

LEIGH-ON-SEA TOWN COUNCIL

# ALLOTMENT HANDBOOK



LEIGH-ON-SEA TOWN COUNCIL, LEIGH COMMUNITY CENTRE,  
71 - 73 ELM ROAD, LEIGH-ON-SEA, SS9 1SP

01702 716288

[ALLOTMENTS@LEIGHONSEATOWNCOUNCIL.GOV.UK](mailto:ALLOTMENTS@LEIGHONSEATOWNCOUNCIL.GOV.UK)



# AN ALLOTMENT IN LEIGH-ON-SEA?

Have you ever thought about growing your own fruit and vegetables but lack the space in your own garden? Leigh-on-Sea Town Council manages two allotment sites in the town on Marshall Close and Manchester Drive, which are beloved by green fingers of all ages. The benefits of having an allotment plot are enormous and the sites offer a haven of tranquillity amongst the busy world around.

## **MANCHESTER DRIVE ALLOTMENTS**

Manchester Drive, Leigh-on-Sea SS9 3EZ

Manchester Drive Allotments is our largest allotment site with a total of 329 plots across 2 sites. The site has its own Allotment Society, Manchester Drive Allotment Society (MDAS), and assists with self-improvement works and maintenance. They also run their own on-site shop and meeting room. The plots can be accessed via a main and secondary entrance on Manchester Drive and via the gate in Randolph Close.

## **MARSHALL CLOSE ALLOTMENTS**

Marshall Close, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 3SS

Marshall Close Allotments is made up of 10 plots, it is also run by its own society



# HOW TO APPLY

Applications for plots and enquiries can be made:

In writing to the following address:

Town Clerk, Leigh-on-Sea Town Council, 71-73 Elm Road, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9 1SP or  
[allotments@leighonseatowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:allotments@leighonseatowncouncil.gov.uk)

In person at the Council office 71-73 Elm Road, Leigh-on-Sea. Enquiries should be made Monday to Friday between 9am and 4pm. For telephone enquiries phone 01702 716288.

For the Manchester Drive Allotments site, at the Manchester Drive Allotment Society (MDAS) shop on Saturday and Sunday mornings between 10am and 12 noon (except January)

If there are no vacant plots at your preferred site then you will be added to our waiting list, we will contact you as soon as a plot becomes available and arrange a time to show you around.

The left side of the page features a vertical column of botanical illustrations. At the top are several carrots with their leafy tops. Below them is a bunch of leafy greens, possibly lettuce or spinach, tied together. Further down is a lavender plant with its characteristic spike of small flowers. Below the lavender is a sprig of rosemary. At the bottom are two heads of cauliflower or similar cruciferous vegetables.

# HOW IT WORKS

Allotments enable you to grow your own food and improve your family's diet. It is also a great way of getting exercise, learning new skills and making new friends.

When taking on an allotment you will be required to sign our tenancy agreement. By signing the tenancy agreement you are making a commitment to maintain the plot throughout the year, keeping it weed free and in a good state of cultivation and fertility. Please see your tenancy agreement for a full list of conditions.

Once the tenancy agreement has been signed you will be asked to pay a deposit on your plot and also for your key to enter the allotment site. Deposits will be returned if you choose to give up your plot, leaving it in a good state of cultivation and returning your key to the Council Offices.

Rents are payable yearly with invoices being sent in September. Water is also included in this invoice and is a variable rate depending on usage. There is a 50% discount for users over the state retirement age or those registered unemployed.

There are 3 plot sizes available; starter, half and full and we encourage prospective tenants to only take on a plot that they can manage.

At least two checks on the state of cultivation will be made each year in May and September. Failure to keep a plot adequately will result in termination of the tenancy after due warning. A period of six weeks will be allowed for cultivation following a warning and the improvement must be sustained.

The left side of the page features a vertical column of botanical illustrations. At the top are several carrots of varying sizes. Below them are sprigs of lavender with their characteristic whorled flowers. Further down are bundles of leafy herbs, possibly basil or similar, tied together. At the bottom are more detailed drawings of flowering plants, including what appears to be a foxglove and some smaller, bushy plants.

# SOIL TYPE & PREPARATION

The soil in our Borough is heavy London Clay. Clay soils can be wet in winter and dry quickly in hot summers. To overcome these extremes dig well rotted farmyard manure, leaf mould or compost into the soil.

This will help to break up the clay, improve drainage and air circulation and add essential nutrients. It is likely that your plot will have had some bulky manure added over the years and it is just a question of keeping the soil in good condition. We recommend that clay soils are dug over in the autumn before they become too wet. However you may be taking on the allotment at another time of the year so ground preparation can be started at any time, weather permitting. The aim is to improve the soil structure, so keep off the site if it is very wet.

