

## Allotments in Carlisle

Allotments can provide a wide range of benefits to tenants, communities, the environment and to wildlife. These benefits can include providing tenants with the opportunity to produce their own inexpensive food, take physical exercise, learn new skills, develop a sense of wellbeing, and to make new friends etc.

We wish you every success with your allotment tenancy.

We've drawn together some factsheets to help support your tenancy.



### **Getting Started**



### **Tools, Equipment and Access to Water**



### **Cultivation and Composting**



### **Hedges, Trees and Weeds**



### **Safety**



### **Personal Health and Safety**



### **Security and Respect**



### **Bonfires**



### **Sheds, Greenhouses and Polytunnels**



### **Livestock, Pigeons, Wildlife and Pests**



### **Tenancy Rules**

### Here are some handy contacts:

- Butterfly Conservation: [www.butterfly-conservation.org](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org)
- Keep Carlisle Clean - to report fly-tipping, littering and dog-fouling: [www.cumberland.gov.uk](http://www.cumberland.gov.uk)
- British Beekeepers Association: [www.bbka.org.uk](http://www.bbka.org.uk)
- Cumbria Police: [www.cumbria.police.uk](http://www.cumbria.police.uk)
- RSPCA: [www.rspca.org.uk](http://www.rspca.org.uk)

For local allotment association contact details, visit [cumberland.gov.uk](http://cumberland.gov.uk) or call us on **0300 373 3730**.





## Getting Started

Before you get started, take time to plan the layout of your plot.

Think about shade, growing space, watering and ease of access, creating narrow planting beds to allow easy access to the soil. Keep paths clear of hazards.

Use crop rotation to keep the soil healthy. Manure your plot regularly to maintain soil fertility; always use gloves and wash hands afterwards.

Draw up an annual plan of what you would like to grow and where you think it should go. Consider within your plan:

- Situation and light.
- Ease of access for watering and maintenance.
- Drainage and soil condition.

### Paths and Access

Keep paths clear of vegetation and potential hazards such as tools or discarded rubbish. Maintaining good paths can also help make it more difficult for some weeds to spread from one planting area to another. Ideally, paths should be wide enough for a wheelbarrow. You must display the number of your plot at the entrance or another visible location.

### Planting Areas

Consider access by means of paths to ensure you can reach easily into the middle of the planting area. Remove weeds, stones and other debris from your planting area and dig over the soil.

### Raised Beds

Raised beds can be more accessible and are useful if you have poor drainage or if you want to grow something that does not do well in the soil type on site and you need to bring in a different one.

### Crop Rotation

Crop rotation involves dividing your crops into three groups based on their preferred growing conditions. Each group is planted in a separate bed and each year the groups are moved to a different bed. The crop rotation method can avoid the build-up of pests and diseases and keeps the soil in good condition.



## **Tools, Equipment and Access to Water**

### **Tools and Equipment**

You may only need a few basic tools to begin with - spade, fork, hoe, rake, hand trowel and gloves. Other useful items include secateurs, shears, dibber, watering can and a wheelbarrow.

Read and follow the instructions when using power tools and make sure you have had appropriate training, if required. Do not store power tools in sheds.

When using power tools, wear safety goggles and appropriate personal protective clothing as well as sturdy boots preferably with steel toe caps. Keep a mobile phone handy, in case of accidents.

Store all tools safely in a lockable unit out of reach of children and do not store power tools or fuel on your plot. Security mark tools to make them easy to identify.

