



London Borough of
Sutton
&
idverde



ALLOTMENT GARDENERS' GUIDELINES

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INTRODUCTION

This latest iteration of the Sutton Allotment Gardeners Guidelines (version 8) includes a number of updates and additions which are:

1. GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) regarding the sharing of a plot-holder's details.
2. A guide for Allotment Site Representatives on Sutton Council Allotments setting out what they can and cannot do, and the support available.
3. Action that can be taken if plot holders cause nuisance or annoyance to the occupiers of other allotment plots.

Since February 2017 *idverde* have been responsible for the administration and maintenance of allotments on behalf of the London Borough of Sutton.

WHAT IS AN ALLOTMENT?

The first allotments were probably land given by benefactors, in the Middle Ages, for the relief of poverty. Most land owners, however, rented their land and the money raised was used for the benefit of the poor, rather than letting the poor cultivate the land themselves. By the seventeenth century it was common for land owners to provide labourers with land for grazing animals or growing potatoes and this was usually regarded as part of their wages.

From about 1760, the Acts of Inclosure changed the way land was owned and worked throughout the country. Until this time peasant farmers were able to work common arable and pasture land to support their families. With enclosure, the commons and open fields were divided into separate parcels of land that were allotted to those who could prove they were entitled to a share of them. Thousands of peasants were unable to prove they had a claim to common rights and so became landless. Many moved into towns and cities to find work or became dependent on poor relief.

The Great Somerford (Wiltshire) Inclosure Act of 1806 was the first to make sure land was set aside as allotments for the labouring poor. Many other Acts followed this example and, by 1833, seven counties could claim to have allotments in almost every parish. Allotments also became popular in towns and cities, Birmingham had 'guinea' gardens, mostly used as recreational gardens, where fruit bushes, vegetables and flowers could be grown.

By the twentieth century, there were almost half a million plots in Great Britain but, according to a Land Inquiry Committee of 1913, demand still exceeded supply. With the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, allotments were created by local authorities and by 1918 the number of plots had risen to one and a half million. After the war, land owners who had lost land to allotments wanted it back but, due to high vegetable prices and economic hardship, there continued to be great demand for allotments. The Government introduced several allotment Acts to regulate the situation and for the first time the term allotment garden was used.



By the outbreak of World War Two, there were about 570,000 plots and the famous 'Dig for Victory' campaign succeeded in encouraging food growing. The Government estimated that 10% of the nation's food was grown on allotments and private land converted to allotments

during the war. After the war, allotments remained important both to national recovery and to families.

Inevitably the number of plots has declined since the war-time peak, but more recently a renewed interest in allotment gardening has been prompted by concerns about the use of agricultural chemicals, genetically modified food, the lack of taste and variety of fruit and vegetables which have travelled long distances causing damage to the environment, coupled with growing interest in organic cultivation.

SUTTON ALLOTMENTS

WHO CAN APPLY FOR A SUTTON ALLOTMENT PLOT?

Anyone who lives in the London Borough of Sutton can apply for a Sutton allotment plot. Residents of neighbouring Boroughs are also welcome to apply, although Sutton residents are given priority.

A list of allotment sites is given in Appendix 1.



WAITING LISTS

When sites are full, with all plots let, we keep a list of people interested in renting a plot. When a plot becomes available, it will be offered to the person who has been waiting the longest.

GARDENERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Gardeners with mobility difficulties may find the plots at Cheam Nursery easier to manage. The plots are 1.2 metres wide and 5.3 metres long, making it easy to reach across to tend the crops. Some plots are raised to 60cm or 90cm for gardeners in wheelchairs or who have difficulty bending. Easy to operate watering systems are built into these beds. The whole area is brick paved for easy access and parking is available close by. An open shelter with picnic tables can be used by anyone visiting the site. There are also two raised beds at the Duke Street allotment.



ALLOTMENT GARDENING

WHAT CAN YOU GROW?

Allotment gardeners may grow vegetables, flowers and fruit on their plot.

Where possible, you should plant small fruit-trees in the middle of your plot, not on the edges where they may cast shade over neighbouring plots. Large forest trees must not be planted allotments as they cause too much shade and take nutrients and moisture from the soil.



CARING FOR YOUR ALLOTMENT PLOT

The main requirement of your agreement is to keep your plot, or plots, tidy by removing litter and rubbish, and controlling weeds regularly so they do not seed and cause problems for other gardeners. If you cannot manage to cultivate your entire plot, it is acceptable, as a temporary measure, to mulch part of it with polythene sheeting, organic mulch or cardboard to keep the weeds down. Do not use carpet, especially rubber-backed carpet, as the backing may rot down releasing harmful chemicals into the soil, causing pollution. Carpets can also cause problems for machinery when clearing plots. The carpet gets stuck in the machinery.



RESPECT FOR OTHER GARDENERS

There are over 1500 allotment gardeners in Sutton and almost as many different styles of gardening. It is up to individuals how they choose to work their plot.

