



# Allotment Handbook

## Gainsborough Town Council

Address: Richmond House, Morton Terrace, Gainsborough, DN21 2RJ  
Email: [townclerk@gainsborough-tc.gov.uk](mailto:townclerk@gainsborough-tc.gov.uk)  
Phone: 01427 811573



# HANDBOOK CONTENTS

Getting Started	4
Help and advice	4
Keeping in touch	4
Terms and conditions	4
Role of the Town Council	5
Written permission	5
Inspection	5
The allotment sites	5
The plot	6
Planning your plot	6
Structures, Fences, Hedges and Trees	7
Heritage structures	7
New structures	7
Fences and hedges	7
Trees and bushes	7
Waste and Fires	8
Waste	8
Skip	8
Fires	8
Water	9
Respect, Safety and Security	10
Respect	10
Chemicals	10
Children	11
Dangerous materials	11
Invasive species of plant	11
Car parking	11
Security	11
CCTV	11
Animals and Livestock	12
Dogs	12

Livestock _____	12
End of a Tenancy Agreement _____	13
Giving up your plot _____	13
Non-Cultivation _____	13
Other ways the tenancy can end _____	13
Condition of the plot _____	13

## Allotment Handbook 2021 (Version 2 - Final Draft)

Photos by Dan Roizer, Markus Spiske, Ryan Ancill, Giulia Bertellion, Annie Spratt, Gary Chan, Nicolas Comte and Tim Cooper Unsplash (<https://unsplash.com>).

# GETTING STARTED

This handbook will highlight key parts of your tenancy agreement. It also contains other useful information and advice. Please keep it safe for future reference.

## Help and advice

You can ask for advice from the Site Secretary. You can also ask the Town Council for information; our contact details are on the front page.

## Keeping in touch

You must let us know straight away if you change address. It is your responsibility to make sure the contact details we hold for you are correct.

We will send any notices to your home address and email if we have it.

## Terms and conditions

You should read through the tenancy agreement very carefully. It contains all the terms and conditions that you are agreeing to. Below are some of the most important ones.

The tenancy agreement is between you and the Town Council. It can't be transferred. You can't sublet the plot which is allowing someone else to pay you to use part or the whole of your plot.

Your tenancy is a yearly one. Rent is due on 25 March each year. You have up to 40 days after that date to make your payment.

The plot can only be used as an allotment garden. You can only grow vegetables, fruits and flowering crops for you and your family to use.

It is illegal to carry on any trade or business from the allotment site. However, you can sell a small amount of surplus that you don't intend to use.

Throughout the tenancy your plot should be kept clean and tidy. This means keeping it free from weeds, litter and waste.

At least three quarters (or 75%) of the plot must be under cultivation. This means it should be used for growing flowering crops, vegetables, or fruits.

If you plan to keep animals or livestock, you should carefully read the relevant section in the terms and conditions. You will also need to provide us with emergency contact details.



## Role of the Town Council

The Town Council is responsible for major repairs and general site maintenance.

We also set the terms and conditions of use and other policies. Any breaches should be reported directly to the Town Council.

We also set the rent and any charges. You will be given a year's notice of any changes to rent or charges.

Please look at the site notice boards, our website and social media pages for updates.

## Written permission

You will need to ask for written permission from the Town Council to undertake certain activities. You need to do this for instance when you want to put up a building, keep animals (other than hens and rabbits) or install a fence.

The written permission must come from the Town Council. A verbal agreement with a Town Councillor, Site Secretary, a member of staff or anyone else will not be accepted as permission.

Please contact the Town Council directly to apply for written permission. Our contact details are on the front page of the Handbook. You will be told about the process and timescales.

## Inspection

Allotment sites are inspected from time to time. If there is an issue with your plot the Town Council might undertake a further inspection of it.

A failure to cultivate or a breach of the terms and conditions could lead to warnings and you could be asked to give up your tenancy.

## The allotment sites

There are five allotment garden sites managed by the Town Council. Each is further divided into allotment gardens which are usually called plots. Plots are usually classed as either:

- Large plots
- Or,
- Small plots

You will be given a key or access code to the site after signing your tenancy agreement.

Each allotment site will have paths and access roads which should always be kept clear.

Some sites have water. You should be told if you have access to water and where the tap is when you take up your plot.

## The plot

Taking on a plot can seem daunting. Just remember that many of the plots around you are the result of years of hard work.

No matter how well the plot has been looked after it will always have weeds. You need to work the soil and clear the weeds as soon as possible.

