

Bonfire Do's & Don'ts

What you can do to avoid causing a disturbance to your neighbours

Current nuisance law is intended to protect people from a significant interference with the use and enjoyment of their property. Playing loud music, letting your dog bark incessantly or burning your garden waste when your neighbour has washing out may do just that. Show some common sense and courtesy by respecting your neighbour's circumstances, and behave towards them as you would expect them to behave towards you. The law is not intended to be totally restrictive, and recognizes that in certain circumstances our actions may well encroach upon our neighbours.

Bonfires are not the best disposal method for waste and having a bonfire should be a last resort. If you have ruled out all other disposal methods and the only way is to have a bonfire, please consider the following:

DO

- Keep the number of bonfires to an absolute minimum and only burn dry garden waste
- Warn your neighbours; let them know you are lighting bonfire as this gives them the opportunity to close windows and doors, remove washing off the line etc
- Locate the bonfire as far away from neighbours as possible
- Have a small fire – it must be controllable and hot enough to burn with minimal smoke
- Consider the weather – ideally no wind or a light breeze, blowing away from nearby houses. Monitor changes in the wind/smoke direction
- Keep the bonfire under supervision at all times and ensure that is extinguished completely, by dousing with soil or water, before you leave it.
- Keep a hose pipe or buckets of water close to hand and be ready to extinguish the fire if problems arise e.g. a sudden change of wind direction

DON'T

- Burn the following: household rubbish, rubber, oil, green garden waste, animal bedding, plastic, tyres, foam or paint - these can produce potentially toxic dark smoke which is unacceptable and might be an offence.
- Use flammable liquids such as petrol, paraffin or methylated spirits to light a bonfire or keep it burning
- Light a fire in unsuitable weather conditions - smoke hangs in the air on damp or warm, still days. If it is too windy, smoke blows into neighbours' gardens and windows and across roads
- Leave a fire unattended or leave it to smoulder - douse it with water if necessary and make sure it is out and will not continue to smoke once left
- If you are a trade or business you should not have a bonfire to dispose of your waste. Trade waste should be removed by a licensed carrier (unless it is green waste) and disposed of at a licensed site. For more information contact the Environment Agency
- Have many bonfires – neighbours are more likely to complain if you often have bonfires