

## **ASHFORD & DISTRICT SMALLHOLDERS LTD**

### **HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY – JULY 2016**

**Introduction:** All activities carry an element of risk, and allotment gardening is no exception. However, many of these risks can be easily prevented or controlled. The aim of this policy is to prevent accidents and provide adequate control of health and safety risks on the allotment site, as far as is reasonably possible. The following policy statement has been approved by the Committee of Ashford and District Smallholders, and is based on a document made available by the Allotments Regeneration Initiative.

**Our Obligations:** Under civil law, and as set out in the Occupiers' Liability Act 1957, all plot-holders have a duty of care to anyone accessing their plots and the pathways for which they are responsible. The duty of care applies to both authorised and unauthorised visitors. As an association, we have a communal duty to ensure that common areas, such as the car park, roadway, trading hut and barrow storage area are safe. The law requires that we exercise at least a 'reasonable' level of care regarding safety in all these areas. Although unlikely, a claim could be made for negligence if an individual were to suffer an injury because we had not taken reasonable precautions. It is not possible in English law to exclude liability, for example by way of a notice. We are also obliged to comply with other laws, such as those regarding environmental and wildlife protection.

**Our Policy:** The Society's Health and Safety Policy is summarised in this document, and is also implemented through the Society's rules, its members' registration form, notices and website. A site safety assessment will be carried out by members of the Committee at least once a year, and appropriate actions will be taken to minimise hazards and risks, and to update this Policy where necessary.

The Society will do its best to ensure that plots leased to new plot-holders are free from hazards, as far as is practically possible. New members will be advised of the Society's Policy and their own responsibilities for health and safety when they sign the members' registration form.

**Responsibilities:** All members of the society are responsible for their own safety, and for the safety of their families, visitors and passers-by. They should therefore adopt good, safe working practices on site. Plot-holders should report concerns about health and safety on or around their plot, accidents and near-misses to a member of the Committee. Members should also record any accidents or injuries in the accidents book, which is kept inside the first-aid box next to the trading hut door.

Plot-holders are responsible for ensuring that visitors and non-plot-holders comply with the Society's Health and Safety Policy. All third-party visitors over the age of 18 are responsible for their own safety. Visitors under the age of 18 and vulnerable adults are the responsibility of their parent/ guardian/ responsible person, and should not visit the site on their own.

The Committee will be responsible for overseeing all health and safety issues on site, and for reviewing and updating the Society's Health and Safety Policy.

#### **Health and Safety Rules:**

- Members must ensure that no items, materials or structures on their plots represent a hazard to themselves, other members or visitors. The committee reserves the right to remove, or order the removal of, any item, material or structure that is deemed to be a risk or hazard to any member or third party. Hazards include sharp edges, broken glass, exposed nails, improperly stored tools, hazards hidden within undergrowth such as discarded tools, or improperly stored dangerous materials such as those listed below.
- Plot-holders must comply with all legal requirements and instructions for the safe storage, use and disposal of hazardous materials such as pesticides, weedkillers, fertilisers, oil, and fuel. These substances must be stored securely in the proper containers, must be removed from the site for disposal, and must be kept well away from the reach of children.

- Barbed wire and razor wire must not be used in any circumstances.
- Broken glass and rubbish are a safety hazard, and should be removed promptly from the site.
- Unprotected panes of glass should not be used near paths, where passers-by could be injured by falling onto them.
- Members must keep the paths surrounding their plots clear of obstructions, safety hazards and long growth. Paths should be safe for everyone to walk on, and reasonably level.
- All vehicles must observe a maximum speed limit of 5mph on site. Please drive & park considerately and carefully.
- Children must be supervised by a responsible adult at all times when on site. They must not go onto another member's plot without the plotholder's express permission.

#### **Advisory Recommendations:**

- In an emergency, members should call 999 for fire, police or ambulance, and explain where the site is located (Ashford & District Smallholders allotment site, vehicle access between 83 and 85 Feltham Road, nearest postcode TW15 1BU). Emergency instructions are posted on site notice-boards.
- A basic first-aid kit is kept in the first-aid box, which is located next to the trading hut door. Under no circumstances should anyone give ointments, tablets or medication to anyone else.
- It is good practice to tell someone when you intend to visit the site, and when you are likely to return, especially at times when few people are on site. We suggest that you carry a mobile phone with you.
- Plot-holders are responsible for the safe storage and use of tools, especially power tools. Children should be kept well away from anyone operating a power tool.
- All communal machinery is used at the user's own risk. Members are responsible for familiarising themselves with the operating instructions before use.
- Please return communal barrows and trolleys to the storage area after use, and leave them in a safe state. Please do not allow your children to play on them.
- Special care is needed if working from a ladder or at height above ground.
- We remind parents of small children and toddlers that there are several unguarded garden ponds and tanks of water around the site. Please take special care of small children, especially near open water.
- Tetanus is a serious infection caused by a bacterium that lives in the soil. We recommend that you have an up-to-date tetanus vaccination before visiting the site.
- Water obtained from the pumps on site comes from ground-water, and may contain infectious organisms. We recommend that you do not drink this water unless it is first boiled or sterilised.
- Rats can spread a range of dangerous diseases. We recommend that members do not leave food waste on the site, as this may encourage rats. Rat poison must be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, with due care for pets and wildlife.

**Site Safety Assessment:** The Committee will carry out a safety assessment of the site at least once a year. This will involve at least two people walking around the site, identifying hazards, assessing risks, deciding on actions and filling in a report form. The risk assessment report will then be referred to the Committee, who will decide what further actions are needed. Some risks are so great that immediate action must be taken, some are severe enough that action needs to be considered, and others may need no action. The safety assessment report will be kept by the Committee, and will be made available to any member who requests it. A letter identifying the hazard(s) found on each plot will be sent to all members concerned, together with a deadline for action.

The safety assessment will consider both hazards and risks. A hazard is something that can cause injury, for example cars, power tools or exposed sharp edges. Hazards can sometimes be eliminated, but many are inevitable. Risk is the probability that a hazard will result in injury. Risks can rarely be eliminated, but can usually be reduced to a reasonably acceptable level.

**Most injuries are easily prevented. Good gardening is safe gardening.**

**It is everyone's responsibility (and in everyone's interests) to ensure that we garden in a safe way.**