



Become a member of The National Allotment Society

Membership of The National Allotment Society comes with a raft of benefits, from discounts on horticultural products through to initial legal advice and horticultural expertise. To become a member visit www.nsalg.org.uk or call **01536 266576**.

Tenancy agreements

To ensure your plots are cultivated correctly, well maintained and your tenants act in the manner you wish, every time a plot is rented out, it should be covered by a tenancy agreement. This agreement sets out the rules both parties must abide by. Many of the clauses can be drawn directly from the allotment legislation, for example a tenant must be served 12 months notice to quit their plot if the landlord wishes to obtain the land back, but if you become a member of The National Allotment Society, we can help you to draw up your tenancy agreements free of charge. It may be worth considering a reduced rent or a rent free first year if the allotment plot is run down. The agreement should cover everything from how much rent is payable to whether bees can be kept on the site or if bonfires are allowed.

Advertising your plots

If you have vacant plots waiting to be filled, the first thing to do is get in touch with your local authority. Speak to the allotment officer or the person in charge of allotments, and ask them to pass on the information about your site to the people on the waiting lists.

Word of mouth, flyer drops, posters in local shops, cafes and libraries will also help to spread the word.

Please be aware that under the Weights and Measures legislation any advertisement for allotments must be done in metres and not feet.



Creating a new allotment site

For landlords and self-managed sites



Allotments not only provide space for growing and fresh air for individuals and families alike, but they benefit wildlife, bring people together and help to keep our cities and towns breathing.

If you wish to create a new allotment site, the first thing that you need to know is whether the land that has been identified for the new site is currently agricultural land or not. The definition of agricultural includes; land used for horticulture, fruit growing, seed growing and the keeping of livestock. Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, you should not need to seek planning permission to turn agricultural land into allotments; however, if the land falls outside this category then you will always require permission. It is always advisable to speak to your local planning authority for clarification.

Where possible choose land that is easily accessible by car or is close to a public transport route. It is critical that the proposed allotment site has soil that can be cultivated and isn't full of rubble or contaminated by chemicals (if in doubt, seek professional testing advice) and it isn't prone to flooding or some other form of nuisance. It is worth excavating a few trial pits around the site to see what the soil profile is like. One way to test the drainage is to fill a hole with water and wait to see how quickly or slowly it takes the water to drain away. If the hole starts to fill up with water by itself then you have serious drainage problems. It is also better for the site to be covered in weeds because by identifying the various weeds you can crudely assess the general condition of the site e.g. nettles grow in rich soil.

Measuring out your plots

Once you have acquired the land, you then need to clear it of any debris and weeds before marking out the plots (for advice see our Clearing an overgrown plot leaflet). Traditionally a standard allotment plot measures 10 poles, roughly the equivalent of 250 square metres, which is enough land to feed a family of four for a year. Often landlords will rent out half plots to help reduce the waiting list time or because tenants have specifically requested a smaller plot.



Traditionally a standard allotment plot measures 10 poles, roughly the equivalent of 250 square metres, which is enough land to feed a family of four for a year.

If you do decide to make the allotment plots smaller than 10 poles, then please ensure this reduction is also reflected in the amount of rent charged.

An acre of land can house 12-15 standard sized plots comfortably, with enough room for haulage ways and footpaths. To enable access for wheelchair users all paths should be no less than 1.5 metres wide preferably measuring 1.7 metres to allow for a wheelchair and ambulant person to travel side-by-side. The main gates should be wide enough to comfortably allow the large delivery vehicles used by hauliers today on to the site.

If the land has a number of standard trees on it, remember it will be difficult to grow any produce near them. Tree canopies and leaves block sunlight to the soil and the tree root will drain the soil of nutrients and moisture. You may want to cordon off this area or set it aside for non-gardening purposes, mark out your plots well away from the tree canopies and root spread.

Structures

As a landlord you do not need to provide greenhouses, polytunnels or sheds for your tenants, but if you do, permission must be sought from your local planning officer. To ensure you don't fall foul of any planning regulations or infringe on your neighbours' rights, choose presentable structures that are well-made and large enough to meet the plot holder's storage requirements.

- *We recommend that a shed measuring 8ft x 6ft, and a greenhouse measuring 8ft x 6ft or a polytunnel measuring 8ft x 10ft should be sufficient for most allotment plots.*

If you decide not to provide these structures, ensure there is a clause in your tenancy agreement covering such objects. Confirm with the allotment holders that it is their responsibility to maintain any sheds and structures on their plot in a safe and presentable condition. Outline what is acceptable from your point of view, but always remember to refer your tenants to the planning officer for the final decision.

Rent

As a landlord you are entitled to charge rent for the plots you own or manage. In accordance with the Allotments Act of 1950 and case law, allotment rents should be charged at a rate which 'a tenant may reasonably be expected to pay'. Today that figure can be anywhere between £25-£125 a year. However when deciding on the level of rent to charge, it should be made clear to the tenant what they can expect in return for their money e.g. access to running water, well maintained pathways and security fencing, a trading hut which can be securely fastened, serviced bins and recycling points, the services of an allotment manager/officer, allotment insurance or free manure and ploughing come the end of the growing season. The National Allotment Society expects rents to be reasonable and to be in line with the services on offer.

As a member of The National Allotment Society you can get for free advice on how to create and manage an allotment site.

