

SALE HORTICULTURAL AND ALLOTMENT SOCIETY

GROSVENOR ROAD ALLOTMENTS HANDBOOK



'WELCOME'

Whether you are the enthusiastic tenant of your first allotment plot, a seasoned allotmentee, or a member waiting patiently to be offered a plot, this Handbook has been produced to guide you through your journey as a plot holder. It provides general information about the Grosvenor Road Allotments, the Sale Horticultural and Allotment Society (SHAS) who manage the allotment site, and gives guidance on what is expected from you as a plot holder.

SHAS was founded in 1988 and is committed to promoting amateur horticulture in the local community. Our allotment site, known as 'Grosvenor Road Allotments', is located on the corner of Grosvenor Road and Glebelands Road in Ashton-on-Mersey, Sale, about 5 miles south of Manchester city centre.

SHAS members are inspired by a wish to 'grow your own' and at the same time enjoy the exercise, fresh air and the sense of community that comes with being an allotment holder. We have over 150 members and approximately 100 plots, ranging in size from under 50 square metres to over 300 square metres.

Most of our members are already plot holders, some are patiently waiting for a plot to become available, while others are 'Social Members' who enjoy supporting SHAS by attending our various talks and events, taking advantage of the competitive prices charged for gardening products in our Trading Hut, and volunteering to help within the allotment community.

How the site is run

The Grosvenor Road Allotments site is leased from Trafford Borough Council by the Sale Horticultural and Allotment Society (SHAS), which is responsible for managing the site by renting out the plots, collecting and paying the annual rents to Trafford Borough Council, and managing and maintaining the site on the Council's behalf.

SHAS is run by a Management Committee, on behalf of and for the benefit of, plot holders and all our members. Committee roles include Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary, Membership Secretary, Plot Manager and Trading Hut Manager. Other Committee members take on roles as deemed appropriate for the management of the allotment site.

Committee members are elected annually at the AGM, which is normally held in March or April and any member of SHAS is eligible to stand for election to the Committee.

We encourage all members, but especially plot holders, to get involved in the allotment community and volunteer to help out where needed, for example cutting grass and hedges, clearing rubbish, tidying buildings, joining working groups, supporting activities and events, or even joining the Committee.

The names and contact details of our Committee members are published in each edition of 'Grass Cuttings' and can be viewed on our website.

Our website is www.shas.org.uk.



JOINING SHAS AND GETTING A PLOT

Membership of the Society entitles members to rent a plot, vote at the AGM, receive newsletters and other communications about the allotments, and to purchase items from our Trading Hut.

To apply for a plot you must be a member of SHAS. You can apply to become a member of SHAS by completing and returning a Membership Application Form (available from the Trading Hut or online at www.shas.org.uk/Documents), and indicating on the form that you want to rent a plot. If you are already a member, you can simply contact the Membership Secretary and ask to be added to the Waiting List.

When a plot becomes available, it will be offered to members in order on the Waiting List.

Plots are rented out on an Annual Tenancy, with the rent calculated each year by the size of the plot and the rental rate set by the Council. The current standard rental rate and any applicable discounts can be found on our website.

The Plot Tenancy is issued in the name of one named individual, the Tenant, who is responsible for maintaining the plot in good productive order, and adhering to the rules of the Tenancy Agreement and any other rules and guidance issued by the Management Committee. The Tenant can nominate additional members to be 'Joint Plot Holder', but this does not confer on them any automatic rights to take over the plot should the Tenant relinquish it.

Allotment Tenancy Agreement

All plot holders must abide by the terms of the Tenancy Agreement and any other conditions which the committee considers necessary to preserve the allotments from deterioration. In summary this requires the plot holder to:

- *Use the plot as an allotment garden for the purpose of growing vegetables, fruit and flowers only, and not sell the produce of the plot for personal gain*
- *Keep the plot in a tidy, well-cultivated state*
- *Not cause nuisance or annoyance to neighbouring residents or other tenants, for example by causing excessive smoke or obstructing paths*

A full copy of the Tenancy Agreement is issued to the Plot Holder when they take over the plot.

By accepting a plot and paying the annual plot rental, a plot holder accepts the terms of the current Tenancy Agreement.

This Handbook is to be read and used in conjunction with the Tenancy Agreement.

The current Tenancy Agreement and Handbook can be viewed and downloaded from the 'Documents' section of our website www.shas.org.uk.



