

*Culpeper Community Garden*

# Guidelines for Plot Holders

*(Plot Holder Handbook)*



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***THIS INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE IN  
LARGE PRINT FORMAT ON REQUEST***

# Welcome to your plot at Culpeper Community Garden

You will find everything you need to get started here, including:

- General information for plot holders
- How to garden organically
- Culpeper Garden rules

If you have any questions that are not answered here please speak to a Garden Worker. We hope you will enjoy being part of the Culpeper community.

## General Information for Plot Holders

### Your Plot at Culpeper Community Garden.

Your plot is your garden but it is also part of a beautiful, award-winning community garden that is dependent on grants for its funding, so please remember:

- When you are allocated a plot, you must respect the Culpeper Garden rules [see below] and follow the Garden Workers' advice and instructions.
- Culpeper Community Garden is an award-winning green oasis in the centre of London. Culpeper's beauty and public access is essential for securing funding, recruiting volunteers and the political support which are all necessary for the Garden to remain open. Though you will be caring for it, your plot continues to belong to the wider garden, so please look after it and don't do anything that might spoil the garden as a whole.
- Though you are responsible for tending your plot, circumstances may arise which require the garden workers to take action on your plot to ensure appropriate maintenance of the garden as a whole. Where possible, garden workers will endeavour to provide advance notice and the opportunity for you to take action yourself.
- When you take on your plot you may be asked to keep certain plants because they contribute to the overall beauty of the Garden or act as a useful barrier. If you are not sure, please check with a Garden Worker before cutting through a stem or you may damage a beautiful wisteria, rose or clematis.
- Ornamental plants placed in plots are understood to become part of the garden. When you give up your plot please do not remove plants, except with the permission of the garden workers. The garden is not able to compensate for plants lost to theft or damage, or which remain in the garden after a plot has been given up or reallocated.

- Never do anything in the communal parts of the garden without asking a Garden Worker first.
- Culpeper is 100% organic so do not use any weedkillers, insecticides or other chemicals.
- You can grow some food crops on your plot, but it is important that the Garden continues to be beautiful, so please grow at least a few ornamental plants, especially by paths (which may also help deter vegetable thieves).
- As a plot holder you must help maintain the communal parts of the garden, not just your plot. This means coming to Work Days, helping out at fundraising and community events, and opening and locking up the Garden as appropriate.
- A core value of Culpeper Community Garden is to be inclusive, kind and friendly. This means making visitors of all ages, ethnicities and abilities feel welcome, which may require tolerance, consideration and understanding other people's needs. It costs around £70,000 a year to keep Culpeper Community Garden open; plot holders' subscriptions only amount to around £1,000. Garden Workers and trustees spend a great deal of time completing applications for funding from charities and the funding we receive is because of the enormous difference Culpeper makes to the mental and physical health of local people, especially the groups and schools who come to Culpeper; without them Culpeper could not continue.
- You should keep up to date with what is happening and take part in decision-making. You should read emails and newsletters, attend the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in October and consider becoming a trustee.
- You must pay your membership and subscription on time in January without multiple reminders.

### **Opening times**

The Garden aims to be open to everyone, not just plot holders, from dawn until dusk. As a plot holder you have an important role in this; if you are the first to arrive please make sure both gates are open to the public, and if you are the last to leave, please make sure both gates are securely locked.

### **Keys**

As a plot holder you may purchase three keys: one to the outside gates and to the Tea Hut, one Tool Shed and one tap key. These can be obtained from the Garden Worker and are charged at cost. They must be returned when you give up your plot and you are entitled to a refund of the purchase price.

### **Garden Workers**

The Garden Workers are employed to keep the Garden running smoothly and will be happy to give advice or help with any problem but it is not their job to look after your plot. Please be aware that they have many other responsibilities including organising volunteers and work parties to keep the whole garden looking beautiful, working with local schools and other groups, liaising with the wider community and, very importantly, fundraising.

### **Tea Hut**

Possibly the most important place in the Garden - this is where members make drinks, have lunch, bring their friends and discuss the latest slug crisis. However, the Tea Hut is not exclusively for plot holders – every member is entitled to have a key and to use the hut.

Please remember you are responsible for:

- Bringing in tea, coffee, milk or sugar from time to time for everyone to share.
- Keeping the Tea Hut clean and tidy so everyone can use and enjoy it.
- Being polite and welcoming to other garden members.
- Keeping the entrance and outside area clear and accessible to wheelchair users.