Traditional allotment gardeners may want to cultivate the entire plot and plant rows of vegetables and flowers. Others may have a lawn with beds of produce. Some gardeners have made complete gardens with a lawn, flower borders, summerhouse, a bench in the sun, a vegetable patch and even a swing for the children. All these styles of gardening are acceptable and the London Borough of Sutton wants gardeners to cultivate their plots in whatever way they find suits their needs.



It is acceptable to plant a part of your plot for wildlife, but please do not allow your plot to become overgrown or plant large hedge plants or forest trees as these cause too much shade and take too much nutrient from the soil. If you wish to create wildlife areas please consider volunteering with our volunteer groups caring for wildlife areas across the borough.

Gardeners are encouraged to cultivate allotment gardens in whichever way they choose, and enjoy their gardening. Please, however, respect other allotment gardeners and their methods of gardening.

CAUSING NUISANCE OR ANNOYANCE TO OTHER PLOT HOLDERS OR LOCAL RESIDENTS

Unfortunately there are times when plot holders do not show respect to others, or cause a nuisance to other plot holders or those living nearby. Unacceptable behaviour includes intimidation, threatening behaviour, theft, causing damage to another plot holder's plot, and violence. The Council takes reports of such behaviour very seriously, and will report issues to partners, including the police, for investigation. Such behaviour by a plot holder will be classified as a "breach of the terms of the tenancy". Where following investigation the Council believes that such behaviour has taken place, it will either issue a written warning to the plot holder or will terminate their tenancy with immediate effect. There will be no appeals process in these instances.

BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO GARDENING

Gardening must be one of the most popular hobbies in the country, so you can easily find websites, magazines, books and television programmes full of useful advice. To help start you on the way to a successful allotment, here are some simple guidelines.

GETTING STARTED

On your first visit to your plot, decide what work you need to do to bring it back into cultivation. If the previous gardener looked after the plot well, you can probably use a fork and spade to hand-dig the soil. Digging loosens the earth, letting air and moisture in and breaking up hard compacted earth. Plant roots and seedlings can then grow through the soil easily, quickly making vigorous healthy plants. Fork in compost and soil improver to stop the soil compacting down again, to feed the plants and to help keep moisture where plant roots can reach it easily. Then level the soil using a rake.



If the plot is overgrown with long grass or weeds such as brambles, you may need to use a strimmer or hedge clippers to cut them down. Treat difficult weeds such as brambles, couch grass and ground elder with a suitable weed-killer at least two weeks before you start cutting them down. This will help to stop them growing back. Check the packaging to see if it is suitable for the types of weeds on your plot. Always read the instructions and follow them carefully.

Store weed-killer in a safe, secure place at home, not on your plot where it is difficult to store it securely. You can compost the weeds you have cut down, but leave them to dry out in the sun first. Never compost weeds sprayed with herbicide.



Don't try to clear the whole plot straight away. Work on a section at a time, clearing and planting it, before moving on to clear the next patch. This way you will be sure to have something to harvest in your first year.

The best time for digging is autumn or early winter if you want to be ready for seed sowing in spring. Choose a dry spell and remember, if the soil sticks to your boots, it is probably too wet for digging.

SEED SOWING AND PLANTING

To germinate well, seeds need fine stone-free soil, warmth, moisture and air. Wait until the weather warms up in spring, then prepare a seed bed by lightly forking an area of your well-cultivated plot. Rake the surface, removing any stones, and firming the soil with the back of the rake.

Then follow the directions on the seed packet. You will not go far wrong if you follow the golden rules:

- sow when the weather warms up the soil;
- cover the seeds with a thin layer of fine soil about as deep as the seed diameter; and
- sow thinly in rows to make it easy to sort out the weeds from the seedlings.





HOW MANY SEEDS?

Most seed packets hold many more seeds than you will need at one sowing. For crops that cannot be stored, such as lettuce, radish and coriander leaves, sow a few seeds every couple of weeks, you should then always have some ready for picking.

THINNING OUT AND TRANSPLANTING

Thin out the seedlings as soon as they appear so they are not overcrowded. Remove weeds at the same time. Then gently firm the soil and water the seedlings to settle the soil around the roots.

You may need to transplant some crops, such as lettuce and marrows. When the seedlings have produced a few true leaves, they can be transplanted into rows for growing on. Gently lift the seedlings with a hand fork and replant in the new position. Lift the seedlings by a leaf **not** the stem, for if the stem is damaged the plant will die.

HARVESTING YOUR CROPS

Most crops are best harvested when they are small and tender, especially peas, carrots and beans. Peas especially should be used as soon as possible after picking to obtain the best flavour. With some crops such as marrows, cucumber, peas and beans picking regularly encourages the plants to produce more fruits or pods. Leaving mature fruits or pods on the plant may bring cropping to an end.

