

Allotment biosecurity

Biosecurity

Biosecurity is simply the everyday actions we take to reduce the risk of plant pests, diseases and invasive plants being accidentally brought in or spread across the allotment.

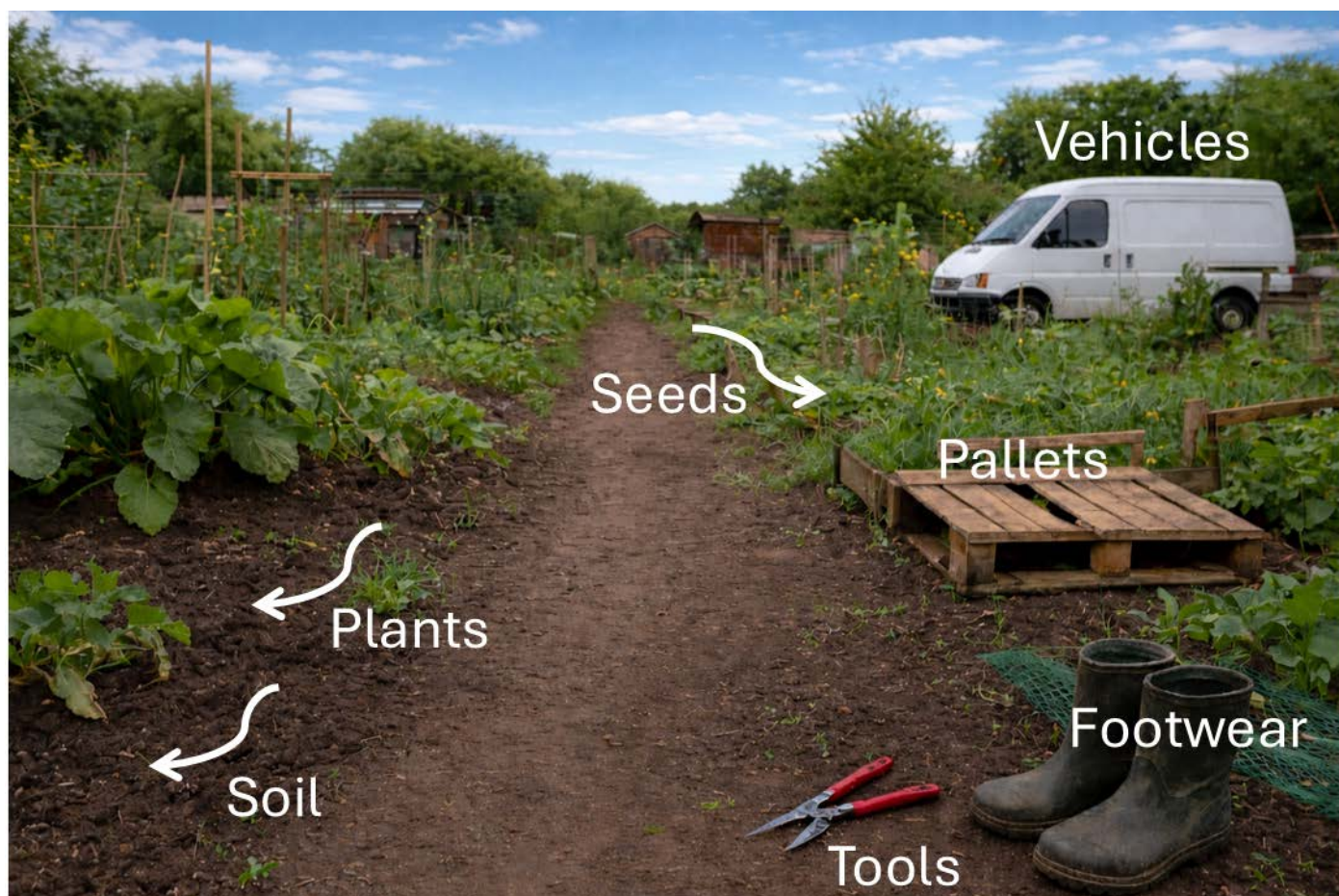
Prevention is better than cure

Plant pests, diseases and weed seeds can be inadvertently brought onto allotments in several ways. If these introductions become established, they can be very difficult to remove.

Common ways pests and diseases spread

Key pathways of introduction for harmful species include in soil, plants and seeds, wooden materials such as pallets, tools, footwear, bikes and vehicles.

Before bringing anything into your allotment visually inspect it and clean it thoroughly to reduce the risk of introducing plant pests or diseases, which are not always visible to the naked eye.



If bringing soil or other growing media onto the site, make sure it is heat treated, as this will ensure that there are no hidden pests and diseases.

Have dedicated footwear and tools which stay on the allotment and so don't bring in an unwanted pest in the soil attached to boots or equipment.

Everyone in the allotment community has a responsibility to protect the site from harm.

Cleaning footwear and equipment

Clean footwear, bikes, vehicles and tools will avoid the risk of spreading disease around the allotment.

Ensure that no soil is attached to boots or equipment. Where possible, wash with hot soapy water.



Scan here

to download the biosecurity
tool wash poster



Dos and Don'ts

Do

- When bringing plants and seeds onto your site, check that they are healthy, free from pests and weeds, and are growing strongly
- Growing media should be checked that it has been heat treated (e.g., have PAS100 printed on the bag) to reduce the risk of introducing pests, diseases and weed seeds
- If you are producing your own compost, ensure that it gets up to a suitable temperature to kill pathogens (at least 55°C for two weeks)
- Work as a team to keep the allotment free of risks

Don't

- Use tools and footwear from other sites without prior cleaning, to avoid disease spread
- Bring soil onto site that isn't PAS100
- Bring seeds and plants in from abroad. If you have to, ensure the necessary plant health documentation and inspections have happened



Source planting material with care

Sourcing

Plants, and the compost they are in, can be a major route by which plant pests, diseases and weed seeds move onto new sites. Care needs to be taken when sourcing plants for use on your allotment.