LOOKING AFTER YOUR PLOT

On becoming a plot-holder you can start to plan your plot to grow vegetables, fruit and flowers and, if you are intent on gardening organically, enjoy the safety and satisfaction of chemical-free produce.

Site access

Access to the Grosvenor Road allotments is via three locked gates — two on Grosvenor Road and one on Glebelands Road. The Plot Manager will issue new plot holders with one key, which fits all three gates. There is a small charge for the key. For the safety and security of the site and our members, please ensure that you always lock the gates when you enter and leave the site.

Vehicle access

Vehicles should not normally be brought onto the site. If it is necessary for you to bring a vehicle on to the site, for example to deliver or remove heavy or bulky items such as a shed or greenhouse, you should use one of the two end gates, and not drive beyond the hard standing areas just inside these gates. You should avoid driving onto the grass paths.

If you feel you must drive a vehicle onto any of the grass paths to get closer to your plot, you must ensure that the ground conditions are suitable and that the exercise is safe in all respects. Once your task is completed your vehicle should be removed as quickly as possible. Should your vehicle get stuck or cause any damage, you will be liable for all costs incurred in making good any damage caused.

Grass paths

The Management Committee takes responsibility for mowing the main paths. However, it is a requirement of the Tenancy Agreement that you maintain a minimum 0.5 metre strip of any paths around your plot in a neat and tidy condition, and trim back hedges, overhanging branches and plants on your plot.

Soil health

Dry lifeless soil which has only been fed chemical fertilisers will not produce good food and so you should manure your plot regularly to maintain fertility and soil structure. It is recommended that every plot should have two or three compost bins so you can rotate their use. Most plant waste can be composted and added to the plot to enhance the soil. Don't add perennial weeds such as couch grass, mare's tail, dandelion or dock roots to the compost bin, as they will re-grow — put them to rot separately or take them home and put them in your green bin. You can speed up the rotting process by layering your plant waste with a bag or two of manure.

If you inherit a weed-infested plot, please do not cover it in old carpet! This has caused us many problems and, it is thought the dyes in the carpet may leave harmful residues in the soil. Instead, try covering weeds with black polythene and rolling back a bit at a time to clear them.

Manure and wood chippings

Bags of horse manure are delivered regularly by a local stable to the bays located close to the three entrance gates to the site, and is available for all plot holders to use. The manure does contain straw so it is best to give it time to rot down on your plot before using it to improve the soil.

Wood chippings are delivered to the Glebelands Road entrance bays on an ad-hoc basis. They can be useful for mulching or to make pathways on your plot, but please make sure they don't spread onto the surrounding grass paths as they can damage lawnmowers when the grass is cut.



LOOKING AFTER YOUR PLOT

Getting rid of rubbish

You must take responsibility for your own non-compostable rubbish and dispose of it appropriately. Under no circumstances should rubbish be dumped on vacant areas of land, on communal areas or in the bays located in the middle and at each end of the site.

Bonfires

From an environmental point of view bonfires are not encouraged, but if you feel that you must have a bonfire because you cannot compost or otherwise dispose of your garden waste off-site, you must follow these rules:

- *Bonfires are only allowed on site between 1st October and 31st March — by order of Trafford Borough Council*
- *Only burn dry material, to avoid creating excessive amounts of smoke*
- *Do not light bonfires if the wind will blow smoke over the surrounding houses*
- *Keep the duration of the bonfire to a minimum*
- *Bonfires must be attended at all times while lit*
- *Ensure that bonfires are completely dead before being left unattended*

Water

Water is a valuable resource and if possible you should collect as much rainwater as you can for your own plot — for example by installing a water butt to collect rain water from a shed or greenhouse.

Free standing pipes are located around the site along the main pathways. These taps are fed from a metered water supply, and should be used sparingly. As a hosepipe can use in excess of 200 gallons an hour, their use is discouraged, and they must not be left running when unattended. The use of sprinklers is not allowed.

The water to these taps is turned off during the winter months, generally from December to March, dependent on weather conditions, to avoid damage to the supply pipes from freezing.

Sheds and greenhouses

You must seek approval from the Committee if you want to erect a shed or greenhouse on your plot. Please contact the Plot Manager to discuss.

- *New sheds should be no bigger than 6ft x 4ft*
- *Greenhouses should be no bigger than 6ft x 8ft*
- *Any new sheds and greenhouses should have polycarbonate glazing*

If any glass panes break in an existing greenhouse or shed, these should be replaced with polycarbonate glazing. Any structures, including sheds and greenhouses are to be kept clear of plot boundaries to allow the mower to cut the grass paths, and their position should not be detrimental to neighbouring plots. It is your responsibility to keep your plot and any buildings or structures on it in a safe and tidy condition, and to remove any broken glass from the site immediately.

