



HARLOW HILL ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

WINTER 2023 NEWSLETTER

For all Plot Holders and Associate Members



Frost and Winter Sunshine

Welcome to the Winter Newsletter and hope everyone has a good gardening year. We're already beginning to see signs of spring with the evenings getting lighter, the birds beginning to chirp and sing, snowdrops in flower, and catkins on the hedges. Time to think of allotments again. A few decades ago we would have completed the "winter digging" and welcomed the recent frosts for breaking up the soil, but we tend to do things a bit differently now. Another good time to set broad beans (even if you set some in October) is mid/late March. I sow a variety called 'witkiem' which is medium in height and better able to withstand the high winds of Harlow than the taller varieties.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



This year's AGM will be held in the Green Hut on Beckwith Avenue at 7.30 p.m. on **Thursday 23rd March.**

The Speaker is **Hilary Dodson from the Northern Fruit Group.** She will be talking about fruit pruning and will bring some samples, so that she can show us how to do it.

This will be followed by tea/coffee and cakes, then the official business including the election of the Committee who of course are accountable to the members. Come along and have your say, and influence the running of the allotment site. This year, we are particularly interested in issues concerned with trees on the site, but feel welcome to raise other issues. The Roland Buckton trophy for "The Most Improved Plot" will be presented to Isabelle Holmes, plot 4B, and the Harry Newport trophy for "The Best Leeks" to Judy David, plot 53A.

ANGELA DICKEN - STEPPING DOWN

I joined the committee of Harlow Hill Allotments in March 2011, so I've decided that it's time to step down at our AGM this March. I have thoroughly enjoyed being involved with our allotment association. I've got to know and worked with some wonderful people and have learned a great deal about allotmenting. I would like to thank everyone – especially my fellow committee members – for their support and friendship. I will continue to help Chris run the Allotment Shop, continue my involvement with HDAF and will format the newsletter, but hopefully will have a bit more time to potter about on my plot.

Angela Dicken

BEST LEEKS TROPHY – THE CRITERIA



I was flattered to be asked to judge the leeks again this year. I used the same criteria as in the previous year as I wandered round the plots to find the best specimens. Firstly, I thought that the trophy should not be decided on the best leek or pair, but a bed of around twenty at least. Secondly, I thought that the leeks in the bed should be quite big. Thirdly, I thought they should look nice, a blend of white stem and bright green leaves, and not looking straw-coloured and tatty. Finally, no one should win the prize two years in succession.

I also think the leeks should be judged in early November. That's in order to do the judging before all the best ones get eaten.

Keith Wadd

ALLOTMENT SHOP

The Committee has decided to keep the same pattern of opening dates and times as last year, as this seemed to work well:

Month	Opening dates 2023	
	Saturday 10.30 – 12.00	Sunday 10.30 – 12.00
Feb	11 th	26 th
March	11 th	26 th
April	8 th	23 rd
May	6 th	22 nd
June	Closed	Closed
July	8 th	Closed
August	Closed	Closed
Sept	9 th	24 th
Oct	7 th	22 nd
Nov	11 th	Closed

We will also do orders by email on each of the Saturdays when the shop is open. I'll put the opening dates on all the gates and the noticeboard, and send out reminders with the price list once a month.

If you have ordered seed potatoes from Acorn, they will be available for collection when the shop is open on 11th February.

Angela Dicken

HELPING ON SITE

As we are a self-managed site, there are always lots of jobs to do to keep the site well-maintained. Many of you have helped at work weekends, when we've had hedges to clear or when we've been improving the drainage; some people take on specific tasks e.g. mowing the main rides, cleaning the toilet, looking after the locks, buying petrol for the mowers, helping in the allotment shop. The Committee is very grateful to everyone who gives their time and effort. We are compiling a list of everyone who is willing to help, so if you've not already told me, please let me know if you're willing to be contacted when there are jobs to do – include the type of jobs you're willing to do.

After the recent windy days, you can all help by clearing any rubbish that's blown on to your plot or into the hedges or the ditch. Thank you.

Angela Dicken

SITE SAFETY

Whilst we're probably all conscious of keeping ourselves safe when working on our allotment plot, it is important to remember that we are also responsible for making the site safe for everyone.

One of the basic things we can do is to make sure that there are no items around, even if wholly on our plot, that are a health and safety issue. The Committee is particularly keen that plot holders should take this seriously as any injuries are ultimately our responsibility.



One item that is particularly troublesome is that of broken glass. We all know how windy our site is and of course when we have gale force winds many plots are exposed to these high winds. A number of times we have had glass blown out of greenhouses causing a site hazard, and even if the plot holders move any broken glass on to their own plot that is not a fully acceptable solution and the broken glass should be disposed of off-site as soon as possible. The picture shows the sort of damage the high winds can cause and indeed all plot holders are strongly advised that they should erect windbreaks around any greenhouse as well as securing it to the ground.

Another common issue is people leaving odd bits of wood with nails or other sharp items sticking out. It is not difficult to put these so that the nails point downwards into the ground rather than sticking straight up, but many people don't. The plot holder and other people on the path can easily trip and fall on the exposed nails.

Some fruit bushes, especially blackberries and others with sharp thorns, are also an issue if close to rides – they can often get out of control and encroach where people are walking. It is easy to keep them cut back and out of the way. Twigs, after having been pruned, can be sharp and can be particularly dangerous at face level (and children's face level), so when pruning please be careful not to leave exposed sharp ends.

