



Editor: Mike McNamara - E14

Notices

Allotment Plot Waiting List

There is currently 12 people on the waiting list with 4 available plots. The number of unworked plots has also fallen dramatically and only one plot remains unnumbered; thanks to all who have helped with this.

Produce Thefts/Site Security

The committee fully understands Plot Holders frustrations about these incidents and is working hard to solve the problem as we have done in the past. A number of additional Site Security suggestions will be put forward at the next Association AGM – 25th March 2018.

Date for your Diary

As mentioned above, the Association Annual Meeting (AGM) will be held at the Oakwood Centre in Woodley on 25th March 2018 at 7.30pm.

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Important Housekeeping Points

The Main Gate – The Allotment committee would like to remind all allotment holders that you must always close and lock the main gate after entering or leaving the site.

Speed Limit – The speed limit of 5MPH seems to have been ignored by a number of Tenants recently. All Plot holders will have received a copy of a letter sent out by the council a copy of which has also now been attached to the Front Gate entrance.

January – Some To Do's

January is generally a very cold month, typically with hard frosts freezing the ground, although there are no guarantees with our fickle British weather. It's well worth taking a look over the allotment & prioritising some jobs. With that in mind; here are some suggested tasks to be thinking about for January.

- Continue to harvest winter brassicas and other veg, including carrots, cabbages and leeks, make sure you keep any netting tightly closed, also remove any yellowing leaves to prevent any disease taking hold
- Winter prune large fruit trees to control their shape and size, and to increase productivity
- Prune gooseberries and redcurrants, cutting side-shoots back to three buds from their base
- Cover rhubarb plants with a bucket or terracotta pot to force an early crop of tender long stems
- Feed spring cabbages with high-nitrogen feed to encourage leafy growth
- Plant bare-root fruit bushes, trees and canes into enriched soil, as long as the ground isn't frozen
- Get your order in for seed potatoes and start chitting them. If you leave it too long you may not be able to get the varieties you want
- Clear out your shed, and organise and clean your tools.
- Start to plan next year's crop rotation and order seeds, if you have already done so.

Items of interest

Launchpad Charity – Project Update

Launchpad project. Very productive day (18th December) with Thames Water volunteers, still smiling at the end of the session, but they felt it the day afterwards! We even managed to plant some onions!

It's been challenging weather but the work of a great bunch of hard-working guys has set a high standard for future working parties!



The next Launchpad 'Day' will be in January, date to be confirmed and we are looking for volunteers to help with this.

If you can come along for a few hours, please let us know via the usual email address at the end of this Newsletter.

Horse Manure

We have found a good source for Horse manure who will deliver to site a 2 Ton (approx.) transit tipper load for £25.00.

Manure will be well rotted, but will contain some straw/wood shavings.

Contact the normal email address (on page 4) if you want to order any Manure.

Fruit Bush Orders

Fruit bush order have arrived and will be ready for collection very soon, you will be contacted when orders can be collected.

For anyone who missed out ordering, we have a few available on a first come, first served basis. Please either email teresa.buley@sky.com or text Teresa on 07715 774215 if you are interested.

Fruit Buses available are:

Type	Variety	Price Each	Number Available
Redcurrant	Laxton No.1	£2.20	3
Blackcurrant	Ben Coman	£2.20	2
Blackcurrant	Wellington xxx	£2.20	1
Gooseberry	Careless	£2.50	5
Gooseberry	Whinham's Ind.	£2.50	5
Rhubarb	Suttons Seedless	£2.00	4

Allotment Notice Board (by the front gate)

It should be pointed out that Commercial/ Trade posters are not to be placed on the notice board without contacting the Committee.

Social Events for Summer 2019

Although the Apple Pressing Day did not get off the ground this year, the committee would like to hear from any plot holders with ideas for some social events in the Summer of 2019.

In the past we have had suggestions about holding and 'Bring & Swap' day for Seeds &

Produce; a Produce Competition Day and of course an Apple pressing day.

We would of course hold a BBQ on these events days as well.

Let's have some other suggestions (via the normal email address) and see what we can do together.

