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# Are you prepared for allotment gardening?

Taking on an allotment is hard work but it's also very rewarding. As well as providing fresh home-grown vegetables (that are free from artificial additives), fruit and flowers, allotments allow you to meet new people and enjoy a healthy outdoor lifestyle. A lot of time, effort and dedication will be required before you can sit on your plot and admire all your hard work.

# What can I expect?

## Give it time

You will need to work on your allotment all year round but it's in the summer months that you'll have to work the hardest. You do need to think about whether you have a regular amount of time that you can commit each week to work a plot. We recommend that you visit at least twice a week to stay on top of weeding and other tasks. This may be more considerably more during the growing season, to water and harvest crops. If you work full time or have other commitments, be realistic about the amount of time you have available.

## Physical work

Allotment gardening is a physical activity, so you'll be expected to do lots of digging, weeding, planting, composting, watering, feeding, cutting and pruning.

## The battle with weeds

You will need to keep on top of weeds and stop them from turning into seed that blows onto other nearby plots. Remember to weed regularly in hot dry weather.

## Grass and hedges

As well as cultivating your plot, you will need to cut the grass around your plot and keep hedges facing your plot trimmed if applicable.

You will also need to keep stones, debris and other items away from the edges of your plot to reduce hazards and to allow maintenance by Town Council staff or contractors.

## Costs

How much you spend is up to you, but you can keep your costs down by recycling, shopping around, borrowing and buying second-hand.

# What are the benefits of allotment gardening?

## Health

As well as keeping you fit and healthy, regular visits to your allotment can help keep your stress levels down and lower your blood pressure.

## Fulfilment and achievement

Once you begin to get produce from your plot, you will feel delighted that it was all worth your hard work.

## Fresh produce

There is something rather nice and delicious about eating and enjoying produce that you have grown.

## Money saving

Allotments provide great value for money. You may make savings on your shopping bill because you have grown your own produce.

## Education

Getting children involved is a wonderful and fun way for them to learn.

## Wildlife

Insects, mammals and birds all benefit from allotments.

# Where can I get help if I'm struggling?

Don't worry, you are not alone. Whether you're new or an experienced allotment gardener, you won’t know everything. There is often a friendly face around to help you.

## Planning

Think about what you would like to grow and where. Start small with things that are easy to grow or require little care. Leave the more adventurous things for when you have more experience. Remember to leave spaces for access; watering, weeding and picking.

## Don’t give up

Your hard work will not be rewarded for some time, but it will. The more hard work you put in and the more you learn from your mistakes, the more successful you will be.

## Still struggling?

If you're finding allotment gardening tough going, please contact us as soon as possible.