

AMBROSDEN PARISH COUNCIL

Allotment Tenant's Handbook

About this Guide

This guide is provided for anyone who rents an allotment garden from Ambrosden Parish Council.

This guide should be read in conjunction with your tenancy agreement.

This guide is not an authoritative interpretation of all applicable allotment law, but attempts to explain your obligations under the formal agreement that is made between a tenant and Ambrosden Parish Council.

The success of an allotment site is dependent on co-operation between garden tenants, allotment representatives and those responsible for the management of the site.

Allotment Holders Charter

We (the Parish Council) promise that we will:

Undertake the administration of allotment sites and provide access through the relevant officer for allotment holders who have queries or complaints. Inspect the condition of gardens and maintain suitable standards of care, issuing warnings and notices to quit as appropriate. Meet with allotment representatives at least twice a year to discuss any current issues. Work closely with allotment representatives and tenants to ensure the provision of an appropriate and satisfactory allotment service.

What is an allotment?

An allotment garden is a piece of land which has been provided by the Parish Council for rent. It can be used for growing fruit and vegetables for you and your family. Sizes are generally small (60 sq. m), standard (120 sq. m) or large (150-180 sq. m). These are approximate sizes and are the minimum area you will be allocated. (The exact areas have been mapped for future reference and if plots need to be resized).

You may not use your allotment for trade or business of any kind, camping or staying overnight.

Why would I want an allotment?

It is recognised by the Parish Council that allotment gardening can be a very rewarding pastime and can make a valuable contribution to the quality and health of people's lives. They are important as recreational assets and can be a social activity. They also provide valuable green open space important for biodiversity.

Who can have an Allotment?

Anyone who lives within the Parish of Ambrosden can apply for an allotment garden. Consideration to applicants outside of the Ambrosden boundary will only be given if the applicant lives in a parish that does not have its own allotment provision and if there is no waiting list of Ambrosden residents.

Waiting Lists

If demand is greater than supply, we will keep a waiting list of people interested in renting an allotment garden. When a garden becomes available it will be offered to the person who has been waiting the longest.

Your allotment agreement

The agreement is between Ambrosden Parish Council and you, the tenant.

When you sign the agreement, you are agreeing to take on a tenancy and to look after your garden and allotment site. You are agreeing to abide by the conditions in the agreement.

Please read your agreement and make sure that you understand your obligations before signing.

What can I grow?

Allotment gardens may grow flowers, vegetables and fruit. **At this site trees are not allowed.** Requests for patio potted trees can be made to the Parish Clerk for consideration by the Allotment Committee and the Council representatives – you must provide full details of the tree type, growing method and planned location – the tree must be removed on termination of tenancy unless agreed in writing with the Parish Council.

Subletting and garden sharing

You may have a private agreement to share your garden with a friend, however, you will still be the tenant.

The garden can only be held in one name at a time. The tenant is always responsible for the maintenance of the garden even if they choose to share.

If you decide to give up your garden, you must not pass it on to a friend directly. You must let us know that you intend to give up your garden. Your allotment will then be allocated to the next person on the waiting list.

Caring for your allotment garden: Parish Council Standards

The main requirement of your agreement is to keep your garden or gardens cultivated and tidy by removing litter and rubbish and controlling weeds regularly so that they do not seed and cause problems for other gardeners. At least one third of the plot should be kept cultivated between the months of May and October. Outside of this window any uncultivated areas must be kept prepared for cultivation or tidy as per the statement below

If you cannot manage to cultivate your entire garden, it is acceptable as a temporary measure to mulch part of it with polythene sheeting or organic mulch to keep the weeds down.

Don't use foam backed carpet or other man made substances that may rot down releasing harmful chemicals into the soil, causing pollution or waste build up within the site.

Don't stockpile timber, sheeting, newspapers or any other materials as they may become a hazard and/ or a breeding ground for pests/rodents.