Crop Rotation

(Summary of Article from Royal Horticultural Society – RHS – www.rhs.org.uk)

The principle of crop rotation is to grow specific groups of vegetables on a different part of the vegetable plot each year. This helps to reduce a build-up of crop-specific pest and disease problems and it organises groups of crops according to their cultivation needs.

Suitable for ...

Crop rotation is used in allotment plots and kitchen gardens for most annual vegetable crops. Perennial vegetables (such as rhubarb and asparagus) do not fit into the rotation. Certain annual crops such as cucurbits (courgettes, pumpkins, squashes, marrows and cucumbers), French and runner beans, salads (endive, lettuce and chicory) and sweetcorn can be grown wherever convenient, merely avoiding growing them too often in the same place.

Plan your crop rotation before the growing season starts, and mark out the plots on the ground so you know where to plant each crop.

Benefits of crop rotation

Soil fertility: Different crops have different nutrient requirements. Changing crops annually reduces the chance of particular soil deficiencies developing as the balance of nutrients removed from the soil tends to even out over time.

Weed control: Some crops, like potatoes and squashes, with dense foliage or large leaves, suppress weeds, thus reducing maintenance and weed problems in following crops.

Pest and disease control: Soil pests and diseases tend to attack specific plant families over and over again. By rotating crops between sites the pests tend to decline in the period when their host plants are absent which helps reduce build-up of damaging populations of spores, eggs and pests. Common diseases that can be helped avoided by rotation include club root in brassicas and onion white rot.

How to do crop rotation

Divide your vegetable garden or allotment into sections of equal size (depending on how much of each crop you want to grow), plus an extra section for perennial crops, such as rhubarb and asparagus. Group your crops as below:

- ***Brassicas:*** Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, kale, kohlrabi, oriental greens, radish, swede and turnips
- ***Legumes:*** Peas, broad beans (French and runner beans suffer from fewer soil problems and can be grown wherever convenient)
- ***Onions:*** Onion, garlic, shallot, leek
- ***Potato family:*** Potato, tomato, (pepper and aubergine suffer from fewer problems and can be grown anywhere in the rotation)
- ***Roots:*** Beetroot, carrot, celeriac, celery, Florence fennel, parsley, parsnip and all other root crops, except swedes and turnips, which are brassicas

Move each section of the plot a step forward every year so that, for example, brassicas follow legumes, onions and roots, legumes, onions and roots follow potatoes and

potatoes follow brassicas.

For more information (with lots more information) from the full article, click [here](#).

From the Archives

Many thanks to long standing committee member Peter McKay for sharing these interesting articles from his collection of Gardening Tips.

We'll be adding a few more into this expanded version of coming Newsletters.

If you have any tips or items of interest, please

Knowing crop values and expected yields				
Crop and rotation group	Yield per sq. yd.	Work required	Value per sq. yd.	Rating no.
Broad beans	A	1.5 lbs	Low	£1.20
Beetroot	B	5 lbs	Med	£1
Brussel sprouts	C	3 lbs	Med	90p
Cabbage	C	3 lbs	Med/Low	60p
Calabrese	C	8 lbs	Med	£8.50
Carrots	B	7 lbs	Med/Low	£1.40
Cauliflowers	C	3 curds	High	£2.25
French beans	A	6 lbs	Low	£4.20
Leeks	A	4 lbs	Med/Low	£2
Lettuce	A/B	12	Med	£3.60
Onions	A	4 lbs	Low	60p
Peas (fresh)	A	1.5 lbs	Med/High	£1.10
Parsnips	B	8-10 lbs	Med/Low	£2
Runner beans	A	10 lbs	Very High	£8
Sweedes	C	7-10 lbs	Med	80p
Spinach	A/B	8 lbs	Med/Low	£4.80
Turnips	C	3.5 lbs	Med	£1.15
Rhubarb		10 lbs	Very Low	£2.50
Sweetcorn	B	5 cobs	Low	£1

Yields based on good garden yields. Prices from a veg growing area, summer levels

Planting onion sets

FROM now on, onion sets can be planted out on the allotment, although if the weather is particularly cold or wet, it's worth waiting for better conditions.

In my experience, sets planted a bit later in good conditions will soon catch up with those planted early in poor conditions. Mid-April is about the latest I would plant sets.

Onion sets are a very convenient way of growing onions. Each set is just an immature onion which will start to grow very soon after planting.

