

# Allotment Gardening

## Are you prepared?



### Congratulations!

You have just taken your first step in becoming an allotment gardener. This rewarding and fulfilling pastime is packed full of benefits, but are you ready for the tasks and challenges ahead?

### It's not as easy as it looks!

We have all picked up those glossy magazines with wonderful photos of mouth-watering fruit from colourful pristine allotments. However it takes a lot of time, effort and dedication to get there. Rest assured it will be a while before you will be able to kick back on a chair in the late afternoon summer sun, watching the bees and birds.

### What can I expect?

**Time** – Allotments require regular visits all year round, whatever the weather. You'll need to spend more during the spring and summer months when absolutely 'everything' is growing!

**Work** – Allotment gardening is a physical activity and you will be required to keep your allotment cultivated at all times (maintained for growing vegetables, fruit or flowers). The kind of work you can expect will be: Digging, weeding, planting, composting, watering, feeding, cutting, pruning and much more.

**Weeds** – The battle with the weeds begins as soon as you start and you will be required to keep on top of them. Other plot holders do not think so kindly to weeds that have turned to seed and blown onto their plot. It is worth remembering the phrase, "1 year of seed = 10 years of weeds!"

**Cost** – You can spend as little or as much as you like on your allotment, but you will find yourself needing to spend some money. Keeping allotments doesn't have to cost a fortune. Recycling, shopping around, borrowing and buying second-hand are all great ways to keep costs down.

**Other Responsibilities** – Plot holders are required to keep their plot cultivated at all times, but there may be other tasks you are not aware of. You are responsible for cutting the grass around your plot. If there is a hedge next to your plot, you will be expected to cut the side which faces your plot. You will also be required to keep your plot numbered at all times, making sure you keep stones, debris and other items away from the edges of your plot to reduce hazards and allow maintenance.

If you wish to erect a structure (shed / greenhouse / poly tunnel) on your plot you need to seek permission. You will need to contact the Council who will request for you to complete and return a structures agreement form (£30 deposit required)



## Help!

Don't worry, it's not all doom and gloom. Here are a few tips to help settle those daunting feelings:

- **You are not alone** – whether it's your first time or you're a seasoned pro, you won't know everything. If you are unsure of anything, ask - there is often a friendly face around to help answer your questions.
- **Plan your allotment space** – take some time to think about what you would like to grow and where. Start small and simple, with plants that are easy to grow or require little care. You can always attempt more adventurous things later. Remember to leave spaces for access (for watering, weeding and picking).
- **Don't give up** – for the first few months you will probably be spending lots of time with very little to show for it. Rest assured your hard work will be rewarded. You will quickly learn from mistakes and cherish the successes.
- **Keep on top of it** – once you start to get the upper hand on the weeds, make sure you keep them that way. A couple of missed trips to the plot during the growing season and you will be back to square one before you know it! Regular hoeing in hot dry weather will keep them firmly at bay.

If you find yourself struggling and unable to keep on top of your whole allotment plot, please do not hesitate to talk to your Site Agent or the Council (see contact details below) to discuss possible solutions. See the contact details below.

## Benefits

Here are just a few benefits from allotment gardening:

- **Health** – there are many associated health benefits to this work out. A simple visit to your allotment can help alleviate stress and lower blood pressure.
- **Fulfilment and Achievement** – once you begin to get produce from your plot you will feel delighted and that it was all worth the hard work.
- **Fresh produce** – there is something rather nice and delicious about eating and enjoying produce that you have grown.
- **Money Saving** – allotments as a pastime provide great value for money. You may find you make savings from your shopping bill because you have grown some of your own.
- **Education** – Getting children involved is a wonderful and fun way for them to learn. You will also find yourself learning plenty too!
- **Wildlife** – Insects, mammals and birds all benefit too!

**We hope you have fun and enjoy your allotment experience!**

## Contacts

### Stevenage Direct Services

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