ROTATING YOUR CROPS

Crop rotation prevents a build up of pests and diseases. If you grow the same type of vegetable in the same place each year, it will deplete the soil of the nutrients it needs, and pests and diseases will increase. To avoid these problems, rotate your crops. Plant a different type of crop on each part of your plot each year. A simple rotation is shown below:

	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3
Year 1	Root Crops [eg potatoes, carrots, parsnips]	Brassicas [eg cabbage, sprouts]	Pod & Salad Crops [eg lettuce, peas, onions]
Year 2	Brassicas	Pod & Salad Crops	Root Crops
Year 3	Pod & Salad Crops	Root Crops	Brassicas

COMPANION PLANTING



Clever companion planting can deter pests - a typical example is growing onions near your carrots to confuse the carrot root fly. Local wildlife should eat your slugs, so look after hedgehogs, toads and frogs: slugs' natural predators. Blackfly and greenfly can be squashed or brushed off and, after a few weeks, should attract predators such as ladybirds. Rusts and mildews are difficult to control, but growing resistant varieties will help reduce their spread.

GROWING ORGANICALLY

Organic gardeners avoid using artificial fertilisers and pesticides that may harm wildlife and people. There is a strong organic gardening movement locally. All residents are welcome to

join the Surrey Organic Gardening Group (SOGG) who hold regular monthly meetings and arrange group outings to places of interest. For further information, telephone 020 8669 6692, email surreyorganic@yahoo.co.uk or visit their website www.sogg.org.uk.

ORGANIC GARDENING BEGINS WITH COLLECTING



If you want to go organic, use plenty of space and stockpile anything green that you can get hold of for the future. Nettles and long grass from waste ground are marvellous. Fresh ground should grow wonderful potatoes in the first year, with nothing added to the soil. Just remember to keep the weeds down. Always dig the soil carefully and remove perennial weed roots fastidiously. Dig in manure or compost and sow grazing rye over the first winter and you will have a beautiful, fibrous soil the next spring for peas and beans. You can then add dolomitic limestone and plant overwintering onions the second winter. So far you should not have needed to use any pesticides. If your crops are attacked, don't give up, this is usually because of historical build-up. Healthy soil will support a whole chain of predators to do your pest control work for you. You will need to keep the weeds down though.



LOVE YOUR SOIL

Organic gardening is all about the health of your soil. By using bulky organic composts instead of rapidly soluble artificial fertilisers, the soil builds up flourishing populations of microorganisms which allow natural fertility. Most plant material can be composted and dug back into the soil. Dolomitic limestone is a slow release alternative to lime that gently releases lime into the soil over a period of up to two years. It can take some years to get the soil back into good health if it has been exhausted or contaminated by pesticides, but healthy soil will repay you in the long run. Green manures such as grazing rye, buckwheat and field beans work wonders on soil and are an alternative at any time of the year to bare soil, which can be eroded by wind and rain. A clump of the herbaceous plant comfrey may last for years and produces mounds of leaves that, when composted, give a high potash feed, especially good for tomatoes and other fruit.



GENERAL ADVICE AND OBLIGATIONS

WATERING YOUR CROPS



Water is a precious commodity, please use it sparingly and consider other allotment gardeners when watering your plot. Please ensure hose pipes are in good condition and that adapters are working and not leaking. Follow these simple guidelines to sensible watering.

- If other tap sharers are waiting, limit your watering to half an hour.
- Do not use sprinkler attachments (or similar) for watering plots.
- Do not leave hoses unattended when in use nor leave hoses attached to water taps when not in use.
- Never leave hoses running when you are not on the allotment site or overnight.

Remember that hose pipe and sprinkler bans imposed by the water companies apply to allotment gardeners and they can fine you for ignoring a ban.

COMPOSTING



Most organic matter such as vegetable waste, grass mowings, hedge trimmings and even weeds, can be used in a compost heap. Leaving weeds to dry out in the sun will make sure they are dead when you add them to your heap, but it is best to avoid fleshy perennial weeds, such as bindweed, as they may continue to grow in your compost. If possible, have two or more heaps, so you can be adding to one while you use the compost from another.

Although a simple heap will work well, you can keep your composting area tidy by making composting bays.

Build the compost heap with layers of different materials, with each layer no more than 15 cm thick. This will help to keep the heap open and allow air to circulate - which is essential if the compost is to rot down quickly. Sprinkling a handful of compost starter, fertiliser or animal manure on the layers will speed up the rate of decomposition.



As the heap starts to rot, the temperature of the compost will rise, helping to kill weed seeds and spores in the compost. Cover the heap with black plastic sheeting or a tarpaulin to keep the heat and the moisture in. Turn the heap to let air in and keep the compost rotting. Usually it takes about six months for the heap to break down into dark brown, nutritious compost. Homemade compost is an essential part of every organic gardener's plot and is cheap and easy to make, with the benefit of giving a supply of nutritious organic matter to restore the soil and feed and mulch your crops.



