

ONE TREE HILL ALLOTMENTS SOCIETY

PLOT HOLDERS' HANDBOOK

Please take time to read this - before agreeing to take on a plot.

Welcome to One Tree Hill Allotments Society (OTHAS), we trust you will enjoy your plot and your produce. You will receive your licence after three months when you have passed your probation. This document contains the conditions of your tenancy, and information about the site and the society.

WORKING YOUR PLOT

We expect plot holders to fully work their plot. We estimate you will need to attend to the plot about four hours a week minimum depending on the crops you grow, the size of your plot and the season. This could mean a visit every week throughout the year, yes even in winter when there is work that can be done. In the summer it may be necessary to visit more often, perhaps every other day. We ask members and potential members to consider this time commitment seriously. If you cannot spare the time to work your plot effectively, you may become disillusioned and discouraged. Given the demand for plots the Committee will terminate licences if plots are unworked. Bear in mind the soil is clay and can prove to be hard work. The site can be accessed at any time during the day and throughout the year. Every plot needs its number clearly visible. When you join you will be given a number to display, or you can make your own.

PROBATION

As a new member you have a three-month probation period to demonstrate suitable progress on your plot to the OTHAS committee. At the end of the three months, if you have passed, you will receive your licence. You will receive a letter after one month if progress is not being made. If the committee does not see significant progress at the end of the three months your licence will not be granted.

UNWORKED PLOTS

It is a condition of the licence that the plot holder will keep their plot clean and in a good state of cultivation and fertility. The OTHAS Committee takes the matter of unworked plots seriously and will issue a Notice to Quit (NTQ) to members who do not fully work their plots. We expect the whole plot to be cultivated, not just a small part. Large Grassed areas are not considered cultivation. We have monthly inspections and, if necessary, take action that can result in an NTQ.

'Rewilding' part or all of a plot is not an option, the plot must be used for growing.

UNABLE TO WORK YOUR PLOT

If for any reason you find you can no longer work your plot or cannot work it for a period of time (e.g. working away, illness etc.) then you must inform the Membership Secretary immediately. There are options to bring in friends and/or family as Associate Members to help, that will need to be agreed with the Committee. We have a large waiting list and we cannot sustain plots being unworked for long periods.

SITE SECURITY

Please ensure the gates are padlocked after you use them. Do not leave them open and unattended for any amount of time. We cannot be responsible for any tools, equipment etc. left on the site, even in a locked shed. We occasionally do have break-ins, so please ensure you take home any quality tools.

SHEDS AND GREENHOUSES

We allow structures on the site, but they must be of a reasonable size. A 6' x4' shed or greenhouse should be big enough for most needs. Permission from the committee must be obtained before creating/erecting one. It is a condition of your licence that the plot holder shall keep their shed in good state of repair. If it is not, despite a written warning from the committee, then the committee has the right to remove and dispose of the structure.

PLOT BOUNDARIES

If there is a natural boundary between yours and your neighbour's plot, do not remove it without the agreement from your neighbour as they may wish to retain it for privacy or wind protection.

PATHS

Please note that, as per the licence agreement, all paths must be at least 18 inches wide, though preferably 24, and in good condition. Narrow or overgrown paths are inconvenient for people and wheelbarrows and can be dangerous if they are a trip hazard. Increasing the size of a plot by cutting into the path is not tolerated. It is the responsibility of the plot holder to keep the paths by their plot in good condition. The committee will check paths on plot inspections and take action against plot holders whose paths are not up to standard.

WATER

The site is served by metered mains water and is available either from taps or tanks. Due to that the Society must pay commercial water rate and we are on a meter, the use of hoses, sprinklers etc is forbidden apart from where the water is from the top standpipe or a raised bed use. Anyone found using a hosepipe will be issued with an NTQ. If you have a shed or other structure the Committee recommends fitting a water butt to capture rainwater.

INAPPROPRIATE MATERIALS

Do not bring Tyres or Carpet on to the site.

Tyres were popular idea as a raised tub for growing however it is really difficult to dispose of old tyres when the plotholder leaves or no longer needs them.

Carpet has been another idea to use as weed suppressant, however often they are left, leaves build up and the carpet becomes buried. Then it is hard and arduous job of digging the carpet out and then trying to dispose of it.

Hazardous materials such as Asbestos/Fiberglass must not be brought on to the site.

Think very carefully about materials and items you bring on to the site.

Do not stockpile "just in case".

There are clauses in the licence that the committee will use if a plotholder brings anything that is not suitable for an allotment.

METAL POLES

On some plots metal poles are used as fencing posts, especially along the path edges. They could be dangerous if anyone falls on them. Accordingly, either remove them or make sure that any pole less than five feet high has something to cover the top of it to make it safe.

