LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

# Gardens policy

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|---|---|
| New policy number: | **836** |
| Old instruction number: | |
| Issue date: | **2 August 2013** |
| Reviewed as current: | **20 April 2023** |
| Owner: | **Assistant Director, Procurement and Commercial** |
| Responsible work team: | **Sustainable Development Team** |

## Contents

# 1 Scope

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for the creation and management of gardens across the Brigade estate to support biodiversity, habitats and general staff wellbeing.

# 2 Definitions

2.1 **Garden -** Outdoor space, with ecological, aesthetic and amenity value to both our employees and the community we serve. This ranges from simple grass verges to the front of stations, to gardens within the station grounds.

2.2 **Biodiversity -** The entire variety of life on earth from mammals to micro-organisms.

2.3 **Conservation -** Careful and organised management and use of a natural resource or area.

2.4 **Ecology** - The science that examines inter-relationships between animals, plants and their habitats. Ecological value refers to the level of benefits that animals, plants and habitats provide to support native life and maintain an ecological balance.

2.5 **Ecosystem -** A community of living organisms (plants, animals and microbes) in conjunction with the non-living components of their environment (things like air, water and mineral soil), interacting as a system.

2.6 **Green roof -** Also known as an eco roof, living roof or vegetated roof, is one that is either partially or completely covered in vegetation such as sedum or wildflower and meadow planting, grasses and mosses, even trees and shrubs. Additionally they provide sustainable drainage, helping to slow the flow of rainwater and potential for flash flooding.

2.7 **Brown roof -** Very similar to green roofs. The main difference is that whilst green roofs are often installed partly for the aesthetic value, brown roofs have greater environmental benefit, attracting local plants and wildlife and providing sustainable drainage.

2.8 **Habitat -** The specific surroundings within which an organism lives. The surroundings include physical factors such as temperature, moisture and light, together with biological factors such as the presence of food or predator organisms.

2.9 **Invasive non-native species** - Plants or animals that have been introduced to a place where they do not naturally occur, are known as non-native species. Many of these live happily in the UK without causing a problem, but a few have become what's called invasive.

2.10 **Person in control (PIC)** - The LFB manager with day to day responsibility for a given LFB premises or defined parts of the LFB premises (see Policy number 490 – Person in control of LFB premises).

2.11 **Contract administrator** - The person engaged or appointed to monitor, inspect, or otherwise control work carried out by a contractor. This is an employee of LFB who has the day to day responsibility for the contract work both in terms of management and control. For every contract entered into by the LFB, a contract administrator must be appointed.

2.12 **Contractor** - This is any person (or organisation), including agency staff or volunteers, who enters into a contract with London Fire Brigade to under take any activity for or on behalf of LFB. For the purposes of this policy, the contractor is one that has one or more of their employees working under the contract, for some contracts, the contractor may be just one self-employed person.

# 3 Introduction

3.1 LFB is committed to sustainable development and environmental protection principles as set in Policy number 897 - Sustainable development policy and Policy number 677 - Environment policy. We recognise the need to both mitigate the negative impact of our activities on biodiversity and where possible enhance the ecological value, where we have direct or indirect control.

3.2 Through the Single Environment Plan it is recognised that biodiversity protection and enhancement can offer a range of benefits for our organisation which include:

(a) Protection and enhancement of open spaces, wildlife and habitats.

(b) Alleviation of the effects of climate change through habitat creation.

(c) Supporting social regeneration, making our stations a more attractive and inviting community resource by maintaining or enhancing the biodiversity present on our premises.

3.3 Trees, shrubs and vegetation can, in some cases, improve outside air quality and reduce air pollution form traffic as they can remove polluting gasses and particulates from the atmosphere, especially on busy roads.

3.4 It is recognised that many of our stations and offices have outdoor space, with ecological, aesthetic, and amenity value to both our staff and the community we serve. This ranges from simple grass verges to the front of stations, to gardens within the station grounds.

3.5 Adding indoor plants to your site could have positive health benefits. All indoors plants are able to purify indoor air to some degree through their normal photosynthesis processes, but some are found to be more beneficial than others in removing harmful household toxins (see appendix 6).

3.6 This policy supports low maintenance and low impact gardens at stations, with new planting carried out in movable containers (information and guidance found in appendices 1 and 2).