You may bring green waste, such as hedge clippings, grass clippings and weeds, onto your plot for making into compost for use on your plot. Similarly, you can arrange for deliveries of horse manure. However, you must not bring onto the site more material than you can use during the year. You must cover fresh horse manure with a tarpaulin or plastic sheeting to help lessen the problems of strong smells and flies.

GROWING TREES ON YOUR ALLOTMENT

If you want to grow ornamental or forest trees, please contact *idverde* to discuss what you intend to do. We will try to find a suitable plot for you on one of the larger sites. We do not encourage tree-growing on normal allotment plots as large trees cast shade over a wide area and take water and nutrients from your and neighbouring plots. Where possible, you should plant small fruit-trees in the middle of your plot, not on the edges where they may cast shade over neighbouring plots.

Allotment gardeners must not remove or prune trees on allotment sites, other than small fruit trees on your own plot. If you feel a tree is unsafe please contact Neighbourhood Services at neighbourhoodservices@sutton.gov.uk or on 0208 770 5000, or for information on trees visit www.sutton.gov.uk then search “trees”

TRADING HUTS

Several allotment sites have trading huts run by private groups. They sell gardening supplies such as seeds, composts and fertilisers and, as the people running them are usually allotment gardeners, they are also a useful source of advice.

Contact *idverde* for information on where the trading huts operate and their opening times.

SHEDS, GREENHOUSES, POLYTUNNELS AND DECKING

You may build sheds, greenhouses, polytunnels or lay decking up to an area of 2.45m x 1.85m (8' x 6') without permission from *idverde*. Buildings must be within your plot boundary and not obstruct paths between plots. We recommend you position buildings on the southern edge of your plot so shade falls on your plot rather than on your neighbour's.



If you want to build a shed, greenhouse or polytunnel larger than 2.45m x 1.85m, please contact *idverde* and discuss what you would like to do. We will also discuss your request with Site Representatives before making a decision. You are not permitted to erect any other type of building or structure on the allotment site.

BAR-B-QUES

You may have a barbeque on your plot for your immediate family, provided that you consider your neighbours and do not spoil their enjoyment of their plot.



DOGS

Unless there is a local agreement allowing dogs on your site, you must not bring dogs into the allotment site, whether or not on a lead. This is principally for hygiene reasons.

If Site Representatives want a local agreement, they should request a ballot of all gardeners on their site. If more than half of those who reply to the ballot agree to allow dogs on the site, the local agreement rules will apply:

- Dog owners must keep their dogs on a lead while on the site
- Dog owners must make sure their dogs do not damage other gardeners' plots
- Dog owners must comply with Dog Fouling By-laws and pick-up and appropriately dispose of dog waste.



LIVESTOCK AND BEE-KEEPING

You may keep bees or laying hens on your plot at the Council's discretion. Cockerels are not permitted. Please write to *idverde* with your proposals.



Bee-keepers must be able to give a telephone number where we can contact them in case of emergency. They must also give an alternative number for use if we cannot contact them on the first number. This could be the number of a friend or bee-keeping colleague, but must be someone who is willing to deal with emergencies.

We expect bee-keepers to have received relevant training, and to be a member of a local bee-keeping society, which can provide advice on insurance and legal matters.

TYRES

Tyres must not be brought onto allotment sites.

DISPOSAL OF YOUR RUBBISH

You need to make your own arrangements for disposing of all the rubbish from your plot or plots. This includes disposing of both green waste and other non-compostable items. Gardeners can take their rubbish to the Re-use and Recycling Centre on Kimpton Park Way, Sutton off the A217 next to Tesco, where disposal is free.

You must not deposit or allow anyone else to deposit rubbish anywhere on the allotment site. This includes the hedges and ditches around the allotment site and unworked allotment plots. Please do not add to any illegal rubbish dumped on your site.

Remember, money spent removing illegally dumped rubbish means that there will be less for other essential maintenance and site improvement work.

BURNING RUBBISH



From 1st January 2020 waste material that cannot be disposed of by composting or other means may only be burned in an incinerator or clean oil drum during the period 1st October to 15th March. Fires should not be lit more than 2 hours before dusk and are not permitted on Bank Holidays during this period. Material that is damp or green must not be burnt until it dries out fully. Never burn materials such as plastics that may cause pollution.

Open bonfires are not allowed on the council's allotment sites except for Guy Fawkes Night celebrations, when open bonfires are allowed for 5 nights before and five nights after 5th November each year.

Note that by law you could be fined if you light a fire and allow the smoke to drift across the road and become a danger to traffic.

Remember that smoke from bonfires can be annoying to neighbours, ruining their enjoyment of their gardens, and preventing them from opening windows and hanging out their washing. Bonfires can damage the health of children, the elderly and those with asthma and other breathing problems.

If you cause a nuisance by frequently having fires or allowing smoke to drift into neighbouring properties the Council can issue an 'abatement notice' and you can be fined up to £5,000 if you do not comply with the notice. In addition failure to abide by this policy will result in termination of the allotment agreement.

