



rotherhamallotments.org.uk



admin@rotherhamallotments.org.uk



PO Box 819, Rotherham, S60 9NR

WATER CONSERVATION ON ALLOTMENTS

Agreed by RAA Board- Minute number 274/06/26 a. of June 2026, for inclusion in RAA policies page.

Background

- Water supplies to all allotment sites is through a metered supply and annual water charges are recovered as an additional charge added to annual allotment rentals. Usually this is done by dividing the total cost of water used by the number of plots giving an equal charge to all tenants immaterial of the amount of water they all use individually.
- There is, therefore, benefits for all plot holders if a common approach to water usage is adopted to reduce the overall amount used, saving plot holders costs and protecting this valuable resource, especially during period of drought.
- Currently the RAA 'Allotment Rules' contains the following:-

5. Water/Hoses/Fires

5.1. The Tenant shall pay such reasonable sum as may be demanded for the cost of water use, which will be incorporated with the annual allotment rental.

5.2. The Tenant shall practice sensible water conservation, utilise covered water butts on sheds and other buildings and consider mulching as a water conservation practice.

5.3. The Tenant shall have consideration at all times for other tenants when extracting water from water points. No hoses are to be used at any time for irrigation purposes, hoses can be used to fill water butts.

Tips to aid water conservation

- Maintain a good quality of soil with the regular incorporation of organic matter such as farm yard manure or well-rotted compost. If you follow a crop rotation pattern the organic matter would be added on one third of your plot each year, for root crops, the following year that is used for legumes and final year of rotation brassicas. Some people prefer a four year rotation adding a section for salads. This type of management plan helps to build up soil condition and in doing this water retention and increased depth of soil which aids drought resistance.
- Most vegetables do not require additional watering at all, they will develop a root system that seeks the water from within the soil and during dryer period roots will obtain water from deeper in the soil.
- Other than watering in newly transplanted plots such as brassicas and salad crops you should leave the plants to develop a good deep root system. Persistent watering leads to the plants developing a surface root system, it having no need to seek water, it then dries out quickly and will continue to need constant watering.



- If sowing seeds direct in the soil during a prolonged dry spell take out the seed drill with a draw hoe or the corner of upturned rake and gently fill with water from a watering can along the length of the row. It may be necessary to water the row two or three times, then leave for half an hour or so to drain and dry slightly. Sow the seed as directed on packet and cover over and gently firm with the flat part of a rake. Do not water from above after the seeds have been sown as can lead to a crust forming which the seedlings will have difficulty breaking through on germination.
- It is advisable to carry out any irrigation in the evening or early morning this allows the moisture to be absorbed into the soil before evaporation.
- Crops can be mulched using well-rotted compost or other proprietary products. These should be added when the soil is wet and this will then prevent both weed growth and retain moisture in the soil.
- Regular light hoeing will also prevent weed growth and provide a 'dust mulch', a shallow depth of dry soil which again will retain moisture in the soil by preventing evaporation.
- Plants which require additional irrigation to obtain good cropping, such as courgettes and marrows, try sinking a plant pot in the soil adjacent to the plant. Fill the pot with water and this percolates directly to the root area. Place a small amount of horse or sheep manure in the bottom of the pot and each watering provides a dilute liquid feed.



- Any irrigation carried out should use a watering can without a rose and direct the water flow gently to the root area. Using a watering can rose waters soil around the plants much of which will just evaporate and not benefit the plants at all.
- A garden hose pipe uses between 540 to 1020 gallons of water per hour, varies due to diameter of the hose, its length and water pressure. An IBU Tank generally holds 1000 gallons, filling should take between one and two hours.