



Grounds Maintenance Policy

Purpose and scope

This policy outlines the Estate's approach to grounds maintenance on Dulwich Estate-owned communal garden spaces and amenity land throughout the Estate.

Our goal is to ensure our grounds maintenance meets best practice standards and supports wildlife while respecting the enjoyment of communal grounds by residents. We seek to achieve a high standard of quality in our management of all the gardens and amenity land across the Estate to create an exceptional neighbourhood and demonstrate respect and empathy for people and our local environment.

Sustainable Grounds Maintenance Practices of The Dulwich Estate

The Estate's sustainable grounds maintenance programme is to ensure the communal and amenity gardens are maintained with awareness of landscape scale effects, nature conservation and climate change to ensure its longevity, balancing health & safety, aesthetics, biodiversity, and long-term resilience of the land.

Maintenance gardeners are trusted to make the most appropriate decisions, in line with this policy. They will be cognisant of the season and have botanical knowledge which informs decisions on each site. Sometimes that will be simply to observe, build and protect habitats and make the decision to intervene no further.

We encourage our gardeners to speak with residents to gather feedback on wildlife observations, wishes around planting, mowing regimes and habitat creation, so that where possible, these can be considered.

When making any changes to how we manage our green spaces, we will always strive to communicate proactively with residents about expected outcomes and benefits. The main communications channels are the [residents' portal](#) and Residents' Associations. We will also take on board specific feedback on landscaping designs, local plants and wildlife, and residents' own gardening activities and plans.

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Grounds Maintenance Tasks

Grass Maintenance

Goal: Well-maintained amenity grassland kept neat throughout the year, and defined areas of grassland managed for conservation and biodiversity.

Lawns are used for many different activities and will be treated according to need and purposes. Grasslands will therefore be managed in line with their land classification based on their characteristics (general amenity, spring bulb, conservation amenity and woodland edge).

In areas of conservation amenity and woodland edge, mowing will follow a more traditional meadow management frequency, adopting a 'No-Mow-Season' (April – September) rather than a one-month 'No-Mow-May'. This will allow wildflowers and bulbs to establish and seed. Areas of ornamental lawn (general amenity) will be maintained as such year-round and will not be included in a No-Mow-May regime.

Ground compaction will be managed through various means depending on the grassland classification. Conservation amenity areas can naturally de-compact through reduced footfall as part of traditional meadow management, but general amenity lawn areas will require mechanical intervention to create aeration.

Shrub and herbaceous beds

Goal: Well-managed shrubs and herbaceous beds throughout the year.

Shrubs and herbaceous plants that need to be removed will be replaced with species that will be selected for climate resilience, promote increased biodiversity and are in keeping with the site's characteristics.

Roses and rose beds

Goal: Appropriately managed species, including hybrid, floribunda, climbing and rambling roses.

Roses can significantly contribute towards both a site's aesthetics and provide benefits to pollinators. Whenever new roses are planted, native and pollinator-friendly species will be selected.

Hedgerow

Goal: *Well managed hedges that provide habitat in addition to amenity.*

In addition to screening and defining boundaries, hedgerows can provide an important habitat and a food source for wildlife.

The Estate's ambition is to expand the length of hedgerow across the area. In the event that hedgerow plants need to be removed, they will be replaced with species which will be selected for climate resilience, increased biodiversity support and which are in keeping with the site's characteristics.

Outside of exceptional circumstances, hedgerows will not be pruned in bird nesting season (March – September).

Trees

Goal: *The successful establishment of saplings and semi-mature trees through the application of good horticultural and arboricultural practice and standards.*

The overall management of The Dulwich Estate's tree stock is detailed within its Tree Management Policy.

Within the scope of grounds maintenance, the key element of practice related to trees is to reduce compaction and damage to tree stems whilst mowing. To achieve this, a 50cm radius will be maintained around the base of trees outside of classified woodland. For trees in general amenity lawn, this radius will comprise a mulch ring and for those in conservation amenity areas it will comprise unmown grass.

Land Management Practices

Minimising the use of herbicide and insecticide

Goal: To minimise the use of harmful chemicals related to weed and pest eradication.

The Dulwich Estate does not support the use of herbicide and insecticide outside of the mandatory treatment of selected species such as Japanese Knotweed and Oak Processionary Moth.

Managing weeds, pest and diseases

Weeds

Goal: Eradication of noxious/invasive species as soon as practicably possible.

Any plant can be classified as a weed, even a rose if it is in an undesired location. The consideration is whether the weed needs to be removed completely because it is causing a problem where it is growing, or if keeping a check on its spread is enough, particularly if it is attractive and beneficial to wildlife. This will be informed by whether the land is designated as general amenity or conservation amenity. Weeds growing within paving and hard landscaped areas will be removed.

The Dulwich Estate does not support the use of herbicide in treatment of invasive weeds such as dandelions, ivy and brambles.

