

Cripley Meadow Allotments

Good Waste Guide

When I walk around Cripley Meadow, I notice how resourceful allotment holders are at using what others consider rubbish - a rusty watering can is transformed into a planter, pallets into a compost bin, a plot number is painted on an old welly.

But we also make waste – weeds grow, plastic goes brittle, fence posts rust. We discover 'treasure' buried by previous custodians. We bring on-site plant pots, polystyrene trays, labels, netting, garden chemicals packaged in plastic. We picnic, we BBQ.

Some of us hoard things that 'might come in useful'. And if we aren't careful, they morph into unsightly, neglected heaps, harbouring weeds. Perhaps, when we move on, they remain, our unwelcome legacy. We really must nip these problems in the bud because they are very expensive to put right later. In one year, 2017-18, our Association spent around £1,500 and 120 Working Party hours clearing plots and removing the rubbish that departed members left behind. The Audit process aims to flag concerns before they become unmanageable and we rely on members' co-operation not to store up problems for the future.

There are various facilities around the site and beyond to dispose of waste, maximising recycling and minimising landfill. And some 'waste' – such as wood chippings, grass cuttings – is brought onto or made on site for us to use productively on our plots, free of charge.

When I first became a Member about 2 years ago, I was confused about what **facilities** were available, how best to use them, and what to do with **various types of waste**. So I asked those in-the-know and wrote this guide organised into those two sections.

Perhaps it goes without saying, but the whole point is to

- minimise negative impact on the environment (on the site and beyond)
- keep our site safe, productive and tidy
- avoid unnecessary financial and labour burden to CMAA, now and in the future
- ensure we operate within the law and the terms of our lease

I hope you find this guide useful. I welcome your feedback – if you need advice on something not mentioned here, please ask.

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PS This guide aims to be consistent with CMAA's Constitution and Rules, Health and Safety Policy, Environmental Sustainability Policy and Equal Opportunity Policy. Where there are inconsistencies, the Constitution, Rules and Policies prevail.

Waste facilities A-Z

Bonfires – we are allowed to have bonfires on-site, so long as we do not cause a danger or nuisance to others on the allotments and beyond. Full details are set out in [Oxford City Council's advice](#), and in our [Constitution and Rules section 6.7.1](#), but the basics are

- Burn only dry material (as damp material creates excessive smoke)
- Don't have a bonfire when the wind is blowing towards Castle Mill flats
- Never leave a fire unattended until it is fully out.

We have had complaints from our neighbours about smoke nuisance. If there are too many complaints, the Council may ban us from having fires; a large site like ours would be unmanageable without bonfires. Some Oxford allotments already ban bonfires on plots. So, whilst you are permitted to have a **bonfire on your plot**, you must be very careful to follow the advice about wind direction, dry materials etc. Those who do not respect the rules may be banned from having fires (as agreed by our 2018 AGM).

There is a **communal bonfire site** at the north-west corner of the site, next to the skip. You must still follow the advice about wind direction, dry materials etc, but, as the communal site is further from neighbours, the risk of nuisance is lower. We do not want a huge pile building up, so Members are expected to burn waste they take there immediately. Therefore, please check that your material is dry and the wind in the right direction before starting out. (Occasionally, the bonfire site will already be full of Working Party waste, in which case please wait until it's clear before having your fire.) An incinerator is being acquired for burning small quantities.

As well as smoke nuisance, be mindful of air pollution – for example, don't burn painted or treated wood (put in the skip instead).

Compost bins – every plot, even the smallest, should have its own compost bin or compost heap. It would not be unreasonable for a full-sized plot to have three or four dalek-type bins on the go. In this way, you should be able to process most plant-waste from your plot on your plot, returning it as lovely, free organic matter to enrich your soil.

Plastic “dalek” compost bins are available to [buy from the Council](#), and second-hand ones can sometimes be found at our Trading Shop.

If you are new to composting, [Garden Organic's composting](#) webpages are a great place to start (gardenorganic.org.uk/compost)

- Paper and cardboard (even colour-printed cardboard which these days uses vegetable ink) are good additions to your bins.
- Much diseased plant material can safely be composted – see the [Royal Horticultural Society's Disposing of Diseased Material](#)
- Pernicious weeds do not always fully rot down so it is much safer to use other methods to dispose of them - see Weeds below.
- Tough, fibrous material, such as brassica and sweetcorn stalks, can take a very long time to rot down. You may prefer to burn instead (if you are using the communal bonfire site, please knock all soil off first).