# 4 LFB staff - guidance

4.1 When seeking to establish a garden, please complete the garden proposal form in Appendix 1 and send to the gardens mailbox- gardens@london-fire.gov.uk for approval.

4.2 If seeking to change existing garden beds, contact gardens@london-fire.gov.uk prior to any changes taking place.

4.3 PFI Stations , please complete the garden proposal form in Appendix 1 and send to the gardens mailbox- GARDENS gardens@london-fire.gov.uk for approval.

4.4 Aim to have plants that are attractive to pollinating bees and insects, in flower from early spring to late autumn (Appendix 5). Winter flowering plants can also be of benefit.

4.5 Take reasonable care for the health, safety and well-being of themselves and of others who may be affected by what they do at work.

4.6 In gardens cultivated by LFB staff, water plants from stored rainwater wherever possible.

4.7 Ensure that any redundant hose or broken equipment (excluding all other operational equipment) is not upcycled to planters, pots or other garden items without prior permission from Operations Support Group or other asset owner.

4.8 Report immediately the presence of any invasive non-native species which are not being managed, via the Property Portal or the Property helpdesk

(LFBPropertyHelpdesk@Bellrockgroup.co.uk or via 89100 option 2). (guidance on common invasive non-native plant species is given in Appendix 4) and never attempt to manage these personally.

4.9 When planting, make sure cover is not provided to would-be intruders, which could compromise security.

4.10 Ensure Policy number787 - Work at height on LFB premises is followed correctly.

4.11 Pesticides and herbicides are not to be used on any garden areas, including slug pellets. See Appendix 2 for some natural alternatives.

4.12 Ensure any fixings or fixtures do not place undue loading to LFB property, including decking and brackets, this may cause potential structural problems.

4.13 Electrical works are not to be carried out by any LFB staff.

4.14 Ensure that any water features, ponds or irrigation systems are not connected to the premises water supplies (so as to comply with legislation for the prevention of Legionnaires disease).

# 5 Contractors and Technical Service Support- guidance

5.1 Ensuring that any garden spaces which have a possible risk of falls from height are identified and recorded in section 4 of the premises logbook and risk assessed in accordance with Policy number 787- Work at height on LFB premises.

5.2 Obtaining and retaining suitable and sufficient information from contractors and sub-contractors who carry out work on any LFB green spaces and/or invasive non-native species, that demonstrates they have the necessary knowledge, qualifications, skills and suitable experience to carry out maintenance work in accordance with this policy.

5.3 Carrying out effective monitoring of property related work on any LFB green spaces and/or invasive non-native species.

5.4 Responsibly managing and maintaining all LFB grounds in a way that protects and where possible enhances, existing ecological value.

5.5 Ensuring that when work is being planned, and a species of ecological value is identified, habitat/species action plans are developed to protect and enhance any key habitats/species found to be within our ownership.

5.6 Recognising and encourage actions to be taken to enhance the ecological value of the site as a result of any maintenance or construction work.

5.7 Ensuring there have been suitable enquiries to confirm that all the parties involved in work on any LFB green spaces and/or invasive non-native species can demonstrate the required knowledge, experience and skills to undertake their tasks without risks to ecological value.

5.8 The responsibilities of contract administrators are comprehensively defined in Policy number 309 - Managing contractor's policy and guidance. In addition, contract administrators must make reasonable efforts to inform local staff before removal or replacement of garden features, outlining the changes to be made and the reason for the changes.

5.9 Ensure any existing garden features are not removed or changed without prior consultation with the Person in Charge or Sustainable Development Team in their absence.

# 6 Invasive non-native species

6.1 An invasive non-native species is any non-native animal or plant that has the ability to spread causing damage to the environment, the economy, our health and the way we live (See Appendix 4).

6.2 A number of our sites have Japanese Knotweed, which is being managed. This is the only invasive non-native species currently found on LFB sites.

6.3 If you identify any of the invasive non-native species mentioned in Appendix 4, contact the Property Portal or the Property helpdesk (LFBPropertyHelpdesk@Bellrockgroup.co.uk or via 89100 option 2). for professional management and do not try and remove or manage it yourself.

