

Newsletter

Ash Road Allotment Association

Improvements to the Water Supply

Most of the work to upgrade our water supply is now nearly complete. Apologies that there is still some tidying up to be done and for the disruption this may be causing. There are still some areas at the top of the site (close to the 90s plots) where trenches need to be filled in. This will be done as soon as possible. Also, at the lower end of the site work to restore the grass path to the Rokeby Gardens entrance is incomplete. This will require some soil levelling work and re-seeding of the grass. This work is weather dependent and so may have to wait until later summer or Autumn. **In the meantime please take extra care when walking around the site to prevent tripping.**

In Memory

A number of you may remember Cath Dean, who was a plot-holder on our site for a number of years and was a great supporter and friend of our allotments and the Allotment Association. I am very sad to have to report that she passed away recently.

In addition, David Turner, one of our current plot-holders, has also passed away. Although he had only become a member more recently, he had already proved a stalwart of our work parties and always ready to volunteer to help.

Both Cath and David will be missed and our thoughts and condolences go out to both families.



Plant Sale Raised Funds for Charity

A big 'Thank You' to all those who donated plants and attended our allotment plant sale back in May. The sun shone (remember what sunshine looks like?) and it was a very enjoyable morning, with a really good range of plants for sale. I am pleased to report that the event raised £254 for Martin House Children's Hospice.

Macmillan Coffee Morning, Sunday 30th June

Our annual allotment Coffee Morning in aid of Macmillan Cancer is planned for Sunday 30th June, starting at 11am. We hope you will come! Everyone is welcome and all proceeds will go to Macmillan. Please also invite your friends and family.

If you'd like to bring along a cake to help make the event even more enjoyable that would be much appreciated - and it also means we can raise even more money for this good cause.

We're also going to have another plant sale at the same time, so if you have any spare plants that you'd like to donate for sale, please bring these along too.

Let's hope the sun shines.

Notices.....

Please do remember that during summer **Bonfires are only permitted after 5pm**. If you have a bonfire consider your neighbours (on and off-site), avoid creating too much smoke. Compost rather than burn green material.

Every **plot-holder must keep the paths around their plot maintained**. A number of the footpaths between the plots are becoming very overgrown and narrow. These paths enable people to move around the site and must be wide enough to allow a wheelbarrow to pass.

You are responsible for **cutting the grass on paths** to the right of your plot when facing north (usually the downhill side of your plot) and also the path on the north side of your plot if you have one (this is usually the side of your plot nearest to the main gate or St. Anne's Road).

Please **DON'T bring any more car tyres on site**. I see that some people have made use of them, but they do degrade and may pollute the soil. Also if plot-holders end their tenancy for whatever reason the tyres then have to be disposed of as special waste.

Drive **VERY SLOWLY** along the **access road** to the top car park. Remember that you are driving past other people's plots.

Please **Remember to close the entrance gates and scramble the padlocks at all times**. This is important for the security of the site. The main access gate should be left open ONLY between 10am and Noon on Sunday morning.

Forthcoming Allotment Events

Sunday, 30th June - Coffee Morning for Macmillan Cancer Support

Sunday, 4th August - Allotment Barbecue

Sunday, 1st September - Allotment Annual Show

Middleton Park Show

The Council's allotment officer, Lynne Rogers, has asked me to advertise this show, the week after our own Annual Show. There are plenty of food and produce related activities - and you can enter your own fruit, vegetables and flowers in their competition. More details can be found at www.fomp.co.uk

Friends of Middleton Park

The Great Middleton Park Show

8TH SEPTEMBER 2019 1-4PM
SHOW THEME - HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

Local Produce & Art Show
Food and Drink
Market Street Stalls
Face Painting
Animal Displays
Music & Entertainment
Games & Activities
Plus more...

Controlling Weeds



Weeds are growing fast. Although weeds are fine in the right places, on our plots they can compete with our crops for water, and even light if they are big enough. They can sometimes also host pests and diseases. There are different ways to control unwanted weeds.

Hoeing or pulling weeds has an important role to play. Hoe on a dry day, but when the soil is still moist enough so the hoe can penetrate the soil and sever the root. Hoeing also breaks the surface of the soil and allows rain and water to soak in better. Hand weeding also works better after rain - it's easier to pull the weed out. This method of weeding is best for bindweed, couch grass and deep-rooted weeds like dandelions, because you need to remove every scrap of root or they will grow back!

Using barrier materials. This means covering the ground to suppress weeds. The allotment shop sells ground covering fabric. Organic mulches such as bark, manure or 'Strulch' (a straw-based, mineral-enhanced mulch, also on sale in the shop) help suppress weeds and also keep moisture in the soil.

Nowadays **most people try to minimise or avoid the use of weedkillers**, although these are still available in garden centres. Perhaps look for the natural products that don't use glyphosate? Some use acetic acid (vinegar) as active ingredient (although in a more concentrated form than culinary vinegar!). Others use pelargonium acid (an extract from geraniums) and fatty acids and have a biodegradable formulation. However, both of these types only work by contact on leaves and will not kill roots, so several applications may be necessary.

