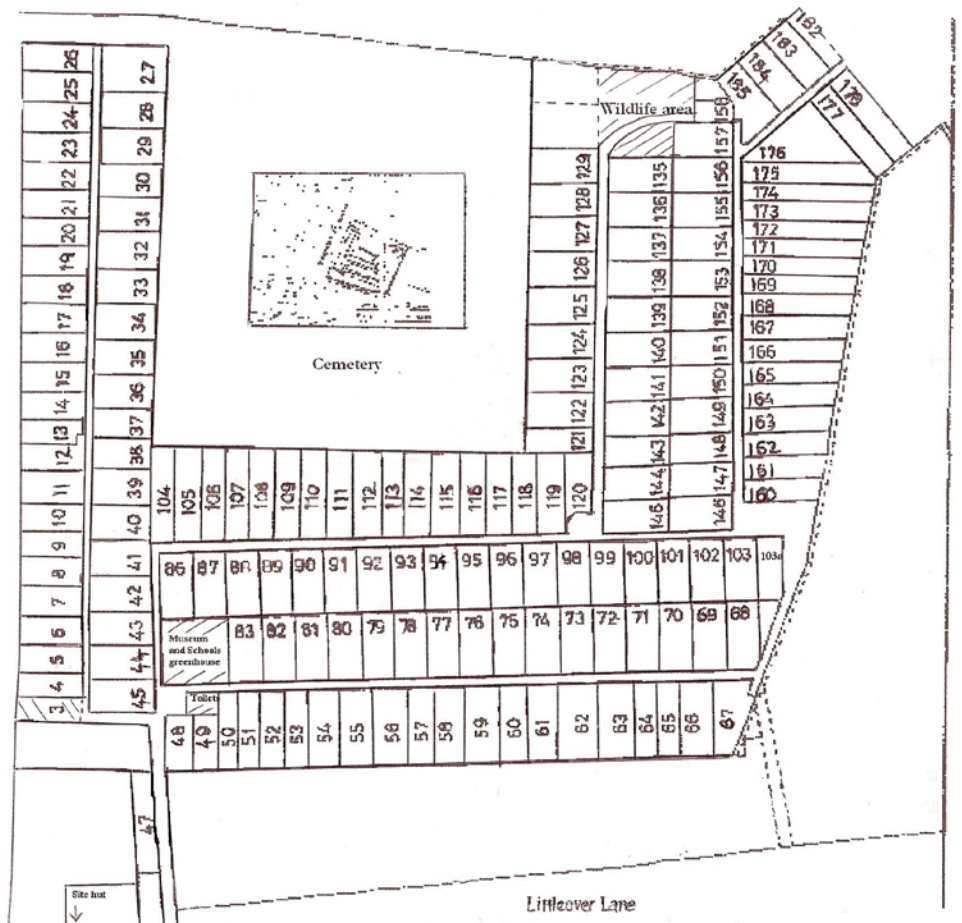


Plot holders guide

Littleover Lane Allotments Association Ltd.



Site Map



Welcome to Littleover Lane Allotments!

This booklet has been designed to bring together information and resources to help you get the most out of your plot. Allotments provide many potential benefits for plotheolders and their families, which can impact on their local environment and community too. An allotment plot gives you an opportunity to enjoy green spaces away from the pressures of modern living, provides regular physical exercise, occupies your mind and the produce you grow can significantly contribute towards a balanced, healthy diet. The most important thing is to enjoy your allotment!

Littleover Lane Allotments Association: background

In 1920, a group of like minded local householders purchased the 11 acres of land near their homes and formed the Littleover Lane Allotments Association Limited (LLAA) in order to protect the land from development. The site was divided into 170 plots, and local residents were invited to become members of the association. New members were required to purchase shares at the rate of 21 shares per standard plot, each share costing 10 shillings (50p at today's prices), a total of £10.50. In 1920 this was a considerable investment, the average wage for a tradesman being between 10 shillings and £2 per week.