- After the site has been mown, there are grass cuttings available (plots 84/109), which you are welcome to take and add to your compost, or use for mulching.

Communal compost plots – the Association experimented with communal compost plots, but they promoted poor practice and became unmanageable. These plots are no longer available to members. (You may occasionally see fresh material added, under Committee direction, from plot clearance).

Council recycling bins – please take home your recyclable plastic and glass. We do not duplicate this recycling onsite.

Hardcore piles (scalpings) – the bags of grey stones around the site are for repairing the roadway and are not to be used, or added to, by members.

Hardcore and brick bay – there is a wooden bay next to the green Association shed, by the skip, for you to dispose of medium-large lumps of concrete, bricks, and tiles. They can be re-used as hardcore, to weigh down plastic etc. Members are welcome to help themselves to materials from this bay – no need to ask. Please don't dump smaller bits of broken glass, ceramics etc. here. They should go into the skip.

Incinerator – see 'Bonfires' above.

Members' Noticeboard – The Members' Noticeboard is the one on the left as you come through the gate. If you have surpluses that may be useful to other plot holders, please feel free to put up a notice here.

Skip – is situated next to the green Association shed on the north-west corner of the site.

The skip is only to be used for waste that cannot be processed or disposed of in any other way. If you can take things home for disposal, re-use or recycling, please do. This is for environmental and cost reasons

- The skip's contents go to landfill
- Skip hire is expensive – it's one of our major discretionary costs.

Here is a list of things that **can legitimately go into the skip**: broken glass, panes of glass, rotten carpet, cracked/torn black plastic, broken plastic flower pots and plant trays, broken polystyrene plant trays, painted wood, broken tools, old roofing felt.

Please squash things down as much as possible so that we are not paying to dispose of air. Also, be mindful of light things blowing out (plastic can end up in the nearby river).

Here is a list of things that **must not be put into the skip** (they are specifically prohibited by our skip supplier): TVs/monitors, plasterboard, asbestos, batteries, car tyres and rubber wheels, medical waste, fluorescent tubes, gas cylinders, electrical items, solvents, paint tins (oil and acrylic), fuels (petrol or diesel) and oils, fridges.

Note: You must not bring anything on-site purely to dispose of it in the skip. This is dumping. It is illegal and could lead to your eviction.

Trading Shop – is on the east side of the site, about two thirds of the way down (to the South, away

from the Gate). It opens for an hour on Sunday mornings. A Committee member (currently Sarah) looks after the Trading Shop and welcomes donation of unwanted seeds and flower pots, which are then available to members for free. She is also pleased to receive items that can be sold, such as tools and watering cans. For details see the [Trading section on our website](#).

Wheelbarrows – CMAA wheelbarrows, stored beside the green shed by the skip, are available for you to borrow. Please return them when you are done. If there's a problem, e.g. flat tyre, please leave the barrow at the front of the shed, with something tied round it (e.g. a plastic bag) so it's obvious it needs attention.

Woodchip piles – we occasionally receive deliveries of wood chippings, or generate them from work to trees on our site. They are generally piled up just to the south of the Green. Members are invited to help themselves for path maintenance etc. on their plots.

The 'Yard' – an area next to the skip that is used to store materials for maintaining the site. We experimented with it also being a recycling area for members, but it became problematic to manage and is now only for use under direction of the Committee.

What goes where – A-Z

Asbestos – asbestos is hazardous waste and needs specialist disposal – Redbridge Recycling Centre can help, if you phone in advance. Google 'Oxfordshire Dealing with Asbestos' and follow the Oxfordshire Council link.

BBQs – the food smell on spent charcoal and used disposable BBQs can attract animals, so please don't put in the skip. Instead, either take home or dispose of in the covered public bin next to Port Meadow.

Bricks – put in the hardcore bay next to the green shed / skip area.

Cardboard – can be put in your compost bin (colour-printed cardboard used to contain nasty chemical dyes, but these days vegetable dyes are used so composting is OK). Larger pieces can be used as mulch/weed suppressant. Or take it home for recycling.