Things to do in June

Top Tasks

- Weed and weed again - see the article in the column to the left.
- Support and stake fruit and veg in case of breezy weather.
- Net peas, cabbages and fruit bushes against pigeons and build support for climbing plants, such as beans. Pigeons can descend in flocks and strip all your fruit even before it is ripe.
- Feed tomatoes as soon as the first tiny fruits appear on plants.
- Slugs and snails are out in force. Plant more than you need, or plant larger plants that can outgrow attacks. Consider deterrent methods such as spent coffee grounds, egg shells or sheep wool.
- Keep 'earthing' up your potatoes with soil to encourage more tubers and stop the tubers going green. Early potatoes may be ready soon, usually when they have finished flowering.
- Greenhouses and polytunnels will need to be well ventilated.
- If you have asparagus, stop picking spears from the third week of June to allow the plants to produce foliage to put goodness back into the crowns for future years. Similarly, stop picking rhubarb after the longest day to keep the plant in good health next year.

Sow or Plant

- Sow seeds for vegetables, salads and herbs for picking in late summer and autumn (water-in with a fine rose).
- If you haven't already - plant out your spring-grown seedlings of Brussels sprouts, leeks, cabbages, cauliflowers and broccoli etc. for your autumn and winter harvests. Do the same for courgette, pumpkin and squash plants - allow plenty of space.
- Outdoor tomatoes and sweetcorn should all be planted out now if you haven't already, to give them time to 'fruit' and ripen. Chillies and peppers will usually need to be in a polytunnel.

Your Fruit Crop

- Net ripening soft fruit to deter birds and protect cherries by using fruit cages or 'wraps' around individual branches.
- Water fruit bushes and canes in dry spells and mulch around the roots to retain moisture.
- Thin the fruit on plum and damson trees once they get to the size of a hazelnut and remove misshapen or diseased fruit.
- Summer prune your stone fruit trees (plums, damsons, cherries etc) to shorten side shoots, remove cross branches and limit size.
- Wait until after the 'June drop' of some of the developing pears, apples and plums then thin your fruit in July - fewer fruit per cluster means bigger fruit and less risk of breaking branches later.
- Feed strawberry plants weekly with high potash feed once flowers form. Remove 'runners' if they are not needed as they sap energy from the mother plant.
- Loosely 'tie in' new summer-fruiting raspberry canes along wires and remove weaker ones to maximise yields.
- If you have a grape vine, only allow one flowering cluster per lateral shoot to develop fruit so that the grapes you do get grow bigger - no more than one bunch per 30cm.
- Summer prune gooseberries and red/white currants, shortening new growth to five leaves (fruit develops mainly on previous year's wood, so pruning shouldn't remove fruit).
- Pull off any suckers appearing from below the graft on fruit trees or from the base of fruit bushes.



Survey into Health Benefits of Growing Food

The Centre for Environmental Policy at Imperial College, London is undertaking an important survey in order to examine the benefits of urban agriculture in the UK. This includes 'urban gardeners' and allotmenters who grow their own food in urban areas.

If you are interested in taking part in the survey, which takes about 12 minutes to complete, follow the link online:

https://imperial.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_emPhQNLw7YbE4Fn

The link includes full instructions on how to complete the survey, so give it a go!

The Newsletter

Any news or other items for the newsletter?

Please contact Chris Martin. Email: chris.e.martin@ntlworld.com

Your Allotment Needs You..... Can You Help?



Our allotment site covers nine acres of land and provides an opportunity for over 200 people to rent plots and grow some of their own food. It is a valuable resource for Headingley and the wider City, a practical demonstration of sustainable development in action, reducing 'food miles' and providing real health benefits.

Although each one of us is, I'm sure, focused on keeping our own plot in order, there is quite a bit of work that has to go on 'behind the scenes' to make sure the allotment site as a whole continues to flourish. We are a self-administered site, which means that although the land is owned by the City Council the day-to-day running and maintenance of the allotments is the responsibility of the plot-holders on the site. There is a Committee that does much of the work - all volunteers - and we also call on others to help from time to time, notably when we have 'work party' mornings. Much of what happens - the events, coffee mornings, the letting of plots, the cutting of the grass, the cleaning of toilets and a whole range of maintenance tasks simply would not happen without people volunteering their time. This is where we need some help.

We could really do with someone, or more than one person, who could volunteer some time and be called upon to carry out some practical maintenance tasks around the site. Particular practical skills that would be really useful would be someone who could look after the routine maintenance of our water supply system (pipes and bathtubs etc), or the maintenance of our gates and locks and other equipment. It would also be useful if someone could help out with grass cutting in summer. **If you are interested and can help, even with one of these tasks, please make yourself known to a Committee Member or email ash_road_allotments@aol.com**