### **Access to Water**

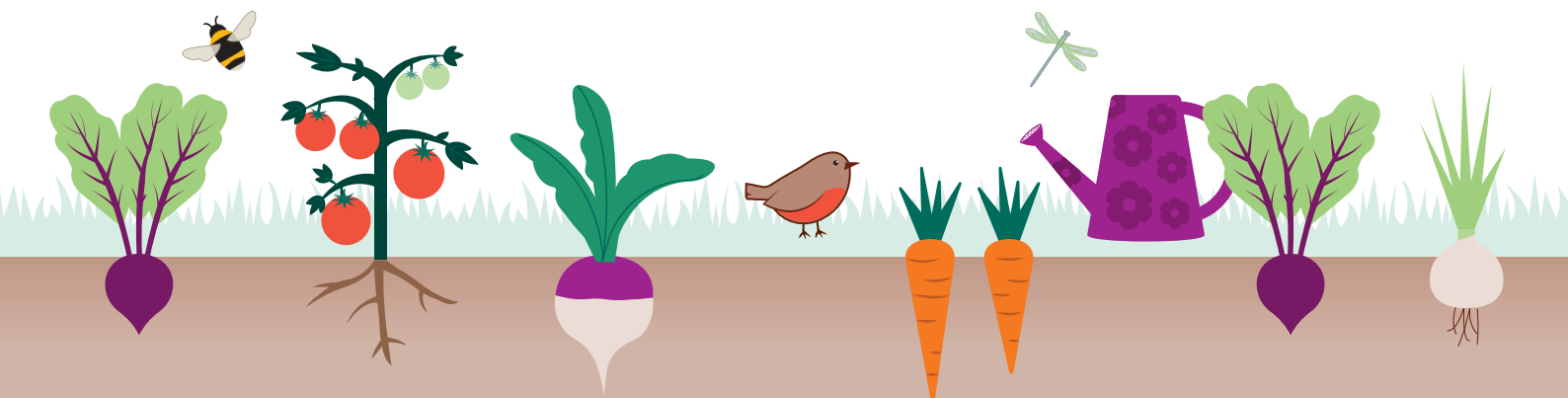
It is particularly important that seedlings get sufficient water until they become established and roots can find some of their own moisture deeper in the ground. Water containers must be kept covered.

An additional charge is made if your site has access to mains water.

Water your allotment in the morning or evening to reduce risk of evaporation or scorching. Give plants a thorough soaking to encourage deep rooting.

Only connect hoses to water taps to top up your water containers and use mains water sparingly and only when needed.

If you have a shed or greenhouse, use a rainwater collection system.



## **Cultivation and Composting**

### **What Can I Grow?**

It is a requirement of your tenancy agreement that you keep your plot in a good state of cultivation. This means that you should use your plot to grow mostly vegetables and fruit on an annual basis.

Allotment sites are inspected at least once a year and if your plot is not well maintained you may be asked to give up your tenancy. You are required to allow access or maintain visibility into your plot for inspections to occur. You are given time to cultivate a new plot, but the Green Spaces Officer will want to see continual progress.

If you are sent a letter for non-cultivation, you will be allowed 21 days from the date stated on the letter to make significant improvements. If you fail to do so we will ask you to give up your tenancy.

### **Why Compost?**

Composting will help you save money, improve your soil, help you grow healthy, strong plants and look after the environment. Try to compost as much green waste as possible. Creating your own leaf mulch will improve soil texture.

Making compost is not difficult. The easiest method is to buy a ready built compost bin. Alternatively, you can build your own bin by using reclaimed timber and four wooden posts to make a bottomless box. Or just heap all your organic matter into a big pile in a corner of your plot. Covering it will help retain moisture. Digging or "turning" your compost occasionally will help to speed up the process.

