

Newsletter

Ash Road Allotment Association

The Newsletter

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

Coffee and Advice

***FREE* coffee on Sunday mornings - at the Hut at 11 am.**
Listen for the Air Horn!

Pruning Blackberries



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

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



Rain Didn't Stop the BBQ!

The Allotment Barbecue (on Sunday 4th) was greeted with a sharp shower or two just in time for the 2pm start. Barbecues and rain don't mix - as the photo above shows [how many Committee Members does it take to light a barbecue? - Ed] However, the rain soon stopped, the weather was then warm and it was a very enjoyable afternoon.

Many thanks to Committee members and others who worked hard to make the afternoon a success. Thanks also to those who donated cakes - it was much appreciated by those who attended. In total more than £102 was raised for Martin House hospice care for children and young people.

Next Allotment Year?

With late summer approaching (yes, already!) thoughts start turning to the next allotment 'year' that starts on 1st October. If you are perhaps thinking that you might like to give up part of your plot to make life more manageable, please let someone in the Committee know - come to the Hut when it is open, or email ash_road_allotments@aol.co.uk. It would help to know before next year's bills are sent out in September so that we can see what scope there is for offering a plot for next year to people on our waiting list.

Annual Show, Sunday 1st September 2019

How can you help?

- **Entries for competition** - bring on the morning of the Show.
- **Help** - would be welcome on the morning to set up (from 9am) and late afternoon to clear up.
- **Help on a stall** - if you have time during the afternoon.
- **Work to transform the Hut** - watch out for an email about this.
- **Sponsorship** - always welcome (individual or business).
- **Return your winner's cup** - Can last year's cup winners please return their cup to the Hut.
- **Donations of produce** - a jar of homemade jam, a bunch of carrots etc. Bring on the day. They can be added to the auction to raise more for charity.
- **Bake a cake** - bring on the day to add to the refreshments!
- **Donations of items for prizes**
For the Bottle Tombola donations of new and unopened bottles (of anything) would be appreciated. For the raffle, the main prize is a hamper, so donations of food items suitable for a food hamper would also gratefully be received. Or you could bring something for the 'white elephant'/second-hand and 'plant sale' stalls. Please bring items to the Hut on any Sunday morning, or leave them on the table under the awning to the rear of the Hut.
- **More info/ offers of help** - contact Lynne Snowden, the Show Secretary (07952 874 121), email lynnesnowden@aol.com or contact her through the Allotment Facebook page.



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 make this an enjoyable and sociable gathering that celebrates all we have achieved on our plots.

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 a Bottle 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 the allotment site. There will be a number of stalls with items for sale, including a plant stall and a stall selling vintage restored garden tools and offering a service to make slate signs for your plots.

Look out for an email with more 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, or in the members' area of the web-site.

We look forward to seeing you all!

Remember that we also have a **photo competition. You can enter up to five prints, 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.

Blight

It's the season for 'late blight', a fungal disease that thrives in warm, humid weather. It usually starts in potatoes, but can spread to peppers and tomatoes.

Symptoms include brown freckles, or patches on the leaves and a yellowish border spreading from those patches - the leaves and stems quickly shrivel and rot.



Please check regularly. Blight will spread, so please try and control it.

If a small number of leaves are affected, you can remove these. For a more serious infection cut off **all** the foliage and stems and burn or dispose in a bin, not in your compost heap. Removing affected foliage prevents the disease spreading down into potato tubers and causing them to rot. If tomatoes become infected your crop can be wrecked within a week. Crops grown in polytunnels are less at risk because the mould spores are spread by rain drops.

Best protection for future years is to plant blight resistant varieties; make sure no potatoes are left in the ground after harvest that might harbour infection; 'rotate' crops around your plot each year to prevent build-up of disease in the soil; and leave plenty of space between plants.

