

Harlow Hill Allotment Association

Winter 2019 Newsletter

for all Plot Holders and Associate Members

Happy New Year everybody. It's actually so far been a good gardening New Year for the brave and well wrapped up. We haven't had much rain for a while and the soil is very workable. All the leaves and annual foliage have died back, so you can see the wood from the trees. Not a bad time at all for clearing up. Furthermore, there are just a few signs of spring, including a splendid show of catkins. And the birds are beginning to twitter a bit.



A plot-holder's compost heap embellished with a fine display of catkins

PLOT FOR A HIGH FIBRE DIET

Our allotment can be good for our health in all sorts of ways, and producing lots of high fibre fruit and veg is one of them.

A recent study suggests that eating high levels of "fibre" has a protective effect against cardiovascular disease, diabetes type 2, and cancer. The research, a major review commissioned by the World Health Organisation, found that of those who eat the most fibre there was a 15% - 30% reduction in death from all causes compared to those eating the lowest fibre.

The high fibre vegetables and fruit that can easily be grown on a north of England vegetable plot are beans, peas, potatoes (for fibre, best when baked and eaten with the skin) and apples. For information (but not for the allotment), other high fibre foods are whole grain and whole meal bread, whole grain pasta, oat-based muesli, nuts, bananas (should be a bit green) and baked beans.

Diet is full of fads and fashions, and what is a good diet has long been a matter of continuing dispute. The high fibre diet is another contribution to the debate and challenges the current low-carbohydrate fashion. Look forward to seeing you and your plots full of beans this summer.

HARROGATE & DISTRICT ALLOTMENT FEDERATION AGM

The Harrogate & District Allotment Federation brings together all the allotments sites in Harrogate, Knaresborough and Ripon. The main function of the Federation is to organise the Annual Allotment Show in the Valley Gardens in August, and to bring the allotment sites together to share ideas and good practice.

The AGM for the Federation will take place on **Wednesday 23rd January at 7.30 p.m.** at Oatlands Mount Social Club (on Hookstone Road opposite Oatlands Junior School). There will be a presentation to The Forest School who were our 2018 charity, and a short talk by Kate Simpson from Henshaws, our 2019 charity, about their gardening activities.

All plot-holders and associated members are welcome. The bar in the club will be open, and we will hold a raffle. For further information, contact Angela Dicken dicken.angela@hotmail.co.uk or phone 505748.

PLANTS THE BEES LIKE

There are quite a few plants that people can include on their plots to give our bees a helping hand around the "June Gap".

- Phacelia planted early May to June in successive lots will provide a good continuous source of nectar through June and into July.
- Borage planted in April will be suitable (flowers 8 weeks from planting).
- Jacob's Ladder (*Polemonium caeruleum*) flowers May to June.
- Thyme can be a great addition to the edge of a plot and will flower from June to July, but is often a little late for the June Gap.
- Red and White Clover also offer a very good ground cover and provide a great source of food from May - September, and June - September respectively.
- Cornflower will bloom June to August if sown from mid-Spring to early Summer.
- Nigella can sometimes flower early but often blooms in July.

Graeme Knowles-Miller

Editor : Here are a couple of vegetable bloomers for the June Gap:

- Broad Beans bloom in June if set in early April or in the autumn - attractive flowers too.
- Leeks: leave two or three of this winter's leeks in the ground and let them go to flower. The bees seem to like them, but not recommended for human consumption at this stage in their growth cycle.

Editor, Stop Press: (15th January) Findings from a recent research project on land use in cities (Leeds was included) have shown that allotments and well-stocked gardens are particularly good urban havens for bees and other pollinators. The research states that allotments are good places for pollinators as they provide a mix of fruit and vegetable flowers "plus weedy corners full of native plants".

PERMANENT FEATURES ON PLOTS

Perhaps you are looking forward to the end of dark nights and to the new growing season. If so, you may be thinking of changing things on your plot, so this might be a good time for a reminder about what features are allowed on plots.

Maximum space should be available for cultivation. Last year, one of our new plot holders had to remove a large area of gravel path left by the previous tenant. When plots are vacated the next tenant may want to use the maximum amount of growing space available and it is unfair to expect the next tenant to move hard features. For this reason hard features other than the ones listed below are not allowed.

- The maximum size for sheds is 4 feet x 6 feet, and for greenhouses 6 x 8 feet. If you would like to put up a shed or greenhouse please ask the committee member responsible for your plot for a shed permission form which you should complete and return.
- If you have a shed, it's a good idea to have a water butt to catch rain water. Not only is this convenient, it helps to reduce the site's water bill.
- A small paved area in front of sheds is permissible, but generally most of the plot should be available for cultivation. Many plot holders use raised beds but paths between beds should be grass or bark chip, not gravel or paving stones.
- Poly tunnels should not be used on the site because weather conditions are unsuitable.
- Ponds should be no longer than 1 metre with a maximum depth of 30 cm and should have sloping sides.
- Grass paths between plots must be at least 50 cm wide and no wider than 70 cm.
- Path widths on plots between beds should be between 40 and 60 cm.

Anne Ellis, Secretary

Diamond Wedding Anniversary Celebration

On Monday 28th January John & Maureen Hammerton (plot 33A) are celebrating their diamond wedding anniversary (that's 60 years together!) They are holding a concert in St Mark's Church Leeds Road given by St Aidan's School Chamber Choir and Symphony Orchestra on **Friday 1st February 2019 at 7.30 pm**. Tickets will be £8 full price and £5 concessions (over 60s) in aid of Caring for Life a charity which supports vulnerable adults and also St Aidan's music department.

Tickets can be obtained from the Hammertons and St Mark's Church office.



