

Elm Village Green Spaces and Greenhouse - Rules of Use

Version 1.5 – 20 April 2010.

Prepared from numerous sources including written and oral comments from Elm Village residents by Peter McGinty, Secretary, Elm Village Community Garden Society. These rules are what seem to be the preferred options selected from the several previous versions of the “v1.x Proposals for Managing the Elm Village Green Spaces and Greenhouse” documents.

The rules in this document are 'near final' and are proposed for adoption, for the first year.

GOAL: to decide on how we will manage gardening within the green spaces for the enjoyment and satisfaction of all residents.

Preamble

The residents body that oversees the adoption of these rules is referred to as the ‘**garden club**’ and it's proposed that, for 2010 at least, this is the existing Elm Village Community Garden Society.

In what follows the words '**user**' and '**plot-holder**' should be understood within their context to mean any of the many possible models of involvement or space allocation – individual, group, shared, collective, community or whatever.

And a couple of acronyms:

EVTRA - Elm Village Tenants And Residents Association
PfP - Places for People

1 General Rules for Green Spaces Use

The following rules will apply to all Elm Village Green Space users:

1.1 Security

1. Maintaining security is a mandatory requirement.
All users must act responsibly and maintain a high level of security.
2. The gates must be kept locked at all times and opened only for legitimate access.
Do not leave an untended gate open.
3. Access for gardening is restricted to between 9am to dusk (or 8pm if earlier).
But also see additional restrictions for the large triangle & greenhouse site.
4. Each of the three green areas will have garden club member who will act as a sort of active 'neighbourhood watch-person' for that space and make sure that gates are locked and a high level of security is maintained. (see also 'Responsible Persons and Dispute Resolution' section)
5. All residents are entitled to a key but must apply for one in writing. They must also pay a charge for each key and provide a deposit (see 'Costs' section).

1.2 Eligibility

6. Every resident of Elm Village is eligible to apply to become a plot-holder.
7. Every plot-holder must be a resident of Elm Village.
8. Camden Garden Centre (CGC) is a social enterprise within our neighbourhood with a long track record of helping the local community (including the residents of Elm Village) with employment, education and training. In view of this an outdoor plot and some space in the greenhouse will be allocated to CGC for the purposes of the education and training of its staff and trainees and the residents of Elm Village. This provision is solely at the discretion of the garden club and may be withdrawn at any time it sees fit.
9. Every plot-holder is automatically a member of the garden club.
10. When a plot is relinquished, control of the plot reverts to the garden club.
Plots do not transfer with the plot-holders' address.

1.3 Fees & Payment for Gardening, Water and Keys

11. Annual fees and subscriptions are set by the garden club with oversight from EVTRA and PFP to ensure fairness. The objective is to break-even. There will be costs for:
 - a) Annual garden club memberships
 - b) Annual Water Consumption
 - c) Gardening sundries, especially for the greenhouse
 - d) Keys

It is not necessary for every household to have keys to the security gates. There will be published times when access for gardening is available.

12. All fees must be paid in advance.

1.4 Good Housekeeping

13. Gardeners must tidy-up after every visit as well as the end of every season and when the plot is relinquished.
14. Tools must be tidied away after use and not left out overnight. They should either be locked in a secure tool-chest or, if personal property, taken home.
15. No blocking of paths or shared spaces or other plots.
16. No squatting on unused plots.
17. No sub-letting (but you can share your plot with friends & helpers).
18. No animals (chickens, rabbits, pigs, goats, etc.)
19. Anyone under 16 must be vouched for by an adult who takes responsibility for their actions.

20. No radios or loud noises.
21. No fires.
22. No smoking in the greenhouse and if you do smoke you should wash your hands before entering the greenhouse.
This is an absolute prohibition to prevent contamination by tobacco mosaic virus.
23. A list of pesticides, chemicals, fertilisers, manures, soil additives, folk remedies, etc., will be created and maintained by the garden club and only materials on that list should be used within the green spaces, especially so in the greenhouse. The reason for this being that as the spaces we share are small, what's applied to a single plot probably spreads to all plots (a little like smoking and second-hand-smoke).

1.5 Responsible Persons and Dispute Resolution

24. Each of the three areas (the large triangle, the south canal site and the north canal site) will have a named person to act as 'guardian' who will help make sure a high level of security is maintained.

The intention is not to burden the guardian with excessive responsibility or authority, just that each site has an active user who is prepared to 'keep on eye' on it, in a neighbourhood watch sense, and help it remain a happy and safe area. The guardian is a first point of contact for security issues but is not responsible for dispute resolution.

25. Every growing plot has a named person responsible for it.
Except when the gardeners of a plot are all junior members, this will be one of the persons who gardens that plot. That individual is responsible for ensuring that garden club rules are abided by on that plot and for maintaining amicable relations with others.
26. Plot-holder disputes are resolved by the garden club. Any failure to agree is forwarded to EVTRA and then, if still not resolved, to PfP.