It is recommended that you stack weeds & timber debris off the ground on a pallet and cover with a tarp, uncovering when on site and covering when you leave to allow the weeds to dry before attempting to burn them.

If you have a problem with smoke from a neighbouring property, contact the Environmental Health Section at Sutton Council on 020 8770 5000 for help.

ASBESTOS ADVICE

Asbestos-based products (such as sheds, boards and containers) are not permitted on allotment sites and any such product should not be brought onto your plot.

Where asbestos items, such as shed roof sheets, already exist on a plot and are in a reasonable condition, they can be left in place, but they will need to be removed if the condition of the material deteriorates. Never break up asbestos sheets. Anyone unearthing suspect material should contact *idverde*. For further advice, including removal and disposal of asbestos, contact the London Borough of Sutton Neighbourhood Services Team on 020 8770 5000 or neighbourhoodservices@sutton.gov.uk.

SOIL AND MINERALS

Allotment gardeners must not take away or sell soil, earth, sand or gravel from the allotment site.

ADVERTISEMENTS

You must not erect notices or advertisements on allotment sites.

FENCES

Either the Council or private landowners in the bordering properties own the boundary fences of the allotment site. You must not move or damage any fences. In particular do not pile rubbish against fences as this can cause them to lean and rot.

It is strongly recommended that you do not fence your plot. There should not be any need for individual fences. You must not use barbed wire or any other materials that might injure passers-by, such as doors or windows with glass panels, as these often break leaving dangerous glass shards on your plot. Please also avoid brightly coloured materials, as they often cause offence to neighbours, and take care not to obstruct the pathways.

MAINTENANCE OF ALLOTMENT FENCES AND PATHS



idverde are responsible for maintaining the fences, gates and hard surfaced paths on sites. They will also arrange for contractors or local allotment groups to mow the grass on the main paths through the sites. Grass mowing on minor paths between plots is the responsibility of the allotment gardeners on each side of the path.

For your safety and security of the site, please always lock the gates when entering or leaving the site.

REPAIRS AND ENQUIRIES

Have you spotted a damaged fence, leaking water tap or had difficulty opening the lock to your site? If so, please contact *idverde* on slwpallotments@idverde.co.uk to let us know and we will arrange the repair as quickly as possible.

CONTACTING *idverde*

If you need information or have an enquiry concerning your allotment or your invoice, contact *idverde* at slwpallotments@idverde.co.uk.

ALLOTMENT GROUPS

SUTTON ALLOTMENTS GROUP

Sutton Allotments Group meets every year. The meetings give allotment site representatives a chance to raise issues with *idverde* and Council Officers and look for joint solutions to any problems. Together, we develop new ideas to promote allotment gardening and improve our sites. We discuss local issues and provide the meeting with occupancy details for each site.



ALLOTMENT GARDENERS' NEWSLETTER

The London Borough of Sutton Allotment Site Rep Hub lbs-asrh.org.uk has offered to produce an annual newsletter. *Idverde* will work with them to distribute this to plot holders on sites that do not have site representatives by laminating and placing them on gates or notice boards.

VOLUNTEER SITE REPRESENTATIVES

Volunteer site representatives represent their site at the Sutton Allotments Group meetings. They can take part in the discussions about how the *idverde* runs Sutton's allotments, help to identify any concerns of gardeners on their site and decide how we can tackle problems together. You will find a list of site representatives at the back of the Allotment Gardeners' Newsletter. Anyone who has a plot can volunteer to represent their site. If you would like to be a site representative and help improve Sutton's allotments, please contact *idverde*.

ALLOTMENT VOLUNTEER SITE REPRESENTATIVES ON SUTTON COUNCIL ALLOTMENTS

THE ROLE OF THE SITE REPRESENTATIVE (Site Rep.) ON SUTTON COUNCIL *ALLOTMENT SITES

*Please note Sutton Council above also includes its main contractor and allotment administrator *Idverde* UK.

Site representatives are volunteers. Volunteers can play an important part in the running of an allotment site. They can contribute in many ways, and their contribution will depend on their experience and time available.

The maintenance of the allotment site and its assets remains the responsibility of the Council, but the Council's budget for allotments supports basic maintenance only and volunteers can, and often do, significantly improve their sites.

The main role of the Site Rep. is to represent the site and its allotment tenants. This can be by being the main liaison point between the site and the council, representing the views of the plot holders at allotment meetings, or even representing the site at regional allotment forums etc.

The role of the Site Rep. is not to act on behalf of the Council.

WHO CAN BECOME A SITE REPRESENTATIVE?

A Site Rep. must be a plot holder on the site that they represent and must be up to date with

payments for their plot.

At some sites the Site Rep. will be elected by the on-site allotment association, where there is an association, and depending on their constitution, to act as the point of contact between allotment tenants and the Council.

