



HARLOW HILL ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

JANUARY 2021 NEWSLETTER

for all Plot Holders and Associate Members



HHAA site on 15th January taken by Wendy Lawton

Happy Lockdown New Year everybody. For most of the first three weeks of the year the allotments, like everywhere else locally, have either been snowbound, frost bound, or waterlogged. Actually the snowfall of Friday 8th was remarkably local - 6 to 7 inches of snow here in Harrogate and, I'm told, none at all in nearby Ilkley! So visits to the allotments have been few and far between, perhaps to pick some frozen sprouts or to delve in the snow for a few leeks. Maybe someone has been to cut a January King. But somewhere down there, the rhubarb is stirring and things can only get better. I'm looking forward to spending time on the allotment again. Last year, it wasn't just the pleasure and frustrations of watching my plants grow, and the warm air and the warm soil, it was the other people on the allotment and the chat, and the feeling that somehow we had rescued a small slice of everyday life as it used to be. So hope everyone has a really good allotment year in 2021.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Happy New Year to all plot holders. Firstly, a big thank you to all plot holders who have donated surplus fruit and vegetables to Waste Not, Want Not. Even the winter months have seen generous donations of beetroot, parsnips and other crops. All these donations are very much appreciated, and they are all used.

2021 looks like another challenging year. However, if we all follow the COVID-19 rules, we should be able continue to tend our allotments, even though social gatherings such as the plant sale/open day may have to be curtailed.

I look forward to seeing you on your plots in the near future.

Ian Clarke Chair HHAA

COVID-19 REMINDERS

We can still use the allotments in the present lockdown, but please keep to the rules.

1. **Maintain 2 metres social distance** from people not in your household at all times. Remind your children to follow this rule too.
2. Opening the locks and gates will mean there are contact points that lots of people are touching. **Always sanitize or wash your hands after handling the gates and locks. Do not** wash your hands under the taps.
3. **Leave the gate open when you or other plot holders are on site. If no one else is on site when you leave, please lock the gate.**
4. Please **do not share tools.**
5. **Wash or sanitize your hands after using the site mowers.**

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2021

As it seems unlikely that we will be able to hold our AGM in person this year, the committee have decided in these exceptional circumstances to conduct the official business by email and post. The reports from the Chair, Treasurer and Lettings Manager will be sent out in early March. Plot holders and Associate members will be given 2 weeks to submit any questions or comments. At the same time you will be notified which officers and committee members are willing to stand for office again and nominations for any of the posts can then be submitted. If a ballot needs to be held, you will be notified of the procedure. Minutes will be prepared at the end of March/early April and these will be circulated.

COMMITTEE MEETS BY ZOOM

The Committee had a successful meeting by zoom on 19th January. The agenda, as normal, covered all aspects of taking responsibility for the smooth running of the allotment site. The Committee also discussed the spraying of weedkillers, the Covid rules, the amount of an allotment that can be grassed area, and the adding of names to the tenancy of an allotment plot.

ALLOTMENT SHOP

We are unlikely to be able to open the Allotment Shop as normal in February 2021. Following discussions with the allotment committee, we have decided to start by offering shopping via email again like we did in 2020.

We will do this once a month for February, March, April and May. An email will be sent out to everyone with the price list in late January and orders will then be taken. The goods will be left outside the shop as before and payment will be by bank transfer.

Once we can re-open the shop as normal, we're going to open on alternate Saturdays and Sundays, but also continue to do the shopping by email once a month.

We are going to continue to allow people to pay by bank transfer (as well as cash) even when the shop is open normally. Customers will be given a slip of paper with the association's bank details on it together with the amount they owe. This should help when you want something from the shop, but don't have any cash with you on site. If you need more information about the shop or have any suggestions, please contact me.

Angela Dicken

HDAF COMPETITION & ALLOTMENT SHOW

2020 should have seen the Harrogate & District Allotment Federation's Diamond Jubilee Show, but of course, it had to be cancelled. The Sun Pavilion in Valley Gardens has been re-booked for **15th August 2021** and we are keeping our fingers crossed that we will be able to hold our celebrations then.