Moss

Goal: To encourage moss as part of conservation habitat management and to remove it from undesired locations.

Mosses are integral in species-rich conservation grassland creating a valuable habitat and food sources for wildlife including birds and invertebrates. However, they are undesirable on hard surfaces and ornamental lawns resulting in a spongy, patchy and uneven appearance.

Moss growing within paving and hard landscaped and ornamental lawn areas will therefore be removed. It will be retained in conservation grassland and woodland edge.

Plant disease management.

Goal: To minimise the risk of spread of plant-based disease

Diseases occur in plants for a variety of reasons. Some diseases spread when a plant is stressed as it has not been planted in a location with the right environmental conditions to support its growth. Some plants are particularly prone to certain diseases. Climate change and international transport are also increasing the number of plant diseases we encounter in the UK.

Good biosecurity practices are expected from all our gardeners. In addition to careful plant procurement practices, gardeners use tool hygiene practices that reduce the chances of spreading soil and plant-based diseases.

Should a plant disease be encountered, our maintenance gardeners will respond by notifying the Estate's Tree and Landscape Manager who will decide whether the case requires selective pruning or removal of the infected plant and replacement with an alternative species. Sometimes this practice can seem brutal, but better this than inadvertently spreading the disease.

Tidiness

Leaves, Fruit, Seeds & Nuts

Goal: To manage the natural seasonal fall effectively.

Fruit, seeds and nuts provide both food for wildlife and often seasonal splashes of colour throughout the year, and leaf fall from deciduous trees and shrubs is a natural occurrence in the autumn season. Therefore, the Dulwich Estate will continue to include fruit and nut trees within our selection range for new planting and will not prune vegetation purely to abate leaf and seed fall.

In conservation areas, allowing leaves to remain where they have fallen on planted beds is normally accepted as a good way of adding leaf-mould to soil. One exception is the habit of removing them where bulbs have been planted, if there is a risk of slugs.

However, leaves will be removed from areas where they pose a health and safety risk, (e.g. footpaths) or if they are blocking light from reaching any grass or low growing plants/ground cover which will continue to grow through the winter season.

Litter

Goal: To maintain litter-free communal areas for residents to enjoy.

Promoting and maintaining a litter-free area reduces the rate of littering.

Litter will be collected in line with a site's frequency of visit and maintenance schedule.

The Dulwich Estate is supportive of residents who wish to undertake community litter picks on their site.

Dog and fox mess

Goal: To minimise the amount of dog and fox mess in communal areas.

In addition to the nuisance created for local residents by dog and fox mess, it can change the nutrient levels of soils, particularly nitrogen, which leads to an increase in invasive weeds and fewer wildflowers in affected areas.

Dog owners are therefore expected to clean up after their dogs, even in woodland areas, and dispose of the bags properly.

The Estate encourages everyone to play their part in securing waste to prevent scavenging by foxes, so that the damage to plant-life related to the waste from the fox population can be reduced.

Additional Sustainability Practices

Goal: To contribute positively to one of the Estate's overarching strategic aims of investing in our natural environment

Additional habitat creation: -

Our gardeners will in some locations create additional habitat in line with the advice under the local nature recovery plan. This may include log stacks / piles and standing dead wood for insects, and leaf piles for hibernating / wintering animals. Waste from tree work on the Estate will be used for this purpose. A combination of standing and lying wood is preferred where possible so that the widest variety of species benefit. In public spaces, where there is a risk of standing wood collapsing over time as it rots, gardeners will intervene and make safe where appropriate.

Increasing food growing on the estate: -

Where replacing lost trees and shrubs, one of our considerations will be the potential to plant native fruit trees and fruit bushes to support public food availability for this and future generations.

Resident nature champions: -

We encourage the residents on the Estate to support biodiversity enhancement initiatives, to take up volunteering opportunities, for example with London Wildlife Trust and take part in citizen science to log plant and wildlife sightings to track population improvements over time.

Communication, Partnership and Responsibilities

Goal: Commitment to transparency and communication on good practice garden maintenance and associated costs for residents, and working in partnership with each other

Communication

Residents will be notified of any reactive gardening works via work orders posted on the residents' portal.

Requests from residents for site visits or for additional grounds maintenance works on communal residential land should be raised via the portal, and where present, channelled through the relevant Residents' Association.

Working in Partnership

The Estate is responsible for the care and maintenance of the communal residential amenity land and therefore residents must not carry out any works without documented pre-agreement with the Estate's Tree and Landscape Manager.

In some areas, however, residents may wish to take on the long-term management of selected areas of their communal spaces. In areas where this is agreed, the residents will enter a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with The Dulwich Estate which will outline responsibilities and duties for both parties, to enable clear understanding of these, and to ensure the management of the site is consistent with the needs of the site.

