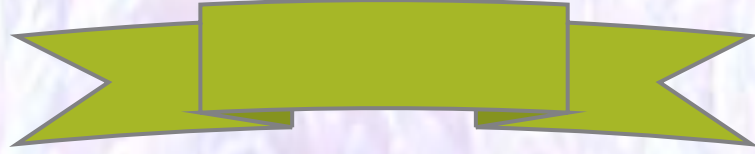


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RBRGHA Ltd



WOLLATON ALLOTMENTS HANDBOOK

Viv Crump July 2019

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For water conservation and bonfires see Rules and Regulations of the site



1 Thinking of renting an allotment?

People take on an allotment for many different reasons. Growing your own fruit and vegetables means you can get really fresh, great tasting seasonal produce. You can choose to grow organically or grow unusual varieties that are hard to find or expensive in the shops.

Having an allotment is a healthy outdoor pursuit which can improve your cardiovascular and mental health and lower your stress levels. Allotment gardening also offers you a great way to unwind in the fresh air and the chance to meet people who share your interests.

Growing your own also means that you are doing your bit for the environment too, helping to reduce the energy use and pollution from the transport and packaging of shop bought food and you will want to promote wildlife on your plot.

Renting an allotment and making it productive is a year-round commitment and may be hard work to begin with. Consider if you have several hours a week to spare, even in the winter as this is the time to prepare your plot for the following season. Remember little and often is the mantra. Demand is high and failure to keep the site well cultivated may mean that you will lose your plot. Before you apply for one please read the notes below and take some time to consider if you are able to spare the time needed; if you have not gardened before perhaps you could help a friend with their plot.

2 What is a tenancy agreement?

The tenancy agreement is a legally binding contract made between you and the Allotment Association, which outlines what is expected from both parties. It is important to read your tenancy agreement as breaking the contract can result in the Association issuing breach notices and ultimately regaining tenancy of the allotment plot. In addition to the tenancy agreement and the key to the site.

A tenancy agreement will be issued if you are successful in renting a plot.

Residents from NG8 and NG9 will be given priority as will people who don't already have an allotment elsewhere.

We will contact you when you are at the top of the waiting list and a plot becomes available, usually we will arrange a site visit and if you want the plot, we will issue you with a tenancy agreement for signing, at this point you will be given a key once you have paid the invoice and you can get started on the plot.

3 Health & Safety

Allotment sites and the activity of gardening is relatively risk free if people are aware of the hazards and take steps to ensure that they, other people and wildlife are not put at risk.

Allotments and gardening provide you with a lot of physical exercise. Which is good, but don't overdo it. Divide large jobs into small manageable tasks and take a break between them, making sure you drink plenty of fluids.

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 clothing and footwear is essential to save you from a forked foot or worse.

Do not do too much work in one go, have regular rests, and never carry out dangerous jobs when you are tired, as this is often when accidents happen

All gardeners should be aware of the risk of catching Tetanus (Lockjaw). This is a serious infection caused by bacterium that lives in the soil and especially manured soil. It enters the body through cuts

and abrasions and a few days or weeks later the illness hits. Please make sure that you have a vaccination that protects you against tetanus.

Wear gloves and other suitable protection when in close proximity to plants and insects that can sting, bite or cause other skin irritations

Be mindful that in very hot weather, especially in green houses, it is possible, although very rare, for Legionella (Legionnaire's Disease) to multiply in warm water to potentially harmful levels. Never drink water from water butts or tanks, avoid leaving bottled water on site from one visit to the next and only drink from taps if you know for sure they provide safe drinking water

Protect yourself from water-borne diseases such as Weil's disease by wearing waterproof gloves, clothing and boots when working with stagnant water

Wash your hands after any gardening activity and always make sure you clean and protect any cuts, scratches and abrasions

4 Tools & Equipment

Garden tools can be a hazard if they are not stored properly or are left lying around the allotment when not in use. For example upturned spades and forks. Always reserve that little bit of time to put things away after a day's work. An untidy allotment is a dangerous one.

Making sure your tools are the right size and style for you and are kept in good condition will help prevent a lot of aches and pains

Most power tools need a reasonable amount of knowledge and training to be able to use them efficiently and safely e.g. Chainsaws, Strimmers, Lawnmowers and Rotavators. A good Rotavator can drastically reduce manual labour, but is also difficult to control, so familiarise yourself with the controls and take a while to get used to it. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for any powered appliance. Never attempt to repair or maintain a powered appliance whilst it is still connected to the power source
Use ear-defenders, dust masks and goggles where appropriate.