1.6 Miscellaneous

27. Space in cold-frames is under the control of Mike Jackson of Camden Garden Centre, not allocated to individuals.
28. The compost in the communal compost bins is under the control of Mike Jackson of Camden Garden Centre and will be distributed as he sees fit.
29. Gardeners and other users of the green spaces are at all times expected to be considerate to others.

2 Site Specific Rules for each of the Three Green Areas

2.1 Large Triangle (including the greenhouse)

The large triangle area is bounded by Bergholt Mews, Barker Drive and Blakeney Close. It contains the greenhouse and some planting beds dedicated to permanent planting. The remainder of the area is paved.

The greenhouse is 4m x 7m with removable benches installed on both sides. Underneath the removable benches are 600mm wide soil trenches and the central area is paved.

It's proposed that Mike Jackson (of Camden Garden Centre) should have a special role for the large triangle space whereby Mike and his trainees have the authority to:

1. Open, close and water the entire greenhouse area and all plantings within it as they see fit. (This doesn't mean they are responsible for watering other people's plantings, just that they can do so if they decide it's appropriate)
2. Have complete control of half of the space within the greenhouse. The other half being for use by individual residents.
3. Take unilateral action on any matter they feel affects the overall health of the greenhouse – especially pest control and neglected plantings.

Furthermore, as there will probably be quite a number of residents wishing to use the greenhouse and that it's imperative we preserve the security of the large triangle site for the neighbouring residents:

4. The gardening club will define the days and times when residents should use the greenhouse (we want to avoid ad-hoc access by gardeners so as to keep the disturbance to surrounding neighbours to an acceptable level).
5. Key-holders should be limited to residents whose gardens back directly onto the triangle area. This should be workable as it's reasonable to assume that at least one of them or Mike Jackson will be available to open the gates on request at the advertised times.

And two rules for planting within the greenhouse:

6. Planting in the trenches within the greenhouse will be shared use, not allocated to specific individuals. Exactly what is planted in the trenches will be a shared decision agreed by all greenhouse users.
7. The available bench space will be divided equally between all users. The exact amount of bench space available at any time will be a shared decision agreed by all greenhouse users. (There will probably be lots of bench space in winter and spring, very little in late summer and autumn)

And finally, a rule about managing the climate within the greenhouse:

8. The target micro-climate within the greenhouse will be a joint decision agreed by all greenhouse users.

2.2 South Canal Site (with the platform)

This is being converted from a steep slope of grassland into three tiers of terraced planting beds plus raised beds, a cold frame and composting facilities. The area at the top will be left as a 'wild-life' area with trees and naturalised plants. The wooden parts of the platform decking and railing, which have begun to decay, are being replaced by powder-coated metal.

When the earthworks are complete there should be about 20 plots of 2m³. An estimated one-third will only be suitable for shallow rooted plants such as herbs, salad vegetables, annuals, etc. The remaining two-thirds will support most planting.

2.2.1 Allocating the Individual Outdoor Gardening Plots

Three of the plots will be allocated to Camden Garden Centre trainees and the remainder to individual Elm Village residents, one plot to every requesting household.

In the event that demand for gardening space outstrips supply space will be allocated in accordance with the following rules:

1. First preference will be to Elm Village residents without their own garden.
2. Next preferred will be residents whose home is immediately adjacent to the space.
3. Final preference is given to all other Elm Village residents

If there are insufficient plots to satisfy all requests then:

4. Gardeners are strongly encouraged to share
5. Plots will be subdivided until there is sufficient number to meet the demand.

There will not be a waiting list.

2.2.2 The Viewing Platform

The platform is a communal resource for all residents and will be a great spot for daytime events and evening drinks. However, in consideration to the residents who overlook the platform area, advance notice is required for any activity that may be deemed 'noisy' or 'late'.

2.3 North Canal Site (behind the Constitution)

This contains one large bed of about 1mx6m and two smaller ones of about 1m² each. One of our neighbours, Fergus, has put considerable personal effort into tidying up this area over the past couple of years. There's still plenty to do but due to his efforts most of the growing space is now a relatively weed-free zone. It's therefore proposed that Fergus is the nominated 'neighbourhood guardian' for this site, keeping an eye on the continued security of the area. Also, given that the planting space is relatively limited it should all be designated a communal planting area and not divided into individual plots.

3 Subscriptions & Costs for Gardeners

There will be costs to gardeners all of which must be paid in advance.

3.1 Keys to Gates

New locks are being installed on all gates to all three areas.

For general gardening purposes Camden Garden Centre or the site 'guardian' will open the areas for gardening at times to be agreed so that individual gardeners do not necessarily need a personal key.

- Cost of a personal gate key = £5 each (plus a £15 returnable deposit?)
A register of key-holders will be kept so that the deposits can be managed properly.

3.2 Water

Anyone having an individual growing plot will need to make a contribution to water costs from the new locked and metered standpipes.

