

Newsletter

Ash Road Allotment Association

The Newsletter

Anything for the newsletter? Please let me know. Chris Martin. Email: chris.e.martin@ntlworld.com

Pruning Blackberries



When your blackberry harvest is over it's time to prune!

Blackberries fruit on two-year old canes (i.e. the previous season's growth) and once a cane has fruited it will not do so again. Cutting out the old, spent canes down to the base will encourage new canes and give you more fruit in future years.

Many blackberries on our site are badly overgrown and blocking paths, so now's the time to prune after you've picked the fruit. Better yet - train new blackberry canes along a post and wire 'fence' - neater, safer, and easier and better harvests!

For **summer fruiting raspberries** the same rules apply, but **autumn fruiting raspberries** fruit on the current season's growth, so you'll need to cut them back in February.



Enjoying the Barbecue

The warm and sunny weather made for a great day for the Allotment barbecue on Sunday 5th. Many thanks to the Committee and others who worked hard to make the afternoon enjoyable. Thanks also to those who donated cakes and salad. The event raised £88 for the NSPCC.

Making Use of Your Harvest

August brings plenty to harvest. Beans and courgettes are growing so fast they need frequent picking before beans turn stringy, or your courgettes grow too large.

Remember also to 'Think Fruit' - don't let your harvest go to waste! Many types of berry fruits freeze well and you can open freeze them on trays, bag them up and store in your freezer for future use. Soon the tree crops (apples, plums and damsons) will also be ready.

If you are going away for a holiday, or will have too much fruit to use, why not ask your neighbours if they would like some or allow them to come and 'pick their own'? You could post a message on the Facebook page with your plot number and specifying which bush/tree is free for picking; or post a sign on your plot. **But... PLEASE.... ONLY pick crops from someone else's plot with their permission.**

Annual Show, Sunday 2nd September 2018

How can you help?

- **Bring your entries for the competition** - to the Hut on the morning of the show.
- **Donations of produce** - a jar of homemade jam, a bunch of radishes etcetera would be appreciated. Bring them on the day and they can be added to the auction to raise more for charity.
- **Bake a cake** - bring to the show to add to the refreshments!
- **Donations of items for the Tombola prizes** (bottles included) or for the 'white elephant'/second-hand stall would be appreciated. Please bring these to the Hut on any Sunday morning during August, or leave them on the table under the awning to the rear of the Hut.
- **Help** - is always welcome on the morning (from 9am to set up) and later in the afternoon to clear up.
- **Man the stalls** - if you have time to help during the afternoon of the show.
- **Work to transform the Hut** - there will be a separate call for this.
- **Bring a folding garden chair and a picnic blanket** - to make yourself comfortable on the day.
- **Sponsorship** - is always welcome from individuals or businesses.
- **Return your winner's cup** - Can last year's cup winners please return their cup to the Hut.
- **More info/ offers of help** - contact Lynne Snowden, the Show Secretary (07952 874 121),



Our **Annual Show** is the main social event of the Allotment year and we'd be delighted to see you - it's a really fun event! Please invite friends and family to help make this an enjoyable and sociable gathering that celebrates all we have achieved on our allotments. Hopefully, the weather will be fine, but we do have gazebos if the weather is wet.

There is a competition for produce grown on the allotments, including the results of the 'Spud-in-a-Bucket' competition, but the emphasis is on having fun and not taking things too seriously. **We'd love more people to enter and we've included some fun categories to encourage children to take part.**

We hope everyone will enter something, but you do not have to enter anything to come along. There will be plenty of things to enjoy. There will be stalls, Tombola, prizes, a raffle, a quiz, plenty of refreshments and a fun auction of produce from the show, donated by the exhibitors, at the end of the afternoon. You can see the competition entries and marvel at the produce some have managed to grow on our allotments.

Look out for an email that will set out all the details of the day. There is a '**Show Schedule**' and this lists the categories of items for competition and what judges will look for. Copies can be found under the awning to the rear of the hut.

We look forward to seeing you all at the Show!

Remember that we also have a **photo competition**. **You can enter prints of A5 in size, with separate prizes for adults and for young people (aged 16 or under)**. Bring your prints along to the Hut on the day. More details next page.

Blight

It's the season for 'late blight' that can affect potatoes, peppers and tomatoes. Symptoms include brown freckles, or patches on the leaves and a yellowish border spreading from those patches.



Please check now and regularly for signs. If you spot it - TAKE ACTION! Blight will spread to your neighbours's plots, so please try and stop it spreading.

If only a small number of leaves are affected, you can remove these. For a more serious infection then cut off all the foliage and stems. Burn or dispose infected leaves safely in a bin. Removing affected foliage prevents the disease getting into potato tubers as long as the tubers are well covered by soil.

Photo Competition

This year's Show includes a photo competition. Photos can feature any aspect of Allotment life, so get 'snapping', or dig out those photos you have already taken.

Entries should be printed (A5 size, approx 150x210mm) for display and judging at the show, but please keep your digital copies secure! If we get enough entries we can use these to put together an Allotment Calendar for 2019. You can make as many entries as you like - within reason. **Please ask permission before taking photographs of other people.**



Storing your Harvest

A real challenge now is storing all the potatoes and onions that are being harvested. Start with healthy produce - only sound, undamaged produce will store well. Any damaged or blemished items (including potatoes you accidentally pierced with a fork while you were harvesting!) shouldn't be stored, but used immediately. Remember - don't wash the produce before storing, only brush off any dirt.

For onions and garlic you need to dry or cure for 2-4 weeks after harvesting in a warm, well-ventilated location, spreading them out in a single layer. By then tops and necks should be thoroughly dry and outer bulb scales rustling. You can then remove outer skins, trim the tops, or leave the tops and braid the dry foliage together. For potatoes make sure they are dry and then store immediately in a dark, dry place.

All these crops store best in cool and dry conditions, like a dark cellar, or a cool kitchen cupboard. Sheds may be too humid and fridges too cold. Don't keep them in an airtight container, they need some air circulation. For potatoes you could layer in ventilated boxes with newspaper between, or place in hessian or paper sacks; for onions or garlic similar, or hang them up from racks or rafters. Check periodically for spoilage.

Remember that another way of 'storing' potatoes is to freeze them. This is particularly useful if you've had to cut and trim those that have been spoiled or damaged and so cannot store them the conventional way. You can peel, cut, and blanch or parboil your potatoes and then open freeze them and then bag them and store them in your freezer. These can then be roasted when you need them, with no need to de-frost first. Alternatively, you could roast the potatoes now and then freeze them, ready for re-roasting later, giving you a head start for those roast dinners that we all look forward to as the nights draw in.