<https://www.allaboutallotments.co.uk/health-and-safety-allotments>


5 Gardening Tips for Beginners

If you're just getting into gardening and need some expert advice, you'll find plenty of knowledge to help you get the most from your plot. For the seasoned pros among you, this chapter will provide encouragement and inspiration for those days when your fingers feel less than green.

6 Enjoy it

The first advice from the experts is to remember gardening should be fun. Yes, growing can be frustrating, stressful and hard work – but so is anything that's worthwhile doing. *"Above all gardening is all about enjoying what you do"*.

Sometimes we get so wrapped up in weeding, watering and harvesting, we forget to look at what we've achieved. Take 15 minutes to enjoy your garden; sit down and relax in it and enjoy your hard work.

When you're starting out, the important thing is to enjoy your garden. 

The world is moving at a faster and faster pace these days, so make the most of something moving slowly for a change. Don't spend time focusing on what you can't do, just focus on what you can, with an eye on the wildlife that shares the garden with you.

7 Embrace the learning curve

Gardening is a steep learning curve and, if you're just starting out, chances are there'll be a few hiccups along the way. *Nobody gets it right first time.* Plants can be moved and new varieties of fruit

and vegetables can be sown and garden designs can be developed. When something works it's amazingly satisfying and surely that's why we all garden. Learning from your failures is what counts; and it's this that helps you to grow as a gardener.

8 Getting to know your soil

Understand your soil and you'll get the best from your garden. Is it heavy or light? How well does it drain? What's the pH level? How much sun does it get? With the answers to these questions, you'll have the tools to know what will thrive on your patch of land.

If you're wondering where to begin, start with a good fertiliser, and what better way to feed your soil than to dig in some good, old fashioned manure. It's usually free (even if it does require a little bit of work) and the benefits to your crops are superb.

You could of course make your own compost: Layer different types of waste vegetable waste, cardboard, straw, manure and make sure you keep mixing it up.

Water your compost heap if it looks dry, or the ants will soon take over.

Grow some Comfrey plants which can then be used as a compost activator, liquid manure, or a mulch.

Look after your soil and your soil will look after you – it's that simple. Everything starts with the quality of your soil. From no-dig methods to improving your soil Victorian style, here's how to keep your beds in tip-top condition.

Top tip *If your soil's just too dry an environment for plants to thrive, try the Victorian method of 'puddling in'. When you're planting your seedlings, simply, dig the hole and fill with a mix of water and liquid seaweed, and then plant directly into the hole and back-fill while it's still filled with water.*

9 Stop digging



If you haven't heard of no-dig gardening, you could be missing a trick. The method involves dressing the soil each autumn with compost or manure, allowing nature to break it down over the winter, and then planting directly into it the following spring – with no digging in.

Charles Dowding has been practising no dig for 35 years and says it "saves time, gives bigger harvests, is ecologically beneficial and keeps carbon in the soil."

No dig means healthy soil, far fewer weeds, much less work, and abundant harvests.

Not disturbing the soil means that the natural diversity remains intact, the soil flora and fauna flourish.

Did you know that digging the ground and turning the soil actually encourages more weeds into your plot? When you mulch the surface of the beds with organic matter and never turn the soil over, the weed seeds that are invariably in the soil never have the incentive to germinate.

(Charles Dowding is a well known author, he has his own website and writes a gardening column for The Telegraph)

<https://www.charlesdowding.co.uk/>

10 Weeding

Pesky weeds can be a gardener's nemesis. Keeping unwanted greenery under control is essential if you're going to get the best from your garden, but weeding often feels like a never-ending, thankless chore. If you're at the end of your tether with keeping them down, don't despair. Experts have some surprising advice that could change the way you look at weeds forever.

If you're faced with a plot that's gone back to nature and is choked with weeds, the only thing to do is blitz them. Once you have tackled the weeds, it's time to keep them under control. Frequent weeding is the best way to do this.

Little and often is a great mantra. In dry weather, try and get around with the hoe as often as you can – 5 minutes weeding with a hoe can save 2-3 hours hand weeding.

11 Try membrane

Using membrane will suppress 95% of weeds: *If you want to beat the weeds and reduce weeding to the absolute minimum a good method is to lay a weed suppressing membrane.* Cardboard is also very useful at times.

12 Stay focused

When you keep an allotment, you'll find you have umpteen tasks that all need doing urgently. The key is to stay focused and achieve one goal at a time. When faced with a daunting gardening task set yourself what you will do plus how long and then stop.