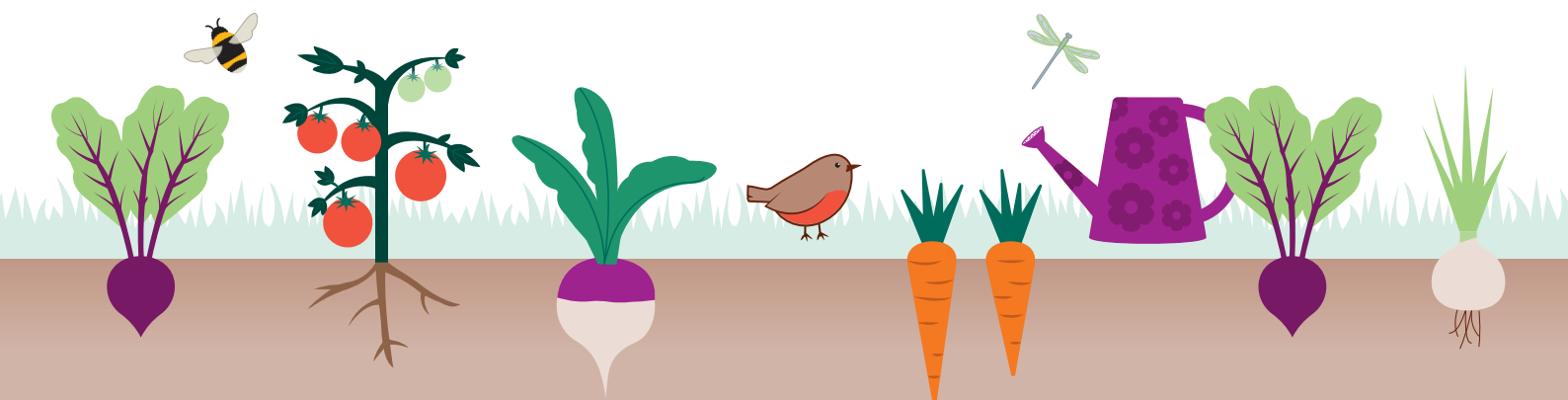
Creating leaf mulch (leaf mould) is completely free and can help to improve your soil texture, suppress weeds and reduce the need for watering. Gather up autumn leaves but not from hedges where wildlife may be hibernating, or from roads where leaves may contain contaminants. By using four posts and some chicken wire you can create an area that will contain the leaves but still allow air to circulate around them. It will take about two years for most leaves to break down fully but digging over occasionally with a fork will help speed up the process. To use the mulch spread a thick layer on top of the soil around your plants to suppress weeds or dig it directly into the soil (with your compost) to improve your soil texture.

Always use gloves when handling compost or manure and wash your hands afterwards. Don't compost cooked food or animal products as these can attract vermin and possibly harmful bacteria or disease.

## Growing Organically

For many people, moving towards a more organic gardening approach can be reached by simply not using slug pellets or other pesticides. Others will only buy organic seed and natural products and materials.

We advise all allotment holders to try and keep their use of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides to a minimum.



## **4 Hedges, Trees and Weeds**

### **Hedges and Trees**

The maintenance of hedges is the responsibility of tenants. Shared hedges should be maintained jointly by the tenants on either side. It is an offence to disturb nesting birds so please check your hedges before cutting.

No large or ornamental trees are allowed on your plot. Tree removal must only be carried out by qualified professionals.

Fruit trees are allowed provided they are on dwarf rootstock. The trees should be well maintained and regularly pruned for shape and to control vigour.

### **Weeds**

Keep your plot free from weeds and don't let weeds set seed. Cover areas with weed matting until they are ready to be worked on. Remove all roots of perennial weeds and when strimming overgrown areas be aware of hazards.

To keep on top of weeds you need to make frequent visits to your plot and make weeding a regular task. Removing roots is the only effective organic way to remove weeds but other methods can help.

You can compost annual weeds, but perennial weeds will grow again if they are composted before they are killed.

### **Weedkillers (Herbicides)**

Contact herbicides can be useful for large areas of annual weeds and usually work on contact with foliage. They have minimal impact on perennial weeds such as nettles or brambles and are best avoided on allotments.

Systemic weed killers such as Glyphosate destroy plants from within, including their roots, usually following a spray application to the foliage. They are useful for controlling perennial weeds such as bindweed and bramble. It is advisable to restrict use of such weed killers to the initial clearance of the plot.

Checking old products is important, as many commonly used products have now been withdrawn from sale due to their adverse impact on the environment. Some products are banned and therefore using them would mean breaking the law.

