



BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

WILDLIFE POND POLICY FOR ALLOTMENT SITES

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1. Introduction

Blyth Town Council has responsibility for 10 allotment sites across Blyth, as follows; Bolam Avenue, Twentieth Avenue, Newsham Side Club, Beatrice Avenue, Tenth Avenue, Delaval Gardens, Laverock Place, Bebside and Wensleydale Terrace.

The Bolam Avenue, Twentieth Avenue and Twenty Third Avenue sites are managed on a day-to-day basis by Blyth Smallholdings & Allotment Association (BSHAA). The Newsham Side Club and Beatrice Avenue (old) sites are managed on a day-to-day basis by the Newsham & New Delaval Allotment Association (NNDAA).

The purpose of this policy is to outline the guidelines and procedures for the safe installation and maintenance of wildlife ponds on allotment sites across the town. The aim is to promote biodiversity while ensuring safety, environmental sustainability, and the enjoyment of all plot holders.

Ponds on allotment sites are permitted for environmental reasons. However, tenants need to be mindful that ponds can be hazardous for children and wildlife and should take steps in their design to mitigate risk. Additionally, having a pond is not a primary purpose of having an allotment plot and the keeping of ornamental or edible fish (e.g. Koi Carp) is not permitted.

The overriding consideration when contemplating the installation of a pond is its potential hazard to people and animals. As example; new ponds created using old baths are potentially hazardous and are not permitted.

All ponds must be within a fenced allotment plot, with secure gate access, to prevent anyone, particularly young children, from easily accessing the pond. Signage must also be displayed advising that a pond is placed on the allotment plot. Consideration should also be given to placing smaller guage netting over the pond to reduce the risk of drowning.

It is the plot holders responsibility for the safety and the on-going regular maintenance of the pond and if children come onto the plot they must be supervised at all times. It is the allotment plot holder's responsibility for the safe management of the pond. The Town Council and/or Allotment Associations are not responsible.

2. Application Process

The application process is as follows;

Submission

Allotment plot holders wishing to install a wildlife pond must submit a written request to Blyth Town Council. For plot holders on sites managed by BSHAA and NNDAA the Town Council will liaise with the relevant Association in handling any request. The request should include:

- The proposed location of the pond (Allotment Site and Plot Number).
- The dimensions and depth of the pond.
- The type of materials to be used.
- A brief plan detailing the intended design, including any planting and landscaping.
- Confirmation that the pond is fenced off and signage will be in place advising of a pond.
- Maintenance Plan

Review

The Town Council will review the application, considering factors such as safety, impact on neighbouring plots, and overall site aesthetics. The Town Council reserves the right to request additional information or suggest modifications, liaising with the relevant Association, where applicable.

Approval

If approved, the allotment plot holder will receive written permission to proceed with the pond installation. Any significant changes to the approved plan must be resubmitted to the Town Council for approval.

3. Design & Construction Rules

The application process requires the pond to meet the following requirements;

Safety

Safety is paramount and all ponds must be within a fenced allotment plot with secure gate access to prevent anyone, particularly children, from easily accessing the pond. The pond should be as far from access paths as possible to minimize the risk of accidental falls. Signage must be displayed advising that a pond is placed on the allotment plot.

Consideration should be given to the use of the smallest gauge netting to reduce the risk of drowning. Plot holders may also be instructed to place netting as a preventative measure for Bird Flu (Avian Influenza).

Ponds should have gently sloping edges, or shelved areas, to allow wildlife to easily enter and exit the pond. Tenants must demonstrate they have taken seriously the need to aid animals, such as hedgehogs, in escaping the pond.

It is the allotment plot holder's responsibility for the safe management of the pond. As stated, the Town Council and/or Allotment Associations are not responsible.

Size and Depth

Ponds should not exceed 2 square meters in surface area. The depth of the pond should not exceed 60cm at its deepest point to minimize risks to children and animals. Ideally, ponds should be at a depth of 20–60cm (8in–2ft), which varies across the pond, as this will suit the majority of pond flora and fauna.

Materials

The use of non-toxic, wildlife-friendly materials is mandatory. Liners, if used, must be durable and designed specifically for pond use only.

Biodiversity

In developing the ponds consideration should be given to prioritising the use of native aquatic plants to support local wildlife and avoid introducing non-native or invasive species.

Consideration should also be given to incorporating features such as shallow areas, logs, and stones to provide habitat diversity.

4. Environmental Considerations

Environmental considerations are important and plot holders must consider;

Water Conservation

Ponds should be filled using rainwater or recycled water where possible to conserve resources. Plot holders should avoid using treated tap water, as it can harm pond wildlife.

Chemical Use

The use of chemicals, including fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides, near the pond is strictly prohibited to protect the ecosystem.

5. Maintenance & Inspection

Regular on-going maintenance to the pond is very important. The pond will be regularly inspected by the Town Council and/or the Allotment Association where applicable.

Plot holders who apply for permission to install a pond must agree to keep the pond in good repair and take all reasonable measures to maintain its safety for both people and animals. The plot holder must ensure regular maintenance including water quality management to ensure the pond is algae free, plant care, and debris removal. The pond should be kept free of pollutants and harmful substances.

The Town Council reserves the right to inspect the pond regularly to ensure compliance with this policy. This will be done in partnership with Allotment Associations, where applicable.

If the pond is not maintained to an acceptable standard, the Town Council and/or the Association may require corrective actions or, in extreme cases, request that the pond be removed.

6. Termination & Removal

If a plot holder decides to remove the pond, the area must be returned to its original condition, ensuring no harm to the surrounding environment.

When a plot holder relinquishes their tenancy, the Town Council will assess whether it is practical to keep the pond. The Town Council maintains the right to ask the plot holder to return the pond to its original condition and rehome any wildlife within the pond, where possible, to a similar location.

The Town Council may decide upon the mandatory removal of the pond if it is deemed unsafe, poorly maintained or in violation of this policy. The plot holder must ensure that the area must be returned to its original condition, ensuring no harm to the surrounding environment. Should the plot holder not comply then their tenancy may be terminated by the Town Council and/or the Association.

Decisions made by the Town Council are final.

7. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it continues to meet the needs of the allotment community and environmental best practices.