



Allotments: a brief introduction for communities

Background

- Applications for council-run allotments in England soared during the coronavirus pandemic.
- This trend has continued, and there has been a steady increase, which was said to be down to the cost-of-living crisis, the increased interest in “growing your own” and better awareness of sustainable growing and eating.
- An increase in interest in allotments was also reported by many Cotswold Town and Parish Councils.
- There are over 70 allotments in Cotswold District, but many will have waiting lists.

What is an allotment?

- An allotment is an area of land, leased either from a private or local authority landlord, for the use of growing fruit and vegetables.
- In some cases, allotments can be used for the growing of ornamental plants, and the keeping of hens, rabbits, and bees. You will need to check the rules at your allotment.
- The size of an allotment dates to Anglo-Saxon times, with 10 poles is the accepted size, which is about 250 square metres or the size of a double’s tennis court.
- National guidance states there should be 15 allotment plots per 1,000 households.

Applying to rent an allotment?

- Most allotments are owned by a local council (so in Cotswold, a town or parish council). A smaller number are owned privately, including by charitable organisations.
- Contact details should be readily available at the parish or town council’s offices, the allotment or online.
- When taking on an allotment, you would be required to sign a tenancy agreement, whereby you would need to agree to allotment regulations and the cost of renting your plot.
- Working a large allotment, can appear daunting, not least the plot can be large, but you can normally take on one with friends or family to make it manageable.

Sharing your produce and gleaning

- It is common for allotment plot holders to share knowledge, seeds, and the harvest they produce.
- It is also possible to set up or use existing arrangements, whereby surplus food can be passed (sometimes known as gleaning) to charity and community projects that provide food, alleviating food poverty, strengthening communities and minimising food miles.

Further reading

- There is lots of guidance available online, most of it free, with copious information, including how to get started. Some examples are:
 - The National Allotment Society: [The National Allotment Society – National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Ltd \(nsalg.org.uk\)](http://nsalg.org.uk)
 - RHS - Getting started on an allotment: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/vegetables/allotments-getting-started>
 - Horticulture Magazine - How to start an allotment: <https://horticulture.co.uk/starting-an-allotment/>