

Bushy Park Allotments – Advice Note 6

CULTIVATION CRITERIA & INSPECTIONS

A key issue with Richmond Council is the assessment of whether allotments are being adequately cultivated by the tenant.

The Council's definition of 'CULTIVATION' is;_

3.1 A minimum of three quarters of any plot shall be in a “cultivation cycle”, with a minimum of 3 crops being grown and be generally in a tidy condition.

“Cultivation cycle” is defined as ground preparation, planting of crops, tending and harvesting fruit and vegetables on a continuous annual basis. (T&C)

The function of allotments is to provide food for the tenant through the tenant's efforts. Use as a chill-out space, children's play area or nature reserve does not fulfil the allotment requirement. Use of a contractor on a regular basis also does not comply with the Council's view of allotment cultivation. **Sub-letting the plot or part of the plot is not permitted.** You are permitted to have friends help you with your allotment for instance to water and harvest when you are on holiday. If friends help on a regular basis they have no rights to the tenancy if you give up the plot.

If you have an extended illness or are otherwise unable to tend your plot you must contact the Allotment Officer and advise him about your situation.

The Council Allotment Officer carries out inspections to assess whether these cultivation requirements are being met. At Bushy Park the Committee supports the Council in this process by checking around the site on a regular basis to identify plots that are not being cultivated. The observations that we are making are: -

- At least $\frac{3}{4}$ of plot should be under cultivation (including perennial crops). Has the plot been dug recently? Perennial weeds should be cleared; a degree of annual weed cover is acceptable. Dig/no-dig options are considered but no-dig does not mean that a weed covered plot or a plot covered with matting is acceptable. Regular cultivation is a requirement; an annual dig-over followed by no activity for the year is not acceptable.
- Have annual crops been sown or planted in the cultivated areas? Is there evidence of planting annual crops, marking sown areas, protection/support, weeding/tending, harvesting and finally clearance?
- Are the areas around perennial crops being kept clear of weed and well maintained? Are the plants pruned/trained/supported, dead growth removed, mulched/fed, harvested?
- Is there an overall balance of use? 100% devoted to crops is acceptable but a mix of crops is required, at least three types, monoculture indicates that the plot is being used commercially which is not permitted. No more than 25% can be used for non-food crops such as flowers.
- What is the overall condition of the plot and is there any livestock? Are the paths, boundaries, shed, greenhouse, etc maintained? Compost bins used? No unsafe practices. Weeds not adversely affecting neighbours. Any animal welfare issues?

We do take into consideration that a new tenant tackling an unkempt plot may require more time to make progress but some progress will be expected.

The inspections are carried out in the spring and autumn when it is reasonable to expect activity on a plot.

The Committee reports their findings to the Allotment Officer and a joint inspection is carried out to determine whether the plot warrants a warning letter. If this letter is issued, the tenant has 4 weeks to cultivate the plot to the Council's standards. A joint follow up inspection then follows to determine whether the level of activity is acceptable. If this is not the case then a further letter is issued with two weeks to cultivate the plot. If the plot fails the third inspection the Council will evict the tenant.

BPAA Committee – updated 23/12/13