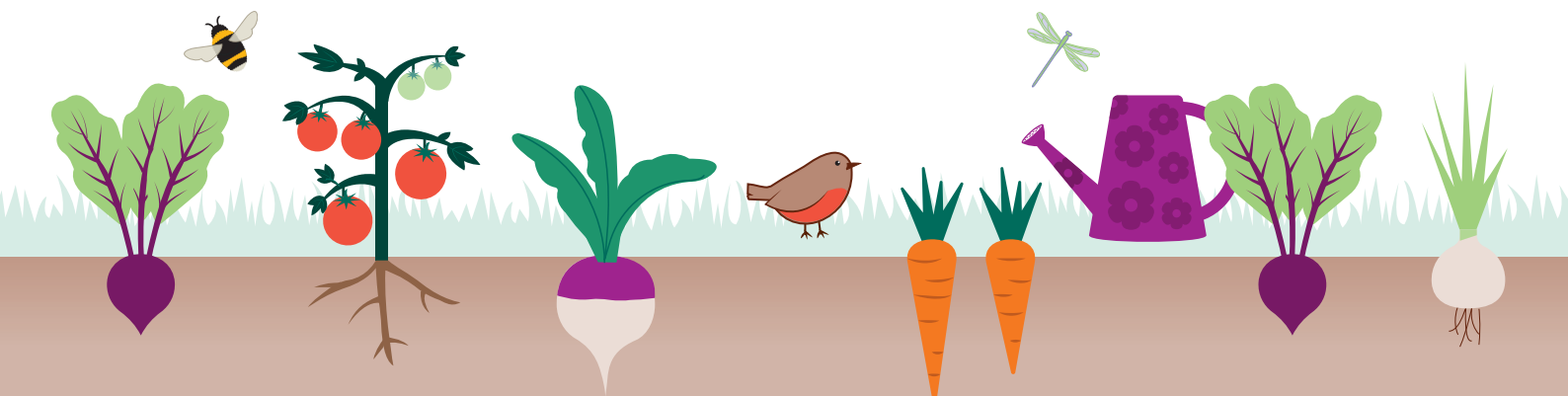
### **Weed Matting and Mulches**

Weed matting can be useful under paths and as a temporary cover to suppress weeds until an area can be worked. It is also possible to grow some crops through holes in the matting e.g. courgettes.

Mulches such as compost and leaf mould need to be applied in a layer 50mm to 75mm thick. These will act as an effective weed suppressor when placed on top of the soil, surrounding your plants or over weed matting.

### Invasive Species

Please inform us immediately if you have any invasive species on your plot as you may need specialist advice to remove them. Ones to watch out for on allotments include Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and Giant Hogweed.





## **Safety**

### **Storing Materials and Waste**

Do not use your allotment plot to store materials. It reduces the area available for cultivation and can pose a hazard to yourself and others. Please only bring materials onto your plot if you intend to use them immediately and, if necessary, store them safely and tidily.

We will write to tenants who are storing excessive amounts of materials on their plot.

By law we can recover the cost of removing excessive waste materials from a plot either during or at the end of a tenancy. Remember you must not bring rubbish on site.

### **Waste Disposal**

When you take on a plot you may find rubbish and other debris on it. We ask if you can therefore remove and dispose of it carefully. Many materials can be taken to the local recycling centre.

Occasionally, there may be a skip available on site for the disposal of bulky materials.

Please be considerate when filling skips so that all of the tenants can benefit from them.

It is an offence to leave waste materials in a communal location where a skip has previously been sited or in expectation of a skip. Any rubbish left when a skip is removed will be treated as fly-tipping.

### **Asbestos**

Asbestos was once a common building material and the majority of asbestos found on allotments is in the form of asbestos sheeting used for sheds/buildings and their roofs.

Provided the structures are of sound construction and are in good condition, there is no need to remove them and you can continue to use them safely. Do not hammer or drill into the structures as this could cause the release of asbestos fibres. It is the inhalation of these minute fibres which is harmful to health.

### **Removing Asbestos**

If you have any concerns about asbestos, please contact us on **0300 373 3730**. It is vital that the material is correctly identified prior to removal and disposal, and on no account should you remove structures.

Occasionally, you might find small amounts of asbestos loose on the plot. When you come across undamaged pieces of asbestos such as corrugated sheeting or pipes, the following guidelines will help you deal with them safely and effectively:

- Clearly identify whether the material is asbestos and of which type. If in doubt, ask.



- Handle only solid and unbroken pieces of asbestos. Do not break or damage when handling.
- Dampen the asbestos with water to reduce the risk of fibres being released if damaged.
- Wear protective gloves and a dust mask.
- Double bag the asbestos using fully sealed plastic bags and seal with tape.
- Remove from the site carefully and take to a Council waste recycling facility for safe disposal.

