

# BONFIRES ON ALLOTMENTS

Bonfires may be a traditional way of disposing of garden rubbish, but there are alternatives. Consider composting, shredding or taking your allotment waste to the tip. However, if you must have a bonfire then please be aware of the following advice, based on the Stroud District Council Pollution and Nuisance web page and National Allotment Society guidelines.

## The problems

- Bonfires can be very annoying to neighbours - usually from smoke or smell.
- Bonfires cause air pollution and the bonfire ash can contain pollutants too.
- Bonfire smoke 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.

## What's the legal position?

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

If, however, a garden 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, which will then be dealt with by the court. If it is found that a nuisance did exist the person responsible can be fined by the court.

## Alternatives to bonfires

### 1. Compost your garden waste

If you can, compost as much of your allotment waste as possible. Further information about home composting can be found on [www.recyclenow.com](http://www.recyclenow.com).

### 2. Take it to the tip

You can take your garden rubbish to one of the Stroud District Council refuse disposal points. The closest one is located at Pyke Quarry (Horsley), which is two miles west of Horsley on the B4058, Wotton under Edge road.

It is managed by Gloucestershire County Council. See [www.recycleforgloucestershire.com](http://www.recycleforgloucestershire.com) for details and opening times.

### 3. Hold or attend a garden shredding event

Do you and your neighbours have garden waste that could be shredded and turned into material suitable for mulching beds or borders?

You can arrange with the Stroud District Council grounds maintenance contractor, Wyevale, to have a chipping machine for a community composting event. These events are advertised to local residents and are open for anybody in the neighbourhood to bring their green waste to the designated site for mulching. Wyevale can be contacted on 07833 091294 (daytime) or 01453 758293.

## Bonfire guidelines

If after having carefully considered the alternatives you still decide to have a bonfire, there are some guidelines that will help to ensure that you don't cause a nuisance:

- Always observe the simple courtesy of letting your neighbours know when you intent to light the fire.
  - Only burn dry material and never burn household rubbish or anything with plastic, foam, paint or rubber in it. Do not take rubbish to the site to burn.
  - Never use old engine oil, methylated spirits, or petrol to light or encourage a fire. Not only does this make smoke, it is also very dangerous.
  - Avoid lighting fires in unsuitable weather conditions such as damp, still days.
  - Avoid times when the wind will blow smoke over roads or into neighbour's gardens.
  - Avoid burning when people want to enjoy their gardens such as at weekends or Bank Holidays.
  - Air Pollution is described using four bands - LOW, MODERATE, HIGH and VERY HIGH. Avoid burning when air pollution in the area is anything other than Low. You can check this at the DEFRA Air Information Resource at <https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/which> provides daily forecast levels of air pollution.
  - Always check the stack intended for burning to look for hibernating hedgehogs or other animals that may be in it.
  - Never leave a fire unattended or leave it to smoulder.
  - Never use water to douse a bonfire. It may appear as if the fire has been safely put out but the water only serves to superheat the ashes and they could re-ignite some hours later. When you have to leave the bonfire site always throw soil or sand over it to smother the heat source.
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- Bear in mind the law of statutory nuisance mentioned earlier; regular smoky bonfires - or even a single one which is very polluting - could be regarded as a statutory nuisance and result in a legal notice being served on you by the Council.

