

Gardens Policy



June 2026



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This policy should be read in conjunction with our:

- [Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy](#)
- [Complaints Policy](#)
- [Repairs & Maintenance Policy](#)
- [Health & Safety Policy](#)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy explains how Thame & District Housing Association (TDHA) manages and maintains its gardens, and how residents can enjoy and be involved in them.
- 1.2 It supports our mission to provide comfortable, safe and affordable homes, deliver excellent services, and encourage residents to play an active role in their communities.
- 1.3 Our gardens are an important part of our homes and communities. They contribute to residents' health, wellbeing and independence, create opportunities for social interaction, and help foster a sense of pride in where people live.
- 1.4 Access to outdoor space and nature can support both physical and mental wellbeing, particularly for residents who spend more time at home.

2. Purpose and Scope

- 2.1 This policy sets out how TDHA maintains and manages communal gardens, supports residents to enjoy outdoor spaces, and enables safe and appropriate involvement in gardening. It also promotes wellbeing, independence, community interaction, biodiversity and sustainable practice.
- 2.2 The policy applies to:
 - All communal garden areas across TDHA sites
 - All residents and visitors
 - Staff and contractors involved in grounds maintenance

3. Our Approach

- 3.1 TDHA takes a practical, resident-focused approach to garden management. We recognise that gardens are not just physical spaces, but environments that support wellbeing, independence and social connection. We will:
 - Maintain gardens to a good and consistent standard
 - Ensure they are safe, accessible and inclusive
 - Support residents who wish to take part in gardening
 - Encourage shared activity, including Gardening and Nature Clubs, and involvement from local schools in intergenerational activities and work experience.
- 3.2 Our approach balances well-maintained and attractive spaces with a more natural style that supports wildlife and biodiversity.

4. Use of Gardens

- 4.1 All gardens are communal and for the benefit of all residents. No individual has ownership of any area.
- 4.2 TDHA provides shared garden furniture in agreed locations. This is positioned to balance accessibility, safety and privacy and should not be moved. Residents may use their own portable furniture where appropriate, provided it:
 - Is removed after use
 - Does not obstruct access or emergency routes
 - Does not damage garden areas
- 4.3 Residents are always asked to be considerate of others, including keeping noise at a reasonable level (particularly after 9pm) and respecting the privacy of nearby homes.
- 4.4 Where damage is caused to gardens, costs may be recharged where appropriate.

5. Gardening and Resident Involvement

- 5.1 TDHA employs contractors to maintain gardens to a consistent, safe and manageable standard. We recognise that gardening can support wellbeing, promote independence and routine, provide a sense of purpose, and create opportunities for social interaction.
- 5.2 Residents are encouraged to get involved either individually (with agreement) or through Gardening and Nature Clubs, which support shared activity, learning and social connection. 5.4 In some cases, areas may be agreed for resident involvement. These areas remain communal and accessible to all residents, and all activity must be agreed in advance to ensure safety and alignment with maintenance arrangements.

6. Practical Arrangements

- 6.1 Residents taking part in gardening should:
 - Work in agreed areas
 - Use suitable, non-invasive planting
 - Maintain and water what they plant
- 6.2 Pots and planters must not be placed on lawns but may be placed in agreed locations on hard surfaces. They must not obstruct pathways and should be kept in good condition and appropriate in appearance.
- 6.3 Residents are responsible for funding their own plants and materials unless otherwise agreed.

- 6.4 TDHA will maintain trees, shrubs, lawns, core landscaping and shared features such as ponds.
- 6.5 Some sites offer specialist facilities, such as greenhouses, for residents to use.
- 6.6 Where a resident-managed area is not maintained, TDHA may resume responsibility to ensure overall standards are upheld.

7. Supporting Nature & Biodiversity

- 7.1 TDHA is committed to supporting nature and biodiversity within its gardens. This includes:
 - Participating in initiatives such as No Mow May
 - Encouraging wildlife-friendly planting
 - Supporting habitats for birds, hedgehogs and other species
- 7.3 We take a balanced approach to ensure gardens remain safe, accessible and attractive, while supporting biodiversity in a practical and proportionate way.

8. Health, Safety & Risk

- 8.1 TDHA will ensure gardens are maintained in a way that is safe for residents, visitors and staff. This includes maintaining safe access and clear pathways, managing trees, ponds and other features appropriately, and overseeing any resident gardening activity.
- 8.2 Residents must seek agreement before undertaking gardening to ensure activities are safe, covered by appropriate insurance and consistent with risk management requirements.
- 8.3 Staff and contractors are expected to identify and report any safety concerns during routine visits.

9. Working with Residents

- 9.1 We recognise that gardens are most successful when shaped with residents. We will listen to feedback and ideas, support resident-led initiatives where practical, and communicate clearly about any changes or restrictions.
- 9.2 Our aim is to create an environment where residents feel able to enjoy outdoor space in ways that suit them, take part in activities if they wish, and spend time outside comfortably and safely.

10. Responsibilities and Decision-Making

10.1 Responsibilities are as follows:

- **Residents:** Use gardens considerately and seek agreement before gardening
- **Scheme Managers:** Support residents, identify issues and facilitate involvement
- **Property & Maintenance Team / Contractors:** Maintain gardens and ensure safety and quality standards
- **Chief Executive / EMC:** Provide oversight of more complex or higher-impact decisions

10.2 Decisions will be practical and proportionate, balancing resident wellbeing and enjoyment with safety, accessibility, cost and consistency across TDHA.

11. Monitoring and Review

11.1 TDHA will monitor garden standards, resident feedback and participation in gardening activities.

11.2 This information will be used to improve our approach, identify good practice and ensure resources are used effectively.

11.3 This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if required.

12. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

12.1 Residents who spend more time at home, including older residents and those with health or mobility needs, may be more affected by the quality and accessibility of outdoor spaces.

12.2 Access to safe, attractive gardens can support wellbeing, independence and social connection, particularly for those with limited mobility or fewer opportunities to access other outdoor environments.

12.3 We take this into account through resident feedback, day-to-day contact, scheme manager insight and wider evidence, and aim to ensure our gardens are accessible, welcoming and supportive of different needs, while balancing safety, cost and practical delivery in line with TDHA's values.