

GARDEN BONFIRES

Bonfire – “a fire for burning bones”.

While modern bonfires may not be so gruesome they may still cause smoke and smell problems for others.

WHAT IS WRONG WITH A BONFIRE?

The smoke and smell can be irritating to neighbours. Smoke, smuts and smell can prevent the enjoyment of the house and garden, and stop your neighbours hanging out washing. The smoke can also reduce visibility on roads.

Bonfires release gases, harmful to both man and the atmosphere. The smoke can aggravate breathing and heart problems. Even if the imminent health risk is slight the bonfire will add to the already high levels of air pollution.

Air quality in the UK often reaches the headlines – do you really want to make it worse?

THE LEGAL POSITION

Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 it is an offence to cause a nuisance through the generation of “smoke emitted from premises so as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance”.

If an Environmental Health Officer from the Council is satisfied a nuisance exists an abatement notice can be served prohibiting future nuisance. Fines of up to £5,000 can be imposed if there is a further nuisance from domestic bonfires after a notice has been served.

If the fire is only occasional or you are troubled by a series of bonfires from different neighbours each of whom only burn occasionally, this will not be considered a nuisance because no individual can be held responsible. In this situation encouragement should be given to use alternative means of disposal.

WHAT'S THE ALTERNATIVE?

Compost as much garden rubbish as possible. A properly built compost heap will be able to deal with most garden waste. Kitchen scraps (except meat and fish) and even small quantities of paper and cardboard can also be added. A free leaflet on composting can be obtained from the Environmental Services Department on 01727 853644.

Some household waste such as newspaper, magazines, plastic bottles and textiles can now be recycled. There are numerous “banks” across the district where these items can be taken. Contact 01727 819623 for details of these sites.

One bag of garden refuse per week will be collected by the Council's contractor as part of the normal refuse collection service. Garden rubbish can also be disposed of at either of the Household Waste Sites located at Dark Lane, Harpenden and St Albans Road, Sandridge, both of which are open 7 days a week, opening at 10.00am.

Collections of bulky refuse can be arranged by contacting St Albans 01727 853644. There is a charge made for this

service, but this is waived if you are in receipt of certain benefits.

IF YOU STILL MUST HAVE A FIRE

Think of your neighbours before lighting a bonfire.

Ensure that only dry material is burnt, as this will produce the minimum amount of smoke.

Do not light a bonfire within an hour of sunset, as temperature inversion conditions will keep the smoke near ground level.

Never add any household rubbish such as plastic, aerosols, batteries, foam filled furniture, oil or petrol to the fire. Do not leave a bonfire unattended.

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Fact Sheet

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