

Newsletter

Ash Road Allotment Association

The Newsletter

Anything for the newsletter? Please let me know. Chris Martin (Plot 59).
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Coffee and Shop

You are invited for ***FREE* coffee on Sunday mornings**. Come along to the Hut at 11 am. Listen out for the 'Air Horn' that announces coffee is served. If the weather is fine we sit out on The Green and it's a great way to meet your fellow allotmenters!

Remember that we also have an **allotment 'shop' at The Hut**. This is open every Sunday from 10.30am. We've recently increased the range of items we stock and there is a wide selection of items to help you on your plot. Subject to availability there is a range of composts and growing media; mulches, fertilisers and feeds; a range of items for protection of crops and pest and weed suppression; as well as other sundry items such as bamboo canes, gardening gloves, garden twine, clips etc. All items are at reasonable prices, cheaper than in commercial garden centres. Come and take a look.

A price list is displayed on the Hut Notice Board and is also attached to the last page of this newsletter.

If you have any suggestions for other items that we might consider stocking please let a member of the Committee know or email

ash_road_allotments@aol.co.uk



Perfect Allotment Weather

We've been lucky to have a lot of dry, calm and sunny weather this last week or so. Now is great time of year to tidy up the allotment in time for the start of a new growing season: Key priorities are:

- check and repair any damage from winter gales.
- check and address safety issues. Ensure that the paths around your plot are clear and free of hazards - after all, paths are there to allow everyone safely to walk around the site! Any overhanging branches from trees and bushes must be cut back.
- Broken glass or any other potentially dangerous material should be safely removed from all plots.
- Make sure you have a sign on your plot that displays your plot number.

Unfortunately some allotments in Leeds have suffered vandalism or theft this winter, so:

- If you see someone on site who you do not know, ask who they are and which Plot is theirs.
- Phone the Police non-emergency number 101. Do report **ALL** incidents if you suffer loss/damage, or if you see intruders.
- Always scramble the gate padlocks - and **please remember to lock the gates at ALL TIMES when you leave**. The only exception is on Sunday when the main gate is open from 1030 until Noon.

Elsewhere in this issue there are some helpful hints for what to do this month and next on the allotment - and some advice that may help some of our newer members get to grips with a new plot!



Find us on:
facebook®

Our Facebook page has the name Ash Road Allotments Association. Follow the link - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1115906655100815>. To 'sign up' click on 'join', or email Lynne with your plot no at: lynneesnowden@aol.com. Use the page to share ideas or news or to contact the Committee.

Seed Swap



Know that feeling when you have packets of seeds and far more than you can use? Darren Turnor has organised a 'Seed Swap' to exchange veg/flower seeds. He is inviting people to come along on **Saturday 2nd March, 12.00 Noon at 'Woodies Craft Ale House', on Otley Road.**

Bring your surplus seeds to swap for other people's seeds. All welcome. This is a great opportunity for current and new plot-holders to exchange and share their seeds, ideas, hints, tips and knowledge. No exchange of monies. Any questions, contact Darren through the Facebook page.

Oh... and I guess 'refreshments' and, ahem..., mineral water and other beverages (!) may be purchased at the bar.....

New to a Plot?

If you have just taken on an allotment plot, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. Here are some ideas that may help:

- **Talk to your neighbours.** They may have useful advice.
- **Check what plants you already have and if they can be kept** (eg. fruit trees or bushes can be revived with pruning).
- **Are there any features or structures that could be cleared or re-used** - raised beds, paths, compost bin, fences, or a shed?
- **Work out a rough plan** of what you'd like to grow where (you won't do it all at once, but it's helpful to have an end in mind). Work out where you'd like to put perennials (plants that live more than two years), fruit trees, bushes, herbs etc that you may not want to move again - remember to allow space for them to grow.
- **'Little and often'** - don't try to do too much all at once; but make sure you **visit your plot often**, so that when you have cleared the weeds you don't come back and find they have all regrown.
- **You won't clear a whole plot at once.** Better to clear a section at a time and get something planted. Use tarpaulins to cover the areas you won't get to this year to suppress weeds. But you could also use areas of bare soil where you won't be cultivating anything this year to grow 'green manure' (see below).
- **Improve the soil.** Winter is the time to dig the soil and break it up - although it's too late now for winter frosts to break it down further (see also 'No dig' below). You can improve the soil further by **sowing 'green manure'**. These are fast-growing plants, grown to cover the soil and then dug-in as a soil improver. Many plants can play this role, but Phacelia and Buckwheat can be sown in spring and dug-in later in the summer - the added bonus is bees love the flowers! Check the internet for other options
- **Resist using a 'Rotavator'** - until you've cleared all perennial weeds (dandelions, couch grass, bindweed), or you will simply chop the roots and each fragment will sprout another weed.
- **'No Dig'** - the idea is that you can grow without digging. It tends to work best on 'raised beds', with a base of cardboard to suppress weeds, but you will need plenty of compost to fill the beds. Plenty of advice on this topic can be found on the internet.
- **What to grow?** - plant potatoes for breaking up the soil and beans/peas for adding nitrogen, but mainly grow what you like and ask your neighbours for suggestions. Check on seed packets for 'when to plant', remembering that we can get frosts until May. Think about storage too.
- **Set up a compost heap or bin** - much of the 'greenery' you clear can be composted. This becomes the source of compost to improve your soil over the years.
- **'Weed before you think you need to....'** Come spring weeds will grow faster than you expect and faster than your veg!



Plot Inspections



Yes, I know it's only still late winter..... but just to let you know that the **Committee plans to start plot inspections in March**.... They will be looking for some evidence that work has begun on your Plot and it isn't simply abandoned. Any safety issues must have been dealt with, including removing broken glass and trimming back overhanging bushes beside paths. Also remember to ensure that you have a clear sign in place with your plot number on it.