Today, this land is still owned by LLAA, plot holders are tenants of the association and pay an annual rent for their plots. Plot rents are currently £20 per standard plot (December 2008), rising to £24 from October 2009 which is still well below average for the city. Rents are due at the end of October annually in advance. LLAA is registered with the Financial Services Authority as a non profit organisation, and is also a member of the National Society of Allotments and Leisure Gardeners. There are currently 171 plots, although the plot numbers run to the mid 180's as some plots have been used for other purposes over the years.

A few plots are being currently redeveloped to make improved use of space and free up more plots for potential members.

Management of the site

As we are private (not a Council run) allotment site, LLAA is self-governing and relies on its members to elect its Chairman and Committee members. Committee members are elected at our Annual General Meetings (AGM) to serve for two years. We have an AGM every year, usually in late November/early December, which all members are encouraged to attend. Committee members meet monthly to discuss any LLAA business, and can be contacted either individually on their plots, or via letter to the Secretary which can be posted at the site hut. Written questions/requests should be directed to the Secretary and will be minuted and discussed at the next Committee meeting.

Current members (December 2008) are:

Chairman: Mr Richard Goodall (plot 108)

Vice Chairman & Security: Mr Howard Clarke (plot 177/178)

Treasurer and Events: Mr David Kenyon (plot 48/49, 118/119)

Secretary: Mrs Eileen Holmes (plot 30/31)

Grounds maintenance/water provision: Mr John Sutton (plot 105)

Plot assessments and Wildlife area: Mrs Debbie Patrick (plot 98, 97b)

Committee member: Mr Peter Cook (plots 4&5)

Membership and tenancy

After a successful probationary period (see below) you will then be eligible to become a full member of LLAA. This means you will be issued a share certificate in accordance with the LLAA rules. It is important to remember that the shares in themselves have no monetary

value, but it qualifies you to be able vote at the AGM. If a plot is rented by more than one person, only the first named plotholder is eligible to vote.

Allotment rules and bylaws

When you become a member you will receive a copy of the Allotment Rules and bylaws; please read these carefully, and abide by them at all times.

Taking over a plot

Plots are managed by the LLAA Secretary, who is responsible for keeping the waiting list updated and is kept informed of plots as they become free. Plots may be in various states of cultivation when they are offered to new members. They may be totally dug over and ready to cultivate, or have structures such as sheds and greenhouses already on them. You may also inherit mature fruit trees or bushes. It is traditional for the new plotholder to pay the outgoing tenant a sum of money for such 'fixtures and fittings' that they leave behind, or if the plot has been well manured and dug over ready for you. The Secretary will be usually be able to tell you what the outgoing plot holder is asking for these before you view the plot. The sum requested should then be negotiated between the incoming and outgoing tenants themselves. Please note the Management Committee does not get directly involved in these discussions, it is for you to decide if you wish to pay the sum requested.

Probationary period

When you first agree to take on a plot, it is for a probationary period of six months. This also applies if this is not the only plot you have on the site. This is to make sure you are able to commit the time and effort it takes to maintaining a plot (or a further plot); some people underestimate this and it is the most common reason for giving a plot up. If you take on a plot that has become overgrown, this probationary period may be extended at the Committees discretion to take account of this. You will be asked to provide a deposit at the start

of your probationary period; this will include payment for a key, a set of Rules and Bye-laws, and plot rent. Your plot will be inspected at the end of your probationary period, and if cultivated you will then be issued a share certificate for that plot and become a full member. Please note; we do not expect your plot to be pristine at this point! We would expect to see evidence that you have prepared it and are at least ready to cultivate it, making allowances for the state it was in when you took it over and the time of year. If the plot shows no evidence of care or cultivation, the Committee may decline to make you a full member, your deposit will be forfeit and the plot will be offered to the next person on the waiting list.

Maintenance of plots

All plots are formally inspected by the Committee member responsible for Plot Assessments and the Health & Safety member twice a year. The rules state that plots must be kept in a state of 'reasonable cultivation'. On this site, this is defined as at least 2/3rds of the plot under active cultivation. This is 2/3rds of the available earth space, so excludes permanent structures such as sheds, greenhouses and hard standing. Orchard areas are counted as part of the actively cultivated area if they are fruit trees underplanted by grass which is kept in the manner of an ordinary lawn. Permanent lawn areas are not encouraged, but if pre-existing should not exceed 1/3 of the plot and be kept regularly mown. Strimming of weedy unplanted areas does not count as active cultivation, and should be either dug over and cultivated or kept covered prior to cultivation to avoid weeds spreading to neighbouring plots.

