



Didcot Town Council's guidance on discouraging rats on the allotments

It is everyone's responsibility to help deter rats on the allotments. Please follow the guidelines below to prevent them from settling on your plot.

What can allotment tenants do?

1. Regularly turn the contents of your compost bin, at least twice a year. This practice disrupts any rats that may have taken shelter and helps aerate the compost, speeding up the decomposition process while reducing methane emissions, a harmful greenhouse gas.
2. To prevent rats from burrowing underneath, line the base of plastic compost bins with small-gauge wire mesh or place the bins on paving slabs.
3. Periodically kick your compost bin to ensure it remains an unwelcoming environment for rats, and regularly check that they are not nesting in your greenhouse or shed.
4. Avoid placing household waste in your compost bin. Never add meat, dairy, bones, cooked food, or other unsuitable items, as these will attract rats and produce unpleasant odours.
5. Harvest ripe fruit and vegetables promptly and take them home for consumption.
6. Do not leave discarded fruit and vegetables on the ground. Clear them away into your compost bin, as they serve as a food source for rats and other pests.
7. Do not feed birds or other animals on your plot. If you have chickens clear up any left-over food as soon as possible.
8. Keep your plot well-maintained, ensuring that allotment gardens do not become overgrown or cluttered with rubbish, such as timber or stockpiled materials, as these can provide shelter for rats.
9. Always thoroughly wash (and peel, if necessary) any food you harvest. Vegetables showing signs of rat damage should be discarded. Rats can carry diseases such as Weil's disease, Salmonella, and Leptospirosis.
10. Ensure sheds are kept secure and inaccessible to rats and mice. Tenants should regularly inspect to confirm that rats are not nesting underneath.
11. Consider storing seeds, bulbs, and similar items in rodent-proof containers.

What can Didcot Town Council do?

Didcot Town Council has never used chemicals or poisons to control rats on the allotment sites and has no plans to implement such measures in the future. However, to discourage rats from the allotment sites, Didcot Town Council will:

1. Consider installing 'herb gardens' on the allotment sites

Rats have an exceptionally sensitive sense of smell, which they use to locate food sources. Strongly scented herbs like mint (particularly peppermint), lemongrass, rosemary, and sage can act as natural deterrents due to their potent aromas.

The Outdoor Team will explore potential locations across all allotment sites for planting 'Herb Gardens.' These gardens will serve as a natural deterrent to rats and provide additional benefits to all tenants. The herbs will be available for everyone on site to pick and use.

2. Plant Lavender sporadically along boundaries

Due to their sensitive sense of smell, rats are also averse to the scent of lavender. Lavender will be planted at various points along the boundaries of the allotments to serve as a natural deterrent. Additionally, lavender is beneficial to wildlife, providing a valuable source of nectar for butterflies and bees, particularly bumblebees, thereby enhancing biodiversity within the allotment sites.

3. Plant Daffodils and Chrysanthemums at the allotment sites

Both daffodils and chrysanthemums emit a strong scent that deters rats, making them effective natural repellents. Like the lavender, the Outdoor Team will intermittently plant these flowers along the allotment boundaries to enhance biodiversity while further discouraging rodents. The allotment sites could also serve as an additional location for the annual 'Community Planting' sessions organised and arranged by the Events and Communications Officer.

Moreover, the strong odours of garlic and onions are effective repellents against these pests and should be encouraged for planting. Allotment tenants are encouraged to plant any of the previously mentioned herbs and flowers on their plots to help deter rats.

4. Regularly inspect the allotment sites

In accordance with the tenancy agreements, every allotment plot is inspected throughout the year to ensure proper maintenance. Staff will also continue to monitor any debris left on site, especially along the borders, and will promptly clear it away.

These measures are inexpensive and easily implemented.

While rats may visit allotment sites and other open spaces, it is hoped that by working together, we can discourage them from settling and causing damage and nuisance across our five allotment sites.

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