



Editor: Mike McNamara - E14

## Notices

### **Allotment Plot Waiting List**

There is currently 17 people on the waiting list with 8 available plots. The number of unworked plots has now fallen dramatically.

### **Produce Thefts/Site Security**

Work has been done repairing parts of the perimeter fence & in particular a section of fence on the eastern side of the site that had been cut. There was evidence that this was a well-used route in to the site. The committee asks all plot holders on L or M row please to take a few minutes to check the fence close to your plot for any breaches.

### **Date for your Diary**

Don't forget the Association Annual Meeting (AGM) will be held at the Oakwood Centre in Woodley on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2018 at 7.30pm.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Notices	1
Important Housekeeping Points	1
February - Some To Do's	1
Items of Interest	2, 3, 4
The Organic or Inorganic Allotment?	3
Our Contact Details	4

### 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. – See Further Item

## February – Some To Do's

February will hopefully show the soil will begin to warm up around the middle of the month and we should see buds beginning to swell on fruit trees and bushes. Overwintering vegetables should be starting to produce new growth. With that in mind, here are some jobs to be thinking about for February.

- Top dress all of the fruit trees and soft fruit bushes with a general fertiliser at the recommended application rate. At the same time top dress the rest of the plot with a general fertiliser as land becomes available
- Winter prune large fruit trees to control their shape and size, and to increase productivity
- Prune late/autumn fruiting raspberries down as low as possible and mulch around them
- Complete any outstanding winter pruning of soft fruit bushes cutting out down to soil level the older dark stemmed shoots of blackcurrants
- Start sowing seeds of tomatoes, globe artichokes & sprouting broccoli in a propagator, while Brussels sprouts, leeks, onions and spinach can all be sown under cover
- Cover the soil with cloches or sheets of plastic to warm it up in readiness for the outdoor sowing and planting.
- Check chitting potatoes & begin to rub off any eyes that are unwanted leaving three or four well-spaced shoots. Keep some fleece or newspapers nearby to cover them up on starry, frosty nights you don't want to run the risk of losing them at this late date.

## Items of interest

### ***Launchpad Charity – NEWS***

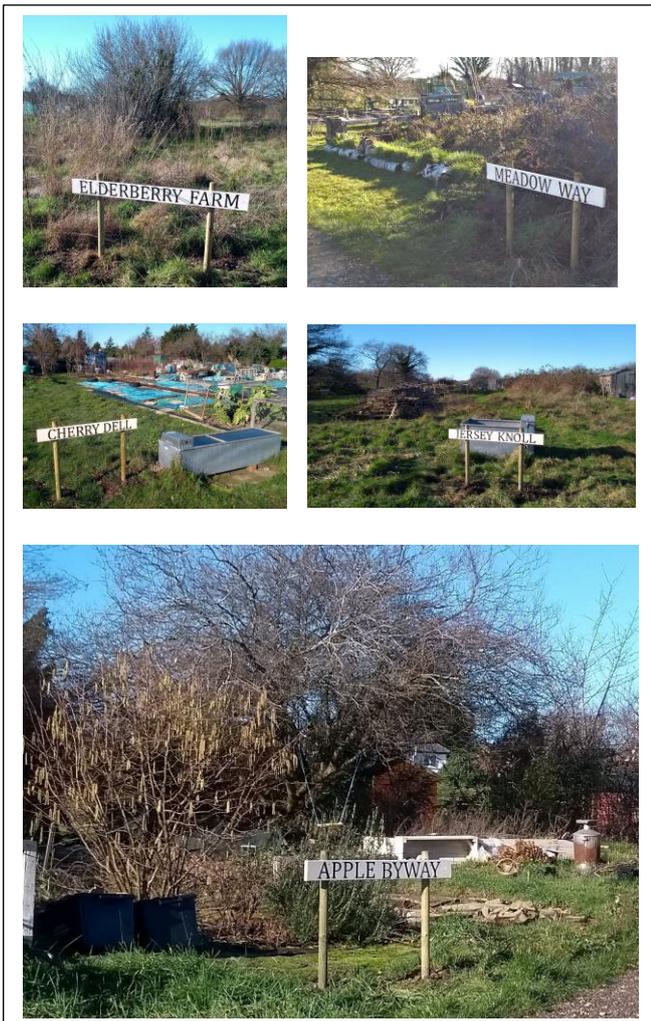
The Launch pad project continues to move ahead, with a new group on site during February. Many thanks to all that have been assisting with this project.

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.

### ***Road Signs***

You all may have noticed that we now have the Road Signs installed.

The committee would like to thank Andy Sherwood who was responsible for the excellent job of creating each individual Road Sign and to Mike McNamara who looked after the installation of them around the allotment site.



### ***Horse Manure***

Due to logistics issues we are unable to arrange deliveries at the moment. Watch this space!

### ***Speeding***

It would appear that vehicle speeding has returned to the site. As has been said in past newsletters, this is not only dangerous to all plot holders, but speeding cars also tear up the roadways that will have to be repaired again.

First warning letters have now been issued to habitual speeders! The next letters will be termination notices to leave the site.

Please keep your speed down when on the site.

### ***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.

### ***Items Left by the Notice board (Main Gate)***

There are still many items being left 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.