You might also want to sit down and plan out how you want your plot arranged.

## Planning your plot

There are plenty of books and internet resources to help you with planning your plot and guidance on the best conditions for different plants to flourish. You could also talk to the Site Secretary or other plot holders.

Planning will help you to organise your plot to make the best use of the space available. You might want to consider:

- Situation and light levels
- Ease of access for maintenance and watering
- Soil condition and drainage
- The space needed for plants to grow and flourish
- Permanent planting areas
- Permanent features such as paths, utilities, buildings, etc.
- Crop rotation
- The tools and equipment you will need

The National Allotment Society provides information about a range of issues. To find out more press the hyperlink or copy it into a browser: [www.nsalg.org.uk/allotment-info/leaflets-2/](http://www.nsalg.org.uk/allotment-info/leaflets-2/)

If you don't have access to the internet, please let us know and we may be able to supply a printed version of the information.



# STRUCTURES, FENCES, HEDGES AND TREES

## Heritage structures

Some plots have sheds, fences, pigeon lofts and other structures that are larger than the dimensions below.

This is because they were built before the terms and conditions were clearly set out and enforced. These structures are called “heritage structures.” Regardless of their age all structures must be properly maintained.

## New structures

All new structures require written permission. This includes all sheds or greenhouses or polytunnels or pigeon lofts or wells or ponds.

- The maximum dimensions for a shed or greenhouse are 244cm (8ft) by 183cm (6ft) and 244cm (8ft) high.
- The maximum dimensions for a polytunnel are 305cm (10ft) by 457cm (15ft).

All structures must be well built and maintained. At the end of your tenancy, you will be expected to remove any structure you have installed.

## Fences and hedges

You must get written permission to install a new fence or hedge.

Any existing fences, gates and hedges must be maintained.

If your plot has a hedge you must maintain it. It should be no higher than 150cm or 5 foot between plots. Hedges on the boundary of the site can be 180cm or 6 foot.

## Trees and bushes

You can plant dwarf fruiting trees on which you can carry out recognized pruning practices.

However, you must not cut, prune, lop or fell any other trees on the site without written permission.

You can plant fruiting bushes. Written permission is required before you plant any other type of shrub, hedge or bush.



# WASTE AND FIRES

## Waste

Please compost as much green waste as you can.

Don't let rubbish and waste materials build up on your plot. Remember that it is your responsibility to remove all the non-compostable waste from the site that you create.

You can at any time keep a reasonable amount of compost or manure on the plot.

## Skip

From time to time the Town Council provides a skip for the site. This is for plot holders to dispose of bulky and heavy items from the site.

Please don't pile up waste in the communal area before the skip arrives.

You must not bring waste to the site to dispose of in the skip. The skips can't be used for getting rid of dangerous waste or substances.

## Fires

If you plan to have a fire you should read through the relevant section in the terms and conditions very carefully.

The most important rules relating to fires are:

- Fires must be attended at all times and they can't cause a nuisance to others
- All fires must be fully extinguished before you leave the site
- You must not bring materials to the site to burn or burn any business/trade waste
- Between 1 April and 30 September, you can only burn diseased plants and dried-out organic material. It must burn without smoke
- Routine bonfire material must be burnt between 1 October and 31 March

The National Allotment Society has provided information on its website about fires and waste.

You can access it on the following page: <https://www.nsalg.org.uk/allotment-info/leaflets-2/>



# WATER

Some sites have a water supply which is for the use of all plot holders on that site. Please therefore be considerate when using it yourself.

During the winter, the mains water supplies are likely to be turned off. You might, therefore, want to plan to bring your own water to the site from October until April.

The Town Council encourages all plot holders to try to conserve water. Please use water butts where possible and consider mulching.

No hosepipes or sprinklers are allowed on the site.

The National Allotment Society has provided information on its website about water use on allotments. You can access it on the following page: <https://www.nsalg.org.uk/allotment-info/leaflets-2/>



# RESPECT, SAFETY AND SECURITY

## Respect

Please remember to be respectful to all other plot holders, council staff and members of the public.

You should not enter or take something from someone else's plot without their permission.

Whilst on the site you must not undertake any illegal activity. You must also keep to all Town Council policies and to what is set out in the terms and conditions.

You must get written permission from the Town Council before displaying a notice or advertisement.

You are responsible for anyone that you bring onto the site.

Please cover over any manure which has not been dug in.

You should maintain the pathways between your plot and neighbours up to the halfway point. Fences, gates and other structures forming part of your boundary should also be maintained.



