

Tommy's Field Allotments Cultivation Policy

Why have a Cultivation Policy?

A cultivation policy sets out to give a clear understanding to current members, and prospective new members of Tommy's Field Allotments, of the minimum standard required to maintaining their allotment/s. It will provide clear and unambiguous cultivation standards and by doing so will help to establish and maintain good relations between neighbouring allotment holders. It also provides a framework for any allotment holder to advise the Committee at an early stage if they are unable to maintain their allotment in accordance with this policy and provide an explanation with mitigating circumstances as to the reason for this.

Definition of an Allotment Garden

Section 22 of the Allotment Act 1922 defines the term "allotment garden" as "an allotment not exceeding 40 poles [1011.72m²] in extent which is wholly or mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of vegetable or fruit crops for consumption by himself or his family."

Definition of Cultivation

Cultivation means the maintenance of the productive area of the allotment by digging using a spade, fork, hoe and trowel or using a mechanical rotavator / cultivator to keep the productive area in a weed free condition all year round or not to allow weeds to grow together to develop into a lawn and not to allow any weeds to develop to flower and set seed. Cultivation also means to grow and maintain all plants and crops of vegetables, fruit, herbs and flowers which are healthy and pest free. This will help to maximise produce growing on the productive part of the allotment which can be achieved all year round. It is not sufficient to simply clear weeds without using the area to produce crops and flowers. A lawn of any type does not constitute cultivation (this includes any type of wildflower meadow or lawn).

Cultivation and Use of Allotments

Tenants must keep their allotment clean, tidy, in a reasonable state of cultivation and fertility and in good condition. The **majority** of the total allotment area should be cultivated – that is either in readiness for growing, well stocked with produce (relevant to the time of the year) or being made ready for crops or being prepared for the following season. The **remainder** of the allotment area is to be kept tidy and maintained in good order.

Weeds must be controlled to prevent seeds spreading to other allotments, in addition the tenant must take all reasonable steps to eradicate pernicious weeds such as thistles, ground elder, nettles, ragwort, horsetail and brambles and ensure that they do not spread to other allotments.

Tenants must not cause a nuisance to other allotment holders by allowing weeds to seed. Each Tenant will be responsible for maintaining paths running adjacent to or within their allotment as per the Paths Policy. Hedges, bushes and trees which cast shadow upon neighbouring allotments must not be allowed to become overgrown and be kept below 1.8m in height as measured from the side in shadow.

Restrictions on Cropping

Tenants may grow any kind of vegetables, flowers, soft fruit, herbs or longer-term edible crops. Fruit trees or bushes may be planted only if they are of dwarf stock and should be sited where they will not create an obstacle or nuisance to others as they grow.

Fruit bushes of all types must be kept within clearly defined areas of the allotment and not be permitted to spread outside these areas.

The ad-hoc sowing of wildflowers is discouraged due to the potential risk of seeds from plants spreading to other allotments and causing a nuisance. In addition, paths giving access to allotments should be retained as natural grass that is regularly cut, the use of weed killers and artificial turf are discouraged.

Members are reminded that Section 14(2) of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 restricts the growing of invasive weeds such as Japanese Knotweed.

Inspection and Enforcement

Regular allotment inspections take place by members of the Inspection Sub-committee and selected criteria are used to establish the condition of each allotment.

Allotment holders who do not meet the standards laid down will be informed through a four-stage procedure:

Stage 1 – Warning of poor cultivation letter sent advising that allotment is showing signs of non-cultivation and work needs to be done to improve it. Letter requests contact with Secretary within two weeks of date of letter.

Stage 2 – Further warning of unsatisfactory cultivation letter sent advising that condition of allotment shows little or no improvement since the last letter was sent. Advised that tenancy of allotment is at risk of termination due to breaches of the tenancy agreement and given 28 days to improve the condition of the allotment (specific date provided).

Stage 3 – Warning of Termination of Tenancy letter Following issue of the warning letter, the Inspection Sub-Committee will re-inspect the allotment and consider appropriate action. Where no significant improvements are made within 28 days of the date of the warning letter the matter will be presented to the committee and if agreed, a termination letter will be sent.

Stage 4 – Termination of Tenancy letter issued as allotment continues to show no sign of being used enough. This gives one week to clear the allotment of rubbish, personal belongings and to tidy the allotment up. Anything remaining on the allotment after this date will be removed and if necessary, disposed of. This is a decision that will not be rescinded. Given a specific date for when tenancy will finish, and the allotment will be re-let.

It is essential that you act on any enforcement letter you receive. Failing a re-inspection can lead to tenancy termination. If you have mitigating circumstances such as a medical condition, then you must let us know as soon as possible.