

CULTIVATION GUIDE

The Association is committed to ensuring that the sites remain safe, vibrant and fully utilised. Members are required to actively cultivate their plots to a good standard.

The Association carries out inspections to identify whether plot holders are complying with the rules, including cultivation rules.

This is what is expected!

You need to be a good neighbour. Your weed seeds don't just affect your plot; they are a nuisance to us all. So, in order to be fair to all tenants, we would expect the plot to be cultivated in a way that does not interfere with the enjoyment of neighbouring plot holders or sabotage their efforts to keep a weed-free plot.

Plots needs to be planted, cropped, harvested or being prepared. It is not sufficient to simply keep the plot clear of weeds, but to leave it un-planted. Cultivation is defined as the physical working of the ground for the production of crops, defined as vegetables, flowers, fruit bushes, fruit trees and herbs;

In the main growing season we would expect to see:

- Fruit, vegetables or flowers
- Lawn and grass paths mowed and trimmed
- No weeds going to seed
- No brambles or couch grass creeping around the plot

In the winter months:

- The above (but obviously fewer fruit, veg and flowers)
- Beds dug over ready for the winter frost
- Green manures being grown
- Growing areas being prepared (and covered to suppress weeds)

Cultivation area

New tenants usually take on plots which are uncultivated and overgrown with weeds. Therefore, we expect new tenants to follow the [probation period](#) rules; the % of the plot they cultivate depends on the size of their plot. Every other allotment tenant will be required to have their plot 100% cultivated.

This what we look at during site inspections

Site inspections are carried out on a regular basis in the growing season – at least every two months. During an inspection, we will look at the entire plot to see if it cultivated and cropped. We will note if large areas have been left unworked.

Next, we look at the level of weed growth on the plot. We are concerned with weeds going to seed in large areas of the plot and causing a nuisance to neighbouring plots.



Unacceptable weed growth

We look at uncontrolled areas of perennial weeds such as couch grass, ground elder, brambles, nettles and unmanaged grass.

We take the season into account. At mid-summer, most of the plot should be used for growing fruit, vegetable or flowers. Plots mostly covered by, for instance, plastic sheeting, are not considered to be cultivated.



Expected condition of plots during summer months

During the autumn and winter months, we will be looking to see that plots which have become weedy in the late summer are being cleared and improved. However, this does not mean you need to be sowing crops. Generally, if you are using the winter months to improve your plot then this will be taken into account.

We will also look at the level of waste on the plot, in particular if new waste materials have been brought onto the site. No domestic waste is allowed in the plots. Materials such as carpet, double glazing, timber, doors, tyres and building or landscaping materials are of particular concern.



Unacceptable waste and carpets to the sites

We will look at your structures within your plot. Remember only specific structures and of specific dimensions are allowed in the plots. The whole plot, including any uncultivated must be kept tidy and safe and free from weeds.



Dangerous shed condition

Photographic evidence

Photos of the plots will be taken as a record of what was observed and we will record any issues in case there is a dispute and you disagree with our findings.

Mitigating circumstances

We do realise we all have a life outside the allotment and there may be reasons for not cultivating an allotment for a temporary period of time. However, the Committee would expect the plot holder to ensure all long vegetation on the plot is kept down so that other allotment holders are not affected by weeds. If you are having problems and falling behind, please inform the Secretary. We will do our best to help and advice.

Absentee gardening

Absentee allotment holders are those who, generally on receipt of a non-cultivation letter, get someone to dig over and weed the plot, hoping that this will get them off the hook for the season. They go from one non-cultivation letter to the next, using them as reminders to visit the plot.

There is nothing wrong with getting a little help from family and friends, but the committee expects that the plot holder will be in attendance and will be the main contributor to the allotment, otherwise it will be assumed that the plot holder has neither the time nor interest to maintain the allotment and the tenancy will be terminated.

Allotments are community ventures in which everyone is expected to play a part, not least in occasionally helping with the maintenance of the site on volunteer days. Absentee allotment holders play no part in the community and cause ill-feeling as well as failing to reap the benefits of having an allotment.

Why does non-cultivation matter?

Non-cultivation matters because when you took on your plot you agreed to cultivate. When we signed the Lease with the landlord, Barnet Council, we all agreed:

- Allotments are to be wholly or mainly cultivated by the tenant for the production of vegetables or fruit crops for consumption by the occupier and his/her family.
- Tenants must keep their allotments reasonably free from weeds and rubbish, and otherwise maintain them in a proper state of cultivation to the satisfaction of the Association.

The future of our Allotment!

Look around the site and you will see houses and new developments, and there are plans to build more houses on all open spaces surrounding the allotment sites. Land is always at a premium in London. Under the terms of our Lease with London Borough of Barnet, if the allotment site is not fully cultivated, they have a right to reclaim it. One of the best ways of ensuring that this does not happen is for all of us to cultivate our plots. Our allotments' future is in our hands!