Yellow Jubilee Tomatoes

To celebrate our Diamond Jubilee, we are going to re-run the competition we held last year. Each allotment site will be given some Diamond Jubilee sweet pea seeds and some Jubilee tomato seeds to grow. We are hoping that each site will have also managed to keep one or more of the Jubilee Boy dahlia tubers from last year. Once again we hope that a group of people on each site will get together to grow the seeds and tuber and then use the resulting flowers and tomatoes to make an arrangement to display at the Show. If you are interested in having a go at growing the sweet peas and/or the tomatoes for Harlow Hill's display, please contact me and I'll get the seeds to you. The tomatoes I grew last year were very tasty!

Angela Dicken

LETTINGS UPDATE

With the pandemic still in full flow, many more of us are looking to get outside. Sales of bicycles have risen by over 60% in the year and camping equipment sales are over 30% up. The attraction of allotments with the opportunity for outdoor, socially distanced space has also risen and more people have put their name down for the chance of a plot at Harlow Hill. Only 8 plot holders relinquished their plots in 2020 and despite some plots being split in half, the Waiting List continued to rise and stands currently at 49. The arrival of the next year's plot rental invoice (now sent out) sometimes causes people to re-consider whether they wish to continue, so we will have to see whether the same happens this year.

I know that all of us greatly value the outdoor opportunities for fresh air and enhanced wellbeing that an allotment plot gives us and so with such large numbers on the list, it becomes even more important that all current plot holders maintain their patch to a good standard in line with the requirements of their Tenancy Agreement. The committee will continue to monitor all plots.

Richard Wriglesworth, Lettings Officer

Some key points from your tenancy agreement

- You should keep all hedges, ditches, fences and gates as well as all the paths alongside your own plot (except the main grass ride and boundary fence or hedge) in good order and repair.
- The plot should be properly manured
- The majority of the plot should be under cultivation. *(The committee regards this as being approx. 75%- so large grassed areas are not permitted.)*
- Weeds should be kept under control and not be allowed to spread their seed onto neighbouring plots.
- Crops should be harvested when mature and not left to rot.

RENTS AND ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP FEES

Invoices for allotment rents and associate membership renewal forms were sent out in mid-January either by email or post. Please contact the Secretary if you have not received yours. If at all possible, please pay by bank transfer. Remember to check that your contact details are all correct – especially your email address as the majority of our communication is done by email.

Many thanks to those people who paid very promptly.

Chris Dicken, Treasurer

KINGS SEED ORDER

Many thanks to the 49 plot holders and associate members who took advantage of the Kings Seed Order this year, which made £313 for the association. The seeds were a little later arriving due to the coronavirus crisis and there were one or two missing items, but perhaps we can forgive these mistakes in what was a difficult year for them.

The seed potatoes from Acorn should be available in early February. You will be contacted as soon as they arrive.

Angela Dicken

SITE MANAGEMENT

Installation of Extra Taps

Phase 1 has been completed with the installation of an extra tap on the site at the corner of plot 56A. Phase 2 involves the installation of one extra tap and the relocation of the existing tap between plots 25A and 26A to better serve the plots in that area.

Tree and Hedge Cutting

A date has now been agreed with the contractor for removing the tree near which overhangs plots 24B and 25B and the pruning of the large oak tree which overhangs plot 44B. The work will be done on 15th February.

Mower Maintenance

The Honda mower (the one in the shed next to the shop) is to be serviced as it runs very unevenly – known as “hunting”.

Many thanks to Paul Knight for looking after the site very efficiently.

ALLOTMENTS GATE TRASHED BY UNKNOWN VEHICLE

Plot holders were surprised one 2020 autumn morning to find the deliveries gate near the allotment shop badly damaged, in fact in two parts several yards into the allotments. Clearly a vehicle had crashed into the gate at some speed, either accidentally or on purpose, then reversed out of the allotments and back along the lane. The incident was reported to the police. The gate has now been replaced.