## Assessing Risk

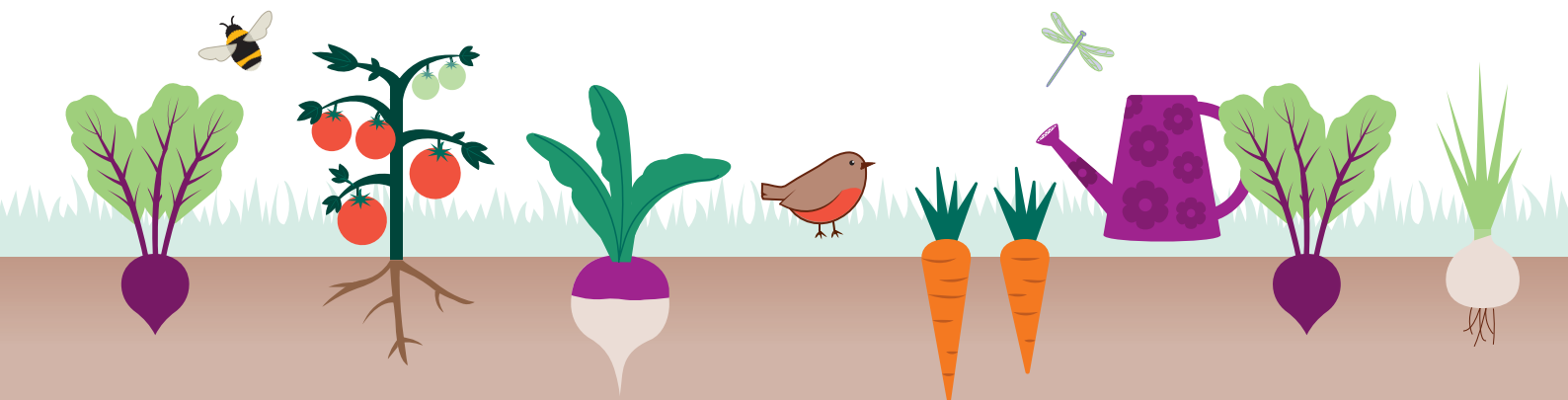
Health and safety on allotments is everyone's responsibility and as a tenant you need to make sure that your plot is as safe as possible for everyone. Tenants have a duty of care to anyone on their plot. We may also enforce action to remove health and safety concerns. When thinking about hazards you need to look at the potential risks to yourself, your family, co-workers, visitors to your plot, intruders (including children) and wildlife.

## Hazards and Risks

To assess dangers on your plot you must first identify hazards that have the potential to cause harm. Some common hazards are: buildings, fire, hazardous materials, (asbestos, combustibles, refuse, scrap metal, glass, chemicals, manure, compost etc.), trees, vegetation, ponds, water, fences and vermin.

Once you have a list of hazards you need to look at potential risks. Risk is the likelihood that the harm from a hazard will happen (e.g. a sharp blade concealed in overgrown grass is more likely to cause harm than on stored away in a locked shed).

You need to identify risks as potentially being "high", "medium" or "low". High risks must be removed immediately before removing or minimising any medium risks.





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## **Personal Health and Safety**

### **Tetanus**

Tetanus is an illness caused by bacteria present in soil and manure, which can enter the body through the tiniest abrasion, scratch, thorn, puncture or cut.

### **First Aid**

A first aid kit is advisable to keep in your garden shed. A small selection of adhesive plasters, antiseptic ointment, sting cream, pair of tweezers and a gauze pad to use as a compress to stop bleeding, are all useful contents.

### **Exercise**

Having an allotment can be hard work, so be mindful of your own capabilities and physical limitations. Build up slowly and if you have a known medical condition you may want to seek medical advice before starting work on your plot.

### **Wash Hands and Use Gloves**

There is a risk of illness from bacteria (such as E. coli) which can be present in animal manure and even homemade compost. Wash your hands regularly and always wear protective gloves when handling potentially harmful substances.

### **Sun Protection**

If you are spending long periods on your plot, please ensure you have adequate sun protection. Keep yourself hydrated by regularly drinking water and avoid physical exertion during the hottest part of the day.

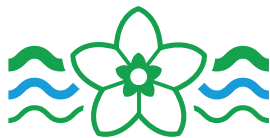
### **Hazards for Children**

Before allowing children onto your allotment plot remove/reduce any hazards. In addition to those already mentioned, particular hazards for children include:

- Glass or other debris lying around your plot.
- Garden canes which could cause an eye injury.
- Hazardous chemicals and sharp tools stored incorrectly.
- Glass structures such as greenhouses.
- Ponds and uncovered water containers.
- Vegetation that can cause harm or irritation.
- Sun exposure.