### **Tool Shed**

The tools are a valuable resource for everyone to share and should never be taken out of the Garden. They should be cleaned and returned tidily after use, with hoses neatly rolled. A few smaller tools, such as secateurs, are kept in the Office and can be borrowed from, and returned to the Garden Workers.

### **Water points**

There are five water points spaced around the Garden, which are activated by a removable tap key which you can get from the Garden Worker. Watering Cans are kept in the tool shed. Hoses can only be used with the permission of the Garden Workers. Please take care not to waste water, which is a big expense at Culpeper.

### **Resource Centre**

This is used by groups and schools and is usually only open when Garden Workers are present, for security reasons. The toilet can be used, with permission, if the resource centre is open.

### **Vandalism and Anti-Social Behaviour**

From time to time, the Garden experiences problems such as vandalism, theft of plants, or verbal abuse directed at members or other garden users. All incidents should be reported to a Garden Worker who will enter them in the incident book and report them to the police if appropriate. If there is no Garden Worker present, report the incident to the police yourself (the police station is just one minute away in Tolpuddle Street) and tell a Garden Worker or Committee member when you can. Remember that your personal safety comes first, so do not to put yourself in any danger.

## **Management Committee**

The Management Committee of Trustees is elected each year at the AGM and consists of up to 11 people. It hears reports from the Treasurer and Garden Workers, discusses issues, makes decisions about the running of the Garden and hears about the continual fundraising that is essential to the existence of the garden. Meetings take place in the Resource Centre at 7pm on the first Wednesday of alternate months. Minutes are kept in a folder in the Tea Hut. If you have any problems or queries that the Garden Workers cannot resolve satisfactorily, please bring them to the Management Committee. To get an item put on the agenda email the Secretary.

## **Gardening Organically at Culpeper**

Organic gardening means using techniques that work with, nature to create a healthy, well-balanced environment. Culpeper has been gardened organically for over thirty-five years, so it will be easy for you to be a successful organic gardener and grow healthy plants. You must not use artificial fertilisers or chemical pesticides – these products may solve the problem in the short term, but in the long term they create even bigger problems, for example, killing off the insects or discouraging the birds which attack aphids. If you are in any doubt about a product, ask a Garden Worker.

## **Soil**

The key to successful gardening is healthy soil, which has the correct balance of nutrients, beneficial organisms and an open structure. Regularly adding organic material will ensure that the soil remains healthy. Soil is a living environment: organic manures feed the whole spectrum of life in the soil from worms to microscopic bacteria. Manure also helps improve soil structure, ensuring that a good percentage of the soil's volume is air and water. Try not to tread on soil or dig it when it is wet, as this will compact it.

## **Garden Compost**

Good compost is at the heart of good gardening and does not have to be bought at great expense in plastic bags. At Culpeper we try to compost as much organic material as possible to put back into our soil. Our compost bins are in the yard.

Please be careful what you put in them – adding materials that are too hard or large for composting worms to eat means that the materials cannot rot down. Adding pernicious weeds, such as dandelion, dock, bindweed or wild garlic with roots or seeds, will make them grow again more strongly. When you put the wrong materials in the bins it means someone else will have the unpleasant job of sorting through to take it out. Look at the information panels by the bins or ask a Garden Worker if you are not sure.

Helping to manage the compost bins is an essential volunteer role at Culpeper. Please add your own plant material to the compost bins; leaves and soft cuttings cut into small pieces as well as food waste from home, such as vegetable peelings.

You must never add meat, fish, cooked food, bread and orange or lemon peel to the compost bins as they will not rot down quickly and will encourage rats. Do not put hardwood prunings, diseased plant material, or perennial weeds in the bins - all of these should go into the big green bags for collection by the Council.

### **Rubbish and Recycling**

The Brown Bin is for recycling glass, newspapers, card and cans only. General unrecyclable waste - food & coffee cartons, tissues, plastic food containers, facemasks etc. should go in the Black Bin.

### **Green Manures**

There are many plants that you can grow and then dig into the soil before they flower to increase its fertility, and are especially useful if your soil is quite bare in winter.