Plants

Check all plants that come onto site – Are they healthy and growing strongly and have no evidence of pests or diseases. Take plants out of their pots and check the roots carefully for signs of infestation.

If any pests or diseases are found, destroy the plants. Burning (where permitted) is best, avoid adding to compost or green waste, as pests and diseases can survive and spread to other plants.

Isolating new plants – a period of isolation could be considered where new plants are grown initially separately from the main crops until they are growing healthily.



Scan here

to download the quarantine
area poster



Seeds

Make sure seeds come from a recognised source and appear healthy and complete (i.e., contain no holes where insects may have made a home), especially if online. This is particularly important if seeds are brought from abroad or online. These seeds are required to be declared at the border so that they can be checked by border control authorities.

Pallets and other waste wood

Wood and wooden products of any kind present a risk because they could contain a pest. These should be checked thoroughly upon arrival and removed if not required to be kept.

Soil

Many beneficial microorganisms are present in soil, but it can also be a pathway for unwanted species.

Bringing new soil or bark chips onto site should be avoided if possible. If it is absolutely necessary, it should be checked and ideally heat treated where possible to reduce the risk of introducing pests, diseases and weed seeds. Beneficial microorganisms will quickly reinhabit the soil after this process.

Dos and Don'ts

Do

- If required, treat soil that is coming from offsite with a period of heating (at least 55°C for two weeks)
- If you are producing your own compost, ensure that it gets up to a suitable temperature to kill pathogens (as above)
- Check pallets for beasties

Don't

- Plant out diseased plants
- Bring soil or wood chips onto site that isn't PAS100



Allotments in a changing climate

Climate change

Climate change is increasing the vulnerability of plants to pests and diseases and enabling new pests and diseases to establish.

Ensuring that allotment plots are healthy and resilient to future weather conditions is essential.

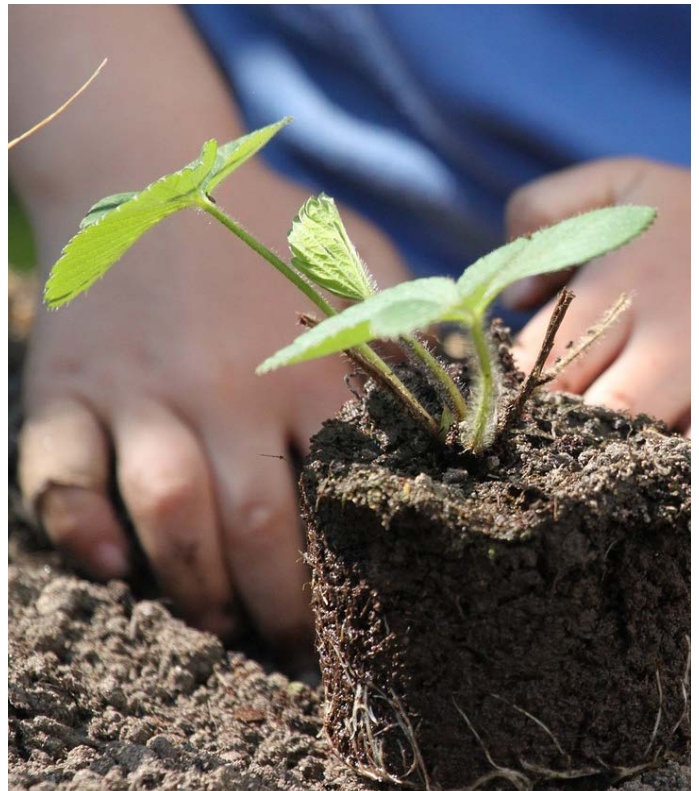
Unpredictable weather

Seasons that are warmer or wetter than normal lead to stresses that can increase pest and disease issues.

Heavy rains and flooding can lead to puddles that harbour pests and pathogens.

Heatwaves and droughts can lead to dry conditions which stress plants and make them more susceptible to diseases.

Storms and winds can physically damage plants, making them more susceptible to pests and diseases.



Dos and Don'ts

Do

- Have healthy plants and discard diseased plants to prevent spread
- Prune diseased trees, cleaning your tools as you go
- Plant native plants to maintain native pollinators
- Grow plants which are drought tolerant and have 'built in' resistance to key plant pests and diseases

Don't

- Let plants get drought stressed
- Let puddles of water sit for long periods
- Bring plants from other countries if they have not met all legal requirements, such as paperwork and inspections



Creating a plant health community

Community

It is important to be aware of the main risks to the site you are in. Engage with similar sites in the area and find out what the main threats are to them.

Allotments are most at risk from pests and diseases unintentionally introduced through plants and seeds sourced from other places, including overseas. Assess the risk carefully before bringing anything onto your site.

Working as a team

The more eyes you have, the more likely you will find plant health risks early on.

Having a contact to report a new pest and disease observation to ensures that information is centralised.



Dos and Don'ts

Do

- Carry out an assessment of the activities on your site to better understand how pests and diseases might arrive
- Take action where risks are identified
- Report pest and disease issues to [SASA](#) and inform the allotment manager

Don't

- Pass up on opportunities for training
- Bring in plants from abroad without ensuring all legal requirements, such as paperwork and inspections are met

In Scotland, plant pest and disease issues can be reported to [SASA](#).



Scan here

for SASA plant health reporting



This work was commissioned by Scotland's Centre of Expertise for Plant Health funded by Scottish Government through the Rural & Environment Science and Analytical Services (RESAS) Division

Photo credit: Lauriston Farm and Lauren of Rhyze Mushrooms