PONDS

Ponds can be very attractive and provide habitat for wildlife. However they can also be a danger to children. The society is required to impose conditions on building ponds; and so permission from the committee must be obtained before creating one.

THEFT OF PRODUCE

It is disheartening to be growing produce and then find it stolen. The committee would like to make it clear that theft from other plots is not tolerated and anyone found doing this will be issued with an immediate NTQ, as per the conditions of the licence.

COMMUNAL AREAS UPKEEP

As part of the membership of the society each plot holder is required to work on the communal areas for six hours each year. The committee arranges and publicises workdays and projects for you to attend. We have a lot of improvements we want to do, so it is important that everyone does their turn. If you cannot make a workday, then the committee can arrange for a task to be done at another time. If you have additional time to spare there are plenty of tasks to be done, so contact a member of the committee. Membership of the society can be terminated if a plot holder does not participate in at least 6 hours of communal work a year.

STRIMMERS

We have some strimmers available to plot holders who have undertaken some basic training in their use. To arrange to use one of them, contact the committee.

WEED KILLERS AND ORGANIC PRACTICES

OTHAS wishes to be as organic as practicable. The general rule is that plot holders should not use any sort of chemical pesticide, herbicide or molluscicide on their plots. Use in particular of any product containing *Glysophate* is forbidden, and its use may lead to a Notice to Quit.

In extreme circumstances chemicals may be necessary in a communal area, but only if agreed by, and organised by, the committee.

TREES

Plot holders need to get the committee's written before planting anything bigger than small fruiting or flowering bushes, which includes all trees. If they want to cut down or trim an existing tree, they need to consult the committee first.

To assist with tree management including pruning the Committee asks that plot holders maintain all trees on their plot to no more than 8' tall. The Committee may intervene to reduce trees to that height.

PLOT HOLDERS' CONDUCT ON SITE

It is a condition of the licence that the plot holder may not sublet or assign their plot to anyone else. Neither may they cause any nuisance/ discrimination/ upset/ violence/ bullying to other plot holders. Friends, family and pets are all welcome, but the plot holder is responsible for their behaviour. Dogs brought on to the site by the plot holder must be kept on a lead and must not be allowed onto other plots. If they poo, the owner must clear it up. Plot holders cannot park vehicles on the site.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

We must all take responsibility for health and safety. Apart from the usual considerations such as being careful with the use of tools, an allotment site does have hazards that may not be normally encountered, so please take care on site.

FIRES

Whilst the licence allows plot holders to light small fires, plot holders are not to burn any man-made material such as plastics or MDF as this creates toxic fumes. Please take these materials home and dispose of them in your household rubbish. Also you must not use old engine oil/petrol/diesel to start fires, as the residue left is not good for the soil. The smell from these materials is also unpleasant for other plot holders. Please ensure that any fire is extinguished an hour before leaving the site. This is a requirement of our site insurance.

There is a communal burning area to the left of the main path before the pizza oven area. You can deposit wood and combustible green waste at this area.

BEEHIVES

We have some beehives on the site and are managed by a plotholder and for obvious safety reasons do not go too close to the Hives.

PERSONAL SECURITY WHILST ON SITE

The site is accessible 24 hours a day. However, you could be the only member on site, even in the middle of the day. All sites occasionally have intruders. They might just be taking a short cut or looking for a place to sit. However, others might be intent on vandalism, theft or causing trouble. We advise you to take a mobile phone on site, and if you feel you are in danger phone the police on 999 and if necessary, warn any other plot holders and leave by one of the two side gates out to Honor Oak Park, which is a public area. We suggest you let someone know that you have gone to the site, your expected time of return and leave the site before it gets dark. An allotment advice organisation recommends that you do not approach an intruder. Instead observe any criminal activity carried out by the intruder from a safe distance, record it in some way, and report it to the police. Do not use gardening tools in a threatening manner.

TETANUS

In the allotments you come into contact with soil and animal manure, and you may wish to be vaccinated against tetanus. It is only a suggestion, and we don't wish to alarm anyone. We cannot be responsible for medical advice, but if you feel you may need protection then we suggest you should contact your doctor to discuss this matter.

CHARITY PLOT

We are pleased to have a local charity that has a number of plots together on part of the site. They are AFRIL (Action For Refugees In Lewisham). Please note that they have regular gardening events on their plots and on occasions their clients may be waiting at a gate to be let into the site, please open the gate for them and welcome them in.

AFRIL's at OTHAS – Message from H. Mason, Food Bank Director

Part of AFRIL's aim is to connect our asylum- seeking and refugee members with their local community. Working on the land is a wonderful way to share the love of growing food and to make new acquaintances. AFRIL welcomes plot holders to join our gardening team. Volunteers can join for 1 off-sessions, helping with workshops, maintenance and building projects, or more regularly at our Tuesday gardening group, Friday evening harvesting for the food bank (in season) or weekend gardening Club.

