



# Health and Safety Guidelines

Gardening is relatively risk free if people are aware of the hazards and make steps to ensure that themselves, other people and wildlife are not put at risk. SACAA undertake general risk assessments and review them regularly. These are available on the notice board in the communal shed and on the SACAA page of the village website. Please read and consider the following points before allotment gardening.

## **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. Digging needs to be approached with care, particularly if you are not used to heavy work. Sensible footwear is essential to when using a fork or spade and could save you from a forked foot or chopped toe!

## **Hazardous rubbish**

Ensure that you do not leave broken glass and other hazardous materials on the allotment. In the unlikely event that you discover a significant amount of rubbish underneath the soil, such as broken glass, plastics etc, then please contact SACAA who can offer some assistance in removing it from the plot.

Please also be aware of the risks from asbestos cement corrugated sheeting. This is not a significant risk if kept whole and undamaged, but it is fragile and should never be broken, drilled or sawn as this will release dangerous microscopic fibres. SACAA recommend that any asbestos sheeting is removed in accordance with the guidelines on Cherwell District Council website.

## **Tetanus or Lockjaw**

This is a serious infection caused by bacterium that lives in the soil and especially in manured soil. It enters the body through the tiniest abrasion, scratch, thorn, puncture or cut and can take a few days or weeks before the illness is apparent. Please make sure that you have a vaccination that can protect you against tetanus and consider talking to your doctor if you suspect that you may have contracted this infection.

## **Skin irritations**

Wear gloves and a long-sleeved shirt when pruning plants that can cause skin irritations for example ivy, euphorbia or any member of the hogweed family.

## **Garden tools**

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, forks and rakes. Tools with edges, such as saws, shears etc should be kept securely when not in use and not left unattended where children or others could come into contact with them.

## **Pesticides and fertilisers**

Ensure that chemicals are kept securely in your shed, away from children and are in clearly marked containers. Do not keep them in unmarked bottles or other food containers or leave them lying around your plot. Please be aware that under the terms of the lease, pesticides should be used sparingly if at all. SACAA encourage methods of

pest control that do not require pesticides and gardening methods that reduce pest attack. If you do use chemicals, please keep them to your own plot and do not overspray or spread accidentally on your neighbour's plot.

When using pesticides or fertilisers please read and follow the instructions for use, ensuring you wear the recommended and 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 watercourse. If in doubt, please contact Cherwell Council for advice.

### **First aid kit and Emergencies**

A first aid kit is a wise addition to the tools kept in the garden shed. Allotmentee's have access to the communal shed where a first aid kit is held for emergency use. First aid instructions are pinned to the noticeboard covering minor injuries. The SACAA committee member responsible for H&S will monitor and maintain stock levels.

In the event of any emergency, it is recommended that allotmentee's have a mobile phone whilst on their plot (especially if it is likely that no one else is around).

The nearest A&E facilities are at the **Horton, Banbury (Tel: 0300 304 7777)**. There is also a First Aid Unit at **Bicester Community Hospital (Tel: 01865 903976)**. This is open 06:00-23:00 M-F and 08:30-23:00 S-S and B/H's.

### **Power Tools**

Most power tools need specific safety and handling training e.g. chainsaws, strimmer's, lawn mowers and rotavators. Allotmentee's are free to use their own power tools but must ensure that they look after their own safety and anyone else who may be affected by their actions. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions. Please do not store any more fuel than is necessary on the allotments. (This is a requirement of our lease.)

SACAA have a petrol strimmer / brush cutter. A standalone Risk Assessment and instructions for its use is available and must be applied in all cases. The communal petrol mower and tiller are also available to allotmentee's and instructions are displayed on the door to the tool storage area. Please make sure that these are followed, particularly the instructions for refuelling.

### **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 water in greenhouses, particularly if using it for spraying fine mists.

### **Water and watercourses**

There are no ponds or watercourses on the SACAA allotments. However, there are water troughs and water butts which, potentially, could pose a risk to small children. All allotmentee's should ensure that all such containers are kept covered with wire or have solid lids to minimise any such risk.

It should also be noted that water butts can easily tip over if not properly supported on a flat and even surface. Their weight will vary considerably during the year as water levels alter and they could topple over and cause significant injury.

### **Hazards for wildlife on allotments**

Hazards include litter, 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. If you suspect that any of the above are present on your plot, contact SACAA who may then need to speak to English Nature for advice.

### **Vermin**

Rats carry 70 diseases including Weil's Disease, which can cause human death via contaminated water. Allotmentee's should be vigilant and report to SACAA any signs of infestation, which include burrows, tracks, droppings and observing the vermin. Popular "homes" are underneath sheds. SACAA may then contact the Cherwell Environmental Health team for advice.

### **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-sterilising gel handy or in the shed.

Always wash your fruit or vegetables thoroughly before eating them.

### **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.

Be aware of weather conditions that can affect walking surfaces making them slippery. Use sunscreen to protect you from over exposure to the sun and insect repellent may also be useful!

### **Bonfires**

There is no law preventing bonfires, or specifying the time that you can have them. The Environmental Protection Act (1990), however, prohibits a statutory nuisance being caused by smoke.

Consequently, please respect the neighbouring properties by checking weather conditions to ensure that there is no significant wind, particularly blowing towards the adjacent houses and the school, do not leave a fire unattended and ensure that it is completely put out before you leave. Please see the SACAA's *Guidelines on Bonfires* for more information.

Check your bonfire for wildlife hiding in it before lighting it. Please do not bring any household waste to the allotments for burning.

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