Can we please ask you all just to take a little more care and thought to avoid causing these quite easily remedied hazards. Many thanks.

Chris Dicken

ALLOTMENT FEDERATION REVIEWS SITE JUDGING

The HDAF AGM was held on Tuesday 24th January at 7.30pm at Oatlands Club. 24 members attended from 10 allotment sites across the Harrogate District. At the meeting there was a discussion about the new process for site judging. Members at the meeting agreed the following proposals:

- The site judging process must be completely transparent.
- The judging criteria should be set by the Harrogate sites.
- The marks needed to achieve Gold, Silver-Gilt, Silver and Bronze should be set before the judging.
- Mark sheets will also have information on 'Areas of Achievement' and 'Areas for Improvement' to provide constructive feedback.
- Completed mark sheets will be given to the sites after the judging.
- For the Top Plot award, each site could put forward 2 or 3 plots to be judged. Sites can decide whether or not they want to put forward plots for this award.
- The judges should be 2 independent people (perhaps one horticultural specialist and 1 member from Harrogate in Bloom). The judges will be provided with the criteria and a marking sheet and will be accompanied by a member of HDAF and a representative from the site when carrying out the judging.

A sub-group of members from 5 Harrogate sites will compile the judging criteria and mark scheme, which will be ratified at the Show Committee and Site Chairs' meetings in March.

The Allotment Show will take place on Sunday 20th August this year in the Sun Pavilion in Valley Gardens. Sarah Stead and myself will represent Harlow Hill at the Show Committee meetings. *Angela Dicken*

HARROGATE & DISTRICT ALLOTMENT FEDERATION INTER-SITE COMPETITION



The theme for the 2023 HDAF Inter-site Competition is **"SIMPLY RED"**. Each allotment site is challenged to produce an arrangement on this theme to include fruit, vegetables and flowers. We can use as many or as few varieties as we wish and the arrangement must fit into a 2ft x 2ft square.

Just before the Allotment Show on 20th August, we will be asking for red produce to include in the Harlow Hill arrangement, so when you're deciding what to grow this year, please include some red varieties. The arrangements will be judged as part of the allotment show. *Angela Dicken*

OPEN DAY

Our Harlow Hill Open Day with plant and cake stalls will be held on **Saturday 3rd June**. Make a note in your diary, and feel welcome to encourage friends to come along.

WASTE NOT, WANT NOT

When we start harvesting the vegetables and fruit on our plots, don't forget to contribute any surplus produce to Waste Not, Want Not. This means putting it in the yellow bins beside the Allotment Shop. In particular, lots of fruit seems to go to waste unnecessarily. And much as our contributions are appreciated, please try to make sure that the produce that we donate is of decent edible quality, not well past its use-by date.



The produce that we put in the yellow bins goes to “Resurrected Bites” a Harrogate and Knaresborough based organisation aiming to reduce food waste and food poverty. The organisation works with local businesses and suppliers to divert good quality food from landfill. Instead, it is converted into meals in Resurrected Bites cafes and is provided to families.

Since Covid, Resurrected Bites has provided 15,750 people with between three and seven days of food. It has diverted three tonnes of food waste from landfill every week – equivalent to 300 large Christmas turkeys. In the Harrogate district, research indicates that approximately one in five children is living in poverty, that's more than 5,700 children.

The work of Resurrected Bites is supported by many local businesses including the major supermarkets, plus, of course, local allotments. There are also “Give As You Can” cafes at West Park United Reform Church in Harrogate and Gracious Street Methodist Church in Knaresborough.

To read more about Resurrected Bites go to <https://resurrectedbites.co.uk/>

Keith Wadd

NUMBER OF EARTHWORMS DOWN BY A THIRD



The UK earthworm population has fallen by 33-41% in the past 25 years. The evidence is from over 100 studies collated by researchers and was presented to the annual meeting of the British Ecological Society in December. This decline in soil biodiversity parallels the decline in the number of insects and a wider biodiversity crisis. Earthworm decline appeared to be greatest on farmland, probably due to the widespread use of toxic chemicals, and in broad-leaved woodland. (see The Guardian, 19/12/22). Earthworms are beneficial to the soil, and a major part of the diet of many birds, badgers too. In my youth, but not these days, flocks of lapwings followed the plough. I noted a few years ago the decline in earthworms on my allotment plot and some nearby plot holders saw a similar trend on their plots. Worms are definitely creatures we should be encouraging, and I wonder whether all our digging, forking, hoeing and weeding has a harmful effect on their numbers.

Keith Wadd

WAITING LIST

We currently have 43 people on the Waiting List (late January). The last person to be given a plot had waited for 2 years 2 months. Three new names have been added to the list, and only one plot recently became vacant and was re-let. Four other plot holders are not renewing their tenancy this year.

NATURE RESERVE NEWS

The pond in the Nature Reserve on the small site has been enlarged and is now full of water. We look forward to lots of tadpoles. The fence around the pond will be installed in the spring. Also in the spring, plants for the pond will be set. A risk assessment has been produced.



Dates for your diary

Thursday 23 rd March	HHAA AGM at 7.30pm in Green Hut
Sat 3 rd June	HHAA Open Day
Sunday 20 th August	HDAF Allotment Show

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