

Pucklechurch Parish Council

Allotment Handbook

Pucklechurch Parish Council

Postal Address: c/o 51 Fouracre Road, Bromley Heath,
Bristol BS16 6PG

Telephone: 07525 842 095

Email: parish.council@pucklechurch.org

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INTRODUCTION

Pucklechurch Parish Council would like to introduce this new Allotment Gardener's Handbook. This booklet has been prepared using plain English. It explains the rules of the tenancy agreement and what can and can't be done on our allotment site. It also explains how the allotment site is managed and who to contact if you have any problems.

There are also some tips on allotment gardening. For those of you who are novices there is some basic advice on getting started, safety and composting. For those of you who are experts—you might not need that part of the handbook!

We would like to encourage as many people as possible to take up allotment gardening, so please tell your friends about the benefits of growing your own produce—the exercise, the fresh air and the satisfaction of eating fresh fruit and vegetables that you have grown.

PUCKLECHURCH ALLOTMENTS

There is a long tradition of allotment gardening in Pucklechurch. The site now in use was formerly agricultural land which was converted for allotment use. There are currently 26 plots and an area of woodland adjacent to the Gardens.

The allotments are situated on the Westerleigh Road on the right hand side, near the motorway.

WHO CAN APPLY FOR AN ALLOTMENT?

Anyone who lives in Pucklechurch Parish can apply for a plot.

HOW DO YOU APPLY FOR A PLOT?

Contact the Clerk to the Council and you will be added you to the waiting list. Once a plot becomes available the Clerk will arrange for you to look at the site and ask any questions. If you decide to go ahead you will need to complete a tenancy agreement, provide proof of address and pay the annual rent, pro rata.

WAITING LIST POLICY

If all the plots are occupied the Parish Council will keep a waiting list for those who are interested in renting a plot. When a plot becomes available it will be offered to the person who has been on the waiting list the longest.

SITE MANAGEMENT

The Parish Clerk co-ordinates the running of the site, renewals and general enquiries. Any business relating to the Allotments can be included at Parish Council meetings. There is a public open session during the meeting when you may speak to the Council, you may also observe the remainder of the meeting. Any serious complaints or concerns should also be expressed in writing to the Parish Clerk. All maintenance work on the site is contracted out to an independent contractor appointed by the Parish Council.

BONFIRES AND RUBBISH DISPOSAL

Bonfires, BBQs and fireworks are **NOT** permitted on the allotment site. Green waste can be made into compost but other waste must be removed from the site. The nearest refuse disposal site to the allotments is at Mangotsfield.

KEYS AND SECURITY

A key to padlock at the main entrance will be supplied to each tenant. This key is for your own use but remains the property of the Parish Council and it must be returned if you give up your allotment. **You must lock the allotment gate every time you enter or leave the site.** If you are worried about any aspect of site security please contact the Parish Council immediately. Occasionally we have experienced theft of belongings from the site (especially from sheds please report any such incident to the Parish Council and most importantly to the Police. For crimes in progress ring 999 for less urgent matters ring the local Police on **101.**

Pucklechurch Parish Council will try to ensure that the allotment site is as safe as possible but we rely on tenants keeping us informed if there are any problems. The Parish Council takes no responsibility for the loss of tenants' belongings through criminal activity. You are advised to have your own insurance and to take reasonable precautions to keep your belongings safe.

SHEDS, GREENHOUSES AND POLYTUNNELS

If you would like to erect a shed on your plot or any other built structure (eg a cold frame, greenhouse, timber compost heap) please contact the Parish Council first and do not begin construction until you have permission in writing. New structures should not be larger than 8' x 6' and must be positioned so that they do not shade neighbouring plots. All structures must be safe and sound and are erected at your own risk. Asbestos must not be brought on to the allotment site. Permission will only be given for 1 shed and a greenhouse.

WATER

As there is no provision of water at the site, tenants are encouraged to install their own water collection systems. These should be of stout materials, covered where possible and positioned high enough to be out of reach of small children. Stagnant water should be discarded as it poses a health risk and is not beneficial to plants.

