

Stanwick Parish Council

Allotment and Community Garden Health and Safety Guide

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

1. 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.
- When moving, lifting or handling loads, assess the load location, seek help if required and if appropriate seek training in manual handling.

2. 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 the Council who can offer some assistance in removing it from the plot.

3. 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.

4. Skin Irritations

Wear gloves and a long-sleeved shirt when pruning plants that can cause skin irritations for example ivy, euphorbia or rue.

5. 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.

6. Pesticides and Fertilisers

- Ensure that chemicals are kept securely locked in their own 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 ensure to wear suitable clothing.
- 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 water course. If in doubt, please contact East Northamptonshire Council.

7. First Aid Kit

A first aid kit is a wise addition to the tools kept in the garden shed. 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.

8. 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 a while to get used to it. Power strimmers, shredders, all have their dangers as well. Always follow the manufactures instructions.

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. 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 the Environmental Health team at East Northamptonshire Council for advice and to report problems.

11. 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. It is the responsibility of the plot holders for basic hygiene and to check 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-sterilizing gel handy or in the shed.
- Always wash your fruit or vegetable thoroughly before eating them (but not from a water butt)

12. 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 hard core, grass. Use sunscreen to protect you from over exposure to the sun. Ensure you have appropriate clothing and footwear for the weather conditions.

13. Bees and wasps

Be aware of environment and do not provoke bees and wasps. Steer clear of bee or wasp hives.

14. Water butts

Garden produce and hands should not be washed with water from water butts.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the Allotment Rules.

Each individual has to take personal responsibility for his/her safety, particularly if working on their own.

At all times, each individual using the site must act in a responsible, considerate manner; mindful of others working there.