Whether your plot is overgrown or weed-free, dig it rather than rotavate. If there are perennial weeds or grass on the plot you will need to remove these with a spade. Rotavating will spread the roots over the plot and may make the weed situation worse. Rotavating will not go as deep as digging meaning that air and water will not penetrate so deep. Aim to dig to the full depth of the spade, breaking up the soil and removing weeds as you go. This can take a while especially on a big plot, but the effort will be worth it. Dig a small area at a time rather than trying to cultivate the whole plot in one session which could strain leg and back muscles.

Gradually work through the plot removing any weeds that do grow back. Break the soil down further by raking and you will soon have an area fine enough to sow seeds or plant out. The weeds that you remove from the plot can go on your compost heap - except for roots of perennial weeds like dandelions, bindweed and thistles, which needs to be disposed of off site in the correct way.



# ALLOTMENT USE

## REPRESENTATION

If a tenant feels that he/she has a matter for consideration they should write to the Town Clerk at the address above. If required, the Town Council operates a complaints procedure. Any complaints should be sent in writing to the Town Clerk and will be considered in strict confidence under that procedure.

## INSURANCE

The Council has public liability insurance, but this does not cover injury caused by plot holders or property and crops owned by plot holders.

## PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

The Council is not liable for any personal equipment left on the site. Tenants are reminded that they should look after their tools in a responsible way to avoid injury and misuse. Tools should be labelled with the plot number.

## VEHICLES

Vehicles should be left in recognised parking areas. Main paths may be closed during adverse weather conditions to reduce damage. Vehicles are used on the site entirely at the owner's risk.

## ALLOTMENT GATES

The Allotment Site gates must be kept shut and locked at all times. If you have deliveries, make sure you are there and you are responsible for ensuring no damage is done. Keys may not be given to deliverers. A refundable deposit is required for a key when the Plot is let; lost keys may be replaced for an additional charge.



# ALLOTMENT STRUCTURES

## BUILDINGS

The Council permits the erection of huts, sheds or tool lockers up to 6ft by 4ft in size and of a non-permanent construction. For larger structures permission must first be sought in writing from the Town Clerk at the address above. The positioning of a shed should ensure that it does not interfere unreasonably with adjacent plots (e.g. by shading), it should not be within 1ft of the boundary and should have guttering collecting the rainwater.

## COMPOST HEAPS

All suitable waste should be composted. A compost heap, if made of suitable material free from weed seeds and under the right conditions, is a valuable acquisition to an allotment. However, this should be properly constructed and well sited on the plot, at least 1ft from the plot boundaries to avoid possible obstruction of the paths and at least 1ft from neighbouring fences.

## PONDS

That ponds shall be no more than 10 ft squared in size, must be 1 ft from the path and that a map be prepared showing where they are, that the depth of any pond shall not be greater than 18 inches and that the pond should be clearly visible.

## BONFIRES

Bonfires are not permitted at any point over the allotments.



# HEALTH & SAFETY

## GROUND RULES FOR ALLOTMENT GROUPS

To be adhered to by all users of the allotment:

- No alcohol should be consumed before or while gardening.
- Ashtrays to be used for cigarette stubs.
- Have first aid kit available at all settings.
- Everybody needs to be willing to share, co-operate and communicate.
- Be aware that everybody has different abilities and skills and not everybody can make an equal contribution.
- Each individual has to take personal responsibility for his / her safety, particularly if working on their own.
- At all times, each individual using the allotments must act in a responsible, considerate manner; mindful of others working in the allotment
- Tenants have a duty of care to everyone on their plot, regardless of whether they have permission to be there
- Assessing risk is an ongoing process
- High risks must be removed immediately
- Always bear in mind your health and physical ability
- Being aware of a particular risk does not remove the risk it may pose to others
- Be aware there may be particular risks for children on allotment plots



# PESTICIDE USE

Whether controlling the slugs eating your lettuce or weeds growing on your plot, you may be considering using a pesticide product. This covers a wide range of chemicals and sprays all of which are used to control pests on plants. Only home and garden products should be used on an allotment.

Prior to purchasing any product, ask yourself, is it necessary and can I use an alternative?

It is illegal to buy a large container of pesticide and then pour into smaller unlabelled bottles. This is for safety reasons as the original packaging will have been assessed for storage of the pesticide and the label for correct instructions on safe use, storage and disposal of the product. By using an unlabelled bottle it could lead to incorrect and unsafe use, storage and disposal which could affect the health of people, animals and the environment.