USE OF GLYPHOSPHATE WEEDKILLER ON ALLOTMENT PLOTS

At our recent committee meeting, we discussed the thorny question of the use of glyphosphate weedkiller (e.g. Round-up) on our allotment plots. This matter came up because, last summer, a plot holder sprayed a weedy patch on their allotment, the weedkiller damaged the grass on the rides and adjacent plot holders were very concerned that the spray might have drifted onto their plots and could potentially cause damage. This is not the first time this problem has occurred.

Some committee members were in favour of banning the use of these weedkillers, believing that there are alternative ways of getting rid of persistent weeds and being concerned about potential harm to bees, wildlife and human health. Other committee members thought that, if Round-up is used with care, then it could be a useful tool in getting rid of weeds such as horsetail (mare's tail).

The use of glyphosphate is still permitted by the Government, though discussions about its use and whether it should be banned are ongoing.

For the moment, the conclusion of our discussion was to continue to allow plot holders to use it, but only if there are no other alternatives and only following a discussion with a committee

member on how it is to be used. It should not be allowed to damage surrounding rides or any neighbouring plots. The section in the Tenancy Agreement on weedkillers will be amended to reflect these changes.

In normal times, we would probably have raised this matter at the AGM for general discussion. If you have any thoughts or comments about it, please let me know.

Angela Dicken, Secretary

Some alternative ways of controlling persistent weeds

Couch Grass



It is possible to dig out couch grass. Use a fork rather than a spade to dig out the roots to avoid cutting them and make sure that you remove every bit of root to avoid the problem getting worse. Dispose of the roots carefully. Do not put them on the compost heap! Sealing them in a black bag with some water and leaving for a few months in the sun will cause them to break down and they can then be safely added to the compost heap.

Horsetail (Mare's Tail)

Horsetail has been around for millions of years and is difficult to eradicate completely. The plant reproduces by spores that are readily wind dispersed. The rhizomes can be forked out of the top layers of soil, but regrowth is inevitable. Shallow weeding should be avoided, as it worsens the problem. Before any new shoots reach 3 inches/7cm, hoe off an inch below the surface. By regularly removing new shoots, the plants seem to weaken as the food supply to the roots is exhausted and the infestation can be reduced quite a lot over a couple of seasons.



Make sure that you put what you have dug out in a place where it will not revive – hanging them out to dry works in summer.

Bindweed



Because bindweed shoots can develop from fragments of root, rhizome or the plant stem, it is hard to eradicate - but with a couple of years persistent digging and hoeing it is possible to get rid of the plant. The first step in treating bindweed is to get out as much of the root system as possible while digging your plot in autumn/winter. Next you must consistently hoe out any shoots that try to come out in summer, as this will significantly weaken the roots for the coming season. Again, do not put any of the roots or stems on the compost heap. A thick mulch can weaken the weed – perhaps the most effective method being to put a layer of compost or well-rotted manure under a black membrane which suppresses the light. After 6 - 12 months, the soil is so well structured that it is easy to pull out the weakened shoots.

INFORMAL PLANT TRIAL: BRUSSELS SPROUTS BRIGITTE F1

I hadn't grown sprouts for several years, but last year I thought I would try again. I particularly wanted a late autumn vegetable to follow the runner beans. I chose Brigitte F1, not because the catalogue says they are "deliciously sweet with a nutty flavour" (I don't think I can tell one sprout from another) but because the catalogue says they "harvest" in October, November, and December. I have been very impressed by their performance, and thoroughly recommend Brigitte. 10 out of 10.



Mine weren't quite as good as these!

I planted out the seedlings around the end of May and watered them frequently throughout the growing period. I also netted them to keep the cabbage whites off (I've seen brussels sprouts eaten to skeletons by very hungry caterpillars). They grew well, and by the time they were making sprouts, they were getting on for navel height. It might have helped that I grew them where I had previously had a manure heap. The sprouts came from early October onwards, and were tight and plentiful. I've still got a few at the top of each plant. There's a case for staking them, but by the time a powerful October night gale had blown them diagonal good sprouts had already formed.

Keith Wadd

HAVE YOUR SAY

Plot holders are very welcome to contribute a short piece about their allotment successes or failures - the newsletter is a useful way of pooling our experience.



HHAA site on 9th January taken by Gordon Coates



HHAA small site on 9th January taken by Angela Dicken

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