Plots not achieving the required standard; members will be sent a letter informing them of this and given six months in order to remedy the matter. The plot will be reviewed again at the specified time period; if the plot still fails to reach the agreed standard the plotholder will be given notice to quit.

Keeping on top of things

We understand that there will times in everyone's life when maintaining a plot will not be the highest priority. If you find that you are unable to adequately keep on top of your plot for whatever reason, please do not let it gradually pass from being cultivated to uncultivated, and then on to being partly or completely overgrown. Instead please inform any the Committee members of your situation as soon as practicable. Similarly, if you decide that you have to give up your plot, please inform the Secretary as soon as possible. There are many people on the waiting list for our site; please consider others by freeing up a plot that you are no longer cultivating.

Security

Security of the site is in all plottolders interests and is taken very seriously. Access to the site is for plottolders and their immediate family only for the purpose of working on your own plot. The two entrance gates must be kept locked after access, if the gate needs to be open for a delivery of manure etc. members are expected to wait by the gate and supervise the delivery, locking the gates afterwards. The toilet block and door next to the main gates are kept locked, you will be given an access key that fits both (£5 from your deposit refunded upon return) when you take on a plot.

Practically all allotment sites in the land suffer from periodic vandalism or theft, and unfortunately LLAA is no exception. It is therefore sensible not to put temptation in anyone's way, and all members should take reasonable steps to protect their property whilst on site. Keeping sheds in good repair and with adequate locks, removing one wheel from rotovators, keeping tools and other valuable equipment security marked (our Security Committee member can do this for you with SmartWater) and hidden from sight are all sensible precautions. If you are unfortunate to suffer from either theft or vandalism it is important to report it to both the police *and* the Security Committee member. LLAA liaises with local Police as part of the Allotment Watch Scheme, and the Security Committee member can be contacted for consultation on any security issues you may have.

Facilities

The site has a toilet block with disabled access, supplied with water all year round, accessed with your site key. Please re-lock after use. The toilets are cleaned and maintained by Committee members, so please report any relevant problems to them.

There are a few items that members can hire for use on their plots, currently a petrol run strimmer and a lawn mower. Donations to use these items is appreciated, see Committee members for details.

LLAA also pays to be affiliated to Normanton Allotments, which entitles our members to use the allotment shop on Hathersage Street. The shop offers seeds, fertilisers, plants and sundries at favourable prices.

Parking

There are two car parking areas on the site, by the main top gate by the site hut, and at the bottom gate by the shelter. Please be considerate to others and do not park outside of these designated areas. Parking next to your plot for loading/unloading for a short period of time is acceptable, but then please use the car parks once completed.

Water supply

Water is available via taps throughout the site from Easter until the end of British Summertime; the taps are then covered with tubes to avoid freezing damage. Water to the toilet block remains on throughout the year. Please bear in mind that the water rates have to be paid from the plot rents, so indiscriminate water use may impact on all members financially. Hoses may be used to fill water butts only;

sprinklers or seep hoses attached to the mains water supply are not permitted. All permanent structures should have rainwater collection facilities wherever possible and collected rainwater used instead of mains water.

Compost, manures and mulch

Allotment rules state that you are responsible for keeping the soil in your plot 'in good heart' by ensuring regular additions of compost or manure. Setting up some compost bins should be a priority when first taking over a plot; you may be lucky and inherit some partly full ones! Compost green material and your kitchen waste; It's better for the environment than burning it and the compost is a valuable resource to return to your soil. Never put any cooked or meat waste in your compost; it may attract vermin.

Well rotted manure and mushroom compost make superb soil conditioners; local farmers and mushroom farms offer delivery at various rates depending on the amount purchased, see notice boards for details. We have recently been able to take deliveries of free shreadings from the local council; when available, this is left in a pile opposite the greenhouses near the top gate for ploholders to help themselves. It is very useful for weed suppression on paths etc.

