



## Are thinking about taking on an Allotment?

Considerations to taking on an Allotment Plot at Manchester Drive Allotments, Leigh-on-Sea

Welcome to the wonderful world of allotment gardening at Manchester Drive Allotments.

Allotments offer a fantastic opportunity to grow your own produce, connect with nature, and enjoy the benefits of our thriving community of growers. Whether you are new to gardening or an experienced green fingered pro, this guide will provide you with essential information to help you decide on the right plot size and understand the time commitment involved, and estimated costs for gardening supplies etc.

While envisioning a beautifully cultivated plot teeming with produce is certainly an exciting prospect, this would be a good time to take a moment to consider the time constraints of modern life before making your decision to embark on the allotment journey.

The main consideration when starting your journey is the size of your plot. This will have the largest direct bearing on the amount of time, effort, and money it will take to maintain. Please read the information below to help you decide:

**Plot Sizes:** We have three different Plot Sizes available:

- **Full Plot:** Typically measures around 250 square metres (2700 square feet) or more. Suitable for experienced gardeners or those with a lot of time and dedication.
- **Half Plot:** Usually half the size of a full plot, around 125 square metres (1350 square feet). A great choice for beginners or those with limited time.
- **Starter Plot:** Smaller plots, perfect for newcomers or gardeners with minimal experience. Starter plots can vary in size but are normally around 30-60 square metres (300-650 square feet).

To help you decide which plot size you would need or could accommodate, please read through the following sections to find out how much food you might be able to produce, how long it would take, and how much it might cost. Your results may vary depending upon your gardening style, efficiency, and fitness, but this information should get you started.

### **Produce:**

Whilst a large plot would be able to feed a large family, this may not be needed or necessary. The table below shows how much food you should be able to produce from each plot size:

<b>Plot Size</b>	<b>Medium Utilisation</b>	<b>High Utilisation</b>
Full Plot	3-5 people	6-10 people
Half Plot	1.5-2.5 people	3-5 people
Starter Plot	0.5-1 person	1-2 people

**Time Commitment** (in hours per week):

The table below shows the estimated time needed to spend *every week* to maintain each of the three plot sizes throughout the different seasons:

Plot Size	Average Time Required (Hours / week)			
	Spring (Mar - May)	Summer (Jun - Aug)	Autumn (Sep - Nov)	Winter (Dec - Feb)
Full Plot	12-20	12-20	6-10	1-3
Half Plot	6-10	6-10	3-5	1-2
Starter Plot	3-5	3-5	1-2	<1

**Estimated Costs:**

The most visible cost of owning an allotment will be your plot rent. The table below shows the current cost components that would be applicable to you. You will need to pay a deposit for the plot and your gate key when you take on your plot, and then for the plot Rent and Water when you take on the plot and then annually every October. The breakdown of these costs is shown below:

Indicative cost of an Allotment at Manchester Drive	Rent (upto age 65)	Rent (Over Retirement age)	Water	Allotment Society membership	Plot Deposit	Key Deposit
Full Plot	£64.00	£32.00	£18.00	£5.00	£50.00	£6.00
Half Plot	£32.00	£16.50	£9.00	£5.00	£25.00	£6.00
Starter Plot	£23.00	£11.50	£6.00	£5.00	£15.00	£6.00

Which can be summarised into an Initial One time Deposit, and then Annual costs:

Indicative cost of an Allotment at Manchester Drive	Initial Deposit	Annual fee (upto age 65)	Annual fee (Over Retirement age)
Full Plot	£56.00	£87.00	£55.00
Half Plot	£31.00	£46.00	£30.50
Starter Plot	£21.00	£34.00	£22.50

Also listed below are items that you may not have considered, but which can add to your costs over time. Keep in mind that these prices are only examples, and total cost will depend upon your growing style:

- **Seeds:** £1 to £5 or more per packet, depending on the type and quantity.
- **Compost / Seed compost:** £6-£8 per bag. Compost is an essential soil amendment for enriching your soil, and for successfully germinating your seeds.
- **Fertiliser:** Depending on the type and brand, fertilisers can cost anywhere from £4 to £16 per bag or container. You may need multiple applications throughout the season.
- **Tools:** Initial tool costs can vary widely. Basic hand tools like a spade, fork, hoe, rake, and pruners can cost around £40 to £80. Consider investing in high-quality, durable tools for longevity.
- A **wheelbarrow** is definitely useful, as are **buckets / trugs**.
- You may want to add a **Shed** to your plot, or if the plot you take on already has one, it may require repairs.
- **Watering Equipment:** Watering cans range from £6 to £10 or more, depending on your needs.



- **Pest Control:** Pest control products such as insecticidal soap or organic sprays can cost around £8 to £16 per bottle. You may also need physical pest deterrents like netting or row covers.
- **Garden Structures:** Costs for items like trellises, stakes, and raised bed materials can vary significantly based on design and materials. Budget accordingly.
- **Compost Bins:** Essential for composting green waste. This could just be a mound on your plot, a contained area constructed out of pallets, a purchased “dalek” style bins, or something more extravagant.
- **Miscellaneous:** Don't forget to account for miscellaneous costs like gardening gloves, plant labels, string, grass cutting, and any specific supplies needed for your chosen crops.

For those tenants living outside the Leigh Town Council boundary and not paying the Council precept, please note that priority will be given to Leigh Town residents. This doesn't mean that residents outside of this area will not be given a plot, just that your priority on the list will be lower. A Non-Resident Levy also applies which is currently £20 a year.

Remember that gardening expenses can vary depending on your gardening style, the size of your plot, and the crops you choose to grow. It is essential to budget for these supplies to ensure a successful and enjoyable gardening experience.

### **Next Steps:**

There is a lot of information above, and hopefully you now have a better understanding of the key considerations.

- The next step is to get yourself on the waiting list! Come and see us in the Shop, which is on your left just as you enter the site through the main gate along Manchester Drive via the Prittle Brook Greenway.
- We will take some details and add you to the waiting list.
- Once you are on the list, just wait for a phone call inviting you down to view a plot.
- If you decide to take the plot, we will take your details and pass them on to Leigh Town Council.
- Once the council contact you and you have paid your various dues to them, you can access your plot.
- We will also invite you to join our Allotment Society (MDAS), which will give you access to our fabulous community and several other benefits (details on the website).

Please be aware that the turnover of plots does vary throughout the year, but we do our best to re-let plots as soon as they become available. Please bear with us whilst you wait.

We hope this guide helps you make informed decisions about your allotment garden journey.

Happy gardening!

Manchester Drive Allotment Society