It is important that young children wash their hands regularly, and do not eat plants or soil. Please also ensure your children do not cause a nuisance to other plot holders.

Remember you must never leave children unsupervised on an allotment site.



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## Security and Respect

### Security on Allotments

Many tenants find that time on allotments is both tranquil and enjoyable. Plot holders spend a considerable amount of time on their plots and put in a lot of effort, keeping their plot well maintained and productive. It can therefore be very distressing if your site suffers from incidents of vandalism or anti-social behaviour. The tips listed under Security Checklist are aimed at increasing plot security and reducing vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

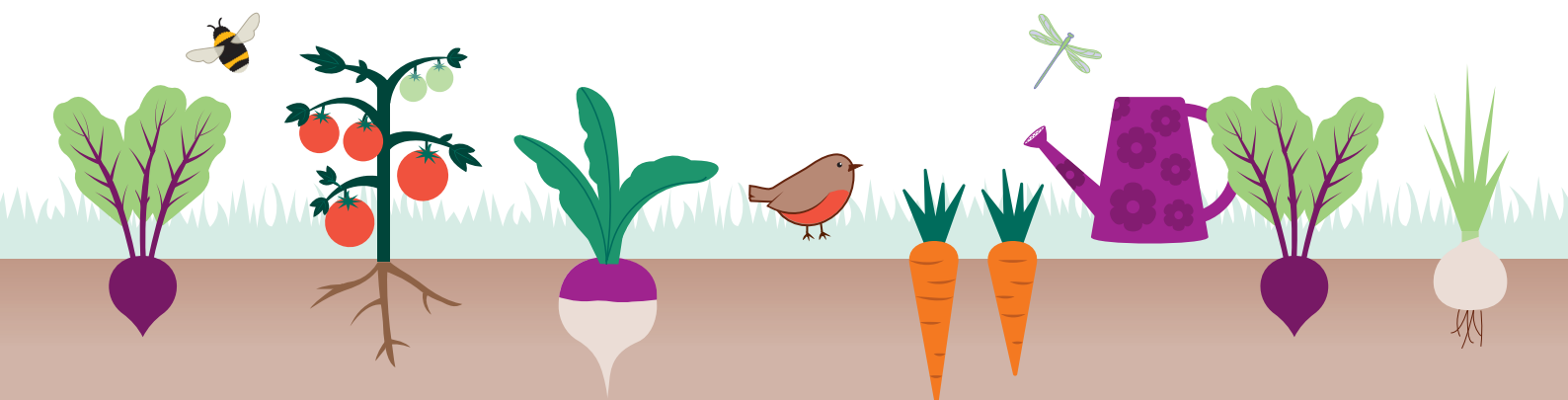
As an allotment holder you are expected to be courteous and respectful to other users of the site and neighbouring properties (this is a condition of your tenancy). Everyone is entitled to enjoy their plot. Dogs must be kept on leads and you must clean up after your dog.

**Report any incidents to the police (101 for non-emergencies or 999 if it is an emergency).**

**Please make us aware of any incidents.**

### Security Checklist

- **Keep your plot maintained.** A well-tended plot is a lot less likely to attract vandals than one that looks uncared for.
- **Don't leave any valuables on site.** If possible, take all tools with you when you leave. Any tools left on your plot should be security marked.
- **Don't use or keep combustible or dangerous materials on your plot.**
- **Dispose of rubbish appropriately.** A site that is well presented and looks cared for can help to reduce anti-social behaviour such as fly-tipping.
- **Keep your site and your plot secure.** Barbed wire, razor wire or similar are not allowed under any circumstances.
- **Be a good neighbour.** Looking out for one another will help make your site feel safer. Don't cause a nuisance to your neighbours and don't visit other plots without permission.
- **Be aware of personal safety when working on your own.** Always let someone know where you are and, if possible, have a means of contact such as a mobile phone.



## **Bonfires**

### **Bonfires**

Burning must be kept to a minimum and composting should be used wherever possible. Although bonfires can be a good way of disposing of some materials, they can also cause major problems for you, your family and for your neighbours.