On other sites the Site Rep. will be put forward in a more informal way, such as:

- They will have the agreement of other plot holders where there is no formal association
- They will put themselves forward where no one else wants to carry out the role

It is important to understand that all of Sutton's sites are different and the plot holders on them will organise themselves in different ways. Some sites may have either none, or more than one site rep. And some sites might even have more than one association.

WHAT SKILLS DO YOU NEED TO BE A SITE REPRESENTATIVE

There are no formal skills required by the role but it helps if you like meeting people and are interested in seeking people's views and to represent them as part of the whole site, regardless of your relationship to them.

HOW MUCH TIME IS INVOLVED IN BEING A SITE REPRESENTATIVE?

Unless specified through the constitution on sites where the Site Rep. is elected by an association, the amount of time involved is entirely up to the Site Rep. and it will often vary depending on the size of the site and how many plots there are.

If you are carrying out tasks such as site inspections and showing prospective tenants around the site, then this may take up a bit more time at certain periods throughout the year.

SUTTON COUNCIL ANNUAL SITE REPRESENTATIVES MEETING

As a site representative you will be invited to these meetings which usually take place annually.

The meetings discuss many things from site based issues, to consultation on allotment strategy, to organising the annual allotment inspections.

Site Reps should represent the collective views of the plot holders on their site.

Site Reps can also raise strategic allotment issues at these meetings

If you are not able to attend you can ask a deputy to attend on your behalf. At these meetings it is important to remember that you represent the site's collective point of view and not necessarily your own.

WHAT THE COUNCIL EXPECTS OF A SITE REPRESENTATIVE

Please note the list below is not exhaustive and if the Site Rep. is unable to fulfil all of these duties it is not a problem.

- Corresponding with the Council
- Attending the annual site reps meeting

- Ensuring equity for all tenants, remaining impartial at all times.
- Ensuring that all plot holders are shown respect in relation to diversity whether for their colour, cultural background, age, disability, sexual orientation, and to challenge discrimination.
- Meeting prospective plot holders on site and showing them around
- Helping with plot letting
- Attending site visits with Council officers by mutual agreement.
- Communication with plot-holders; speaking on site, notice boards, email etc. Reporting back to plot holders on meetings with the Council or any relevant information as required.
- Raising issues with the Council regarding on site matters such as unworked plots, and any repairs that are required
- Carrying out annual plot inspections
- Working with other allotment sites to offer a “buddy service” for annual plot inspections
- The agreement to become a Site Rep is not a legally binding one and the Site Rep may cancel this arrangement at any time. Neither party intends any employment relationship to be created either now or at any time in the future.

WHAT SUPPORT THE COUNCIL WILL PROVIDE TO THE SITE REPRESENTATIVE

Again this list is not exhaustive. The Council will liaise with the Site Rep. to:

- Share the most up to date vacant plot list
- To provide information to Site Reps who are carrying out the annual plot inspections to help and support this
- Liaise as far as possible with Site Reps over the outcome of the plot inspections in respect of Non Cultivation Orders and Notices to Quit working within the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- Inform Site Reps if someone gives up a plot as soon as possible
- Inform them if any contractors or utility services are visiting the site if it will impact on people plots

There are no financial, or non-financial benefits offered to the role of site representative.

SITE REPRESENTATIVES AND ALLOTMENT INSPECTIONS

The Council does not have the resources to carry out annual plot inspection, and relies on Site Reps as volunteers to carry out this task.

Some sites organise a buddy system with other sites to carry out this task either because they need extra help on a big site or because they feel that swapping this role with another site reduces bad feeling on the site or accusations of favouritism or singling someone out.

Please note on sites where there is not a waiting list for plots there is no need for an annual plot inspection.

Please note that as with above there are many reasons why a plot may not be being worked sufficiently, and this may be frustrating for other site reps and plot holders, however these can be personal and sensitive matters for the plot holder concerned. The Council will always take a sympathetic stance in such matters and as set out above this information will not be shared.

Remember while carrying out the site inspection, site reps do not have a right of access over other tenants plots. Inspections should be carried out from the service paths. Site reps may offer advice if asked to do so, but they do not have authority to tell other plot holders how to garden on their plot or require them to make changes to their plot.

THE BEANSTALK PROJECT



The Beanstalk Project is run by ecolocal. Families with young children who would like to learn how to grow food organically on an allotment plot can join the Beanstalk Project. For more information please call ecolocal on 020 8770 6611, or email beanstalk@ecolocal.org.uk, or visit their website (www.ecolocal.org.uk).

ALLOTMENT SOCIETIES

There are many gardening and allotment societies in the Borough which organise flower shows and other gardening events. You are encouraged to join your local society, as it will be able to offer advice and information about local events.



