



Bishops Stortford Plot holders Guide

Asbestos

Asbestos cement is quite commonly found on allotments, sometimes as part of garden sheds but more usually fragments buried in the soil. To make asbestos cement safe, first thoroughly wet it using a watering can; then, using gloves, put the pieces in a stout plastic bag (a builders rubble sack is fine), place this bag in a second, seal and label the bag and leave it in a place on your plot where it will not be disturbed by you or anyone else. Contact your site agent for its removal so that it can be collected by a specialist service. Do not bury asbestos or move it from your plot.

Bees, wasps and rodents

Beekeeping is a useful activity on allotments, and is encouraged subject to some constraints. Please ask for the Bee Keeping guidelines.

From time to time wild bees and wasps build nests on allotments and rodents take up residence. The council does not provide a service to dispose of these for plot holders. Further information is available from East Herts District Council Environmental Services / Pest Control and there may be a charge. Contact no. 01297 655261

Weed killer

Only shop bought of organic weed killer is permitted. Please ensure that when weed killer is used that the weather conditions are calm and that the spray does not encroach onto your neighbor's plot.

Bonfires

Small bonfires are permitted but please use your discretion and do not light on adverse or windy weather days. Bonfire must not be left unattended and must be out before you leave the site.

Compost bins and water butts

These are not provided by the Town Council but are available from a wide variety of other sources.

Dangerous trees and structures

If you think a structure (building, fencing, etc) or a tree is in a dangerous state, please speak to your local site agent.

Hedges

Hedges on allotments are the joint responsibility of the tenants, and should be cut back at least once a year – more if they border public footpaths. This is not the responsibility of site agent, but if he or she asks you to join a working party to prune a hedge please remember that it is partly your responsibility to do so.

Keys

Lost keys can be replaced at a cost of £7.50 by the Town Council. Please send a cheque for £7.50 payable to Bishops Stortford Town Council (BSTC) with your name, address, site name and plot number to:

Allotments Administrator The Old Monastery Windhill Bishop's Stortford
Herts CM23 2ND or call 01279 712148

Manure and woodchip

Horse manure and woodchip give nutrients and structure to the soil. Compost is easy to make and gets rid of most of the waste matter from your allotment – adding woodchip usually helps to produce compost more quickly. Manure is often available free of charge and can be collected from local riding stables (take your own bags). You can get woodchip from arboricultural contractors operating in the area.

The council does not provide manure or woodchip for allotments because of the cost and the uneven distribution. It is possible for plot holders to organise a delivery of manure from a local farm or stables. But be sure what you're getting – it may be contaminated with rubbish, pesticides and veterinary products. If you approach an arboricultural company for woodchip, make sure that it is not tipped outside the allotments (this is an offence) and make sure that what is delivered is what you want. It is not uncommon to find large logs buried in the pile of woodchip.

Measuring plots

Allotments are traditionally measured in rods or poles (they're the same thing). A rod is a measure of area equal to 16.5 by 16.5 sq ft, or 272.25 sq ft. This is approximately 30 sq yards or 25 sq meters. The size of an allotment plot includes half of each of the surrounding paths. Allotments in Bishops Stortford are typically 5 rod, but can be any size and are sometimes sub-divided into smaller plots. Although there are some 10 rod plots in existence these will be split into smaller plot when they are given up. The actual area is not guaranteed to be an exact measurement – paths can move over time.

Overgrown plots

The site agent and a representative of the council inspects plots from time to time. Tenants are responsible for the maintenance of their plots. Tenants may be dismissed if they fail to cultivate them and keep them free of weeds. The council does not provide a plot clearance service for new tenants.

Paths

The maintenance of allotment paths in a safe and good state is the responsibility of the allotment tenants. Each tenant is responsible for the paths surrounding his or her plot and all tenants are jointly responsible for the maintenance of communal paths. The council does not provide a grass-cutting service for allotment tenants and does not hire or loan strimmers, though these are available from many tool hire companies.

If you feel that a path on your site is unsafe, please report this to your site agent.