Top Tasks for August

- **Pick Regularly** - Beans and courgettes grow so fast they need frequent picking before beans turn stringy or your courgettes grow too large
- **Storing Your Produce** - A challenge is processing and storing your harvest. Only sound, undamaged produce will store well. For onions and garlic you need to dry or cure for 2-4 weeks after harvesting in a warm, well-ventilated location, spreading them in a single layer. By then tops and necks should be thoroughly dry. You can then remove outer skins, trim the tops, or leave the tops and braid the dry foliage together. For potatoes make sure they dry for a few days. All these crops store best in cool and dry conditions, like a dark cellar, or a cool kitchen cupboard. 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.
- **'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.
- **Protect your Crops** - remember to net your fruit and also your Sweet Corn. Birds and squirrels are ever ready and the squirrels on our site know exactly when sweetcorn are ready.
- **Don't Waste Food - Share!** - if you are going away for a holiday, or have too much produce 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 from someone else's plot with their permission.**
- **Keep paths clear and mown** - the rain has meant a good summer for weeds and grass. Please do keep paths clear between the plots so that you and your fellow plot-holders can walk around the site safely.
- **'Being a Good neighbour'** - I have been asked by a plot-holder to remind everyone to be considerate of other plot-holders around them. So if you are strimming or mowing, or whatever, please do so with consideration of your neighbours. Equally although we are not an exclusively 'organic only' site, please be careful with use of pesticides and other gardening chemicals - always follow the instructions for the product; always minimise use and always have regard to the need to ensure the protection of bees and beneficial insects and other wildlife on site; and always ensure you are not affecting neighbouring plots.

Best Plots

It's at the Annual Show when we all get to learn who has won the prize for 'Best Plot' for the Year! I have been asked what the criteria are that are used to judge a prize-winning plot.

These are the main criteria that are used to judge:

Cultivation and Cropping

- Types/variety of produce
- Seasonal produce/fallow and rotation
- Attractive Features (flowers and containers)
- Herbs
- Quality of crops
- Area of cultivation

Husbandry

- Compost or manure heap
- Free from perennial weeds
- Free from rubbish
- Labels (for variety of crops etc)

Environment

- Neatly maintained/safe paths
- Quality/condition of structures
- Clearly visible plot sign (number) in good condition
- Baths - clear of debris and safe
- If water at ground level, it must be visible and screened (as required in allotment rules)

Contact Details

Please make sure we have up-to-date contact details for you. Invitations will be sent out soon to renew your membership. Please advise any change of address or email to
ash_road_allotments@aol.co.uk

KINGS SEEDS

CATALOGUES

AVAILABLE NOW

UNDER THE HUT AWNING

PICK ONE UP ANYTIME - OR AT THE SHOW

**DETAILED FULL COLOUR CATALOGUE OF
VEGETABLES, FRUIT, FLOWERS,
SUNDRIES, ORGANIC & HERBS**

GOOD QUALITY SEEDS, REASONABLY PRICED

GIVES GROWING NEEDS, HELPFUL TIPS

SOWING & HARVESTING CHARTS

"GARDENERS CHOICE" & "SHOW BENCH"

1ST ORDER DEADLINE - Sunday 13TH OCTOBER

2ND ORDER DEADLINE - Sunday 15TH DECEMBER

Orders are sent out very quickly and you will be contacted individually to say they have arrived, and arrangements made to pick them up from the Hut.
 Potatoes arrive Jan/Feb

Order in October for Autumn planting fruits

Please support Ash Road Allotments by ordering your seeds through us. We do receive a commission for our funds, at a higher rate for the early deadline. It's ok to put in an order for both dates if you are unsure of some of the items you may need

Kings Seeds Catalogues Available

These popular catalogues are now available (see the poster above) so start thinking about what to plant for next year, get reading and ordering! These are special versions of the King Seeds catalogue specifically for allotment associations, with lower prices than their normal catalogue. So this is a great way to get good quality seeds at lower prices and it also helps benefit the Association.

Stapled to each catalogue is a note explaining how to place your order, and how you will know when your order arrives. Soft fruit and potatoes should preferably be ordered by the first deadline. If you have any questions please contact Susan Frost, who coordinates orders at susanslatterfrost@gmail.com