



Plot Inspections – What are the Criteria?

Your *Allotment Tenancy Agreement* is renewed annually in January. Woodley Town Council (WTC) and the Association WATA Committee have put together this handy guide to help you understand a bit more about some of the requirements of working your allotment. It should also act as a guide for you to follow WTC's *Allotment Tenancy Agreement* and its criteria for Plot Inspections which are carried out by the WATA Committee on behalf of WTC at various times during the year.

What are the expectations?

Some of the requirements set out by WTC include:

- *An allotment is primarily for the growing of vegetables, fruit and flowers for you and your immediate family's enjoyment.*
- *A steady progress of cultivation of crops over the first year of tenancy and thereafter i.e., growing produce or being readied for further production. Clearly this does not suddenly happen 'one day' before the initial 12 months are up! It takes time to bring an unused plot back into production and it is this steady work that the Plot Inspection Team looks at over the year during the various inspections it performs for WTC. Of course, how much can be done also depends on the season in which you took over the plot, which is also taken into consideration when carrying out plot inspections.*
- *Keeping the allotment, including surrounding paths on or immediately adjoined to their plot, tidy and well maintained. See Para. 4.5.3. of the Tenancy Agreement for full details.*

In addition, the WTC Tenancy Agreement for Allotments Holders states that...

- *Para. 4. 4) The Tenant shall use the plot as an allotment garden as defined by the Allotment Act 1922, wholly or mainly for the production of vegetables, fruit and flower crops for consumption or enjoyment by the Tenant and his family and no other purpose*
- *Paras. 4. 5.1.1., 4.5.1.2., 4.5.1.3.) The Tenant shall have at least 25% of the allotment garden under cultivation within three months of the start of first year of the tenancy, 50% of the allotment garden under cultivation of crops within 6 months of the start of the first year of the tenancy, and 70% of the allotment garden under cultivation of crops after 12 months of the start of the first year of the tenancy and thereafter. Plot inspections will be carried out on a regular basis to measure adherence to these requirements.*

We continue to carry out research and still find that most councils in the UK have very similar requirements and in many cases, still have much stricter criteria than WTC.

Clearly the different seasons will influence how an allotment plot looks throughout the year, Also other extenuating circumstances (a change in Health circumstances, employment etc.) may affect what work is carried out on plots, again this is taken into consideration during plot inspections, providing that the WATA Committee has been informed.

We hope that the following examples will provide a way that Plot holders can see what is expected of their allotment tenancy. The following images we have used are not from the Reading Road Allotment Site but are simply examples to explain various aspects of the criteria.

WOODLEY ALLOTMENT TENANTS ASSOCIATION AT READING ROAD PLOT INSPECTIONS – WHAT ARE THE CRITERIA?

Uncultivated Allotments – What might one look like?

This is where the tenant has abandoned their plot (yes we have had some of these) and would seem to have no intention of cultivating anything. Questions that would be asked during a plot inspection might include:

- Has the plot been cultivated at all?
- Is it free of seeding weeds?
- Grass may not be cut because of harsh weather!
- Are there piles of rubbish/plastic/rubble collecting or anything else potentially dangerous on the plot?



Fig. 1 – UNCULTIVATED PLOT



Fig. 2 – UNCULTIVATED PLOT

These are good examples of uncultivated plots, taken in the late Autumn/Winter; they show little indication of any work being carried out in the previous months or an intention to prepare for the next growing season.

Spring Season on a Cultivated Allotment Plot



Fig. 3 – SPRING 50%



Fig. 4 – SPRING 50%

Questions that would be asked during a Spring plot inspection might include:

- Has cultivation started yet? Are there signs of progress, bearing in mind weather at the time of inspection?
- If so, what percentage has been cultivated?
- Are grass paths being cut/trimmed?
- Are plot numbers clearly visible?



Summer Season on a Cultivated Allotment Plot



Fig. 5 – SUMMER 50%



Fig. 6 – SUMMER 50%

Questions that would be asked during a Summer plot inspection might include:

- Is the plot still being cultivated? Are there signs of progress? If so, what percentage has been cultivated?
- Are any new fruit trees being grown on dwarf root stock? The WATA Committee would advise plot holders against letting seedling trees such as Oak or Sycamore take hold on their plots.
- Are grass paths being cut?
- Is there anything potentially dangerous on the plot?

Autumn Season on a Cultivated Allotment Plot



Fig. 7 – AUTUMN 50%



Fig. 8 – AUTUMN 50%

Questions that would be asked during an Autumn plot inspection might include:

- Has the plot been cultivated at all? Are there signs of progress? If so, what percentage has been cultivated?
- Is it free of seeding weeds?
- Are grass paths being cut/strimmed?
- Is there anything potentially dangerous on the plot?



Winter Season on a Cultivated Allotment Plot



Fig. 9 – WINTER 50%



Fig. 10 – WINTER 50%

Questions that would be asked during a Winter plot inspection might include:

- Has the plot been cultivated at all? Are there signs of progress? If so, what percentage has been cultivated?
- Has the ground been dug over?
- Is the ground covered for the winter?
- Grass may not be cut because of harsh weather!
- Is there anything potentially dangerous on the plot?

Winter Season on a Cultivated Allotment Plot – but completely covered for winter



Fig. 11 – WINTER COVERED



Fig. 12 – WINTER COVERED

Other General Allotment Plot Information

- *The 70% of each plot available for open cultivation should be fully cultivated within a complete growing season and produce at least one crop meaning that:*
 - *The plot has been readied for growing*
 - *The plot is well stocked with growing produce relevant to the time of year*
 - *The plot is being prepared for following crops or the following season*



- Greenhouses, poly tunnels, raised beds and compost heaps count as cultivated areas, sheds will come under the 25% allowance that is not cultivated.
- Paths allowing plot access and between beds are counted as cultivated land. These paths may be grass, bark chippings, paving, stones or bricks. They should not be more than three feet wide. Paths on and between plots are to be maintained by the tenants and kept free of any obstruction.
- It is the tenants' responsibility to keep the plot free of weeds that cause a nuisance to adjoining tenants.
- Weed seed heads should be removed before the seed has set.
- Pernicious and invasive weeds e.g. couch grass, mares' tail, brambles and bindweed are to be kept under control.
- Long grass or other detritus that may harbour pests, e.g. Mice, rats, slugs and snails, should be removed.
- An uncultivated area left to go wild is not a managed wildlife area.
- Areas left to go fallow as part of crop rotation must be strimmed or covered with [Garden Weed Control Fabric](#) to avoid seed spreading.

We hope this easy to follow guide will be helpful to all Allotment Plot holders in understanding what is required with regards to their Tenancy Agreement so that they are well prepared for Plot Inspections.

Lastly, I would like to reiterate that if you are having any problems whatsoever keeping up with your plot, don't hesitate to contact the WATA Committee on their own plots or on my email below and we will see how we can help you.

We have already helped a few tenants move to smaller plots when they found that they could no longer utilise their entire exiting plot. Don't forget, we're here to help.

Many thanks

Mike McNamara

Chair – WATA Committee

chair@woodley-allotments.org.uk