Allotments are undergoing a renaissance, with gardeners snapping up available plots to grow their own fruit, veg, and even flowers. If you're lucky enough to have acquired an allotment, or are thinking about doing so, here are some expert tips to help you make the most of your patch.

13 Take it steady

As exciting as gaining an allotment might be, resist the temptation to dive into growing without a plan. Take things a bit slowly, plan and be patient... focus on what you eat at home such as strawberries, raspberries, potatoes, green beans and onions. Growing plants from seed is immensely satisfying and will save you a lot of money.

Here's how to make growing seeds and seedlings a success:

Check the weather before planting your seeds. Don't be in a hurry to sow seeds early or plant out tender crops, you'll only end up doing the same job twice.

An average temperature of around 15°C (59°F) is required for good germination for most general plant varieties. If it is not possible to maintain the required temperature artificially, sowing should be delayed until the weather is warmer."

The same goes for planting inside – leave it until the weather begins to warm up, Because seedlings started off too soon will: grow weak and leggy before the conditions are right for planting out in the ground.

Let the weather and the soil tell you when it is time to plant.

14 Get organised

Don't cover seeds until you have sown them all. When you're sowing into modules or cardboard tubes, it's easy to forget where you have and haven't sown.

Fill them all with compost, make a hole in each and drop a seed in each. But don't cover any of them over until you've sown a seed in every hole. By leaving them uncovered you will see when you've done this. If you cover them as you go along you can easily lose track and leave one or two without seeds.

Remember to label up your plot so that you know what you have sown and where.

Write up labels well in advance and store them with corresponding seed packets:

Sow seeds at the right time for them - not too early!

Remember to stagger your sowing, or you'll end up with a glut at harvest time.

Succession growing spreads the harvest.

Growing your own is a cheap, healthy and environmentally friendly way to provide food for your plate.

15 Choosing what to grow

Be bold and grow unusual crops like tomatillos for a tasty addition to your table.

Before you start growing, think about the food you like to eat. Do you want staples, or do you like to try new things? *Work with nature, not against it. Plant lettuces and beetroot in the shadow of tall plants such as sweetcorn and beans. Everything should work in harmony.* Avoid gluts by sowing less, but more frequently.

16 Wildlife gardening

You can help native wildlife thrive with just a few small changes to the way you garden.

Begin by asking yourself: “*what does the wildlife need?*” Think about basics

Like food, water, shelter, and safety. Planning your garden around the building blocks of survival will make your garden nature friendly by design.

By creating hedgehog highways through our gardens, we can join up vast swathes of land and give these lovely little creatures a fighting chance, remember to provide water. A small pond gives the birds another food source and somewhere to bathe and drink.” Think about where wildlife will live, which can be as simple as a small piece of old carpet and some bricks behind the shed – the perfect hidey hole for insects and shy creatures like slow worms. Nest spaces or nesting boxes and roosting boxes are fundamental for wildlife to survive.

But it's not just birds who need shelter – think about bugs and beasties too.

More bugs mean more bats fluttering overhead during spring and summer evenings.

17 Planting

Look at your garden through the eyes of prospective wildlife visitors. Do you have a tree? If not, consider planting one. Or if space is a problem, make existing structures work for birds and insects. Shrub-like plants like lavender or fuchsia give off a lot of smell and still carry pollen for our pollinators. The bees are grateful for the early food.

18 Reuse & Recycle

The savvy gardener is a frugal one. There are so many ways you can repurpose, reuse and recycle in the garden – saving money and the environment. So many gardeners' essentials can be used over, and over again – saving money and the amount of rubbish sent to landfill. For example, make landscape fabric last more than one year. Use rewritable tape to transform single use plastic labels into multiple use plastic labels.

It can be difficult to see where to water leafy ground-covering plants like strawberries, squashes and courgettes. Cut the top off old plastic bottles to make funnels, press into the ground next to the roots of plants so the water always gets to where it's needed. Plastic bottles can also be used as a mini plant/seedling protector, grape boxes make perfect reusable greenhouses. Seeds can be germinated in toilet-roll tubes and egg cartons. I am sure there are many more tips but these are just a few to get you started.

<https://www.thompson-morgan.com/static-images/master/static-images/pdf/thompson-morgan-little-book-garden-wisdom.pdf>

<https://www.nsalg.org.uk/>

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?pid=84>

There are many more sources of useful information on the internet

Image: Shutterstock.com