Dogs

Dogs must be **kept on a lead** and on **your plot** whilst on site. Owners are responsible for cleaning up after their dogs.

Rents

Allotment rents are due by no later than 1st January, each year. The charge is based on the range of services provided on the site and the size of the plot. A discount is available in some circumstances, as advertised on posters on allotment gates or notice-boards.

Rent reminders are sent out before rent is due, with instructions on when and how payment can be made. It is important that allotment tenants make sure that they notify any change of address promptly. If you fail to respond to a rent reminder and do not pay your rent, your allotment tenancy may be terminated.

Rubbish collection

The council does not provide allotment tenants with a rubbish collection service. Any rubbish from your allotment must be disposed of using the domestic waste collection service or by taking it to the town's waste and recycling facilities. It may not be left anywhere on the allotment site.

Security

Fences and gates are maintained by the council, except for fences owned by neighbouring properties. Gates may not be installed from neighbouring properties onto the allotments.

If you are aware of recent damage to the fencing or gates of an allotment (including broken padlocks), please report this to your site agent or advise the Town Council Administrator, giving the name of the allotment site, a description of the damage and the approximate location.

Allotments are vulnerable open spaces usually protected by little more than a simple fence and gates through which many people pass. There is no way to make them totally secure. Security fencing may actually attract vandals, who may think the fence shows there is something worth stealing.

If you lose equipment, tools or produce, you should inform the police. The simplest way to do this is to report the theft to the Plot Watch Team in your ward (this is much simpler than making a formal statement at a police station, but you may need to do the latter if you intend to make an insurance claim). Their details are as follows:-

Local Police Officers are:-

Bishops Stortford North - PCSO 6142 Steve Siggers and
PCSO 6307 Antony Johnson

Bishops Stortford South - PCSO 6631 Clare Andrews and
PCSO 6322 Matt O'Shea

Town Center – PCSO 6010 Fallon Colline, PCSO 6092 Kim Wood 6092 and
PCSO 6272 Adam Pemberton

Please call 101 or 01707354192 to contact all the above.

Remember that you should not store anything valuable on the allotment – particularly a petrol strimmer or rotovator – this simply attracts thieves to come back again.

Snakes

Snakes are extremely rare on allotments. Most reports are actually of slow worms – 1 to 2 ft long, the thickness of a finger or thumb, and silver or bronze in colour. Anything larger is likely to be a grass snake. Grass snakes and slow worms are harmless to people and both are beneficial to allotments, eating slugs that would otherwise be eating young plants.

Grass snakes and slow worms are protected species that must not be disturbed or harmed. Failure to observe this law could result in prosecution.

Toilets

A plot holder may not, under any circumstance, install a toilet on an allotment plot. It is a health hazard and a nuisance. The council does not install conventional toilets on allotments however one is maintained at Hallingbury Road West.

Tree pruning

Trees growing on the communal parts of an allotment site are the property of the council and must not be damaged, pruned or cut down without the permission of the allotments administrator. Trees growing on plots are the responsibility of the plot holders, and the council does not provide a pruning service for these trees. If you live next to an allotment site, you are entitled to remove any branches overhanging your property – do not throw these onto the allotment, as you may be held liable for damage. The council will not remove a tree simply because it is shading your garden.

Water supply and leaks

There is a water supply on nearly all sites, and the cost of water is included in the rent. The supply is turned on in early April and off at the end of October each year. The water is the same as the domestic water supply, and is drinkable. During winter, rainwater can be collected to maintain winter crops. The water supply is the responsibility of the council. If there is a water leak, please speak to your site agent. If you are unable to do so, please contact the allotments administrator. Giving the name of the site, the location of the leak and its severity (is it a dripping tap, a steady flow or a gushing flood, for example). Leaks are prioritized but we try to deal with serious leaks as soon as we can.

Cars

Please do not take cars onto the sites in adverse weather conditions.

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Herts CM23 2ND

01279 712148 (Administrator) or 01279 715000 (Town Council)