

## **Effingham Allotments**

### **GUIDANCE FOR ALLOTMENT HOLDERS**

The leases make very few restrictions on the use of the allotments. The following guidelines represent ideas for good practice, for your mutual convenience and safety.

#### **Bonfires**

For safety reasons, there cannot be a communal bonfire site.

Allotment holders are asked to burn rubbish, if necessary, only on their own site, with great care, preferably when the wind takes smoke away from nearby houses. Only material arising from the site should be burnt; do not bring rubbish in from outside. Beware sparks blowing onto crops.

Be sure bonfires are safe before you leave.

#### **Rubbish**

Allotment holders are asked to keep their plots free of old or unwanted items as far as possible, and to take these home or to the dump for disposal. Please do not dump rubbish of any sort on the communal verges and border areas (or in the drainage ditch alongside The Paddock). Areas of rough ground where the mower cannot go allow weeds and brambles to spring up and rabbits to find cover.

#### **Water**

The installation of water butts, baths etc to capture water on each allotment, and the use of watering cans, is very much encouraged.

To keep costs down and in fairness to all allotment holders, automatic sprinklers are forbidden.

Hoses should ideally be used only to fill water-butts. They are permitted for direct watering if absolutely necessary (subject to any restrictions made by the water company or national legislation), with consideration for others needing access to the taps.

To avoid freezing up of the pipes, the water supply will be turned off at the beginning of December and back on again at the end of February every year.

#### **Parking**

Whenever possible please park on The Street, as the track surface survives better under less traffic. When you do need to bring a car onto the site, please park on the unused areas at each end of the site, not on the track.

There is no objection to you grassing-over a car's width of ground at the end of your allotment alongside the track for parking. Do not park on anyone else's allotment.

#### **Plots and paths**

A full plot of 10 rods covers an area of 300 square yards (in whatever shape), and similarly a half plot of 5 rods is 150 square yards. The full-size Effingham plots were originally laid out as 10 yards by 30 yards approx (30ft by 90ft).

The Parish Council is responsible for keeping the track and the paths mown. The paths need to be 36" wide for the mower to get through. Therefore, when placing sticks, stakes, netting, hoses etc please put them 6" inside the edge of the plot, and do not dig this narrow edge strip, so that the side of the grass path will not be undermined and collapse. There is no objection to allotment holders cutting or strimming paths alongside their allotments. All the wide perimeter paths need to be kept clear so that vegetation etc. can be kept under control and neighbours can trim their hedges or overhanging trees. Please try to keep paths around your plot clear of possible trip hazards, and store all your equipment on your plot.

#### **Consideration for neighbours and other allotment holders**

Please be considerate of other people, for instance in use of radios etc.

#### **Access**

The only people permitted to go on the allotments are the allotment holders, Parish Councillors and Clerk.

Normally there would be no objection to adjacent householders maintaining their hedges etc. but anyone else needs the specific permission of the Parish Council. If you see anyone you suspect should not be there, please tell the Clerk.

## Advice

Phil Vallis (Plots 4 and 13A) and John Barrett (8A) have held plots for several years. They act as informal representatives of the allotment holders and liaise with the Clerk. Please feel free to approach them with queries concerning the allotments.

## Problems

Contact the Parish Clerk direct. Do not intervene directly on someone else's allotment or with their property, unless on obvious safety or humanitarian grounds (fire, trapped animal etc).

## Waiting list

It is obviously important that anyone who really wants to swap, extend or 'downsize' knows they will have the chance to do so. However, it would be impossible for the Clerk to have to offer every single vacancy to all existing plot-holders first. The following is a way of answering this.

i) If existing plot-holders think they might want to change, they need to tell the Clerk. **No-one, existing or new, can be offered anything unless they have personally written or spoken and had their interest logged on the waiting list. The onus will have to be on letting the Clerk know of your interest in advance, rather than waiting to be asked.** It would be appreciated if plot-holders enter into the spirit of this and only those seriously intending to change put their names down.

ii) When a half-plot becomes free, first refusal will always go to the tenant of the other half if they have asked for first refusal.

iii) Swapping your present plot for a bigger or smaller one

If a full or half plot becomes free, first refusal will next go to any existing plot holder who has asked for first refusal specifying either a whole plot or a half plot, in order as shown on the waiting list. There is no need to name particular plots, although if you had a very specific preference, it would help.

iv) Vacant plots will next be offered to the first person on the waiting list, in order. Existing plot-holders who want to keep their present plot but take on some more will have their names logged here.

v) Folk are sometimes unsure whether they want a whole plot or a half until the offer is made and they can see the piece of land in question. This is not a problem. If they turn down the first vacant plot, the Clerk will offer it down the list until someone takes it. The people on the waiting list will always stay in the same order. They will not drop to the bottom if they turn the first offer down.

vi) Splitting full plots into half plots or vice versa can only be decided by the Clerk.

vii) All decisions of the Clerk are final etc. etc

For the time being, the waiting list is limited to residents of the civil parish of Effingham.

## Probationary period

Taking on an allotment can be a lot more work, and a much bigger commitment, than some people can cope with despite their best hopes and endeavours. It has been agreed that all new allotment holders will be asked to agree to a one-year probationary period. If it seems to the Parish Council that the allotment is not being sufficiently used or cultivated, the tenant will be asked to relinquish it.

## Uncultivated plots

Allotment holders are encouraged to maintain allotments in accordance with the lease – ie keep plots cultivated, and not let them fall into disuse or become burdened by undisturbed rank growth. The lease entitles the Parish Council to reclaim the allotment if it is not cultivated for three months.

No-one expects the site to look like Wisley, or all the ground to be in full cultivation all the time. The three-month rule would never be enforced if it is obvious that a straggly plot is still in use. But if plots are neglected, for whatever reason, a series of unwelcome things happens. Neighbouring allotment holders are inconvenienced. The 'amenity' opportunity of having a village allotment is wasted, and unfairly with-held from other villagers on the waiting list. Anyone who wants to take a plot over will have a mountain of clearance to tackle before they can even get going. This makes it especially difficult for first-time allotment gardeners to succeed and perpetuates the problem.

So: if you are unable to work your plot for a sustained period – and obviously, unexpected things happen to anyone - please let the Clerk know. This saves her from worrying about tackling you at what could be a sensitive time. Also there are several things positive things that could be done:

1. Organise help to keep the ground in good condition until you are back on track
2. Put a weed-suppressing covering down
3. Ask to reduce the size of your plot, if appropriate
4. Agree a long notice period, say six months, on the basis that if you have sorted things out you will stay, but if not, we agree you will relinquish the plot.
5. Take on 'an apprentice' from the waiting list, who might be glad to share some of your plot with you as a first step into the allotment-holders world.
6. Resign your plot for now, but put your name back on the waiting list for another when you will be better placed to get going again.

So, please get in touch if you are having problems, as every effort will be made to help with temporary or more long-term difficulties.

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