Allotments are popular in many countries in Europe. In Germany, the individual plots tend to be fenced in, locked up, and with large permanent features for a variety of leisure purposes. This is a picture of allotments in Heligoland, an island off the coast of Germany.

ALLOTMENTS ELIGIBLE FOR “COMMUTED SUMS”

“Commutated sums” are monies gained from new provision of residential dwelling within Harrogate and District, and allotments are included in the “permissible expenditure” with relation to the “Provision For Open Space”. Harlow Hill Allotments Association has been awarded a sum of money under the commuted sums allocation. These monies must be spent within 10 years of Harrogate Council receiving them, and can only be spent on specific projects, not used for maintenance of new or existing facilities.

One option that has been noted by the Committee is to apply for a grant for the provision of electricity to the allotment shop. Ian Clarke, Chair of Harlow Hill Allotment Association, will give more information at the AGM where there will be an opportunity to discuss the possible uses of the money.

Angela Dicken

ALLOTMENT WEBSITE

The allotment website can be found at www.harlowhillaa.org Angela Dicken who looks after it has made it a very attractive and informative website. She keeps it very up to date and there are lots of photos. The password for the Members' Area is Beesmakehoney Frequent “visits” to it are much recommended, and many thanks, Angela.

KNOW YOUR WEEDS: MARE'S TAIL

A weed has sometimes been defined as a plant in the wrong place. Mare'sTail is always in the wrong place and it's a terrible weed. It's a perennial too, lasts forever. Many years ago, there was no mare's tail at all on my plot, but it has crept in over the years. I think it came from the nearby road. It arrives stealthily by an underground route, a foot or more below ground. It spreads by its roots - I've never seen it flower or seed, though apparently it has cones. If the mare's tail is not dealt with, the plot will be thick with mare's tail roots underground, and thick and high with growth above ground. If mare's tail gains control, cultivation of a plot is impossible. It can be recognised by a long flexible stem with green branches either side. Looks a bit like a big feather. I first wrote that it's no use whatsoever for anything or anybody, but apparently it can be boiled in water as a fungicide for mildew.



It can be got rid of chemically, but it is time-consuming and expensive, as well as going against the grain. A well-known garden had to resort to chemical treatment, however, such was the extent of mare's tail infestation. For mainly organic gardeners like me, I recommend frequent digging - it doesn't take to being messed about a lot. You are down to the roots when the spade gets tugged a bit. Dig up every bit of root, and make sure it's destroyed (not composted). A couple of years ago, I had to dig up my gooseberry bush to get rid of the mare's tail, a choice that had to be made. In the summer, dig up or pull up every mare's tail shoot as it surfaces.

By these means, you will be able to deal with it. You won't be able to get rid of it completely, but you will be able to keep on top of it and show it who's the boss. Incidentally, its “proper” name is field horsetail (equisetaceae)

A LEEK EXPERIMENT

I always grow leeks. I don't know anything about their fibre content, but they're good all-rounders (soups included) and they last well into April. The variety I always grow is Musselburgh (if they do well near Edinburgh they're good for Harlow Hill). I set them from seed out in the open in the latter part of April and they germinate almost 100%. By the end of June/early July they are ready for transplanting (if you transplant them later than July they'll not make much growth if any). Make a small hole with the top end of the hoe, stick a leek in each hole, push the soil back in the hole, and water frequently for a few days. Weed occasionally and they'll look after themselves.

The year before last, I didn't need all the leeks that had germinated, and instead of digging them up I left them. Many of them grew into decent-sized good leeks, certainly very usable, though as I hadn't thinned them, they were all jumbled up.

Last year (2018/19), I decided that I would sow them more thinly and leave them without transplanting them. The results? Well, I'm no worse off. I've had a good row of leeks, and there are enough left to last till April. I didn't set them thinly enough so they are still too close together with many small ones, but plenty of good size too. Hardly any are rotten. They are cleaner to use, as you don't get any muck down the top of them - that's because they grow higher than the transplants.

Aesthetically, they look scruffy: so no beauty prize. Instead of tops in various shades of green and a bit of white ankle (I always think transplanted leeks look nice), mine are unremitting grey with a bit of green at the top. The grey I assume is because the outside of the stems has been exposed to the weather. They're tatty too, because the Harlow Hill wind has ripped bits away. For which reasons, I decided not to enter them for the Harry Newport leek competition. But they're still in business.

Why not let the newsletter know of your allotment successes and failures? - it's a good way of sharing our experience and ideas.

ALLOTMENT SHOP

The Allotment Shop will **re-open on Saturday 2nd February 2019**. The shop will be open on Saturdays and Sundays from 10.30 till 1200. A new price list will be sent out in the next few weeks. Please support the Allotment Shop. Our prices are often cheaper than commercial shops, you will be helping to raise funds for the Association, and you don't have to carry your purchases very far.

Angela Dicken

RENTS AND ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP FEES

You will already have received details of how to pay your allotment rent or renew your associate membership either by email or post. The treasurer will be grateful if you could make the payments as requested.

Dates for your Diary 2019

Wednesday 23rd January 2019 at 7.30pm

Harrogate & District Allotment Federation AGM at Oatlands Mount Social Club, 1 Coronation Grove, Harrogate, HG2 8BY.

Saturday 2nd February. Allotment shop re-opens

28th February Last Date for Receipt of Plot Rent and Renewal of Associate Membership Subscription

Saturday 16th March and Sunday 17th March 2019 from 10.00 – 12.30.

Work Weekend Please come and help on one of the mornings. More details to follow.

Thursday 21st March at 7.30pm

Harlow Hill Allotment Association AGM will be held on **in the Green Hut**. Talk on **'Fruit growing'** and refreshments

Sunday 18th August 2019 from 11am – 4pm.

HDAF Annual Allotment Show in the Valley Gardens

All items by the editor unless otherwise stated,

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