Manure & Wood-chip



We hope to get fresh supplies of manure soon, some wood chip is still available. Please arrange payment **BEFORE** taking anything. The cost is £1 per barrow-load. Speak to a member of the Committee, or ask at the Hut on Sunday. Alternatively please put your cash in an envelope, marked with your name/plot number and what you are taking and post it in the post-box on the back wall of the Hut (under the awning).

Please note that the gravel material piled close to the top car park is not to be taken. This material is for use by the Committee for site maintenance only.

Things to do in February/March

Tidying/Pruning

- Tidy after the winter. Clear your plot of spent crops.
- Complete pruning of apple trees, pear trees, currant bushes and autumn fruiting raspberry and blackcurrant canes.
- Tidy strawberry beds - remove dead leaves, remaining 'runners' and clear old beds. New planting of strawberries should wait until after the last frost.

Digging

- Clear overgrown beds and dig-over. The next stage should be to prepare beds for planting (ground dug and raked to a fine tilth). This can only be done when weather and ground have warmed up and dried somewhat.
- 'Feed' your allotment with manure or other fertiliser on beds you plan to use this year and 'top dress' around your fruit trees and bushes.

Sowing and Planting

- Last chance to plant bare-rooted fruit trees and bushes.
- 'Chit' your seed potatoes if you haven't started. 'Chitting' is where you allow the potato to sprout. Do this in a well-lit position and frost free (egg-boxes are great because you can stand the potatoes vertically, with the most 'eyes' up). You can start preparing your beds for planting now, but planting out is generally an April activity, so that when shoots emerge the last frost has occurred (and this is mid to late May in most years). The key is that the soil needs to be at about 10c+ when you plant. Some people like to cover the bed with clear polythene a few weeks ahead of planting to help the soil warm and dry out.
- Plant onion and shallot 'sets' - you might want to cover to keep birds and squirrels away.
- Even if your seed packets say seeds can be sown directly outside in Spring, remember we are only just coming into March and cold, wintry weather and frosts can't be ruled out. For many vegetables planting out should only be done IF and WHEN soil and weather has warmed and the ground is not waterlogged. Cold frames, cloches and fleece can help with seed germination and help give them a start and for many veg you could be growing seedlings now indoors, on a cool, light windowsill, ready for planting out later in the spring.

Can you help?

Our current supplier of 'wood chip' may not be able to supply us with more for some weeks. Does anyone have a contact who may be able to supply us sooner? Contact a member of the Committee (in person or email ash_road_allotments@aol.co.uk)

Also, the group that looks after the allotment chickens is running short of **green food for the chickens**. The chickens apparently love brassicas and herbs as part of their diet, so if you are clearing out the brassicas and other green vegetables or herbs on your plot and you'd be happy to donate them to the chickens that would be great. You can contact one of the chicken group - someone is usually at the Coffee morning at 11am every Sunday, so come along and make yourself known!

Allotment Shop Price List, February 2019

Allotment Shop - open at the Hut Sunday mornings (10.30-Noon).

Composts/Growing Media

'Gro-Well' Multipurpose Compost	60 Litre bag	£5.15
Peat-Free Multipurpose Compost	50 Litre bag	£5.15
John Innes No.1 Compost (for young plants)	25 Litre bag	£3.70
John Innes No.3 Compost (for established plants) ...	25 Litre bag	£3.70
'Gro-Bag'	3 Plant-size bag	£2.25
.....	4 Plant-size bag	£3.00
Perlite	1 Litre	80p
Perlka Fertiliser (nitrogenous/lime) NEW ITEM ...	1kg Keg	£1.30
Vermiculite	1 Litre	80p

Mulches/Fertilisers/Feeds

Farmyard Manure	40 Litre bag	£4.15
'Strulch' - straw mulch	Large 13.5kg/150 Litre bag	£10.50
Compost Activator	1kg for 45p	
Garden Lime	1kg for 50p	3kg for £1.25
Growmore	1kg for 75p	3kg for £2.25
Bonemeal	1kg for 80p	3kg for £2.25
Sulphate of Potash	1kg for £1.80	3kg for £4.60
Organic Pellets	1Kg for 85p	3kg for £2.40
Rootgrow	360g for £8.50	
Liquid Plant Feed	1 Litre	£2.60
'Doff' Tomato Feed	1 Litre	£2.25

Protection and Pest/Weed /Supression

Fleece (Lightweight)	45p per linear metre	
Fleece (Heavyweight)	65p per linear metre	
Groundcover - 1 metre wide	£1.20 per linear metre	
Groundcover - 2 metre wide	£2.20 per linear metre	
Anti-Bird Netting	£2.20 per linear metre	
Debris Netting - 2 metres wide	£1.70 per linear metre	
Enviromesh - 1.8 metres wide	£2.50 per linear metre	
Slug Pellets	800g	£2.60

Other Items

Canes - 8 feet (2.4 metre) length	Each	75p
Gloves (Various - Per Pair	Regular £2.00 /Strong	£5.00
Plant Labels (6 inch/150mm)	25 pack	35p
Jute Twine	500g	£3.65
Green Twine	110metre roll	£1.85
Greenhouse Clips	25 pack	£2.20
Hessian Sacks	Each	£1.65
Velcro Plant Tie (Roll) *NEW ITEM*	Roll	£1.30
Water Butt (slim)	100 Litre	£21.50
Water Butt Stand		£9.60

Hire of Equipment

Mower	£3.00 per half hour
Strimmer	£3.00 per half hour