

BONFIRES

Bonfires have been a traditional way of disposing of rubbish from allotment plots, but they often cause a nuisance to neighbours from smoke, smells and smuts. They also contribute to air pollution.

Tenants are not permitted to have a bonfire on the allotment site between the 1st April and 30th September annually.

The Problems

Bonfires can be very annoying to neighbours – usually from smoke or smell. This can stop them from enjoying their garden, prevent them from opening their windows or hanging out washing.

This is especially a problem if neighbours or their children are asthmatic or have a chest condition. Even if they aren't particularly sensitive to smoke, bonfires cause air pollution.

Bonfires can produce irritating and even poisonous compounds that contribute to poor air quality, which everyone nearby have to breathe in.

Bonfires can also cause a hazard to road users by reducing visibility.

Bonfires can cause a fire hazard if they are close to trees or fences and especially if left unattended.

Remember Your Neighbours – What's the Legal Positions?

There are no specific laws that prohibit bonfires, nor any which restrict them to certain hours of the day, days of the week or number per year.

If, however a bonfire causes what is called a "Statutory Nuisance", the council can serve a legal notice on the person responsible requiring them to stop causing the nuisance. Failure to do so is then an offence for which they can be prosecuted. Under the same legislation any person affected by a bonfire can also lodge a complaint at the Magistrates Court alleging nuisance and then the matter will be dealt with by the Court. If it is found that a nuisance did exist the person responsible can be fined by the Court.

What are the Alternatives?

You can take your garden refuse to one of Bexley's local amenity sites **FREE OF CHARGE TO BEXLEY RESIDENTS** which are located at:-

1. Maidstone Road, Fooks Cray 020 8309 5978
2. Thames Road, Crayford 01322 521478

If after having carefully considered the alternatives you decide to have a bonfire between 1 October and 31 March, there are some guidelines that will help to ensure that you do not cause a nuisance.

- 1 Avoid having a bonfire at weekends, Bank Holidays. People are more likely to be upset by smoke at these times.
- 2 Check to see that the wind direction will not blow smoke into neighbours houses.
- 3 Do not light a fire when the weather is still or damp or within an hour of sunset. The smoke is more likely to hang in the air and cause a nuisance.
- 4 Warn your neighbours before having a bonfire.
- 5 Site the bonfire as far away as possible from any houses, sheds or boundary fences.
- 6 Burn only **dry**, clean materials. **If the material is wet or damp DO NOT burn it.**
- 7 Never burn plastics, foam, rubber or paint. These can produce poisonous fumes.
- 8 Start a small fire, wait for it to become hot, and then add small amounts of waste at frequent intervals. If the bonfire smokes you may have placed too much material on the fire, or the temperature may not be high enough to adequately burn the material. The bonfire should always be supervised.
- 9 Douse the fire with water when you have finished. Never leave a bonfire to smoulder.
- 10 Always ensure the fire is out before leaving the allotment site.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE BOTHERED BY A BONFIRE

Approach the person concerned and explain the problem. **BE FRIENDLY** – they may not be aware that they are causing problems.

While this can be awkward, it will hopefully make them more considerate in the future. If you approach the authorities immediately it may cause bad feeling.

If after approaching them, you do not resolve the issue then contact Environmental Protection Team on 020 8303 7777.