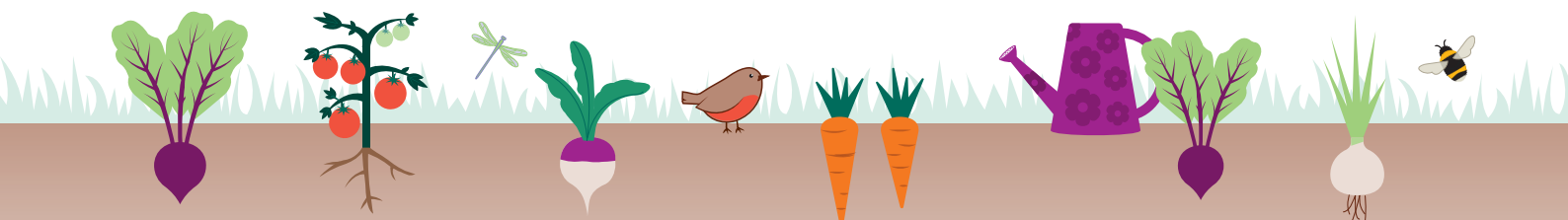
Smoke nuisance from bonfires generates a lot of complaints each year. We would advise tenants to minimise burning during the summer months and especially at weekends and Bank Holidays.

Green waste should be composted where possible. Non-green waste, such as carpet or plastic, should never be burned and disposal should be through the nearest waste management centre. Recycle materials whenever practical.

Think before burning! If you do need to have a bonfire, you must follow the precautions and guidance below. Under no circumstances should material be brought onto a site to be burned. This is a breach of your tenancy.

### **Precautions and Guidance**

- Keep the fire small and under control at all times.
- Never use an accelerant to light or encourage the fire.
- Never dispose of garden chemicals on a fire.
- Never burn anything that could produce noxious fumes, including household rubbish, rubber, plastic paint, foam, carpets, aerosols, batteries etc.
- Do not burn green or damp materials as they will produce excessive smoke.
- Consider weather conditions/wind direction. Do not light a fire if conditions are unsuitable.
- Only burn if the wind is blowing smoke away from nearby houses and roads. It is an offence for smoke to obstruct a highway.
- Burn later in the day, so that people have the chance to dry washing and enjoy their outside space during the daytime.
- Never leave a fire unattended.
- Always site the fire as far away as possible from hedges, fences and other structures.



## **Sheds, Greenhouses and Polytunnels**

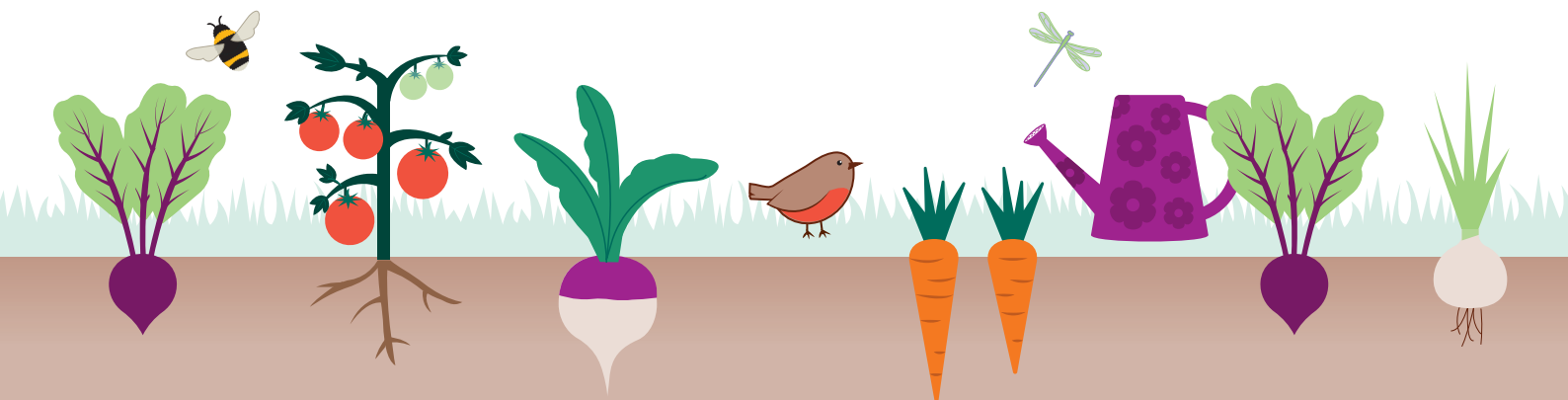
Greenhouses and polytunnels extend your growing season and increase the range of crops you can grow. Sheds can be used for shelter and storage. No permanent foundations or structures are allowed.

