



Allotment Handbook



Welcome to Sunnyside Allotments. We hope that you will derive as much pleasure, exercise, fresh air and produce from your plot as we all do, and that you will enjoy visiting this peaceful spot, away from the bustle and pressures of the town.

This handbook has been compiled by members of the committee of Sunnyside Allotment Society and is designed to give you practical information which we hope you will find useful as you start on your allotment gardening. For more information see our website:

www.sunnysideallotments.org.uk.

Sunnyside Allotment Society

revised January 2024

INTRODUCTION—OVERVIEW OF SITES

Sunnyside Allotments are located on both sides of Ivy House Lane, and cover approximately 15 acres. There are about 160 allotment plots interspersed with areas managed for biodiversity and two hazel coppices to provide bean and pea sticks in the future. There is in addition an area of woodland actively managed as a nature reserve, known as Birtchnell's Copse after the local historian. The Town Council currently leases about a third of the 15 acres to Sunnyside Rural Trust, a charity catering for the needs of adults with learning difficulties. They have an activity centre building on SSOld, which they allow us to use for our AGM. On SSNew they have planted a heritage apple orchard, stands of hazel, birch and ash for coppicing, and an area of willow for basket making. There are plans of the sites on our website.



SUNNYSIDE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY

Please visit our website at www.sunnysideallotments.org.uk

As a registered tenant of Sunnyside Allotments you are automatically a member of the Society. As such you will receive our quarterly Newsletter and any other communications from the Society, and you are entitled to attend and vote at our annual AGM in January. There is no fee for this.

For an annual subscription to the Society of £4.00 (collected on our behalf by the town council) you get the following additional benefits:

Membership of the NSALG (National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners) so that you can participate in the seed purchase scheme. Kings Seeds Ltd supply seed catalogues in August. In return for early ordering, we benefit from very reasonable prices, and the Society gets a discount. Another benefit from the NSALG affiliation is their public liability insurance cover. You can also take advantage of a 10% discount at the Tool Hire shop on Billet Lane, HP4 1DP 01442 863073. Mannings (01442 866264) in Ashley Green, a good source of fencing and posts, occasionally informs us about special offers.

The subscription also goes towards the running costs of the Society.

A list of current Committee members can be found on the latest newsletter.

GENERAL SITE INFORMATION & FACILITIES

Car Parking on SSOld: parking is available in the Church car park off Ivy House Lane and also next to Plot A4 inside the Gravel Path/Grantham Mews gate (please do not park in the roadway outside this gate). Also next to Plot B2.

Car Parking on SSNew: a car park is available inside the bottom gate. There is limited parking at the top of the site, but parking is usually possible in Ivy House Lane by the top gate.

Apart from loading and unloading, please do not park on the roadways as this can prevent other tenants and muck deliveries from getting through. Please avoid driving on the roadways when very wet; they can be dangerously slippery.

Gates: Vehicle gates to the site should be kept shut at all times.

Tea Hut: On SSOld there is a Tea Hut on B15 and tenants can make drinks when the hooter sounds. Tenants should provide their own mugs. Donations are requested in order to replace the calor gas, tea, coffee and milk supplies. There is a collection box in the tea hut. Tenants often donate cakes and biscuits etc.



Toilet: a flush toilet is available on SSOld on A15. The padlock combination is available from committee members. Please leave the toilet as you expect to find it. There is a cleaning rota for the toilet and new volunteers would be welcome.

Water Supply: mains water is supplied to the tanks throughout the sites. Pressure hoses may be used, but you have to pay an additional water charge to the council for this and obtain your own water key. Currently the water company do not classify allotments as gardens, so we may be exempt from any hosepipe ban (but not always), but it is our policy to make sure that water is not wasted eg avoid watering in the heat of the day. If you apply for a shed or greenhouse, you will be required to add guttering and a water butt in line with our policy of water conservation. See [water leaflet](#) and [water supply page](#).

Water Leaks: If you discover a water leak, it needs to be stopped as soon as possible. If it is a faulty or broken ball valve causing a tank to overflow, turn the

stopcock off at the tank. The easiest way to do this is to place a stick (or a fork or a spade) across the tank and tie up the arm of the ball valve with a piece of string. Most but not all tanks now have these fitted. If it is a serious leak from underground pipes, or if you can't isolate the tank, turn off the water to the site at the main stopcocks. On **SSOld** this is just inside the Grantham Mews gate for A Road and the carpark at the west end of B Road for B and C Roads. On **SSNew** it is outside the top gateway on Ivy House Lane. Please inform the chairman or Berkhamsted Town Council as soon as possible. Phone numbers are on the notice boards, website and current newsletter.

Roadways & Paths: The Council pays a contractor to keep the main grass roadways cut. It is important that tenants keep the edges of their plots next to the roadway well maintained and clear of rubbish so that the contractor can cut to the full width. The contractor also keeps the hedge in Ivy House Lane cut.