RIGHT OF ENTRY

Councillors, Officers of the Parish Council and others employed by the Parish Council have the right to enter the allotment site to inspect and carry out work without notice. The allotment gardens are inspected on a quarterly basis to ensure that all tenants are complying with the terms of the tenancy agreement.

LIMITS ON THE USE OF YOUR PLOT

Your allotment must only be used for growing fruit, flowers and vegetables and for no other purpose. Tenants must ensure that 1/3 of the plot is cultivated within 3 months of joining the site and 2/3 within 12 months of taking over the plot.

OPENING HOURS

Tenants must only visit the site during daylight hours and should not to enter the site after dusk for their own safety.

OPENING HOURS

You must not cause a nuisance or annoyance to other tenants on the allotment site. The Parish Council will not tolerate bullying or harassment on the site. In the unlikely and unfortunate event of any disagreements or disputes between tenants, the matter must be referred to the Parish Council whose decision shall be final.

MAINTENANCE OF ALLOTMENT GARDENS

MAINTENANCE OF PATHS

Pucklechurch Parish Council is responsible for the maintenance of the main tracks on the site. There should be a fence between each allotment plot and each allotment tenant is responsible for keeping their fencing in good repair. In addition tenants must keep the verge directly in front of their plots clear to enable our contractor to cut the main pathways. Tenants are asked not to block pathways either in front of your allotment or the public pathways leading to the Community Woodland.

MAINTENANCE OF FENCES

Pucklechurch Parish Council is responsible for the fencing hedgerow and gates surrounding the allotment side. Please do not put rubbish up against fences as this will cause them to lean and rot.

Tenants are responsible for fencing surrounding their own plots.

REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

If you see a broken padlock, damaged fence, or any other problem on the site please report it to the Parish Clerk on 07525 842 095 as soon as possible so that repairs can be carried out promptly.

HOW BIG ARE THE ALLOTMENT PLOTS?

Allotment plots vary in size and shape.

WHAT CAN YOU GROW?

You can grow any vegetables, fruit and flowers which do not take more than 12 months to mature. If you want to plant a fruit tree you must have written permission from the Parish Council. You are only permitted to grow 1 fruit tree, if there is already a tree in existence

then permission would not be granted. Please contact the Clerk with details of the tree you want to plant. Large trees are not permitted because they will cast shade over a wide area and take nutrients and water from neighbouring plots.

BRINGING COMPOST/MANURE ONTO THE SITE

Gardeners may bring green waste such as grass and hedge cuttings onto their plot for making into compost for their own use. Manure may also be brought onto the site in appropriate quantities provided it is stored and used appropriately. Please remember that humans are at risk of infection from handling animal manure (e-coli bacteria is especially prevalent in fresh manure) and always wear gloves when handling any type of manure. If taking delivery of manure please ensure that you are on site to oversee the delivery and ensure that vehicles do not drive onto neighbouring plots causing damage to the plot and soil compaction. **Storage of compost or manure must be within the perimeter of your plot and not the public areas/paths.**

KEEPING OF LIVESTOCK (including BEES)

The Parish Council does not permit tenants to keep chickens or cockerels, or any livestock on the site. The keeping of bees on the allotments is prohibited.

DOGS

Tenants may bring their dogs onto the allotment site but must keep them on a lead and strictly on their own plot. Ensure that you clear up after your dog, having consideration for other tenants. As a tenant if you have any problems with dog fouling, please report this to the Clerk.

VERMIN

Vermin infestation is a very serious threat to health because of the numerous diseases which rats carry and the Parish Council is very keen to keep the site free of vermin. Please be careful to avoid any practices which might encourage vermin. Open composters are fine for grass cuttings and weeds but not for kitchen waste. Overgrown plots and piles of rubbish will also attract rats so it is important to keep your plot tidy. If you see a rat or any sign of infestation including burrows, tracks or droppings please inform the Clerk immediately so that the Pest Control Officer can be called. Do not use poisons yourself as this will affect wildlife within the Gardens.

USE AND STORAGE OF CHEMICALS

You are free to use sprays and fertilisers on your own plot in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. In doing so you must take care that you do not affect any adjoining plots, hedges, trees etc. You should use chemicals, only where absolutely necessary within your own plot and that will cause the least harm to members of the public, game birds and other wildlife (other than vermin or pests) and you must comply with the law about use of pesticides and chemicals. You should be aware that game birds in particular are protected by law. Chemicals must be kept in appropriate containers and stored in a locked shed or store.