## Chemicals

We would encourage all plot holders to try to grow organically. However, on the plot you are allowed to use products sold from garden or horticultural suppliers. You can use such products to control pests, diseases and weeds.

Please try to minimize the use of pesticides, herbicides and inorganic fertilisers. If you feel that you have to use them try to reduce the level of use over time.

Be sure to read the instructions before use and select a product that will cause the least harm to others and the environment.

When using a spray or fertilisers you should make sure that hedges, trees, and other plot holders' crops are not affected.

Do not store oil, fuel, lubricants, or other flammable liquids in any shed except in an approved container (maximum capacity of 5 liters). You can only use such substances for gardening equipment.

## Children

The health and safety of children on an allotment plot must be considered carefully as allotments can pose particular risks to children. Remember you must never leave children unsupervised on an allotment site.

## Dangerous materials

If you think you have found asbestos let the Town Council know immediately. Don't try to move it or inspect it yourself.

Tenants should under no circumstance bring asbestos onto their allotment.

You must not use any dangerous material such as glass, spikes, barbed wire, razor wire, on the boundary of your plot.

## Invasive species of plant

Please let us know straight away if you think you have any invasive species on your plot. Ones to watch for are Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and Giant Hogweed.

A list of what to look out for can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prevent-the-spread-of-harmful-invasive-and-non-native-plants>

## Car parking

Only a plot holder or someone acting on their behalf can bring a car onto the site. The car must not cause a nuisance such as obstructing roads and paths

## Security

All plot holders will be given a key or access code to the site. The main site gate should be locked and closed except when someone is entering or leaving the site.

Only you or an authorised person are permitted to enter the site.

You should remember that the Town Council will not be held responsible for loss by accident, fire, theft, or damage from the Allotment Garden.

## CCTV

The Town Council requests that you do not point CCTV or image recording equipment at other people's plots. The system should only capture images from within the boundary of your plot.

If you are planning to use such equipment you should visit the Information Commission Officers website and read the guidance relating to use of domestic CCTV equipment.

<https://ico.org.uk/your-data-matters/domestic-cctv-systems-guidance-for-people-using-cctv/>

# ANIMALS AND LIVESTOCK

## Dogs

You are allowed to bring a dog on the site as long as they aren't a nuisance. The dog must remain with you and on a leash. Dog mess must not be left on the site under any circumstance.

## Livestock

You can keep hens and rabbits.

You are not allowed to keep cockerels or any animals for trade or business purposes.

Written permission will be required if you want to keep pigeons and install a pigeon loft. The Town Council will only consider giving permission to keep pigeons on a limited number of plots on the North Warren Allotment Garden site.

If you do keep animals or livestock, you will need to give the Town Council emergency contact details.

Any plot holder keeping animals or livestock will need to abide by all relevant legislation and Town Council policies.

The National Allotment Society has provided information on its website about keeping hens and rabbits on allotments. You can access it on the following page:

<https://www.nsalg.org.uk/allotment-info/leaflets-2/>

If you plan to keep animals, you should also read the RSPCA's Welfare of animals kept on Allotments advice: <https://politicalanimal.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Welfare-of-animals-on-allotments.pdf>



# END OF A TENNANCY AGREEMENT

## Giving up your plot

You must contact us in writing or by email if you want to give up your plot. After you contact us, we will let you know about the process.

## Non-Cultivation

After 3 months we would expect to see some of the plot cleared and dug over. After about half a year we would expect to see some crops in place.

After three months if we notice that you are not cultivating your plot you might be sent a letter. You will be allowed a certain amount of time to make improvements.

If you fail to do so you will be sent a further letter. Following a second warning, if there is no progress, your tenancy will most likely come to an end.

## Other ways the tenancy can end

Most tenancy agreements end without a problem. Unfortunately, in some cases the Town Council may choose to terminate an agreement.

The rules around termination of the agreement are complicated. However, apart from for non-cultivation the other reasons most likely to be given are:

- Not paying the rent within 40 days
- Not keeping to the terms and conditions

There are other situations that can end a tenancy agreement, but they are rare.

Out of the growing season (before 6 April and after 29 September) either the Town Council or the plot holder can give 12 months' notice to end the agreement.

## Condition of the plot

When the plot is handed back to the Town Council it must be clean, tidy and in the state, you found it in.

You must also return Town Council any property you have been given by it such as keys.

Please remove any of your own property and the plants you wish to keep.

If the Council has to clear the plot for the next tenant, it could look to recover the costs from the plot holder that left the mess.