



South Swindon Parish Council

Guidelines for Weed Control

Background Information

It is your responsibility to keep your plot free from weeds, thereby not causing a nuisance to adjoining tenants. This includes not allowing weeds to set seed. In such circumstances the plot should be covered with a suitable weed control membrane whilst the plot is gradually being cultivated or prepared for winter.

Removal of Weeds

Weeds are classified as annuals, weeds that can be pulled up or cut down with a garden hoe as soon as they appear, or perennial, these are more of a problem because they are able to survive in the ground from one season to another and require a more long-term approach to get on top of them. Weeds such as ground elder, bind weed, nettles and couch grass will require a more structured approach to removing their root system. Perennial weeds should not be composted but incinerated.

The following weeds should be reported immediately to South Swindon Parish Council:

Giant Hogweed – is a very large perennial herbaceous plant which grows in moist conditions. A mature plant can grow to 4m (12ft) or more and produces large flat flower heads – resembling very large cow parsley – up to 0.5m (18in) across. It has deeply dissected leaves and red/purple hairy stems.

Plot holders should approach Giant Hogweed with caution. Small plants can be dug out with care –wear glasses and long gloves – but it is best left, so it can be sprayed with a suitable herbicide to make sure the roots are killed.

Japanese Knotweed – is an invasive species that spreads rapidly from roots growing just below the soil surface. It forms clumps of tall reddish-brown stems of up to 3m (10ft) with attractive pale green oval leaves and sprays of very small white flowers in late summer.

It is an offence to plant either Giant Knotweed or Japanese Knotweed and to move any material off site – it can be safely dug up and all parts of the plant should be left to dry before being burned. Generally, it is better left to be sprayed, as this kills off the roots.

The Use of Mulches to Suppress Weeds

Weeds need light to grow, so to kill off the weeds you need to exclude them from light, using a mulch is the easiest way to prevent the weeds from growing. Mulches are used in two basic ways:

Temporary manmade covering, plastic sheeting that is laid on the soil and removed in sections as and when the weeds are cleared, this method is best for killing off perennial weeds.

Permanent mulch is a layer of organic covering that can be left down and will eventually rot into the soil, which also helps improve the quality of the soil. Such mulches include soaked cardboard, thick layers of soaked newspapers both of which should be covered with manure.

Carpet and tarpaulin mulches are not permitted on any of the South Swindon Parish Councils allotment sites. Carpets become heavy when wet as they do not allow rainwater to penetrate through. Couch grass and nettles are extremely resistant and find their way through carpet and tarpaulin and the fibres remain in soil for many years. There are practical concerns about the disposal of carpets from allotment plots once they have outlived their purpose. They do not rot down well and are extremely heavy and difficult to remove once they have become soaked and covered in mud and weeds.

Remember do not bring any mulches onto the allotment site that you will not be able to dispose of appropriately later.

Herbicides with Glyphosate (Roundup, SBK Brushwood Killer & Tumbleweed)

Glyphosate used on perennial weeds will eradicate them over a period of a few months, however they may not be effective at killing weeds but may help in controlling them. Weeds should be sprayed when in full growth, just before the flowering season when they are their most vulnerable. Bindweed can be teased out and individually painted with a glyphosate gel that can be bought from garden centres.

Please take every precaution to protect yourself and others when using chemicals and be mindful of neighbouring plots that are being cultivated, water troughs and other water supplies on neighbouring plots and our valuable wildlife.

DO NOT WASH CHEMICAL CONTAINERS OUT IN THE WATER TROUGHS, POLLUTING THE WATER SUPPLY WILL LEAD TO TERMINATION OF YOUR TENANCY.

Rotovating

Using a rotovator is a good way to quickly dig over your allotment and you may have taken advantage of our rotovating service when you took over your tenancy with South Swindon Parish Council, but please remember that the blades also cut up any weed roots as well as the soil, therefore we recommend that you dig out any roots so they do not have the opportunity to get established.

Pathway and Boundaries

The maintenance of allotment paths in a safe and good state is the responsibility of the allotment tenants. Each tenant is responsible for the paths surrounding his or her plot, the grass should be kept to an acceptable height and boundaries to be kept clear.

Carpeting, plastic and linoleum must not be used to create pathways between plots as they become slippery.

Wood chippings is attractive and to prolong the use of the woodchip, we recommend that you use a permeable membrane underneath. Wood chipping rot down and will need to be removed and replaced every 3 – 5 years.

Acknowledgement

Tenants will indemnify the Parish Council against all costs, claims and liabilities, which may arise in connection with his or her tenancy.