Ceramics, broken glass, lumps of slag etc – these are regularly dug up and should NOT be piled on your plot, thrown onto paths, the roadway etc. Larger bits (say, half a brick or more) should go to the hardcore bay next to the green shed by the skip. Smaller bits should go in the skip.

Crops – If you have no other outlet for your excess crops, they can be left under the Members' notice board (the left-hand side as you come in the gate), for others to pick up. If they are not taken, please remove before they rot.

Cuttings – see "Seedlings and Cuttings" below.

Diseased plant material – [The Royal Horticultural Society provide guidance on the disposal of diseased plant material](#), much of which can safely be composted.

Food – cooked food, such as picnic or BBQ leftovers, attracts animals, including rats. Take it home and dispose of in your Council food waste bin (which is heat treated and generates electricity). Do not put cooked food in your compost bin or in the skip.

Uncooked vegetable matter goes in your compost bin. If whole or large, it should be chopped down or it will attract the rats.

Glass – No new glass should be brought on-site for use on your plot. Where members are clearing old glass (sheets, broken bottles...), it should be put into the skip. Whole bottles and jars should be taken home for recycling.

Metal – drinks cans should be taken home for recycling. Rusty metal and wire that cannot be re-used should go into the skip; please squash down as much as possible first. Wire mixed with wood should be burnt first (see Bonfires above).

If you have metal items in good condition that can be re-used for building projects (e.g. fence posts), please consider offering them to other plot holders (via a notice on the Members' Noticeboard, see above). Old watering cans, buckets etc. that may be re-used by others should go to the shop (see Trading Shop, above).

Paper – can be put in your compost bin.

Paving slabs – the Committee would welcome donations of whole, reusable paving slabs for use around the site. Please speak to any Committee member. Broken slabs should be put in the Hardcore and Brick Bay (see above).

Plants, Seedlings and Cuttings – many members share spare plants etc. with their allotment neighbours. If you wish to offer more widely, please use the Members' Noticeboard (see above). Donations of potted-up plants and cuttings are particularly welcome, in June, for the CMAA stall at the Jericho Fair (benefits CMAA funds).

Plastic – recyclable plastic should be taken home to your council recycling bin.

Usable plastic flower pots are welcome at the Trading Shop (which Members can then take for free). Broken plastic flower pots should go to the skip.

Brittle/torn black plastic goes to the skip.

Empty compost/manure bags tend to be made of thick plastic, so are useful for composting pernicious weeds (see Weeds below).

Supermarket carrier bags – thanks to charging, these are now seen in decreasing numbers. Please re-use or recycle where possible, else to the skip.

Tangled plastic netting – please fold it right down to reduce its mass, before disposing of in the skip.

Broken plastic furniture – may be disposed of in the skip. Again, please reduce mass where possible.

Seeds – if your seeds are viable and surplus to requirements, please donate them to the Trading Shop where they are offered free to others.

Seedlings – See Plants, Seedlings and Cuttings, above.

Soil – if you have surplus soil, your plot neighbours will probably bite your arm off! Otherwise, do offer it on the Members' noticeboard.

Tools – Please donate any unwanted tools in good condition to the Trading Shop where they are sold for reasonable prices to others. Broken tools should go in the skip.

Weeds – most weeds can happily go into your compost bin. However, pernicious weeds (such as horsetail, ground elder roots, bindweed, ragwort, nettle roots), need different treatment. (If you aren't confident in identifying them, take a look at this advice page – cripleymeadow.org.uk/advice.htm, specifically, the [section on weeds](#)). Pernicious weeds are best bagged up and left for a year or so to decompose fully. Thick plastic bags, such as the ones used for shop-bought compost, manure etc, are ideal. Rats can be attracted to piles of bags (for shelter); to avoid this, some people put their bags into a lidded dustbin.

You may also 'drown' pernicious weeds until they turn to sludge, which you can then use as fertiliser (but note, it's extremely stinky and must be buried to minimise smell nuisance when you come to use it).

Large, thick spiny weeds, such as brambles, are unwieldy to compost, so better dried and burnt.

Wood – If you have surplus wood that might be re-usable in someone else's building project, then please offer via the Members' noticeboard. Otherwise, painted or treated wood goes into the skip, untreated is burnt.