# 7 Green and brown roofs

7.1 Green and brown roofs (also known as living roofs) have a wide range of benefits including; reduced rainwater runoff; enhanced roof insulation properties; attractive visual appearance and encourage biodiversity.

7.2 The living roofs on LFB sites are mainly brown roofs. The main aim of brown roofs is to encourage biodiversity by maximising the number of species living on the rooftop and to provide a habitat for a specific species (e.g. a threatened species living on a brownfield site that a building is being constructed on).

7.3 It is a general misconception that the term "brown roof" describes the colour of the roof, because brown roofs are created using local soil and spoil to provide the substrate for the roof, giving the roof a brown colour. However, over time, plant species will grow over this substrate and the end result will be a green-coloured roof.

7.4 You cannot plant on the green or brown roof at your site, as they are designed specifically to aid with drainage and biodiversity, but you can still introduce a garden using pots and planters if you are limited on space (see Appendix 2).

# 8 References

- London Fire Brigade's Single Environment Plan.
- Policy number 897- Sustainable Development Policy.
- Policy number 490 - Person in control of LFB premises.
- Policy number 787 - Work at height on LFB premises.
- Policy number 309 - Managing contractor's policy and guidance.
- LFB Standard Station Design Brief– clause 7.23.
- GB Non-Native species secretariat website.
- British Beekeepers Association- local contacts.
- Royal Horticultural Society website.

# Appendix 1 – Garden Proposal Form

A version to save and complete can be found here: Gardens Proposal Form.

Before completing this form, please read this policy fully and contact the Gardens mailbox for any enquiries.

Please complete the relevant section of the proposal form.

Ensure the person in control of the site (Station Commander or Site Manager) has read and signed the declaration.

# Appendix 2 – Suggested garden features

**Bees**

**Risk assessments, conducted with the British Bee Keeping Association, have identified a number of issues, and advised that Beehives are not appropriate to be located at an operational fire station, however, bees and other pollinators can be encouraged by:**

- Flowers provide pollen and nectar for bees, butterflies and other insects. Bees and butterflies are pollinators and perform the vital task of fertilisation – seed and fruit production would drop dramatically without them.
- Choose plants that provide pollen and nectar for as long a season as possible.
- Installing nest boxes containing cardboard tubes or hollow plant stems, or holes drilled in blocks of wood will provide nest sites for some species of solitary bees.
- Nests are available from garden centres or you can make your own (holes/tubes should be in a mixture of sizes with a diameter of 2 – 8mm / (116 – 516 in)).
- You can also support local beekeepers by adopting a hive. You can find your local beekeeping association here.

**Birds**

- Birds can play a vital role in the garden's ecosystem, as pest controllers of everything from snails to aphids and eating any fallen fruits and berries.

**Dead wood**

- Decaying wood provides an ever rarer habitat to a range of specialist wildlife that is growing increasingly uncommon, such a stag and bark beetles and their grubs, and many species of fungi, while also providing cover and hibernation sites.
- Any unstained or unpainted wood can be used, although big, natural logs are best, ideally partly buried. Artfully arranged, log piles can look quite architectural and rustic, though many prefer to tuck them out of sight.

**Plant types**

**There are 3 ideal groups of low maintenance plants:**

- Shrubs- There are many varieties of slow-growing shrubs and evergreens that add size, stature and a colourful range of seasonal flowers and foliage to the garden.
- Grasses- They are the ultimate low-maintenance perennials. You can forget staking, tying up, or deadheading. They only need cutting down once a year.
- Conifers- Conifers provide year-round shape, texture and colour - some change and take on different shades in winter.

**Bulbs**

- Bulbs are the ultimate 'no work' option. You only need to plant them once - three times their own depth is the rule - and they come up year after year.

- Go for spring, summer and autumn types that don't have a lot of floppy foliage that looks messy once the flowers have finished e.g. snowdrops, crocus, cyclamen.

**Trees**

- Many hardy trees and shrubs are suitable for container growing.
- When choosing a container ensure it is large enough to house the rootball of your tree and has plenty of drainage holes. Do not put a small tree in a very large container; instead pot up the plant in stages, and remember that may need protection from extreme cold.

