



HARLOW HILL ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

SPRING 2024 NEWSLETTER

For all Plot Holders and Associate Members

It's a mid-Spring day as I begin to put this newsletter together – Friday 17th May to be precise. Not a bad day weather-wise: a cloudy, damp morning, but at least it was wind-free which is always a blessing at Harlow Hill. In the afternoon, the sun burned off the cloud and it was warm and pleasant. The allotments are now beginning to look good, and on many plots there are rows of new potatoes with their shoots well above ground, rows of other just-germinated seeds of various indeterminate species though they'll soon be making their credentials plain, and broad beans of various heights. The soft fruit looks good, and it looks as if it will be a good year for plums. They seem to have appreciated the wet winter. For those of us who like gooseberries, you have to grow them yourself these days – unless I've missed out somewhere, you won't find them in the shops.



I've just come back after nine days away, and for vegetable gardeners mid-May is not a good time to be away. The amount of growth, particularly of the weeds, has been quite phenomenal. I've come round to the view that ordinary (if there is such a thing) meadow grass is an irritating weed if it gets a hold, it grows quickly, smothers delicate plants, and has a thick mass of roots that are difficult to loosen from the soil. The leeks that I left in the ground to harvest on our return put on massive growth as well as going to seed, and many of them were festooned with slugs and snails. I shall dig all the leeks up at the end of April in future.

A couple of years ago I set some asparagus crowns as a fun crop. Asparagus is best left for two years before the first tasting. I didn't think it would survive the wet winter, but somehow it has managed to, and quite a lot of spears have now surfaced. In the next few days, some are going to find their way to the plate, and that really will be a gardening first for me.



Many of this newsletter's readers, particularly those whose plot is at the top end of the site, will have made acquaintance with the local robin, a particularly bold member of its species. It has been so close that I could almost touch it, and certainly close enough for me to fully appreciate its handsome looks. What a beautiful creature it is! But not an entirely desirable presence - a young worm that I was very pleased to see was soon detected by the robin's quick eye and promptly gobbled up.

Have a good allotment summer everyone.

ENJOYABLE AGM

This year's AGM at the Green Hut on Thursday 21st March was an enjoyable and successful occasion. It was attended by 40 people, 8 more than the previous year, and it was good to see some new plot holders there.



The meeting began with an interesting talk entitled “A Smorgasbord Allotment” given by Anna Gukan one of our plot holders, sub-titled “The quirky ideas of Claire Cartledge and Anna Gukan”. “Smorgasbord” is a Swedish word and refers to a mixture of hot and cold dishes on the same plate (hope I have got it right). Anna referred to its philosophy, and how she and Claire have adapted its principles to their allotment. Rather than me attempting to describe their extraordinary plot, go along to Plot 24B and have a look at it. If you are really lucky, Claire and/or Anna will be there working on it, and you can have a chat with them – which is part of the exercise.

After the talk, there were tasty refreshments, and an opportunity for a chat, and then the normal business of the AGM. The Secretary's Report, Letting Manager's Report and Treasurer's Report were presented and approved, and our allotment's finances are in a comfortable position with a “net worth” of over £12,000. Gerry Hansford stood down as chairperson, many thanks Gerry for your valuable contribution, and Jane Ayre was elected as her replacement in the chair. All the officers and committee members were re-elected, plus Jayne Mitchell who had been a co-opted member in the previous year.

The size of trees on plots was discussed, particularly with respect to them overhanging rides and other plots, the shade they create, and the problem they might create when there is a change in tenancy. Plot holders are asked to keep trees to a reasonable height and only to plant miniature varieties grafted upon dwarf rooting stock, preferably planted as cordons.

It was agreed that we should look into getting some matting for the Beckwith Avenue entrances which were extremely muddy during the winter.

OPEN DAY

Harlow Hill Allotment's Open Day is on the morning of **Saturday 15th June**. Please come along and support it and feel more than welcome to invite family members and friends. Let's hope that, like last year, we shall have a fine, warm day. There will be a plant stall and cake stall (contributions much appreciated), refreshments, sale of books and magazines, beans in the Kilner jar competition, Allotment Show raffle tickets, guided tours, and the allotment shop will be open as usual. Plus many opportunities for a chat. The proceeds will go to two much valued local charities – The Green Hut and Horticap. And please have your plot looking at its best.

SITE JUDGING

The site judging for our allotments will be at **10.00 a.m. on Friday 28th June**. As last year, the judging criteria takes into account the different sizes of plots, the proportion of poor plots to good/satisfactory, the range and quality of the plants across the plots, maintenance of the site, environmental diversity, community participation, and overall impression. Another reason to do your best to have your plot looking good.