Before planting, trim off any old dry stems from the top of the set to try to prevent birds from pulling the sets from the ground before they have rooted.

The other tip is to plant them with a trowel. Don't just push them into the ground as this can compact the ground under it and as its roots grow, it will push itself out of the ground.

Mine are planted on deep beds about 4in (10cm) apart in all directions, which I find gives reasonably sized onions and a heavy overall crop.

The closer they are planted, the smaller the individual onions will be when harvested, but the overall weight of the crop per square yard will be higher than if they were planted further apart and fewer larger onions were produced in the same area.

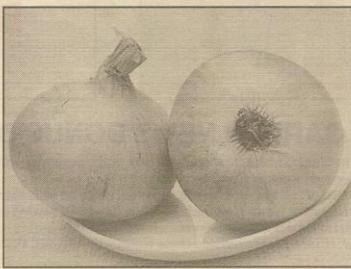
Very large onions are probably not as useful in the average kitchen. Smaller onions also keep longer.

I usually grow a couple of varieties from sets, Turbo, a round type, and Stuttgarter Giant, a flat type, pictured below, both keep well and have good flavour.

Allotment PLOTTING



by
Adrian Jones



Tasty leeks easy to grow

The humble leek is one of the country's favourite vegetables, probably more so in the North and in Wales, where it has become the national emblem.

Excellent specimens can be grown by even the beginner who follows a few simple rules, which include never letting them dry out.

Most gardeners will grow them for the kitchen. These varieties will need less attention than exhibition types, are all robust and will produce long and thick stems if planted at the right time and in a rich soil.

Varieties in this category are: **The Lyon, Yates Empire, Winter Crop, Giant Winter, Wila, Albinstar** and **Muskelburgh**. My first choice from all these is **Muskelburgh**, widely available and reasonably priced.

It is an old favourite, tried and tested, which when planted at the correct time will produce thick stems of excellent quality and flavour. It is hardy, ready from November, and will stand in good condition for a long time.

I sow seed thinly in a bed outdoors in March. Seedlings should be ready to be planted out in May when they are the thickness of a pencil.

I put them in 9in (23cm) deep holes made with a dibber after trimming the tops and the leggy roots.

One watering is normally enough, unless there is a dry spell. They also need to be kept weed-free, so all the nutrients in the ground are available to the plants.

Once growth has started, they will also benefit from a feed of mild manure every 10 days until the end of September.

If you prefer the leeks to have a maximum length of blanch, a little more effort is required when earthing up, and the seedlings will need more space between the rows.

My second choice would be **Albinstar**, available from Sutton Seeds. This is a heavy-yielding, long-stemmed, mid-season variety which also stands well for a long time.

It can be grown as described above, but I found it fared better when seed was sown thinly in either pots or trays in late January/early February in a heated greenhouse.

Reg Clipson's new fortnightly series on growing his favourite veg...beginning with leeks



Remember to leave room for earthing up.

I will then prick out the seedlings and pot them into deep containers so they establish better roots.

They are planted out in late April or early May in a 16in (40cm) deep trench with well-rotted manure in the bottom quarter, followed by soil in the next quarter into which the seedlings are planted. I fill in the trench as the plants grow.

Using this method gives a half-stem blanch once the filled-in trench reaches the bed level; a full stem blanch is then achieved gradual earthing up as the plant grows.

The last time I grew **Albinstar** using this method I had some long, straight, thick stems with no bulging at the base.

Many gardeners will want to sow a few seeds of an exhibition variety. My choice is **Robinson's Mammoth Blanch Leek**, which is available from most garden centres, or from W Robinson & Son Ltd, Sunny Bank, Forton, near Preston, Lanes PR3 0BN. There about 100 seeds per packet costing £1.50, plus 25p post and pack

Items Left by the Notice board (Main Gate)

We have noticed that a number of items are starting to congregate by the noticeboard at the main gate.

As a rule of thumb, we would ask people that left them to remove them if they have not been taken after one week.

Many thanks for your help with this.

... Finally

All gardeners know better than other gardeners. – Chinese proverb

Our Contact Details

If you have any suggestions for items that you would like to see covered in further editions of this newsletter, please do contact us at:

readingrdallotments@hotmail.co.uk