SALE OF PRODUCE

The sale of surplus produce from your allotment is prohibited as the allotment is should be used to cultivate produce for your own personal consumption. Running a business or trading from an allotment garden is also prohibited.

VEHICLES ON SITE

You may drive your vehicle on to the site but you must lock the gate behind you each time and stick to the tracks. The Parish Council takes no responsibility for any damage caused to your vehicle on the site. Please exercise care and drive slowly bearing in mind that there may be children on site. Please avoid using vacant plots as a turning circle as this compacts the soil and makes the ground extremely difficult to work. Whether you park your vehicle on site or outside the gates you are advised to keep your vehicle locked at all times. Remember, it is against the law to park on the pathway on Westerleigh Road.

CONDITIONS OF TENANCY AGREEMENT

This part of the Handbook explains some of the most important aspects of your tenancy agreement. Please read this carefully.

ALLOTMENT AGREEMENT

The annual tenancy agreement is between Pucklechurch Parish Council and you, the Tenant. When you sign the agreement you are agreeing to pay the rent, to take on the plot, to look after it and to abide by the tenancy agreement and the conditions and rules explained in this handbook. The ownership of the plot stays with Pucklechurch Parish Council throughout the period of the tenancy.

CHANGE OF CIRCUMSTANCES

If your personal circumstances change please inform the Parish Council, eg if you change address, or leave the Parish.

YOUR RENT

By signing the agreement you agree to pay the annual rent *which is due on 1 April*, payable in advance. The rent is reviewed by the Parish Council, annually, each July every year and if there is to be an increase in the annual rent, the Parish Council will provide tenants two months written notice. New tenants who join post April will pay a pro-rata rent.

HOW TO PAY YOUR RENT

An invoice will be sent to you and this can be paid by cheque through the post to the Parish Clerk or by cash or cheque at the Parish Council meetings. Please do not send cash through the post for security reasons.

SUBLETTING/SHARING YOUR PLOT

The plot can only be let to one person and the tenancy agreement will be made out in the name of that person. You are not permitted to sublet or share the plot.

GIVING UP YOUR PLOT

If you decide you no longer want your plot you need to inform the Parish Clerk in writing. You will be asked to complete a termination form and this will end your agreement on the date we agree (even if this is a few months away). We will make every effort to have your plot taken over as soon as possible so that it does not become overgrown. However, the Parish Council is unable to refund any rent which has already been paid.

CARING FOR YOUR ALLOTMENT PLOT

The most important responsibility as a tenant is to look after and maintain your plot. This means you must keep your plot cultivated and free from weeds (as per your tenancy agreement) and you must keep the plot safe and tidy by removing rubbish. The plot must be kept free of hazards eg broken glass and scrap metal. If you are not cultivating all of your plot you can cover part of it with polythene membrane to keep the weeds down. It is really important to keep your plot tidy so that it does not interfere with the successful gardening

of other tenants. If your personal circumstances mean you cannot cultivate your plot (eg you are unwell, go away temporarily etc) please tell the Parish Council so this can be taken into account when inspections are carried out. Please remember that as an allotment tenant you have a duty of care to make sure that your plot does not present health and safety hazards to any people accessing the allotment site eg other tenants, visitors, contractor's even unauthorised intruders. We have a number of tenants who like to bring their children with them to enjoy the allotment site and we need to make sure the site is safe for all users including curious children.

SITE INSPECTIONS/NOTICE TO QUIT

The site is regularly inspected and if your plot is not cultivated or is not tidy and free from weeds you will receive a warning letter. You will be given 28 days in which to clear the plot of any weeds and to remove any rubbish. If after this time you have not cleared the plot then the Council will instruct its contractor to carry out the work in order to prevent a nuisance being caused to neighbouring plots. The Council will invoice you "the tenant" for this work and if you fail to pay or keep your plot tidy and free from weeds or if you break the terms of the tenancy agreement in some other way you will then be given notice to quit. If a tenant is served with notice to quit then the Parish Council is able to recover the allotment plot after the notice period has been served your plot deposit will be retained and the Parish Council will be unable to refund any rent to the tenant. The Parish Council does not want to serve notice to quit on any tenant and will always try to negotiate to resolve any problems before taking this drastic step. However, it is unfair on other tenants who do adhere to the terms of their tenancy agreement to allow other tenants to consistently allow their plot to become overgrown, tidy them up and then neglect them again.