**Grow your own**

- You can grow various fruit and vegetables in window boxes, pots or grow bags, select pots at least a foot in diameter for growing herbs. For larger crops, use pots at least 16 inches wide and deep, and preferably larger, so roots have room to spread.
- Some easy options for beginners to start to grow your own could be; tomato's, herbs, onions and garlic, further help and guidance can be found here: Grow Your Own.

# Appendix 3 – Garden maintenance

**Container Planting:**

- Almost any type of plant can be grown in a container. Generally, the bigger the pot and the plant, the easier it is to care for. Large planting containers hold water for longer and grouped containers make watering easier.
- Choose a robust container with multiple holes in the base, ideal to allow excess water to drain out.
- When placing containers in their final position consider placing them on pot feet so that excess water drains freely away.
- Further information can be found on the Royal Horticultural Society website: Containers.

**Watering:**

- Water is a limited and valuable resource, but is also essential for plant growth, collecting and storing rainwater for re-use is the best option.
- It is better to water the garden before drought sets in, to keep the soil moisture levels even and avoid soil moisture deficits building up.
- Further information can be found on the Royal Horticultural Society website: Watering.

**Weeding:**

- All weeds can be controlled without weed killers by manual removal, smothering and using weed barriers.
- Weeds can be controlled whenever they are troublesome, which is usually in the spring and summer months.
- Further information can be found on the Royal Horticultural Society website: Weeding.

**Composting:**

- Stations with gardens are reminded not to put used soil and large amounts of garden waste in the food recycling stream. However stations are encouraged to set up composting options for garden waste where possible.
- Composting is a great way of dealing with kitchen and garden waste, plus it produces compost that can be used as an excellent soil improver.
- It is important that the site is not subjected to extreme temperature and moisture and getting the right balance of composting materials (avoid letting any one material dominate the heap). Layer materials, include scrunched up newspaper and tea bags.
- Further information can be found on the Royal Horticultural Society website: Composting.

**Worm Composting:**

- Worm composting is an efficient method to recycle food waste and other organic material into compost and a concentrated fertiliser, by using worms.
- Further information can be found on the Royal Horticultural Society website: Worm Composting.

**Natural Pesticides:**

- As an alternative to pesticides, don't forget flowers! Marigolds planted in amongst vegetables will help ward off pests and attract beneficial insects.
- Further information can be found on the Royal Horticultural Society website: Organic Gardening.

# Appendix 4 – Common invasive non-native plants guide

The following species should not be intentionally planted on Brigade premises, and any suspected presence of these plants should be reported to the Property Portal or the Property helpdesk (LFBPropertyHelpdesk@Bellrockgroup.co.uk or via 89100 option 2).option 2.

| Species | Description | Appearance | Info Sheet |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Japanese Knotweed**<br><br>**This has been found at: Croydon, Erith, Forest Hill, Barnet and Hayes** | An ornamental garden plant, that has caused serious problems in a range of habitats – particularly roadsides, riverbanks and derelict land – by displacing native flora and even causing structural damage.<br>**Avoid pulling stems - report immediately to the Property Portal or the Property helpdesk (LFBPropertyHelpdesk@Bellrockgroup.co.uk or via 89100 option 2).** | Japanese knotweed forms dense clumps with fleshy, red/green shoots, 2-3m tall, which have hollow green stems with red/purple flecks. Leaves are green, heart or shield-shaped with a flat base, up to 120mm long. Creamy clusters of flowers are borne on the tips of most stems in late summer. The root system consists of rhizomes which are orange/yellow when cut. | Japanese Knotweed |

| Other invasive non-native plants to be aware of | Info Sheet |
|---|---|
| **Giant Hogweed**<br><br>**Health Hazard: Plant Sap is Poisonous**<br>**Do Not Touch - report immediately to the Property Portal or the Property helpdesk (LFBPropertyHelpdesk@Bellrockgroup.co.uk or via 89100 option 2).** | Giant Hogweed |
| **Himalayan Balsam** | Himalayan Balsam |
| **Parrot's Feather** | Parrot's Feather |
| **Floating Pennywort** | Floating Pennywort |
| **Water Primrose** | Water Primrose |
| **Rhododendron** | Rhododendron |