Your garden will be inspected from time to time at regular intervals by the council and the committee. If there is a failure to maintain the required cultivation ratio or a breach in any element of the tenancy documentation you will be formally requested to resolve any identified issues.

If you do not bring your garden up to standard within the timescale stated, your tenancy may be terminated and your deposit may be forfeit on termination of the contract.

If you have any problems with your site and its maintenance, please let APC know and we will advise on what can be done to help. This includes unexpected changes in your personal circumstances. We will work with the site representatives to achieve a satisfactory outcome for all parties.

Sheds, structures and sundries

You cannot build sheds or any other structure unless you have our written permission to do so.

Sundries include water butts, composters and any furniture required to aid you on the site.

Sheds and other structures must be within your garden boundary and not obstruct paths between gardens. Your tenancy agreement will include a plan showing the location of your plot and where on that plot all structures should be kept. This not only keeps the site tidy in appearance but means that shade is less of an impact on adjacent plot holders. Please note you may only have one shed, one poly tunnel, and one greenhouse.

Your shed footprint should not exceed 1.5m x 2m (approx. 4ft by 6ft), greenhouses should not exceed 2m x 2m, and polytunnels should not exceed 2m x 2m. The total space that may be used for sundries should not exceed 6m squared in any combination with no more than 2m x 3m for each individual item. You can have a storage box on your plot. It is a good idea to have lockable storage.

Sheds and other structures should be removed by you at the end of your tenancy and can only be left if there is agreement with the incoming tenant and the Parish Council. All structures must be secured.

Structures made of glass, including greenhouses, are not permitted on allotments. Agreed structures erected during tenancy year 2019-20 are required to replace glass with a non-glass material going forward as/when it needs replacing – no new glass structures are allowed.

Windbreaks are permitted but require prior authorisation from the Council. Requests must be passed to allotments committee, to review, and the proposal and comments will then be passed to the Parish Clerk and Chairman of Parish Council to confirm.

Water

The site is on a water meter, with several taps at each area. The Parish Council encourages all tenants to have at least one water butt at their shed and sundries area, and to practise good water management such as collecting rainwater from shed roofs. Sensible use of hosepipes is acceptable – no sprinklers are allowed. If using a hosepipe, please allow others to access the taps to fill water cans as required.

The water on site is NOT potable and should not be ingested.

To prevent damage, the taps are turned off over the winter period. This runs from around the end of October until around the end of March, weather dependent. Tenants will be kept updated on any changes to this schedule.

Maintenance of Fences and Paths

We are responsible for maintaining the perimeter fence, tarmac roadways and parking areas, large internal pathways and the boarding around the plots. If you are at all unsure, check with your site representative or contact us.

Please keep all paths clear at all times, to allow safe access for all. Any new pathways constructed on plots must be made of natural materials (gravel is not permitted for new pathways)

Allotment site boundary fences are owned by the Council. You must not move or damage any fences. Please do not tie/hang any equipment or pile rubbish against fences as this can cause damage.

Bringing composts and manure to site

Deliveries of compost and manure are possible. Enquire of your site representative what is acceptable on your site.

If you as an individual bring fresh manure to your garden, ensure that it is moved onto your allotment within 24 hours of delivery, is no more than can be used in a year and is covered by a tarpaulin or plastic sheet to lessen the problems with strong smells or insects.

Disposal of rubbish

We would ask each gardener to consider composting or recycling as an alternative to disposal. You may keep a composter on your site in your shed and sundries area.

You must not deposit or allow anyone else to deposit rubbish anywhere on the allotment site. This includes the areas around the allotment site and unused allotment gardens.

We do not allow bonfires on any site, since this is a considerable nuisance to other users of the sites and neighbouring properties, has significant Health and Safety issues and is bad for the environment.

Respect for other gardeners

It is up to individuals how they chose to work their garden as long as it complies with Ambrosden Parish Council standards. Traditional gardeners may cultivate the entire garden and plant rows of plants and vegetables. Others may have a different approach.

