



Plot Inspections – What are the Criteria?

The WATA Committee carry out plot Inspections on behalf of Woodley Town Council (WTC) at various times during the year. The 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 also serves as a guide to help you comply with the WTC *Allotment Tenancy Agreement* and its recently released new *Woodley Town Council – Reading Road Allotments Plot Inspection Policy*, which WATA plot inspection teams are now required to follow during plot inspections. A full copy of this new policy can be downloaded from the [WTC allotment page](#) (click previous text for a copy).

What are the expectations?

Some of the general 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 also 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.*

In addition, the WTC 2026 *Tenancy Agreement for all Plot Holders* states that...

- *Para. 4.4) The Tenant shall use the plot as defined by the Allotments Act 1922, wholly or mainly for the cultivation and production of vegetables, fruit and flower crops for consumption or enjoyment by the Tenant and their family, or charitable donation, 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 under cultivation within three months of first year of the tenancy, 50% of the allotment under cultivation of crops within six months of the start of the first year of the tenancy, and 70% of the allotment under cultivation of crops after 12 months of the first year of the tenancy and thereafter.*
- *Para. 4.5.3) All allotments are to be surrounded by 2 foot wide grass path marking the limits of the cultivation area. Tenants must not extend the boundary of their plot without prior agreement of the Council. The Tenant shall keep the allotment, including surrounding paths on or immediately adjoined to their plot, well maintained, free from weeds, noxious plants and any hazards, such as broken glass and scrap.*

Please refer to the [2026 Tenancy Agreement](#) (click previous text) for more details on plot holder's full responsibilities.

The WATA Committee continue to carry out research and still find that most councils in the UK have very similar requirements and in many cases, 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 by the plot holder.



We hope that the following examples will help Plot holders understand what is expected as part of their allotment tenancy. The following images are not from the Reading Road Allotment site; they are provided solely as examples to explain various aspects of the criteria.

Uncultivated Allotments – What might one look like?

This is where the tenant has abandoned their plot (yes we still 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:

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

- 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/strimmed?
- 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:

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

- 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 via the email address below and we will see how we can help you.

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

Many thanks

Mike McNamara

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