# Appendix 5 – Plants to attract wildlife

| Flowering plants for attracting wildlife | Attracts Bees | Attracts Butterflies | Attracts Birds | Container planting |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Summer** | | | | |
| Raspberries/ Blackberries | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Broad beans | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Runner beans | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Alyssum | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Allium | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Borage | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Campanula | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Chives | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Cornflower | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Echium | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Fennel | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Foxglove | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Geranium | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Hebe | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Lavender | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Marigold | | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Monarda | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Dog Rose | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Mexican Feather Grass | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Sweet William | | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Verbena bonariensis | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Sage | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Rosemary | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Thyme | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Oregano | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| **Late summer/autumn** | | | | |
| Buddleja | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Catmint | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Dahlia | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Escallonia | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |

| Flowering plants for attracting wildlife | Attracts Bees | Attracts Butterflies | Attracts Birds | Container planting |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Late summer/autumn cont** | | | | |
| Echinops | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Hebe | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Hollyhock | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Ivy | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Lavatera (Mallow) | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Honeysuckle | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Panicum | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Scabious | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Sedum | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Sunflower | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Verbena bonariensis | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| **Spring** | | | | |
| Blackcurrants/Redcurrants | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Gooseberries | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Aubrieta | | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Bergenia | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Bluebells | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Crocus | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Daphne mezereum | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Flowering Currant | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Forget-me-not | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Grape Hyacinth | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Hawthorn | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Holly | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Lungwort | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Pyracantha | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Heather | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Rowan | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Snowdrop | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Wallflower | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Wisteria | ✓ | | | ✓ |

# Appendix 6 – Indoor plants to improve air quality

| Species | Description |
|---|---|
| Aloe | This easy-to-grow, sun-loving succulent helps clear formaldehyde and benzene, which can be a by-product of chemical-based cleaners, paints and more. |
| Spider plant | With lots of rich foliage and tiny white flowers, the spider plant battles benzene, formaldehyde, carbon monoxide and xylene, a solvent used in the leather, rubber and printing industries. |
| Gerbera daisy | This bright, flowering plant is effective at removing trichloroethylene, from dry cleaning. It's also good for filtering out the benzene that comes with inks. |
| Snake plant | Also known as mother-in-law's tongue, this plant is one of the best for filtering out formaldehyde, which is common in cleaning products, toilet paper, tissues and personal care products. |
| Chrysanthemum | The colourful flowers help filter out benzene, which is commonly found in glue, paint, plastics and detergent. |

# Document history

## Assessments

An equality, sustainability or health, safety and welfare impact assessment and/or a risk assessment was last completed on:

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| EIA | 31/07/2013 | SDIA | **H** - 24/03/2020 | HSWIA | 24/03/2020 | RA | N/A |

## Audit trail

Listed below is a brief audit trail, detailing amendments made to this policy/procedure.

| Page/para nos. | Brief description of change | Date |
|---|---|---|
| Page 3, para 4.5<br>Page 4, para 5.4 | Updated '125 sites across London' to 'over 100 sites across London'.<br>New paragraphs (f) and (h) added, all remaining paragraphs adjusted accordingly. | 07/03/2014 |
| Page 11 | 'Subjects list' table - template update. | 04/12/2014 |
| Page 6, para 5.6 | New sentence added to paragraph. | 13/08/2015 |
| Throughout | Major changes have been made throughout so please re-read the policy to familiarise yourself with the content.<br>Various amendments from consulting with internal stakeholders (TSS, Central Operations, Health and Safety, Communications). | 19/01/2017 |
| Page 2, para 2.12<br>Page 4, para 8 | The term 'LFEPA' replaced by 'London Fire Brigade' in both paragraphs. | 03/04/2018 |
| Throughout | Minor changes have been made throughout. | 02/12/2019 |
| Page 1<br><br>Throughout | Owner title has been amended to reflect the changes in organisational structure and governance due to the abolition of LFEPA.<br>This policy has been reviewed as current with no other changes made to the content. | 24/03/2020 |
| Throughout | Reviewed as current with changes made throughout, please re-read the policy to familiarise yourself with the content. | 20/04/2023 |

## Subject list

You can find this policy under the following subjects.

| | |
|---|---|
| Environment | Gardens |
| Plants | |
| | |

## Freedom of Information Act exemptions

This policy/procedure has been securely marked due to:

| **Considered by:** (responsible work team) | **FOIA exemption** | **Security marking classification** |
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