



Editor: Mike McNamara - E14

## Notices

### ***Allotment Plot Waiting List***

Currently there are 12 people on the waiting list with 4 available plots.

### ***Volunteer Needed***

Volunteer required to help monitor & maintain the sites CCTV Cameras. If you are interested please contact us via the normal email.

### ***Speeding on the Site***

As was recently mentioned on our Facebook page speeding is again raising its head. Clearly we have a number of plot holders that have no care for the safety of other people on the site. With that in mind the committee will now be advising Woodley Town Council to issue termination notices to these repeat offenders.

### ***Important 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.

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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**

## March – Some To Do's

Despite our recent February weather hiccup, March is the month when things really start to move in the growing season. A benefit of the February sun will have been a warming of the soil & providing we don't slip back into the 'depths' of winter, it will continue warm up throughout March. In the meantime, here are some jobs to be thinking about for March.

- Cover the soil with cloches or sheets of plastic to warm it up in readiness for the outdoor sowing and planting
- Towards the middle/end of the month you can transplant any early peas, broad beans, cabbages or lettuce you may have started off earlier
- Sow the seed of Brussels sprouts, summer cabbage, broccoli, onions and leeks in short rows on a "nursery seed bed" or the poly tunnel /greenhouse. These will be grown on to be transplanted in April
- Plant Jerusalem artichoke tubers now
- Sow in rows in the open ground Spring onions, peas, broad beans and turnips
- Plant out onion sets, shallots and garlic before they start to produce shoots
- March is the right time to establish an asparagus bed if you are starting from crowns
- Check chitting potatoes. If you have a warmed up some of the plot with poly cloches you could try a planning for some early returns
- Complete any unfinished digging and winter pruning.

### Items of interest

#### **Launchpad Charity – NEWS**

The Launch pad project continues to move ahead, with a new group on site during February.

L25 – The larger plot is now covered until we have time and resources to clear it. L26 is already 3/4 cleared and planted with onions and broad beans, the rest of the plot needs to be weeded and planted next.

If anyone has time you are welcome to join the tenant volunteers, currently spending half a day a week prepping, or help to supervise the volunteer groups, next one due 6th March.



Many thanks to all that have been assisting with this project.

We are always 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.

#### **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.

#### **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.

#### **Compost Source**

re3 celebrates the upcoming Compost Awareness Week, 6–12 May by launching its branded compost re3grow.



The compost is a thriving example of closing the loop for garden waste collected from the kerbside or deposited free of charge at the recycling centre.

re3grow can be purchased at both Recycling Centres, Longshot Lane in Bracknell and Smallmead in Reading directly from the Meet and Greet teams.

The committee would be interested in hearing back from any members with comments about quality etc. if they purchase any of this for their plots.

#### **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.

### ***Allotments on Prescription!***

Now doctors prescribe ALLOTMENTS to help with loneliness or muscle and joint pain.



The May Lane Surgery, in Dursley, Gloucester, is offering gardening allotments to people suffering from social isolation or muscle and joint pain to get them fitter and onto a healthy diet.

See the full story [here](#).

### ***Grandparent Gardening Week***



Taking place from 1 – 5 April 2019, Grandparent Gardening Week aims to help schools and Early Years settings get support from the local community to kick start their gardens into action after the winter.

Hosting gardening activities is a great way to reach out and engage grandparents, carers and local residents (including local allotment

holders) in your school or nursery activities, and to get your garden in tip top condition along the way!

More info and sign up [here](#).

### ***National Allotments Week***



## National Allotments Week

A National Allotment Society initiative

This year's campaign week theme is "Shared Harvest" celebrating the fact that plot-holders share their crops with family, friends, colleagues and worthy causes, including food banks. Each plot in the UK can benefit up to 8 people!

We will once again be producing a poster and publicity guidelines to help promote Allotment Open Days and Events during the week. However, this year we will also be taking a look at and publicising the practice of donating crops to food banks. We will be producing a set of good practice guidelines for sites that do so and sharing some stories.

More details can be found [here](#).

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

Don't forget that the Allotment Association AGM will be held on 25th 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 continuing to clear 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.

### ***Sowing & Planting in March on the Vegetable Plot***

During our research for this monthly newsletter we come across various sites dedicated to helping fellow allotment holders. The following article is from one such site – [www.allotment-garden.org](http://www.allotment-garden.org).

Full of great tips and advice, it is a place to find lots of helpful independent information as we all strive to make our allotments more productive. This one deals with working on a plot in March.

If the weather is cold but otherwise reasonable, you can steal some time and start early by cloching and fleecing.

Although expensive glass cloches have been around for many years, nowadays we can get cheap polythene tunnel cloches and even cheaper horticultural fleece.

Place the cloche or fleece a week or two before planting and the soil will have warmed up nicely as well as being dry and easy to work.

Water well into the drill prior to sowing and replacing the cloche. Do remember to water weekly or more frequently in sunny weather under cloches.

To hold down fleece without tearing, save plastic 2 litre milk containers and fill with sand or water although water tends to leak.

The smooth surface will weigh down the fleece but not damage it. It's surprising how just a layer of fleece can raise the temperature of the underlying soil.

Plant out your onion and shallot sets. If growing onions from seed started earlier in the year under cover these can also go out now.

You can also direct sow onions, thinning to the eventual spacing. Cloching will help them establish and also stop pigeons from pulling them up.

March is the right time to establish an asparagus bed if you are starting from crowns. Do make sure you get it in the right position as it will be there permanently.

Mid-March should let you start planting out those potatoes you've had chitting. If you want some really early potatoes, start some in a black polythene sack in the greenhouse or tunnel. Punch drainage holes in the sack and use a multi-purpose compost. See Guide to Growing Potatoes

Staying with root crops, you can plant Jerusalem artichoke tubers now. Be aware that getting them all up at harvest time is very difficult and any tubers left in the ground will grow, so effectively you're creating a permanent bed.

Take a deeper look around the whole website via – [www.allotment-garden.org](http://www.allotment-garden.org) and perhaps sign up to their newsletter.

... Finally

*'A weed is a plant that has mastered every survival skill except for learning how to grow in rows. – Doug Larson*

### ***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)