THE ALLOTMENT AGREEMENT

YOUR ALLOTMENT AGREEMENT

The agreement is between the Council and you the tenant and is administered by *idverde*. When you sign your agreement, you are agreeing to take on a yearly tenancy and to look after your plot and allotment site. You are agreeing to abide by the conditions in the agreement and the Allotment Gardeners' Guidelines. The conditions in the Allotment Gardeners' Guidelines and agreement were prepared following discussions between Council officers and the Sutton Allotments Group and are reviewed regularly.



GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS (GDPR)

Idverde as the Council's allotment administrator will hold information on plot holders for the administration of the service. This will include names, addresses and email addresses (and any other information that you choose to share).

Your information will not be shared with another group or individual without your expressed permission.

They will need their formal agreement before they share details with reps, or anyone else.

For more detail on GDPR at Sutton Council please see the "privacy notice" on the Council's web site.

HOW THE COUNCIL SETS YOUR RENT



The charges are reviewed annually. Each September, the London Borough of Sutton produces a report suggesting changes in charges for the following year. The Environment & Neighbourhoods Committee examines the charges, and decides whether the new charges are fitting. The Committee then revises or approves the suggested charges. New allotment gardeners are charged the new rate from 1 April the following year. Existing plot holders will pay the new rate as from October the following year.

YOUR RENT

You, the allotment gardener, are a tenant of the Council and agree by signing The Agreement to pay the yearly rent in advance at the rate set by the Council. Your rent is due on 1st October for the following year and the *idverde* will issue an invoice and one reminder. Failure to pay your rent will result in a Notice to Quit being issued.

CONCESSIONARY RENTS

Concession rents are offered to gardeners who are in receipt of the State Pension, or in receipt of benefits. New gardeners can request the appropriate rent when they complete their agreement and show proof of their personal circumstances: see paragraph on **Change of Circumstances**. Existing gardeners whose circumstances change, will be entitled to the lower rent from the following 1 October.

WATER CHARGE



When paying the yearly rent for your plot you will also be charged a contribution towards the cost of the water. This, like the rent, is charged per sq metre, in advance, at the rate set by the Council.

Unfortunately due to the aging network of water pipes the cost of maintaining and replacing infrastructure such as pipes and tanks has increased in recent years and this charge helps to cover repairs and upgrades in addition to the cost of the water used.

HOW TO PAY

- Allotment keys can be collected via arrangement through slwpallotments@idverde.co.uk or telephone 0203 876 8806, from Cheam Park Depot SM3 8QS. The cost is £20 which is non-refundable.
- Methods of how to pay your annual rent will be shown on your invoice.
- Current allotment charges are shown on the Council's website

STATUTORY NOTICES

In certain circumstances the law requires the Council to give notice to tenants. For example, the Council must issue a statutory notice to terminate your agreement. Any Council Officer can sign the notice.



Notice can be served in one of the following ways:

- by writing to you at the last address you have given to the London Borough of Sutton or *idverde*;
- by putting the notice in a prominent place on the allotment site; or

RIGHT OF ENTRY

Councillors, Officers of the Council and others employed by the Council may enter, inspect and carry out maintenance work on your allotment garden without notice. For example, if there is a burst water pipe or damaged fence on your plot.

CHANGE OF CIRCUMSTANCES

It is your responsibility to contact *idverde* and tell us if your personal circumstances change. For example, if you reach age 60 or if you become unemployed and want to claim the lower rate. Please provide proof of eligibility for any concessionary rates (such as birth certificate, driver's licence, bus pass, Job Seeker Allowance). You must notify us of any changes before the invoices are sent out in October.

If you move, please let *idverde* know your new address, so we can update our records. This is important as we shall continue to write to you at your last known address. If, for example, your rent invoice does not reach you and we do not receive payment, we will assume you have given up your plot. You could even lose your plot.

MOVING TO ANOTHER PLOT OR SITE

If you want to move to another plot or take on an additional plot on the same site, please contact *idverde*.

If there is a waiting list at your site, you can still ask to move to another plot, but you will have to give up your original plot in exchange. Contact *idverde* and we will put a note on the plot records and contact you when the plot you want becomes vacant.

If you want to move to another site, please contact *idverde* and we will check availability and arrange to update your records.



SUBLETTING AND PLOT SHARING



You may have a private arrangement to share your plot with a friend, however, **you** are still the tenant.

The plot can only be held in one name at a time. The tenant is always responsible for the maintenance of the plot even if he/she chooses to share.

If you decide to give up your plot, you must not pass it on to your friend, or anyone else, directly. You must let *idverde* know you intend to give up your plot. But remember, if there is a waiting list for the site, we will offer the plot to the first person on the waiting list.

SITE INSPECTIONS/PLOT CULTIVATION

Following inspections. Tenants of uncultivated plots will receive a non-cultivation order. This allows the tenant 28 days to bring the plot back into cultivation.

Any tenant who is struggling to work their plot, for any reason, should contact *idverde* at this stage.