To find out what is going on now, contact Rose Cowling, AFRIL's Allotment Gardener on 07849 312318 or Email rose@afril.org.uk

Feel free to pop across to our plot and say hello.



TRESPASS

Although everyone is welcome to wander around the site, they must stick to the paths and must never go onto other people's plots. The paved area inside the main gate includes a communal open area, but the raised beds at the side of it, are private plots and children/pets must not go on them. Mint or berries etc. growing on the border of a plot belong to that plot, and people should not trespass onto the plot to take them.

TOILET

We have a compost toilet situated by the Green container. Please use a little scoop of sawdust to "flush". The composted "donations" are spread around the base of the trees in the orchard to nourish them, this is done one evening in summer do please look out for the event and join in!

THE SOCIETY

CONTACTS

Membership secretary membership@othas.org
Committee committee@othas.org

RENT

Rent covers the period from 1st October to the 30th September. The committee fixes the rent prior to the AGM. It is payable by the 31st October. You will be advised of the next year's rent in the written notification of the AGM.

ADDRESS CHANGE

If the plot holder changes their address, they must tell the membership secretary as soon as possible.

LICENCE TERMINATION

The committee may terminate the licence if conditions are not met, or if the plot holders' behaviour is judged to be detrimental to the interests of the other members. Before terminating any licence, the committee gives the plot holder a reasonable chance to explain themselves. This usually includes giving them two-week's warning of a committee meeting at which their case will be considered, so that the plot holder can either attend or send a letter. After deciding to terminate a licence, the committee will issue a Notice To Quit. This must be in writing and must allow one month for the plot holder to leave the site. If the plot holder wants to appeal against the NTQ, and can find one other member to support them, they can take this case to a general meeting. Such a general meeting must take place before the NTQ's one month's notice is up. The decision of the general meeting will be final, and there is no appeal against it.

PLOT TRANSFERS

If you wish to move plots, maybe to a smaller or larger one or a raised bed, or just to another area of the site, please contact the Membership Secretary with the details.

Transfers will only be given under the following circumstances:

A: Your existing plot has been deemed "worked" at the last plot inspection.

B : An alternative plot becomes available. We will add you to the transfer list if one is not immediately available.

The decision of the committee is final.

RESIGNATIONS

If you wish to give up your plot, please inform the Membership Secretary in writing and return the gate key for a refund. Note as part of your licence, from the date the plot holder has said that they will give up their plot, or from the date of the activation of the Notice to Quit, any buildings, tools, equipment, or plants left on the site shall become the property of the society. If a plot holder dies or becomes too unwell to continue, the licence is automatically terminated. However in re letting the plot, the committee will give priority to the plot holders' immediate family. Also we have Associate Membership of the society, in that they do not have a plot but can come to the site when they want to, so a plot can be given up but don't lose out on being able to enjoy the site and meet up with plot holders.

EQUALITIES ACT 2010

Gardening is a pursuit that can be done by all. The society supports plot holders in striving to have the site as accessible as possible given the terrain. We welcome all, irrespective of Nationality, Race, Gender, Age, Religion or Disability. We don't tolerate nuisance/discrimination/intimidation/harassment/upset/violence/bullying by plot holders or their friends or family, to the site occupants, whether visitors to, or members of other plots. We will take action and it can result in a Notice To Quit.

DISPURES AND DISCRIMINAION

It is rare but on occasions there may be an issue that needs resolving. If you need to raise an issue, please contact the chair and/or the secretary on

chair@othas.org

secretary@othas.org

We are working on a formal procedure that should be published mid 2023.

AGM

The Annual General Meeting is held on the last Thursday of September. Members will receive written notification at least two weeks before. Normally we do not hold any other meeting during the year.

Members are able to attend Committee meetings (held every other month) or Plot Inspections. Notifications of these will be emailed out and posted on the notice boards.

WEBSITE

Our website address is www.othas.org.uk

FACEBOOK

We have a Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/301436933291184>

or search for "one tree hill allotments"

SOCIALS

We hold a number of social events, including an Open Day which the site is open to the public. Details of these will be shared in advance, and plot holders can suggest ideas for event as well.

We also have a communal area with a pizza oven that can be booked for small plot holder gatherings. Please contact the committee if you would like to book it.

PLOT ENQUIRES

If a member of the public approaches you asking about obtaining a plot, please tell them to check the allotment website if the waiting list is open, there will be details of how to apply if the Society is accepting applications. They will be contacted and advised of their position on the waiting list.

Please do not say there are vacant plots. There may well be some on the site, but they will be being offered to those at the top of the waiting list.

MAIN AREAS OF THE SITE