We encourage gardeners to cultivate their gardens and enjoy their gardening. Please respect other allotment gardeners and remember that you have a Duty of Care to each other and to visitors to the site.

Please keep your dog on a lead whilst on the allotment and clean up after it. Please ensure your children do not cause a nuisance to other plot holders.

Allotment holders are as varied as the local community and will all have different ways of managing their allotment.

Safety & Security

You must keep all gates closed and locked when not in use and when working your plot. This prevents trespass and illegal fly tipping. There are combination locks at the site, and you will be informed of the current code, and when it changes. Please do not share this code with family, friends or children, to ensure the site is as secure as possible.

Please keep the gates locked when working in the garden – some plots are quite isolated and some work alone so for safety of all lock the gates after entering and leaving the site, remembering to ensure that the entry code does not remain visible

Visitors to the site must be accompanied by the tenant or his/her family. Please make sure that children are always supervised by a responsible adult. Please do not allow children to play outside the compounds unsupervised as there are cars in the area.

Handle and use pesticides and chemicals with care and in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, and make sure they are locked away when not in use. Please ensure that these are used only within the boundaries of your own plot unless you have the agreement of your direct neighbours, for example when removing weeds from path areas

Repairs and maintenance

Should you require assistance for any repairs or maintenance to your allotment site i.e. perimeter fencing or water supplies, please contact us or contact your allotment representative.

Meetings with allotment site representatives

We will meet at least twice a year with an Allotment Committee, should one be formed, in order to discuss how we run the allotments, help identify the concerns of gardeners on their sites and decide how we can tackle problems together. The Committee will consist of parish councillors, officers and allotment site representatives.

Right of Entry

Our officers and others employed by the Parish Council may enter, inspect and carry out maintenance work on your allotment garden without notice if we need to. For example, if there is a burst pipe or damaged fence near or on your garden.

How the Parish Council will serve statutory notices

We will serve notices in one of the following ways: Writing to you at the last address you have given us, via email and/or putting the notice on the allotment notice board.

Change of address

Please let us know your new address if you move house so that we can update our records. (It is useful if you could provide an email address as well)

This is important because we will 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 that you have given up your garden. You could lose your garden.

Your rent

You are a tenant of Ambrosden Parish Council and agree by signing the Agreement to pay the yearly rent in advance as set by the Parish Council.

How to pay

You can pay by bank transfer or cheque. The Parish Council does not accept cash payments.

Contact us for the bank account details.

Giving up your garden

When you decide that you no longer want your allotment garden, please let us know in writing. This will end your agreement. Please do not wait until we invoice you for the rent. The deposit is refundable dependant on the condition of the allotment. Part year rent refunds will not be applicable.

By letting us know early, we can arrange to have your garden taken over as soon as you stop working it. This will help you make arrangements if you have sheds etc that can be transferred to the incoming gardener, get the gardener off to a flying start and makes sure that the garden does not become overgrown.

Ending the allotment agreement

In some circumstances we can end the agreement with you, or you can end the agreement in accordance with the terms of your tenancy agreement by writing to the Parish Council offices at the address previously given. In most circumstances, the Parish Council aims to address issues through informal discussion and warnings. Where required, formal warnings allow tenants a period of six weeks to address raised concerns without further action. If no formal warnings are not heeded to, formal notice of one month can be served.

Contacting us

If you need information, have an enquiry about allotments email clerk@ambrosdenpc.org.uk telephone 07749 974395, or write to Ambrosden Parish Council, care of 13 Oak Close, Bicester, OX26 3XD

USEFUL INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE:

The National Allotment Society: www.nsalg.org.uk. The Parish Council has Local Authority membership and can access certain things on your behalf if you would like. You can also subscribe as an individual. Please visit their website for membership fees.

The Parish Council insurance includes cover for public liability.

The insurance DOES NOT cover your sheds, other structures, tools or other items stored onsite, or livestock. This would be up to you to insure.

See <https://getcomposting.com/> for information and guidance on the use of composters and water butts