Sheds must not exceed 8ft x 6ft and must be well maintained. If you intend to store tools, ensure you have secure lockable storage areas and do not store power tools or flammables.

Greenhouses must not exceed 10ft x 8ft; polytunnels must not exceed 20ft x 10ft. Both should be well maintained.

Don't store glass on your plot and be aware of any broken glass. Ensure safe construction and regularly check and maintain all structures.

Don't store dangerous tools, combustibles or chemicals on site, even in a locked shed.



## **Livestock, Pigeons, Wildlife and Pests**

The majority of allotment sites are for cultivation only, but some allotments are pigeon & poultry sites or just pigeon sites. For these, provided that 75% of your plot is used for growing vegetables and fruit, you are usually allowed to keep up to six chickens (no cockerels) and/or two rabbits per plot (restrictions may apply). The keeping of any other animals is not allowed.

When inspecting plots with livestock or pigeons on them, we will also consider the suitability of housing and the welfare of the animals/birds.

You are responsible for the care, welfare, nuisance, health risks or damage caused

Pigeon-keeping is only permitted at specially designated sites. Plots used for pigeon-keeping should still be well-maintained in accordance with your tenancy agreement.

### **Keeping Livestock and Pigeons**

If you wish to keep chickens, rabbits or pigeons, you must have:

- Knowledge, training or experience concerning physical/behavioural needs, appropriate diet, recognising injury/disease and when vet assistance is needed, handling animals safely, carrying out daily hygiene tasks etc.
- The ability, time and money to ensure welfare and care needs are met.
- Secure housing providing the right type of living environment.
- Storage for food away from the plot or in a metal bin, to avoid attracting rats.
- A good understanding of personal safety and hygiene.
- Availability as a 24-hour emergency contact.
- Suitable insurance.
- Support from your neighbours.
- Awareness of, and willingness to comply with, animal welfare regulations.

### **Wildlife and Pests**

Allotments provide a range of habitats for birds, small mammals, amphibians and insects. Many animals are beneficial to gardeners as they prey on pests such as aphids, slugs and snails. Birds can be encouraged with nest boxes and feeders placed in trees.

Rats are attracted by uncultivated areas, spaces under sheds, piles of debris and open compost heaps, as well as unharvested crops. Keeping your plot well cultivated and tidy helps deter them.

Only use commercial products such as poisons, slug pellets etc as a last resort.

Follow instructions for use when using commercial products and use netting to avoid pigeon damage.

## **11 Tenancy Rules**

Allotment use is subject to legislation. It is important to read your tenancy agreement carefully and follow the rules set out in it. Remember your tenancy agreement is a legally binding document and if you do not adhere to the rules you may lose your tenancy.

### **Rent**

Allotment rents must be paid within 28 days of receipt of an invoice. The invoice explains how and where to pay.

### **Sharing and Co-working**

You may wish to share your plot with someone else. If you would like the person you are sharing with to have any rights with regards to the tenancy agreement then you need to have a "joint tenancy" agreement. You cannot sub-let your plot (charge others a rent for using it), and any tenant found doing this will have their tenancy terminated.

### **Trading**

You cannot use your plot to sell produce for any trade or business.

### **Changing Your Details**

If any of your personal details change, please let us know as soon as possible.

### **Keys**

Keys to allotment sites can only be arranged by contacting us. We will advise which number key you need, so you can go to the locksmiths with your signed tenancy agreement to purchase one.

### **Giving Up Your Plot**

You must contact us by email or telephone as soon as possible if you wish to end your tenancy. Please remove any of your property at the end of your tenancy.

You can contact us by emailing **[allotments@cumberland.gov.uk](mailto:allotments@cumberland.gov.uk)** or call us on **0300 373 3730**.