- Cost of personal standpipe key = £5 (plus a £15 returnable deposit)
- Cost of water from standpipe = £20 per annum (this is my pessimistic-but-safe guess)
- Cost of standing charges to Thames Water are already absorbed within the existing contract between PFP and Camden Garden Centre

If at the end of the first year the water charges average out at less than twenty pounds each then we can arrange refunds. It's most important though that for the first year we don't end up with a deficit.

3.3 Greenhouse Sundries

If every user of the greenhouse were to buy all their own potting compost, insecticides, herbicides, fertilisers, twine, and such like then we'd soon have a larger stack of chemicals than Du Pont. Instead, all greenhouse gardeners will contribute to a 'greenhouse fund' and that will be used to purchase what's needed for the greenhouse. By the same logic this fund will also be used to purchase the shared plants for the greenhouse e.g. one packet of melon seeds would fill the whole greenhouse so we don't all need to buy our own seeds (though of course we can if we still want to).

- Greenhouse fund = £10 per annum.

3.4 'Garden Club' Subscriptions

Now that communal gardening at Elm Village has a secure future it is necessary to provide the garden club with a sound financial basis.

- Gardening Club membership = £5 per annum.
- Junior membership = £1 per annum (under 12 years).

3.5 Minimum Costs for Gardeners

The minimum cost of joining in with the gardening activities is:

- Greenhouse Gardener = £15 per annum.
(£5 for garden club membership + £10 for greenhouse sundries)
- Outdoor Plot Gardener = £25 per annum.
(£5 for garden club membership + £20 for water costs)
- Fill-ya-boots Gardener = £35 per annum
(£5 for garden club membership + £10 for greenhouse sundries + £20 for water costs)

Keys for gates and standpipes being optional.

4 Appendix

4.1 Appendix I - Key Control Policy

Our discussions about locks and keys imply that we will have a 'key control policy'. Below is a simplified version of an example provided to me by a security organisation which I propose we adopt:

By requesting and accepting a key to the communal areas of Elm Village the requester agrees to abide by all of the conditions of this key control policy.

The implementation of this key control policy will be performed by an individual or organisation known as the **key-safe**. The identity of the **key-safe** will be determined by agreement between PfP and EVTRA.

The **key-safe** is responsible for maintaining Elm Village's communal space key control system and for authorizing the dissemination of keys.

Those seeking a key must obtain a "Key Request Form" from the **key-safe**. After a key request form is received and approved, the **key-safe** will arrange for the key or keys to be provided.

Key requests will be reviewed by the **key-safe** and no reasonable request withheld.

All keys to communal spaces are, and at all times remain, the **key-safe's** property and may be recovered at any time.

Records of keys and key-holders, including the names of individuals to whom keys are issued, dates of issue/return/loss will be maintained by the **key-safe**.

Fabrication, duplication, possession, or use of keys to Elm Village communal spaces without the written agreement of the **key-safe** is a violation of this policy.

Residents found in violation of this policy may be asked to return keys. Non-residents found in possession of unauthorized keys may be reported to the police.

4.2 Appendix II - Greenhouse Health, Safety & TLC

The warm, moist climate in a greenhouse benefits plants but also means that pests and diseases breed and spread faster.

Prevention is always better than cure!

Always inspect plants before bringing them into the greenhouse to ensure they are not introducing pests or diseases. It may help with cuttings to wash them in water with a few drops of washing-up liquid added before bringing them into the greenhouse.

Seeds are not a problem.

Seed, cutting and potting composts must be clean, fresh and part bags should be wrapped up to prevent weeds, pests and diseases getting inside the bag. Tools, pots, containers etc. should also be clean.

Tobacco products can contain Tobacco Mosaic Virus (TMV), a serious disease which affects a wide range of plants particularly tomatoes. PLEASE DO NOT SMOKE IN THE GREENHOUSE. Ideally smokers should wash their hands before entering.

Plants which are adequately fed, watered and receiving the light they need are more resistant to attack than neglected plants.

Weeds act as hosts for pests and diseases, so they are a source of infection. Weeding, particularly under benches or between paving stones or on the surfaces of compost in pots as an ongoing operation.

Despite all the above hygiene precautions pests, diseases and weeds will always find their way into any greenhouse. Keen observation and early intervention are important here. We will endeavour to use organic methods of control whenever possible.

Pests particularly found in greenhouses are red spider mite, whitefly, mealy bug and scale insect. Fortunately there are two very effective natural predators we can use against the first two mentioned. Diseases include powdery mildew, grey mould and the so-called damping-off diseases of seedlings.

Birds and mammals, such as squirrels, dogs, cats, mice and rats, can be destructive too and also need to be excluded.

This greenhouse is made from polycarbonate sheeting so it is much safer than glass. Floors in greenhouses can get slimy from algal growth so we need to keep the floors swept. In consideration of fellow users please tidy up your own mess and take home your personal tools etc. and don't use the greenhouse as your own personal store.

Take care of hose pipes being a trip hazard. Always reel-in the hose pipe after use and put it back.