



DYNEVER GARDENING ASSOCIATION ENVIRONMENTAL GUIDELINES

Last updated: March 2026

Introduction

Dynever Gardening Association is keen to encourage all our members to adopt planet-positive gardening practices that support our local biodiversity and help mitigate the impacts of climate change. Growing food and vegetables close to where we live is an inherently planet-positive thing to do, for a whole host of reasons:

Reduces reliance on industrial agriculture

Allotments avoid the heavy machinery, synthetic fertilisers and pesticides that contribute to soil degradation, water pollution and biodiversity decline from mono-culture crop production.

Reducing Greenhouse Gas impacts

Allotment grown produce massively reduces the Greenhouse Gas impacts that are associated with all shop-bought foods, which will usually involve the extensive use of fossil-fuels needed for growing, harvesting, (cold) storing, processing and transportation.

No single use (plastic) packaging

Food from our allotments also comes without any additional packaging of course, avoiding the use of materials and energy needed to make what's often single use plastic packaging that only gets used for a very short period before ending up in our recycling bins.

Produces much less waste

Growing food on an allotment is also likely to produce a lot less waste than shop-bought fruit and vegetables, as supermarkets only stock unnaturally perfect examples of both, and we never see the huge amounts of (perfectly good) rejects that never make it onto the shelves.

Boosts local biodiversity

Allotment sites usually include diverse crops, wildflowers, ponds, compost heaps and hedges - creating habitats for pollinators, birds and beneficial insects.

Improves soil health naturally

Allotment gardeners typically use composting, mulching and crop rotation, which build soil organic matter and increase carbon sequestration compared with conventional farming.

So whilst growing produce on an allotment is inherently good for the planet, there are a few practices we can all adopt to help even more:

Practices that help mitigate climate change

Build and protect soil carbon

- Use compost, mulch, leaf mould and green manures (e.g., clover, field beans) to lock carbon into the soil.
- Avoid excessive digging wherever possible. Many people now adopt the “no-dig” method to preserve soil structure and reduce carbon release (although new plots holders will typically find that a fair bit of digging is required to clear the weeds that are likely to have built up).

Make and use homemade compost

- This keeps organic matter (from the plot, or the kitchen) out of landfill, where it breaks down and produces methane (a very strong Greenhouse Gas).
- Homemade compost helps to create rich soil that’s full of nutrients and locks in carbon, reducing the need for commercial fertilisers.

Why peat-free compost matters

- Peat extraction destroys natural peatlands, which are among the world’s most efficient natural carbon stores and provide unique wildlife habitats.
- Removing peat releases large amounts of carbon and damages ecosystems that help mitigate flooding.
- The Wildlife Trusts has calculated that since 1990, peat extraction for horticulture in the UK has contributed an estimated 31 million tonnes of CO₂
- In total UK peatlands store 3.2 billion tonnes of carbon, making their protection essential in climate mitigation.
- The sale of peat-based composts was banned for home gardeners in 2024

Collect and store rainwater

- We expect all plot-holders to include a water butt on every plot, especially when the plot includes a shed or greenhouse (with guttering to direct water into the butt)
- Collecting rain water helps reduce local demand on processed mains water, especially during drought periods.

Choose climate-resilient crops

- Growing drought-tolerant or heat-resilient varieties (e.g., chard, squash, certain beans) can help reduce the amount of watering that’s required.
- Mix perennials (e.g., rhubarb, berry bushes) with annuals to stabilise carbon and reduce soil disturbance.

Use natural mulches to conserve moisture

- Straw, wood chips, leaves, & grass clippings reduce evaporation & suppress weeds.
- Healthy, moist soil stores more carbon and supports richer life.

Reuse, repurpose and minimise plastic

- Use terracotta, or reused/recycled containers instead of buying new plastic pots.
- Repair tools and upcycle materials whenever possible.

Practices that support biodiversity

Avoid chemical pesticides and herbicides

- Many weed and pest control products are extremely harmful, especially those made with glyphosate, which has been shown to negatively affect wildlife, ecosystems and soil health. The World Health Organization has classified glyphosate as “probably carcinogenic to humans,” and multiple studies point to potential links with metabolic, neurological, reproductive and oncological disorders.
- Instead, we encourage the use of organic, nature-based alternatives such as neem oil, garlic sprays or soft soap. Plant-based insecticides and herbicides are now commonly available to buy from garden centres and on-line retailers too.
- Encourage predators (to pests like aphids for example) by planting flowers and providing habitats instead of using chemicals.

Plant for pollinators all year round

- Include some nectar-rich flowers e.g., lavender, borage, marigold, verbena.
- Choose varieties that bloom in early spring and late autumn to support insects beyond peak summer months.
- Allowing some herbs (like thyme, basil & coriander) to flower can make them huge pollinator magnets.

Create mini-habitats for wildlife

- Install bug hotels, log piles, and small rock stacks.
- Leave a “messy corner” with leaf litter and long grass for beetles, hedgehogs and overwintering insects.
- Add a small water source, such as a buried bowl with stones - for birds, bees and amphibians.

Grow a diverse range of crops

- Diversity encourages beneficial insects, reduces pest outbreaks and increases soil microbial life.
- Companion planting (e.g., onions with carrots, marigolds near tomatoes) boosts natural pest control.

Leave seed heads and stems over winter

- This provides over-wintering habitats for insects.
- Birds also rely on seed heads for winter food.

Hedges or living borders

- Native hedges (e.g., hawthorn, blackthorn, dogwood) act as carbon sinks, windbreaks and wildlife havens.