CLEARANCE OF PLOTS

It is the Tenants responsibility to clear the plot when you give up your tenancy and leave the land ready for the next tenant. If you leave your plot in an untidy state so that it is not fit to be re-let to another tenant the Parish Council will invoice the exiting tenant for costs incurred. This includes removal of rubbish and dismantling of unsafe structures.

COMPLAINTS

If you are unhappy about any aspect of the way the site is being managed or if you have a complaint about the way you have been treated you should put your complaint in writing and address it to the Parish Clerk. All complaints will initially be referred to the Allotments Working Party and you will be kept informed about the way your complaint is being handled.

PERSONAL SAFETY AT THE ALLOTMENTS

We are always working to make sure that the allotment site is as safe and secure an environment for tenants as possible. However it is not possible to make an allotment site a "risk free zone" so please note the following safety advice:

- Ensure that you keep your tetanus injections up to date
- Observe basic hygiene rules when handling manure, soil and chemicals.
- Lots of gardeners often spend long periods of time on their own on site, make sure that you tell someone where you are going and how long you expect to be

- Report any hazards on the site (e.g. broken glass) to the Parish Council as soon as possible
- Always store sharp tools and chemicals securely
- Supervise your children at all times
- Report any crime or suspicious behaviour to the police 101 for non emergencies and 999 for crimes in progress. Please also keep the Parish Council informed

RECYCLING

Many allotment gardeners make use of recycled materials for gardening purposes, eg railway sleepers, oil drums etc. The Parish Council encourages tenants to be inventive and to re-use old materials but reminds tenants that all structures must be safe and secure. Please do not bring anything on to the site unless you have a specific use for it and the project will be completed within a short timeframe. Piles of recycled materials will encourage rats and rabbits who will quite happily live above ground providing there is sufficient shelter.

COMPOSTING

Composting is a cheap and easy way of providing your plot with an environmentally friendly garden conditioner. Rich in plant nutrients, compost is a crumbly, brown, soil-like material, which forms from the decomposition of organic matter. The addition of compost to your soil will improve its structure and increase the level of biological activity both of which are vital for successful plant growth.

- **DO COMPOST**
 - Fruit and vegetable peelings
 - Grass cuttings, autumn leaves and annual weeds
 - Tea bags/leaves and coffee grounds
 - Soft prunings and clippings, finely cut hedge clippings
 - Hair and Pet fur, pure wood jumpers
- **DON'T COMPOST**
 - Fat or bones
 - Coal
 - Ash
 - Products soiled with oil
 - Paper
 - Metal, glass or plastic
 - Nappies
 - Meat
 - Cooked Vegetables
 - Bread
 - Cat/dog litter
 - Sauce covered foods
 - Woody Material

TIPS FOR NEW PLOT HOLDERS

Plan your plot. A well-planned plot is more likely to be successful. Good gardens don't just happen.

Decide what you want to grow. Grow what you enjoy eating, what your children enjoy eating—getting children involved at a young age is a great way of promoting healthy eating. Find out what your crops require with regard to soil type, sunlight or whether they require a greenhouse.

Do not be afraid to ask. As a rule, gardeners are friendly and helpful, so ask the person who seems to have the best plot or the most successful one. It is worth remembering that the two plots are not necessarily the same.

Do not try to do too much at once. Do a bit at a time. A little done well will likely be more successful than a lot done hurriedly. Patience is definitely a virtue in the garden.

Be prepared to accept a failure. It happens to EVERYONE!

Try to have the right tools for the job and look after them, as it will make life easier. Enjoy your plot. If you enjoy it you will look after it. If you look after it, your chances of success are likely to be higher. If you allow your plot to become a chore, then you can almost guarantee to fail.

Good luck and good gardening!