It is the responsibility of the tenant to maintain the paths between the plots at a width of about 27 inches (67.5 cm). Tenants should arrange with their neighbours to share this job, including petrol costs. Paths should be kept clear of stones and other obstructions which could damage mowers or strimmers. We strongly discourage the use of weedkiller, but if you must use it please do so on a still day and ensure that it does not spread on to your neighbours' plots or on to the paths.

Plot Numbers: Each plot should have a clear plot number. The design and materials are your choice, but the sign should be clearly visible from the roadway. This helps us when we need to identify plots, and it also helps new tenants orientate themselves. Have a look at what other tenants have done.

Materials: Allotment gardeners are inveterate recyclers. Wooden pallets make ideal compost containers and benches. Plastic barrels are useful for water butts. From time to time we acquire materials from development sites etc which would otherwise be thrown out, and we keep a keen eye on local skips. No tyres should be brought on to site. There is a central store on SSOld which is available for general use. All we ask in return is a donation to Society funds. These may be left at the tea hut or by bank transfer. Please email our treasurer for bank details.

Tools: Occasionally the society is given old gardening tools. Before splashing out on expensive tools, come and see if we have anything you need. They are available at the Tea Hut in return for a small donation to Society funds.

Wood Chip: woodchip can be useful for mulching and making paths. However be careful when using this on your plot as the wood may have been diseased. Presently there are no communal heaps, although Sunnyside Rural Trust are happy for tenants to use their heap on C Road when it has been replenished. Please bear in mind that woodchip is in low supply as much is being exported to France for biomass fuel. However tenants are welcome to make their own arrangements (with agreement from the committee) for woodchip delivery to their own plots or nearby, but this must be moved within a day or two.

Manure: Suppliers of farmyard (cow) manure are:

Dave Burgin 01442 832997

Phil Marks Dunsley Farm Tring (opposite Tesco's) 01442 823357

Nigel Durrant 01442 403351

This manure is usually well rotted and can be dug in straightaway. Deliveries are usually during the autumn and winter, but the tractors can only use the roadways when they are firm and dry, or frozen.

The end of your plot adjacent to a road way is known as a ransom strip (about two metres) and should be shared between tenants on plots divided in half to enable manure deliveries.



CONSIDERATION FOR OTHERS

Bonfires: Bonfires are not banned but the Council would encourage tenants to use alternative methods to dispose of their waste. Bonfire smoke can be distressing for anyone suffering from a respiratory complaint, and it can cause a nuisance to other plot holders and neighbouring households. Please read the Bonfires leaflet in this pack. Never burn green, damp material.

Organic versus non-organic gardening: The Council is keen to encourage environmentally friendly gardening. We are very fortunate to have a largely natural site which already has a wide variety of flora and fauna. It is our duty to conserve this and to do what we can to encourage greater biodiversity. It is preferable not to use chemicals as they pose a danger to bees and other pollinators. If you do use chemicals please be careful that they don't spread onto neighbouring plots.

Seeding Weeds: Weeds such as thistles and grasses can produce large amounts of seed. Please make sure that any such weeds on your plot are cut down before they have a chance to spread seed over neighbouring plots.

Duty of Care: We all have a duty of care to each other. This involves making sure that such things as broken glass or rusty metal are not left lying about where people could get hurt.

All tenants are responsible for the disposal of any rubbish on their plots. Chemicals should be properly labelled and not accessible to children and children must be under the control of their parents at all times when on site.

Children: Allotment sites can be hazardous for children. The paths between plots are often uneven and there are many greenhouses that could be fallen into. Therefore tenants' children should remain on their own plot under adult supervision. Children should not run around making a lot of noise as many tenants come to their allotments to enjoy some peace and quiet.

SOCIAL EVENTS

The Society organises various events throughout the year.

Open Day: this is held during National Allotment Week in August. Its original purpose was to act as a showcase for the allotment site and to attract new tenants. Now that we have so many more tenants, it has become more of an occasion when we can invite local residents to enjoy the beauty of the site and its activities with us.



Christmas Drinks: this event takes place at lunchtime at the Tea Hut on SSOld, usually on the Sunday before Christmas. It is an “al fresco” event so wrap up warmly! Tenants bring contributions to eat, and a bottle to be added to the warming mulled wine. It’s a very sociable occasion and a good opportunity to get to know your fellow allotment gardeners.



Allotment Working Parties: we hold these on winter Sundays in October, November, January, February and March, when we ask tenants to become involved and give some of their time to general care and maintenance of the sites. This could be mulching the hazel coppices, clearing overgrown areas, re-pairing or re-seeding roadways, clearing car parks, or whatever else needs doing. The day is hard work, good exercise, and lunch is provided.



Now enjoy your allotment gardening



Please visit our website to find out more about Sunnyside.
www.sunnysideallotments.org.uk



[You can find us on Facebook too.](#)