

FRONT GARDEN POLICY

Policy Sponsor:	Director of Operations
Approving Body:	Leadership Team
Date Approved:	December 2018
Date of Last Review:	May 2026
Date of Next Review:	May 2029

Introduction

For homeowners and tenants living in Port Sunlight, the front garden of properties remains in the ownership of Port Sunlight Village Trust, (PSVT), who are responsible for its general care and upkeep.

PSVT does however encourage residents to take pride in their front garden and allow them to carry out complementary planting and light maintenance which will improve the garden and generally enhance the appearance of the village.

This policy is written in conjunction with the Residents Landscape Advisory Group.

Statement of Intent

To ensure residents clearly understand what they can and cannot do in relation to front garden maintenance, while preserving and enhancing the landscape's significance.

The Policy

Future Works

This policy applies to all landscaped areas within the ownership of PSVT.

General principles are set out below, but for further guidance, residents may contact PSVT's Landscape Manager.

Residents may choose from a range of planting styles, including bedding displays, herbaceous plants and small shrubs. Any planting should follow these principles:

- Use plants and materials that are in keeping with the character of Port Sunlight, with a preference shown for native species that support local biodiversity.
- Choose non-invasive plants that will not grow so large that they obstruct windows or pathways.
- Select low-maintenance planting that needs minimal watering once established.
- Avoid plants that require frequent pruning to maintain their shape.
- Plants should not usually exceed one metre in height when fully grown, so avoiding any problems with natural light being excluded from houses and apartments.
- Mulching should be with an organic material such as compost or wood chip, rather than plastic membrane and stone.

Planting and garden features must not interfere with routine maintenance. The following are not allowed without prior approval:

- Planting or items that obstruct footpaths or ride-on mowing.
- Changes to paving, or the addition of ornaments.
- Removal of existing trees or shrubs without permission from the Landscape Manager and/or Director of Operations.
- Major layout changes, including altering the shape of existing turf, unless approved by PSVT in advance.

For the purposes of this policy, "inappropriate" means planting, materials or features that are not in keeping with the historic character of Port Sunlight, significantly detract from the appearance of the conservation area, interfere with maintenance activities, or present health and safety concerns.

If there are doubts over what would be suitable, the Landscape Manager or one of PSVT's Landscape Team will be happy to help.

If approval is needed requests should be submitted in writing to the Landscape Manager and PSVT will respond within 28 days. Where permission is refused, reasons will be provided in writing, and residents may request a review by the Director of Operations.

When planting, residents need to ensure the ground is well prepared, the plants are watered in and continue to be watered and weeded throughout the first growing season and particularly during dry periods. Whilst gravel and other inorganic mulch or membranes are not allowed due to complications with other maintenance tasks, a thick organic mulch such as bark chippings or compost will reduce weed growth and help the establishment of new plants.

As a general principle, PSVT's Landscape Team will not maintain areas that are being actively cared for by residents, however it may sometimes be necessary if the planting ever becomes problematic or unsightly. This will be done when the Landscape Team are maintaining the surrounding gardens of other properties, as they may not always be aware if it is being maintained or not. If it appears in need of maintenance, it may be pruned, if there are significant weeds they may be cut down and/or sprayed with herbicide.

If this guidance is not followed and there are found to be inappropriate alterations, PSVT will advise the resident and list the actions that will need to be taken in writing. If this is not done within 90 days, PSVT will arrange for this work to be completed. The resident will then be charged for this service. Any removed plants will be disposed of, and any other items (ornaments etc.) will be removed and stored for a period of 30 days.

Existing Gardens

PSVT recognises that there are many front gardens within Port Sunlight that have been altered in the past without permission, sometimes many years ago, that would not be considered in keeping, as set out above.

A record of all gardens will be made at the commencement of this policy, this will be by video recording. Residents may request a copy of the record relating to their property and may notify PSVT of any inaccuracies within 60 days of receipt of the record.

As a Conservation Area, it is important that the landscape is appropriate and does not distract from the site's significance. These areas, therefore, must be attended to. It is recognised that this may involve significant cost, or the removal of features that may have been costly.

For existing unsuitable alterations, no action will be taken by PSVT, other than to offer advice, for a period of 3 years. During this period PSVT will provide advice and guidance but will not require remedial works except where there are health, safety, access or maintenance concerns.

At the end of this period, there will be a reassessment of the condition of these areas and the effect on the landscape's significance before further action is taken.

If at this stage an area is found to still be inappropriate, PSVT will write to the resident who will be given the opportunity to carry out any works within 90 days. If this work is not carried out, PSVT will arrange for this work to be completed. Any removed plants will be disposed of, and any other items (ornaments etc.) will be removed and stored for a period of 30 days before disposal.

Residents may appeal decisions under this policy in writing within 28 days, Appeals will be considered by a senior officer not involved in the original decision. No enforcement action will be taken until any appeal has been determined.

Front Lawns

Whilst it is recognised that an individual could care for an individual lawn to a very high standard, part of the significance of the Port Sunlight Landscape is its cohesiveness, and the front lawns form an integral part of this landscape. It is therefore essential that individual residents do not perform any maintenance tasks on the lawns in PSVT's ownership at the front of their homes, including cutting, edging or using any form of pesticide or fertiliser, without prior permission from PSVT.

If a resident carries out unauthorised work on their front lawn, they will receive a letter explaining the negative effect this can have on the overall appearance of the village.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Port Sunlight Village Trust is committed to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. We treat everyone fairly according to their needs, regardless of their race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, marital or civil partnership status, age, disability or pregnancy and maternity status.

Contacting Us:

If you would like to contact us to discuss this policy or anything else, the best way to do this is by calling our main office on 0151 644 4800, we will be more than happy to assist you.

You may want to contact us in writing, our address is:

Port Sunlight Village Trust
23 King George's Drive
Port Sunlight
Wirral
CH62 5DX

If you prefer, you can contact us via email: admin@portsunlightvillage.com or you can speak to a member of our team in person by visiting us at our office.