Bonfires

Bonfires should be kept to a minimum, and awareness of the potential for smoke nuisance for both other plot holders and neighbouring houses should be considered at all times. All bonfires should be kept well away from any fences or buildings/sheds and must not be left unattended; it is the ploholders responsibility to extinguish any fire before leaving the site. Some plot holders save their end of season dead and diseased prunings etc for an annual bonfire on 5th November; you can use the resulting ash as a source of potash for your plot!

Wildlife

The site supports a large variety of wildlife, including many beneficial insects and bees (a few plot holders have hives on site), and ploholders are encouraged to consider planting a small area of nectar rich plants, flowers or fruit trees on their plots to support this. There is a small local fox population, which members are requested not to feed, and some very large pigeons: be warned, unless you net your brassica plants they will enjoy them before you! There is also the usual slug and snail population to contend with: a report from DEFRA implicates Metaldehyde and Methiocarb (common poisons in slug pellets) in the poisoning of a wide range of both domestic and wild animals; please consider using other less harmful methods of control, such as nematodes, beer traps etc. Ferramol based slug pellets which do not harm any wildlife except molluscs are also widely available and just as effective. The site is developing a wildlife area with a pond for all members to enjoy, whose upkeep is supported by a small band of ploholders: if you wish to be involved in its development please let the Committee member responsible know.

Communications

There are two notice boards on site, one by the main gate on the site hut, and one on the side of the shelter in the bottom car park. AGM information and other Committee communications is usually emailed or posted to members; if you can to have your communications emailed to you to save postage money please let the Secretary know your email address.

We currently produce two LLAA Newsletters, Spring & Summer emailed or posted to all members with important dates for events and articles of interest; contributions welcome!

The shelter at the bottom car park is also used as an impromptu recycling point; any surplus produce or useful materials are left there for others to use; not for general rubbish though please.

Open Days and site visits

As one of very few allotment sites listed in the National Gardens Scheme's famous 'Yellow Book' (which lists private gardens that open to benefit the charity) we host two 'Open Days'. These are held on the first Sunday in June and September annually. Plant, produce and refreshments sales are a major source of income for LLAA at these events. Volunteer helpers are always needed on these occasions, and donations of extra plants always welcome! We encourage members to 'open' their plots for the public to walk on to, and we have recruited many new members from these occasions. Open days and attendance at other related events raise the profile of LLAA, and many members of the public who saw our stalls at the Locko Park Gardening Event in May, and the biannual 'Ecofest', later attended one or both of the Open Days.

We also have groups, such as other allotment societies, school and scout groups coming to visit under the NGS scheme. These are usually evening visits in the summer, and volunteers to show small groups around the site are always welcome.

Competitions and shows

We usually enter the 'Derby in Bloom' annual competition as a whole site, and encourage individuals to enter their plots or produce as well. Judging for this is usually done in early July, so we post reminders around that time for a general spruce up! We won this event in 2006, and hope to reclaim our past glories again soon. We have also had successes at national level in recent years with competitions run by Kitchen Garden magazine, and Gardening News. We post entry details on the notice boards when they are published for those interested in entering.

There are also several local produce shows held in early September, details and entry forms are usually posted onto the notice boards.

We also hope to hold our own annual LLAA show in 2009, dates and details to be confirmed.

Resources

The Allotments Regeneration Initiative

http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=142&Itemid=125

National Society of Allotments and Leisure Gardeners

<http://www.nsalg.org.uk/>

Allotments and children

<http://www2.eng.cam.ac.uk/~tpl/allotmentkids.html>

<http://www.allotment.org.uk/>

<http://www.allotments-uk.com/>

Allotment forums

Allotments 4 all forum <http://www.allotments4all.co.uk/smf/index.php>

Kitchen Garden forum <http://www.kitchengarden.co.uk/forum/>

Allotments UK forum

<http://www.allotments-uk.com/forum/>

Grow your Own forum

<http://www.growfruitandveg.co.uk/grapevine/>