<https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/green-manures>

### **Animal Manures**

The Garden has twice-yearly deliveries of well-rotted manure which plot holders may buy. Please order in advance from a Garden Worker.

### **Fertilisers**

Fertilisers improve the chemical balance of the soil. Organic fertilisers have to be broken down in the soil before they are available to plants, and include animal remains (blood, fish and bone meal), ground rocks (limestone, phosphate and potash) and seaweed (seaweed meal or calcified seaweed). Be careful, an excess of nutrients can lead to soft growth, which can be susceptible to various diseases (eg. gooseberry mildew).

### **Identifying and Encouraging Beneficial Wildlife**

Ladybirds, lacewings and hoverflies eat aphids (black/white/greenfly), so are your best friends in the garden! You will find plenty of these at Culpeper, encouraged through the varied planting and organic environment, and you can encourage them by growing Limnanthes (poached egg plant), Sedum, Fennel, etc. Various habitats in the garden also encourage these creatures - frogs in our pond eat slugs and bird boxes provide homes for tits who feast on aphids.

### **Identifying and Controlling Harmful Pests**

Of 21,000 insects species in the UK only a few hundred are harmful to plants. Most are neutral. So it is important to identify if an insect is harmful before trying to get rid of it. Regularly checking your plot and picking off the offending creatures by hand at the earliest possible time is the best way to deal with pests.

Early in the year, slugs are the gardener's worst enemy. Pellets are not the answer – they may kill the first wave, but this only makes them breed faster and stronger. Try beer traps, grapefruit peel, sharp grit, bran. None will be wholly successful, but they will help. Avoid

plants that slugs love eg. lupins, lettuce, or plant these out later in the season when slugs are less prevalent and the plants are strong enough to resist.

### **Healthy Plants**

Strong plants are more able to resist pests & diseases - always choose healthy plants and check for pests and diseases. Avoid plants that are particularly susceptible to disease and choose resistant varieties. It is best not to sow too early in the season - later sowings will catch up.

### **Controlling Weeds**

There are no organic weed killers so you should dig, hoe and hand weed. Mulching your plot with a thick layer of compost, manure or forest bark will also help to suppress weeds by blocking out the sunlight they need to grow. If your plot has some empty spaces during the winter consider growing a green manure (see above) rather than letting the weeds take over.

### **Communal Activities**

Culpeper is a Community Garden - this means all plot holders must share responsibility for the whole of the Garden as well as their own plot. If you are the first person at the garden in the morning you should unlock the gates for the public and leave them open when you go. If you are the last person at the garden in the evening you should lock the gates behind you – but make sure you haven't locked anyone in!

An important responsibility for plot holders is to attend Work Days, on the second Sunday of each month to help keep the whole garden looking beautiful for everyone. If you can't make it, please ask the Garden Worker what you can do at another time - if you see a job you think needs doing in the communal area please check with a Garden Worker first before doing it yourself.

All plot holders are encouraged to help with fundraising – buying and selling raffle tickets, Plant Sales – and other social events such as Open Squares and Gardens. Some of these – such as Summer and Winter Solstices, are for members, volunteers and friends; others - the pensioners' Strawberry Tea and children's Halloween Party - are for the wider community. If you can't make it on the day, you might be able to donate plants for the plant sale, prizes for the raffle or bake for the strawberry Tea or other events. However busy you are, please make time for some of these opportunities to support Culpeper – it is sociable, fun, and makes you feel like as if you are contributing to the community garden we all love. Look out for details of what's coming up in emails, the quarterly newsletter and on the noticeboard.

## **Garden Rules for Plot Holders at Culpeper**

1. The Garden is subdivided into individual plots which are the personal responsibility of plot holders subject to the conditions laid out below. All other spaces will be regarded as communal.

2. All plot holders are expected to contribute to the communal nature of the garden. This means coming to Work Days (the second Sunday in each month), helping out at fundraising or community events, and promoting the purposes of the garden. This includes opening and locking up the Garden as appropriate and making visitors of all ages and ethnic groups feel welcome.
3. The Garden is committed to organic methods of cultivation. No inorganic fertiliser or pesticide may be used.