Always read the label carefully and use according to the instructions.

Protect your local environment, wildlife and water pollution. Never dispose of unwanted products, diluted products or rinsings in household drains, ditches or ponds.



# BEE KEEPING POLICY

## CONDITIONS

- A beekeeper must be a member of the relevant Allotment Society where the hive(s) they are responsible for is(are) situated or be the allocated beekeeper for the Allotment Societies hives.
- Telephone numbers of all beekeepers should be prominently displayed on the Allotment Society notice boards and by the designated hive site and beekeepers are to make a First Aid kit available.
- Beekeepers must be a member of Southend Division of the Essex Beekeepers who are affiliated to the BBKA, membership of which provides public and product liability insurance. Proof of membership and insurance must be produced each year to the appropriate Allotment Society committee.
- Beekeepers must have a recognised qualification with the BBKA, undertaking at least a Beekeeping for Beginners course or higher and/or warrant that they have at least one year's experience of keeping bees with an experienced mentor to assist and support them. Further, the beekeeper warrants that they will exercise the appropriate skill and care in managing their colonies
- No hive shall be kept on the designated wildlife area without the prior consent of Leigh Town Council and the appropriate Allotment Society.



# BEE KEEPING POLICY

## MANAGEMENT

- The beekeeper may have no more than one permanent hive, plus one temporary hive, for the purposes of swarm control, if needed, throughout the calendar year.
- A source of easily accessible water must always be provided for the bees and be in place before the bees are established. This source must be maintained and not allowed to run dry.
- An individual keeping bees on a designated wildlife area must ensure that for any period of (prolonged) absence, adequate arrangements are in place prior to absence to ensure their colonies are still managed and any problems swiftly dealt with. Contact numbers of alternative nominated persons are to be provided to the Allotment representatives (and/or Leigh Town Council).
- There are effective methods of swarm control and the beekeeper should practise these, carrying out a regular inspection at least once a week during the swarming season.
- The hives must be registered with BeeBase and open to inspection by the Regional Bee Inspector.
- The beekeeper should, as far as they are able, ensure that the colony of bees has a docile temperament when considered against an average colony of bees. Should the colony display overt aggressive tendencies such as excessive stinging, excessive defensiveness or 'following', the beekeeper must take suitable remedial action to calm the colony (which may include re-queening or ultimately destruction).



# BEE KEEPING POLICY

- Every effort should be made to inspect colonies at quieter times, when there are less people in the immediate vicinity of the colony/ies, however, the beekeeper shall always be mindful not to cause inconvenience to others who are working in the immediate vicinity and if necessary advise those persons around that inspections will be taking place and for roughly how long.

-Signs (as many as are reasonably needed) "Beekeeper at work" should be placed prominently while the beekeeper is working, and for around half an hour after, to ensure that no one accidentally walks too near.

-Ensure that bees are encouraged to rise at least 6 feet before leaving the plot by the use of screening, which could be natural hedging, wooden fencing or fine plastic/wire mesh screening. The screening also serves to avoid drawing the attention of potential vandals to the hives.

Failure to abide by the conditions of this agreement may result in the removal of the hive(s) from the allotment site.

The left side of the page features a vertical column of botanical illustrations. At the top are three carrots with their leafy tops. Below them is a lavender plant with its characteristic spike of small flowers. Further down is a bunch of leafy herbs, possibly basil, tied together with a rubber band. Below that is a rosemary plant with its needle-like leaves. At the bottom are two heads of cauliflower or similar vegetable.

# USEFUL TIPS

- Plan ahead so that your plot is ready for sowing/planting
- Follow local weather forecast and time your cultivation, planting, watering and harvesting accordingly
- Ask a neighbouring plot holder to look after your plot if you're away. You can return the favour if they are away
- Collectively buy and share seeds with other plot holders to reduce costs
- Use water sparingly. Water in the early morning or evening around the base of the plant for best results
- If you have restricted mobility or difficulty bending construct some raised beds. These are also useful for growing herbs as they provide better drainage
- Keep a diary of your allotment year noting seeding, planting and harvesting times. Note your successes and try to repeat or better them next year
- Above all enjoy your plot and the pleasure that growing your produce brings
- Take time to plan the layout of your plot for ease of use
- Develop a yearly plan of what you will grow
- Think about shade, ease of access, growing space, watering, etc.
- Create narrow planting beds to allow easy access to the soil
- Use crop rotation to keep your soil healthy
- Manure your plot regularly to maintain soil fertility
- Always use gloves and wash your hands after handling manure
- Ensure you have good paths and keep paths clear of hazards
- Don't do too much in one go but maintain steady and regular progress