Equipment

The Management Committee is responsible for maintaining the site using our own strimmers and mowers. Unfortunately, theft, damage and repair of society owned strimmers and mowers has been a major financial problem in the past and therefore the use of such equipment is restricted to named users.

Plot inspections

Plot inspections are made by a team from the Management Committee throughout the year, usually in April, June and September, to ensure they are being well cultivated. A record is kept of the state of each plot. There is a six month probationary period for new plot holders. If, during an inspection any plot is found to be left uncultivated or unproductive for an excessive period of time, we will contact the Plot Holder and, if necessary, invoke the Eviction Procedure. A copy of the Eviction Procedure can be found on our website.



GENERAL INFORMATION

The Trading Hut

The Trading Hut has become a focal point for many activities on site over the years. It is normally open during the growing season (February to September), on either Saturday or Sunday mornings from 10.30am to 12 noon. Full details of opening dates and times are posted on the site gates and can be found in the Trading Hut section of our website.

We stock a range of fertilisers, composts, lawn care, and garden sundries at competitive prices. You'll find an up-to-date stock list and prices on our website. We have information about some commonly used fertilisers and how to use them. During February/March we sell onion sets, shallots and seed potatoes, and in September we sell garlic bulbs and over wintering onion sets.

We are totally reliant on the support of volunteers to operate the Trading Hut. Volunteers help man the counter when the hut is open and assist with bagging up our stock items and restocking shelves. If you can spare some of your time to help out, you'd be most welcome. You don't need any specific skills, just an enthusiasm to help out. Please contact the Trading Hut Manager if you are interested in helping.

The Hoe-Down

Our amenity building, the Hoe-Down, located adjacent to the Trading Hut, is available for use by all our members, providing a rest area, a kettle and toilet facilities adapted for disabled members. The Hoe-Down is kept locked for security, but members can access it at any time by purchasing a key from the Trading Hut. The Hoe-Down is kept clean by a team of volunteers, so please help us by ensuring that you always leave it tidy and locked after using it.

Grass Cuttings

Our newsletter 'Grass Cuttings' aims to keep members up to date with what is happening on the allotment site. It is produced four times a year and is distributed by email to save on printing and postage costs. Current and previous copies of Grass Cuttings are available on the website.

Social Events

We aim to hold a number of social activities, talks and demonstrations relevant to gardening throughout the year. Events are organised by the Social Secretary with input and support from other committee members and plot holders. These are advertised in the newsletter and on the website.

Awards

Trafford Borough Council makes an annual inspection of all the plots in the Borough and sends letters of commendation to the Tenants they judge to have the best plots in the Borough. There is also an award for the Best Allotment Site in Trafford. In addition to the Trafford Borough Council awards, we make annual awards to plot holders for categories such as Best Kept Plot and Most Improved Plot.

Volunteers

In addition to needing regular volunteers to help run the Trading Hut, we are also dependent on Members to help out with various other tasks throughout the year, such as joining working parties to clear up areas of the site and helping with events and activities.

National Allotment Society (NAS)

SHAS is an affiliated member of the National Allotment Society – or National Society for Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) to give it its full name.

Through our membership, plot holders gain a number of benefits, such as access to the Kings Seeds discount scheme, offering seeds and other gardening items at a discount of up to 40% off their normal prices. If you are interested, please call in to the Trading Hut, where we usually have a few copies of the NAS magazine and the Kings Seeds Catalogue and Order Forms.

SHAS Allotment Insurance

SHAS has Public Liability insurance for members of the Society named in the policy schedule. The named members are the individual plot holders – the Tenants – who are responsible for paying the annual plot rental. SHAS insurance covers damage to our communal buildings, such as the Trading Hut and Hoe-Down and theft of SHAS owned equipment eg. its lawnmowers. It does not cover damage to plot holders' sheds or greenhouses nor theft of your own equipment. If you want additional cover you should ask your household insurance provider about extending your domestic policy to cover the buildings and/or equipment on your plot. The SHAS insurance policy is available on request.

Privacy Policy

The SHAS Privacy Policy explains how we collect, use, share, and protect your personal information. It also sets out your rights relating to your personal data and how you can exercise those rights. A copy of the Data Protection Policy can be found on our website.