### **Allocation of Plots**

- To be eligible for a plot, the applicant must not have a garden, must live within the catchment area, and must be fully signed up to rules 2 and 3, above.
- Applicants for a plot must complete an application form and, provided they are eligible, they will be added to the waiting list held in the Garden Workers' office and allocated a plot in order of receipt. At the time an application for a plot is submitted, applicants must be a member of Culpeper and pay the appropriate subscription.
- The allocation and monitoring of the cultivation and use of plots is delegated by the Culpeper Management Committee [Trustees] to a Plot Management Sub-Committee supported by the Garden Workers. The Plot Management Sub-Committee comprises at least one trustee, one plot holder and a Garden Worker.
- The Plot Management Sub-Committee will meet regularly to decide on the allocation of vacant plots and to inspect plots to check that they are not neglected by existing plot holders. Decisions to allocate plots and to send warning letters and plot reallocation letters will be taken by the Sub-Committee.
- The Garden Workers will keep clear records, including dates, of applications for plots, the payment of membership subscriptions, decisions to allocate plots, any warning letters to plot holders and decisions to reallocate plots.
- When a plot falls vacant, existing plot holders may exchange their plot for the vacated one by application to the plot management Sub-Committee. If there is more than one such application, the Sub-Committee will allocate the plot by ballot.
- Only one plot will be allocated per household.
- A small number of plots will be allocated directly by the Management Committee, for example plots used by specific groups e.g. local schools, learning disability or mental health projects, or by individuals with specific needs e.g. the raised beds for people with mobility difficulties.
- Plot occupancy is an internal cultivation agreement and carries no legal right of tenure.



- Plot allocation is delegated to the Plot Management Sub-Committee but is ultimately the responsibility of the Committee; plot holders are not entitled to reallocate or sub-let their plots themselves.
- The Plot Management Sub-Committee will report to each Management Committee meeting on plot allocation, warnings issued and plots reallocated.

### **Responsibilities of Plot Holders**

- Plot holders should be considerate of other plot holders, garden members and users. This includes appropriately disposing of all waste materials, cleaning and returning communal tools at the end of a work session and keeping paths clear at all times.
- No tree or shrub more than 3" in diameter may be cut down; no earth may be removed from plots.
- No permanent structure or fence may be erected without the permission of the Plot Management Sub-Committee. Any structure must be kept in good repair. Barbed wire must not be used anywhere.
- Use of a plot is renewed annually upon payment of the annual subscription fee.
- Plots may be used only as the Management Committee permits. Plotters who neglect their plots will receive a first stage written warning from the Sub-Committee, giving them four weeks to bring their plot to a satisfactory level.
- If after four weeks, the Sub-Committee is not satisfied they will issue a second written warning saying that if their plot is not adequately cultivated over the next four weeks, the plot will be forfeited and reallocated.
- If there is still no satisfactory progress, the Sub-Committee will notify the plot holder in writing that they must give up their plot.
- Plot holders who otherwise fail to meet their responsibilities, such as involvement in the care of the communal areas, will be requested to take remedial action.
- Before writing to a plot holder to tell them their plot is being reallocated, the Plot Management Sub-Committee will take into account any reasons for the neglect of the plot and what the prospects are for improved care of the plot. In the reallocation letter the plot holder should be told that they have the right to appeal to the Management Committee if they feel the decision is unreasonable.
- In extraordinary circumstances, such as significant or repeated violations of the rules laid out in this handbook, or of the Garden's Code of Conduct, the Sub-Committee may recommend to the Management Committee that a plot be reclaimed for reallocation immediately. The Management Committee will consider the matter and decide a course of action to be implemented by the Sub-Committee. If the

Management Committee decides to reclaim the plot, the plot holder has the right to appeal to the Management Committee if they feel the decision is unreasonable.

- If the plot holder, for reason of disability or lack of written English, needs assistance to submit an appeal, the Garden Worker should be willing to help them.

## **General**

- The Management Committee (Trustees) is empowered to take decisions not covered by the rules in the interests of the Garden. If a member has a grievance with the implementation of the rules or with any other decision made by the Committee, it should be addressed to the Management Committee via a Garden Worker, or a Committee member.
- No dogs, except dogs working with the disabled, are allowed into the garden.
- All money collected shall be handed over to the Treasurer or Garden Workers who will pay it into the bank account of the Association. Cheques must be signed by two members of the Management Committee.
- All members of the garden pay an annual subscription for membership, due each January, with the rate set by the Committee
- No committee members of the Garden can receive direct or indirect payment for the services of the organisation.