

Bishop's Stortford Allotment and Garden Society (BSAGA)

BSAGA shop Hours of opening:

December closed.

January, October – November 10 - 11

February to September 10 – 12

See Facebook page.

Address: Ward Crescent Allotments CM23 3GJ

National Allotment Society

www.nsalg.org.uk

Common Sense Gardening Group

www.garden-care.org.uk

British Beekeeping Society

www.bbka.org.uk

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Bishop's Stortford Plot Holders Guide

Allotment clearance – getting started.

The long-term objective is to remove all traces of weeds including roots. This can be a lengthy process and for which a rotovator is not practical because it can spread weed fragments which may regrow. Persistent ones include crouch grass, docks, nettles, and bindweed. A suggested initial course of action is to cut the plot down to ground level by using a strimmer, shears or even a scythe and put all cut materials in a composting area. Brambles may need their roots dug out. The quickest way to dispose of perennial weeds is: - Cram them into a bucket, roots, and all. Fill the bucket with water and weigh down the weeds with a brick or stone so they are under the surface. Cover the bucket to exclude light, to stop evaporation and prevent rain from overflowing. Leave for 4 weeks. Even the roots of perennial weeds will then be drowned. Strain off the liquid and use it as liquid feed – dilute 5 parts water to 1 part feed. Put the dead roots into your compost bin.

There are 3 suggested methods of reclaiming the plot.

1. Manual digging.

Dig the plot methodically with a spade or fork, breaking up the soil and removing weeds and roots by hand. It can be easier to use the spade to cut and turn over a clod, then break it apart with the fork and pick out roots, It is easier to remove weeds if you have the above ground bits to pull on while loosening the roots with a fork, especially brambles This is the most labour intensive method, set yourself realistic targets and don't overdo it, two square metres over an hour would not be slow.

2. Chemical Weed Killers & Pesticides – Not Permitted

Tenants are not permitted to bring onto site or use any non-approved chemical pesticide or fertilisers. Tenants should aim to use organic fertilisers such as compost seaweed, dried blood, fish blood & bone, bone meal, poultry manure pellets and liquid comfrey or nettle feeds. Garlic is a useful organic pesticide.

3. Smothering the Weeds

Cover the plot with black polythene (carpeting is not recommended as weeds can grow through it). The covered areas will in time become bare of all plants and make digging easier.

Asbestos

Asbestos cement is quite commonly found on allotments, sometimes as part of garden sheds but more usually fragments buried in the soil. Do not under any circumstances break up asbestos pieces as this is how fibers are released. 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.

N.B It is illegal to move asbestos without a carrier's license.

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.

Occasionally bees will 'swarm' from their hives. If this happens, please contact Bishop's Stortford Beekeepers Association (BSBKA) through their website for their removal. www.stortfordbees.org.uk

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 allotment's 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 only 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.

Keys

Lost keys can be replaced at a cost of £8.00 by the Town Council. Please contact the Allotment Administrator on 01279 712148

Cars

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

Useful Information

Town Council Allotment Administrator	01279 712148
Bishops Stortford Town Council	01279 715000

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.

Slug Pellets

Only brands containing ferric phosphate or iron phosphate-based slug pellets should be used and they should be used sparingly. Please check composition on label.

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.

Tenancy and 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 and may be evicted if they fail to cultivate them and keep them free of weeds. Please inform the Council if you are temporarily unable to tend the plot due to an unforeseen circumstance. If you give up or are evicted from your plot you are expected to remove your belongings from the plot by a stated date, if you do not remove your belongings then the Town Council will dispose of them as it sees fit. If rubbish is left on a plot when it is vacated the departing tenant may be charged for its removal. The Council does not provide a plot clearance service for new tenants.

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.

From time-to-time wild bees and wasps build nests on allotments and rodents take up residence. Wasps can be useful to the gardener as they hunt other insects.

Rats and mice can be drawn to allotments sites by the composting of food material and poor feed hygiene with chickens. Waste food should not be composted on allotments and chicken feed must be kept in rodent proof storage.

The council does not provide a service to dispose of pests for plot holders. Further information is available from East Herts District Council Environmental Services / Pest Control and there may be a charge. Contact no. 01279 655261

Bonfires

Are not permitted on any BSTC Allotment Sites

Compost bins and water butts

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

Children

Allotments can be dangerous place for children so children taken to site must be always supervised by a responsible adult. They must not be permitted to cause nuisance to other tenants and their plots.

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.

Dogs

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

Hedges

Hedges on are the joint responsibility of the tenants, and should be cut back at least once a year, more if they border public footpaths. The Council is responsible for the perimeter of the site.

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.

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 rods 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.

Paths

Each tenant is responsible for the paths surrounding his or her plot and should ensure that paths are not diminished by digging. Paths separating plots should be wide enough to walk safely down with a wheelbarrow i.e., approx. 18 inches. The Council is only responsible for the main 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 tools hire companies.

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

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 noticeboards.

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.

Please ensure that the allotment gate is kept closed at all times. The last person to leave the site should lock the gate. 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 attract vandals, who may think the fence shows there is something worth stealing.

If you lose equipment or tools through theft, you should inform the police and gain a crime number. The Council is unable to report any thefts on your behalf but should be advised of the incident. Please also advise the site agent who may be a member of Allotment Watch run by Herts Police.

Please call 101 or 01707 354192 to contact the Police.

Any disturbances of anti-social behavior should also be reported to the police.