

Bonfires & Smoke Nuisance

The Law

The Environmental Protection Section receives a large number of complaints about bonfires causing a repeated nuisance. Such nuisances need never arise if due consideration is shown to our neighbours. This leaflet explains the law and gives some suggestions to help prevent a nuisance being caused. The Environmental Protection Act 1990 allows the Local Authority to take offenders to court should their bonfires cause a nuisance to neighbours (i.e. have an unreasonable effect on the enjoyment of their home or garden). Moreover any bonfire on trade premises, which causes dark smoke, is an offence regardless of whether anybody else is affected (Section 2, Clean Air Act 1993). The fines could be up to £20,000 for each offence. Persons complaining to Environmental Protection Section will be asked to keep a diary of events to assist officers investigating the matter.

There are no byelaws that allow or prohibit burning.

Do's and Don'ts

Should you decide to have a bonfire, we recommend the following:-

DO NOT burn damp grass clippings or 'green' material as this creates thick smoke.

DO NOT burn any oily rags, rubber, plastics, damp garden waste; furniture or other materials which would create heavy smoke or toxic fumes.

DO NOT light a bonfire when your neighbours have washing drying, or are out enjoying their gardens or have windows wide open.

DO NOT light bonfires one hour before dusk, or leave them burning overnight. Choose the time of day and weather conditions that will cause the least inconvenience to neighbours.

DO NOT leave your fire to smoulder for long periods. Never leave a fire unattended. Hose it down until cold before you leave it.

DO advise your nearest neighbours before you light a bonfire so they can be prepared for any minor inconvenience that may arise.

DO burn material quickly in small quantities so the minimum amount of smoke is created. An incinerator makes this much easier.

DO choose your bonfire site carefully, well away from trees, fences and windows. Beware of attempting bonfires on very windy days as it can so easily get out of control. Have a hose-pipe and buckets of water handy just in case.

The ashes, when cold, can be raked into the soil as a useful fertiliser. Small pieces of charcoal can be included, but larger pieces should be picked out first.

Alternatives to Burning

As much as 25% of domestic rubbish can be composted. This includes fruit and vegetable peelings, grass cuttings and garden clippings which can be placed in domestic compost heaps.

The SORT IT!* collection can be used as follows:

Green bin—grass cuttings, garden waste.

Green box—waste paper, engine oil, clothes, shoes, car batteries, cans, drink cans and foil.

Shredders can be hired to make mulch from woody waste. If using a shredder be considerate as they can be very noisy.

The Council will collect up to three bulky items for a charge. Bulky waste is items that are too big to fit in your wheelie bin. If you receive Income Support, Pension Credit or Income Related Job Seekers Allowance your household is entitled to two free bulky waste collections, per household, per financial year. To obtain a price or arrange a bulky waste collection please contact our StreetCare Helpdesk on 01454 868000 who will be able to make the appropriate arrangements for you.

Civic Amenity Sites

Dean Road, Great Western Business Park, Yate; Station Road, Little Stoke; Carsons Road, Mangotsfield; Thornbury, Cooper Road down to Short Way.
Tel: 01454 868000 for more information

Free Internet access is available at all South Gloucestershire libraries

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