Trust.

Please try to stick to the following guidelines:

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

The Community Garden will have a lockable tap to reduce the risk of misuse or anti-social behaviour as it is located in a public area. Only the Community Gardeners will be provided with access to the tap.

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

All Tenants must immediately report any water leaks, including dripping taps, to the Site contact and try to prevent further loss until a permanent repair has been carried out. 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

If you choose to keep tools onsite, we recommend using a lockable storage box kept inside the communal shed. If you wish to install your own shed, greenhouse, storage box or polytunnel, you must obtain written permission from the Trust by sending an email to info@egctrust.org.uk, with the following information

- Plot number
- Size of structure
- Material used to build structure
- The intended position of the structure
- Have you spoken to all neighbouring allotment holders about this
- Timeframe when it will be put up

An application form is available from the Trust.

You do not need permission to install a cold frame, however it cannot be a glass cold frame.

We strongly encourage you to discuss the position of your shed or greenhouse with your neighbours to ensure they have no objections, i.e. blocking light.

Any storage installed must meet the following criteria, if it does not meet this criteria you will be asked to change it, at your expense.

- It is a temporary structure, and cannot be built of brick or concrete.
- It must be laid on a dry foundation, however the base cannot be made of poured concrete or any other hard core. If you use concrete slabs or bricks for the base, they cannot be fixed to the ground. 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 125m² plot would be 2m x 2m. The maximum height for any structure is 2m .
- If you are installing a greenhouse or cold frame, only glass substitutes such as polycarbonate, or Perspex can be used.
- We recommend you use a commercially-produced building, alternatively, any proposed structure must comply with a similar standard and must be maintained in a good state of repair.
- If any building is deemed to be in a poor state of repair, notice will be served outlining the repairs required which must be carried out within one month. Failure to carry out the repair may result in the removal of the building, at your expense, and further action taken if deemed necessary.

The Trust is not responsible for the security of or the loss of, or damage to your storage shed, greenhouse, tools or other contents. We recommend you use a padlock or D Lock on any storage you have on your plot.

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

Communal shed

There is one communal shed located on each site for allotment plot holders and Community Gardeners. Each allotment plot holder may store 1 labelled box in the shed (dimensions cannot be more than 75cm x 60cm). Please note any boxes stored in the shed will be stacked. There may be space for some tools (1-2 per plot) which need to be clearly labelled. **If you choose to store equipment in the communal shed you do so at your own risk. The Trust does not take responsibility for the loss or damage of any items stored in the shed.** For this reason we do not encourage you to store your tools in the shed. Allotments can be vandalised. When using the communal shed you must ensure you leave the shed in a tidy manner, clearly label your own belongings, be respectful of other people's belongings and avoid using anything that is not your own. You must ensure the shed is fully secured after use.

Ebbsfleet Green – this shed is for the use of the Community Gardeners and allotment holders.

Springhead Park – This shed has 2 sections. The small section is for the use of the Community Gardeners, and the large section is for the use of the allotment holders.

Health and Safety

Plot-holders should ensure that their plot is free from hazards such as exposed nails, discarded tools, hazards hidden within undergrowth such as discarded tools, improperly stored dangerous materials such as those listed below. Please remember that we are legally responsible for the safety of anybody who may enter our plots.

We advise all gardeners to:

- use gloves, especially when handling chemicals, manure and compost
- keep up to date with tetanus jabs
- follow safety instructions and wear safety equipment if applicable (eye protection)
- Wear suitable clothing, be it sun cream, sun hat and glasses or layered, warm clothes, including waterproof clothing if required
- wash hands after gardening
- Do not drink the water from the water butt, and do not splash it onto your face, and wash hands after using it
- When it is very hot
 - o Drink fluids to keep hydrated,
 - o Do not work in the middle of the day, when it is hottest
 - o Cover arms and shoulders.
- acquaint themselves with the safe use and storage of power tools, if required
- Use safe lifting and carrying techniques when moving heavy items
 - o Make sure the load is stable and light enough to be safely lifted
 - o Get a good grip
 - o Bend at the knees, and ensure your feet are stable
 - o Keep the load close to your body
 - o Keep your back straight, do not bend it
 - o Ask for help if needed

Fire – Emergency Action Plan

In case of fire or serious accident, phone 999.

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 on info@egctrust.org.uk

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 and Community Gardeners will be informed if there are any actions they are required to take. Plot holders and Community Gardeners should exercise a 'Duty of Care' towards others, and notify the site contact on info@egctrust.org.uk if they notice any hazards / risks.

There will be an informal site check carried out every month by the Trust.

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 on the notice board (including What 3 Words).

Composting, Manure and Waste

Plot holders and Community gardeners 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 and the Community Garden. 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 and Community Gardeners are strongly encouraged to use the communal compost bin for garden waste only, not food 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 and the community garden. 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 break down into the soil and can be absorbed by vegetables and fruit, or man-made fibres which do not break down.

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.

Any chemicals must be compliant with COSHH regulations and any other relevant legislation.

If you see evidence of vermin (e.g. rats), make sure you wear disposable gloves when dealing with the problem, and when harvesting your vegetables. Please notify the site contact immediately, 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 the noticeboard as a way to keep in touch and provide useful information including about the activities of the Community Gardeners.

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 and Community Gardeners about the allotments or Community Garden, 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, Community Gardener or guest will not be tolerated and will lead to termination of the tenancy. We ask everyone using the Allotments and Community Garden to treat each other with respect at all times.

If you would like to report a complaint, please read the Dealing with Complaints Policy on the EGCT website – at the bottom of each page.

Antisocial Behaviour Policy

Antisocial behaviour is defined as 'behaviour by a person which causes, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to persons not of the same household as the person'. This includes, but not exclusively: verbal abuse, theft, threats, noise nuisance, assault, actual damage, dangerous or violent behaviour, and indecent exposure.

Antisocial behaviour towards other plot holders or their property is not tolerated. All allotment plot holders should be able to attend their plot without fear or harassment.

If you experience or witness anti-social behaviour, from another tenant or someone else on the allotment site, please report it to Kent Police. You can use their online form

[KENT POLICE -Reporting anti-social behaviour](#)

Where personal safety is at risk, the tenant should contact the police as soon as possible.

Please also report the incident to the site contact using info@egctrust.org.uk

Where appropriate, the site contact will seek information from both sides to resolve the situation. An incident of antisocial behaviour may result in the termination or non-renewal of the tenancy of the perpetrator.

If police involvement results in a civil or criminal charge, this may result in termination of the allotment tenancy.