The National Allotment Society considers 75% cultivation as reasonable, and Sutton Council expects that the plot will display the following characteristics after the first three months of tenancy depending on the season:

1. The plot is in readiness for growing
2. The plot is well stocked with growing produce relevant to the time of year
3. The plot is clearly in the process of being prepared for the following season

Allotment law stipulates that there should be evidence of at least 25% of the plot worked within the first 3 months, and at least 75% of the plot should be worked within the first year, and thereafter.

If a plot remains uncultivated after 28 days, without good reason, a notice to quit will be issued.

GIVING UP YOUR PLOT

When you decide you want to give up a plot, inform *idverde* in writing. This will formally end your tenancy agreement on the plot. Please do not wait until we invoice you for the rent. You can give notice that you intend to give



up a plot at any time. We will note the date you want to finish, even if it is several months away. We will try to arrange to have your plot taken over as soon as you stop working it. This will help to get the new gardener off to a good start and make sure the plot does not become overgrown.

Due to administration costs, the London Borough of Sutton / idverde is unable to refund rent for any part of the year remaining when you give up your plot.

The tenancy agreement shall automatically end on the 29th September following the death of the tenant.

ENDING YOUR ALLOTMENT AGREEMENT

In some circumstances, the Council / idverde can end the allotment agreement with you. The tenancy may be ended by the Council in the following ways:

- By the Council / idverde giving the tenant at least twelve months' notice in writing, expiring on or before the 6th April or on or after the 29th September in any year, as appropriate.
- Or by giving three months' notice in writing, if the land is required for building or any industrial use, or for roads or sewers needed for these uses, or any purpose for which the allotment garden has been appropriated under any statutory provision.
- Or by giving one month's notice in writing if the rent or part of the rent is in arrears for forty days or more whether it has been legally demanded or not.
- Or if the tenant has been issued with a Notice to Quit the plot following receipt of a Non Cultivation letter.
- Or if the tenant has breached the conditions in the allotment agreement and Allotment Gardeners' Guidelines.



Allotments idverde
Cheam Park Depot
Tudor Close
Cheam
Surrey
SM3 8QS

telephone: 020 3876 8806

email: SLWPallotments@idverde.co.uk

APPENDIX A – List of Allotment Sites

An application form to go on the waiting list can be downloaded from the London Borough of Sutton web site.

No Plots	Allotment Name
15	Beddington Park
135	Belmont
172	Benhill
101	Buckland Way
26	Bushy Meadow
112	Bute Road
55	Bute Road Orchard
12	Central Road
34	Chaucer Road
21	Cheam Court
61	Cheam Park Nursery
19	Cheam Park Paddock
5	Clensham Lane
24	Culvers Avenue
278	Demesne Road
35	Duke Street
6	Forge Lane
23	Fryston Avenue
217	Gander Green Lane
63	Goose Green
106	Green Wrythe Lane
20	Lavender Road
21	Mill Green
57	Perretts Field
6	Priory Crescent
2	Pylbrook Triangle
58	Ridge Road
106	Roundshaw
57	Spencer Road
276	Stanley Road
15	The Warren
32	Wandle Road
12	Wandle Side
27	Watson Avenue
171	Westmead Road
14	Wrights Row

The Allotment sites with names in **Bold** have trading huts.

Appendix B

Health and Safety Guidelines for allotment users

- Do not drink the water from the tanks or standpipes
- Wear gloves whenever handling soil, compost, fertiliser or pesticides. Thin latex (or latex-free for allergy sufferers) gloves can be worn for delicate work
- Do not open bags of compost or potting media with your head right over it
- Fold over the top of compost bags when not in use.
- Avoid potting-up in confined spaces.
- Moisten dry potting media before use. Also dampen down dry compost heaps before turning or use.
- Consider wearing a dust mask when turning compost heaps and handling potting media or other dusty materials.
- Avoiding storing potting media in greenhouses as these will heat up and may encourage *Legionella*.
- Empty the water out of garden hoses after use and do not leave full hoses in the sun after use.
- Avoid splashing water around when watering pots
- Wear gloves and keep arms covered when pruning plants that can cause irritations; e.g. ivy (*Hedera*), *Fremontodendron*, *Euphorbia* or rue (*Ruta*).
- Only shred woody prunings in an open, well-ventilated area.
- Ensure tetanus jabs are up to date. Otherwise, see your local GP for a tetanus vaccination if you have cut yourself on a plant or got soil or manure in an open wound.
- Discourage rats by securing rubbish in bins and not putting cooked food on the compost heap.
- Rat-proof compost bins with wire mesh if necessary. To reduce the risks from salmonella avoid using rat-infested compost on edible crops, especially those not cooked before consumption.
- Protect from water-borne diseases such as Weil's disease by wearing waterproof gloves, clothing and boots when clearing out ponds.
- Always wash your hands after gardening and especially before eating.
- Keep a hand sterilising gel down in the potting shed if clean water is not available
- Children should always be accompanied by an adult and supervised on site