### ***Fruit Items for Sale – Final Bargain Prices***

10 x Gooseberry (2 different varieties) £ 2.50 each  
4 x Rhubarb £2.00 each

### ***The Organic or Inorganic Allotment?***

Summary of Article by Mike Thurlow Head Gardener for over 30 years at The National Allotment Society – [www.nsalg.org.uk](http://www.nsalg.org.uk)

Having your own allotment is the best way to provide affordable, fresh, healthy fruit and vegetables for you and your family.

The hot topic at the moment is to whether to produce them organically using the more traditional growing methods or inorganically using modern sophisticated chemicals. On your allotment plot you have the choice and control over how you want to grow them.

The important thing is to make a responsible and enlightened decision based upon all of the up to date information that is available – especially in respect to pest and disease control.

### ***Organic/biological control***

Choosing this method means using nature to control pests. This can be done by introducing various predatory insects, mites, parasitic wasps or nematodes that infect the pest with a fatal bacterial disease.

This technique is mainly used in greenhouses, but some biological controls, especially pathogenic nematodes, can also be used out of doors.

### **Chemical control**

This is the non-organic method of using pesticides to control pest. The pesticides directorate website should be consulted when deciding which products to buy and use.

Without a doubt the Supermarkets have had and influence on things by demanding that all fruit and vegetables have to conform to an exact size, shape and appearance. This isn't strictly as nature intended and this is where the allotment plot comes to our rescue.

We are all familiar with knobbly potatoes and carrots that are less than straight, but they, they taste great! The NSALG has been the lifeblood of the Allotment movement for decades and it has had to adapt too many changes in its lifetime and we want to support and encourage allotment gardeners to get the most enjoyment out of their plots whilst growing the best produce possible.

For more information about starting down the organic route see the full article [here](#).

### ***Alternate Fertilizer Source***

Coffee grounds are a good source of high nitrogen fertiliser and this can be obtained FREE OF CHARGE FROM Waitrose and Coffee #1 in the main Woodley shopping precinct. Take your own container.

Thanks to Mike Hatcher (E20) for this tip.

Do you have any tips for other plot holders; let us know via the normal email at the end of this newsletter.

### ***Annual General Meeting (AGM)***

Don't forget that the Allotment Association AGM will be held on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2018 at 7.30pm at the Oakwood Centre in Woodley.

Please let the committee know any suggested agenda items via the normal email at the end of this newsletter. We have received a number of items already including proposed additional Site Security suggestions.

### ***Culvert Clearance***

Woodley Town Council is clearing the culvert that goes along the side of the site by the main gate. The culvert is supposed to help with the drainage of a spring in that area, and the vegetation blockages have caused flooding. Hopefully this work will reduce the flooding round the gate and on plots L1, L2 and the top end of K row.

**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 feel free to send them along to us using the normal email address.

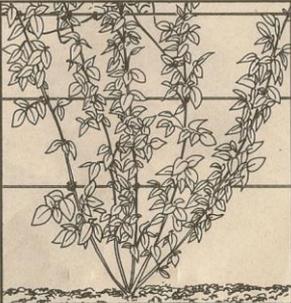
**Training Cane Fruit**

**TRAIN CANE FRUIT**

OLD fruited stems of blackberries, loganberries and similar cane fruits should be pruned and new canes trained. Cut the old canes to within a couple of inches of the ground, then tie the new growths to wires.

Several training methods are used, but the fan method gives high yields and is good for less vigorous varieties.

Here, the shoots are spread out evenly and tied to the wires fan fashion to expose them to maximum light and air. Next year, train young canes vertically.



**Coping with Carrot Fly**



**Carrot fly calls for some tough opposition**

■ This week, in preparation for sowing my carrots, I hope to buy the materials to make a new carrot fly barrier.

I use polythene about 2ft 6ins (75cm) high supported by garden canes or roofing laths from a builder's merchant to completely surround the carrots, making sure that there are no gaps underneath to allow the fly in. You can also use fine mesh netting, as pictured above.

It works on the principle that carrot flies only fly near the ground and the polythene simply forms a physical barrier to stop them gaining access to lay eggs.

**Overwintering Dahlias**

**Dahlias**

**Wake up tubers**

IF YOU want early cuttings, which in turn will give you earlier blooms, then now is the time to wake up your dahlia tubers.

I have prepared some trays of a good, open mixture, using peat and leaf mould with some silver sand added. This has been warming on the greenhouse bench for a week or two (as we indicated earlier this month) and is now ready to receive the stock.

After checking that the roots are in good health, push them into the compost as opposed to burying them. This way the vulnerable crowns will be above the moisture levels and relatively safe from rotting.

New growth, all things being equal, should appear within two to three weeks.



*Phil Damp* Push the roots into the compost.

**The History of Allotments**

The origin of the modern allotment began back in the 1600s, known as the enclosures. The process of enclosure started by previously common land, once held in an open field system being divided up and enclosed by new hedging; the use of the land became restricted to the owner.

Over the next 100 years new hedges were planted to divide the fields, changing the landscape forever. Throughout this period of enclosure there were various movements to try and provide ground for the common labourer. As early as 1649 a group that called themselves the 'Diggers Movement' were protesting for the 'right to dig' for all. The 'Diggers' efforts were quickly dispersed by the government; however the idea of a 'right to dig' is still very much alive today. Learn more [here](#).

... Finally

*'The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago. The second best time is now. - 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](mailto:readingrdallotments@hotmail.co.uk)