



# Sherborne Town Council

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## Health & 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 they themselves, other people and wildlife are not put at risk. The Council undertakes risk assessments each year on their allotment sites. Please read and consider the following points before allotment gardening.

**1. Personal safety:** 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 lock the gate behind you upon entering and leaving the site. Be aware of weather conditions that can affect walking surfaces such as hardcore, grass. Use sunscreen to protect you from over exposure to the sun.

**2. Physical exercise:** 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.

**3. Garden tools:** Garden tools can be a hazard if they are not stored properly or are left lying around the garden when not in use; for example upturned spades and forks.

**4. Power Tools:** 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 time to get used to it. Power strimmers, shredders, all have their dangers as well. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions.

**5. First aid kit:** A first aid kit is a wise addition to the tools kept in the garden shed. Suggested essential items are: a small selection of adhesive plasters, antiseptic ointment, a pair of tweezers for removing thorns and splinters and a gauze or lint pad to use as a compress to stop the bleeding if you are badly cut.

**6. Risk of infection:** 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. Plot holders are responsible for basic hygiene. Please check that your tetanus boosters are up to date. 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 with you or in the shed. Always wash your fruit or vegetables thoroughly before eating them.

**7. Tetanus or Lockjaw:** 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.

**8. Vermin:** Rats carry 70 diseases including Weil's Disease, which can cause human death via contaminated water. Plot holders must be vigilant and report any signs of infestation, which include burrows, tracks, droppings and observing the vermin. Contact West Dorset District Council for advice and to report problems.

[www.dorsetforyou.com/pest-control/west-dorset](http://www.dorsetforyou.com/pest-control/west-dorset)

**9. Legionella:** 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.

**10. Hazardous rubbish:** Ensure that you do not leave broken glass and other hazardous materials on the allotment. If you discover a significant amount of rubbish underneath the soil, such as broken glass, plastics etc, then please contact Sherborne Town Council who can offer some assistance in removing it from the plot.

**11. Pesticides and fertilisers:** We encourage you to use organic based pesticides, fungicides, fertilisers and other such products. Please note that Garden Organic, the national charity for organic growing, provide advice and publications on methods of pest control that do not require pesticides and gardening methods that reduce pest attack. [www.gardenorganic.org.uk](http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk)

Please always ensure that chemicals are kept securely locked in a cupboard in your shed, away from children and in clearly marked containers. Do not keep them in lemonade bottles or other food containers or leave them lying around your plot. 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!

When using pesticides or fertilisers please ensure that you wear suitable clothing.

Pesticides or fertilisers must be 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. Small quantities can be taken to the Sherborne Household Recycling Centre in West Mill Lane.

**12. Hazards for wildlife on allotments:** These include litter, low-level fruit netting, use of pesticides, open drains, slug pellets, mowing, strimming, broken glass and pre-stacked bonfires. Certain wildlife e.g. badgers, slowworms, some birds of prey and reptiles have specific legal protection concerning their management. Contact Natural England for advice about protected species. [www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)

**13. Bonfires:** The Environmental Protection Act (1990) prohibits a statutory nuisance being caused by smoke. Check weather conditions to ensure that there is not significant wind, do not leave a fire unattended and ensure that it is completely put out with water before you leave. Always check your bonfire for wildlife before lighting it.

This document must be read in conjunction with your Allotment Tenancy Agreement and Conditions of Use.

A copy of your signed tenancy agreement is available upon request from the office:

01935 812807 or [sherbornetowncouncil@sherborne-tc.gov.uk](mailto:sherbornetowncouncil@sherborne-tc.gov.uk)