

GARDEN SCHEME POLICY

Responsible Officer

Director of Customer Services

Aim of the Policy

The aim of this policy is to promote well maintained gardens in our community to provide a pleasant environment for residents and help reduce the risk of urban foxes and other pests.

This policy sets out tenants' and lessees' responsibilities for their gardens and details of the low cost garden scheme service we offer to support residents who meet the criteria to manage their gardens.

The Policy

Responsibilities

You have a responsibility to maintain any private garden you have sole access to. Keeping the garden tidy and not overgrown with grass or hedges and free from unsightly debris.

Tenant Responsibilities

Under tenancy agreements, tenants are responsible for the maintenance of their garden ensuring it is tidy and free from rubbish.

Lessee Responsibilities

Where the demised premises includes a garden, leases state that lessees can use the garden as a domestic garden only and for no other purpose. They must keep the garden free from rubbish and weeds and in a good state and maintain good and sufficient boundary walls and fences along the boundaries of garden. For easy reference, this is marked with a "T" on the plan within the lease.

Our Responsibilities

We are responsible for maintenance of all communal gardens. We will ensure that all of our empty properties, for rent, with a garden are assessed and any trees which are deemed to be a health and safety risk, e.g. over hanging branches into adjoining property, trees impacting upon the fence line, or root damage to paving/drains, will be reduced or removed. Wherever possible, the works will be carried out prior to the property being re-let.

We will provide advice and guidance to residents on prohibited species which are not appropriate for planting in residential gardens. This will also be issued to new tenants as part of their welcome pack when they sign up for a Phoenix tenancy.

Enforcement

We aim to ensure that any concerns or risks of unkempt gardens are raised with you and you are reminded of the responsibilities set out in your tenancy agreement or lease.

This also includes working in partnership with the Housing Management team to address any enforcement issues that may arise or identify any resident who is vulnerable.

The garden scheme

The garden scheme is a grass cutting service that:

- is available to you for a charge if you are over 60 years of age or have a disability (i.e. you are registered with the local council as disabled, hold a blue badge or receive disability benefits).
- provides four cuts per season.
- runs by appointment from March to October, Monday to Friday between 8am-4pm (excluding public and bank holidays).
- must be paid for in advance for the season by the end of February each year.

If you are new to the scheme, we will inspect your garden before accepting you on the garden scheme. Gardens that are very overgrown will be subject to a one-off clearance and a separate cost before joining the scheme.

Garden scheme appointments are scheduled within the first 10 working days of March, if we have received payment.

Gardens must be clear of household rubbish and debris to enable garden appointments to be carried out. If materials are present in a garden and present a potential health and safety risk (for example, they are suspected to contain asbestos, could cause damage to machinery used or an accident to the operative) we will stop works and further advice will be taken before works can proceed. You will be consulted and any health and safety instructions will be provided

Prevention

We will ensure proactive action is taken to prevent gardens becoming overgrown and causing a nuisance to other residents.

We will do this by:

- carrying out estate inspections and identifying unkempt gardens.
- working closely with teams across Phoenix.
- offering this Garden Scheme service.

In exceptional circumstances, we will carry out a one-off cut on the basis that you sign up for the garden scheme to help maintain your garden in the future. This request will usually be a referral from the Housing Officer or other member of staff and will be agreed by the Estates Services Manager.

Monitoring and Review

We monitor performance of the garden scheme including:

- number of gardening scheme requests received.
- number of residents on the garden scheme.
- average cost of grass cutting service.
- income received from the gardening scheme.

We will also report performance information to residents.

Policy Review

We will review this policy every three years, or sooner if there are changes to legislation or good practice.

Legislation

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1972
- Management of Health and Safety at Work regulations 1999
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1992
- Manual Handling 1992
- Environmental Act 1995
- The Control of Asbestos Regulation 2012

Associated documents, policies and procedures

- Health and Safety Statement of Intent
- Asbestos Management Policy
- Phoenix Standards
- Voids Management Policy
- Tenancy Agreement
- Leaseholder Lease Agreement
- Tree Maintenance Policy

Definitions

Term	Description
Demised Premises	Lessee property and garden.
Residents	Tenants and lessees.
We/us/our	Refers to Phoenix Community Housing.
You/your	Refers to Phoenix tenants and lessees.

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