DEALING WITH WEEDS

The best way to deal with weeds is to get rid of them as soon as they surface. This particularly applies to annual weeds such as chickweed, speedwell, and sow thistle. Dandelions and meadow grass too. At this stage the weeds pull up easily and haven't grown big enough to smother what you are trying to grow. At this stage too you can hand-weed, more accurately finger-weed, or, if you don't like bending, run a hoe about a half inch below the surface of the soil. If you do it this way, it has to be little and often, at least every few days in the summer months. In fact, little and often is the best way to keep on top of an allotment plot or any garden for that matter. At present, I'm guilty of not having followed my own advice, and I'm spending a lot of time uprooting weeds that have grown far bigger than I should have allowed them to.

MARE'S TAIL



Mare's tail, also known as horsetail, is a much more difficult weed to deal with. It is not an annual weed, and once it becomes established on a piece of land, it is very hard to get rid of. Unfortunately, it has become well established on parts of Harlow Hill Allotments. I think it moved in from surrounding gardens and streets - it extends its roots for long distances under tarmac and other hard surfaces and can be detected where it pushes up through the cracks. It can also grow quite tall. On our allotments, particularly at the top end, it has gradually extended its range and can show up anywhere.

The key thing is not to let it take over and become a dense mass, as happened to at least one plot. However, the good news is that the plot concerned was restored to productivity and is now a pleasure to behold.

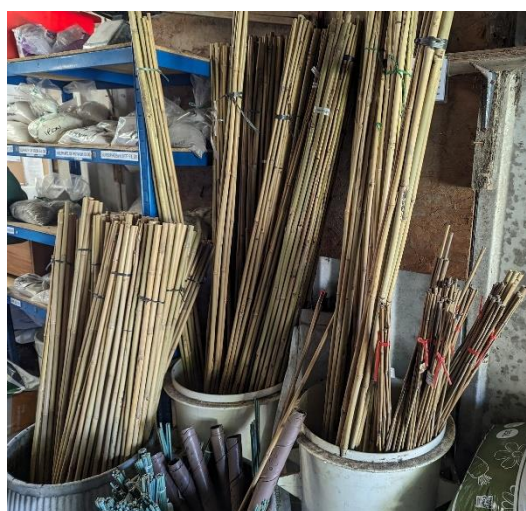
The strategy is to be able to recognise it, to be vigilant, and to get rid of it as soon as you see it. It has surfaced on a long strand connected to the main root which is at least a foot further down, so dig as deep as possible to get rid of the surfacing strands. If mare's tail is dealt with like this, it will still be an irritant, but it won't take over. Digging deep can have its problems too, because it can disturb the roots of what you are actually trying to grow, so decisions and compromises will sometimes have to be made. It is advisable not to put the removed mare's tail on the compost heap, because it might begin to take root there. Please note that it is forbidden to use weedkillers on Harlow Hill Allotments, even for mare's tail.

Mare's tail is also known as “Lego plant”. This is because the stems can be dismantled in sections, and then put back together again. Never tried doing it myself, but apparently something that children used to do. Doubt if they do now – those were the days when townie kids were only a generation away from the countryside.

THE ALLOTMENT SHOP

By popular demand, the shop is now open most Saturdays 10.30 -1200, and with additional payment options. As well as the previous methods of bank transfer and cash, we now have a card reader. However, bank transfer is still the preferred method.

We have five new volunteers this year, making 12 in total, allowing the shop to be open more frequently. These volunteers are fellow plot holders who kindly give up their time to assist us all. Over the next few months during the intense growing season the shop will be open every Saturday in May and June, followed by the 13th July and 10th August. It will then be open every Saturday morning from September to 16th November.



You can purchase compost, manure, weed membrane and canes amongst other things at a very competitive price. You can even borrow a wheelbarrow to take your items to your plot.

Profits from the shop raise money for the association which helps to keep the rent low, so please do support it as much as you can. We are pleased to say that sales in the shop are up about £400 up on this time last year.

Jayne Mitchell

ALLOTMENT TOILET

Please note that the present code on the lock is **7126**.

WORK WEEKEND 22nd & 23rd JUNE.

Please come along to help. Tasks identified so far are the ginnel hedges, including hedge encroachment, the hedge from the ginnel gate to the shop, and the hedge along the house edge on the small site. Other tasks identified are cleaning the garage door, strimming the wildlife area and removing the bindweed. Harlow Hill Allotment Association sets a very good example to the local community by cutting back its hedge along the ginnel and not allowing growth from the hedge to obstruct a public path.

MATting TO BE INSTALLED AT BECKWITH AVENUE GATE

Matting is to be installed at the Beckwith Avenue entrance for the large site. The small site entrance will be reviewed next winter to see if it is needed there as well. The ride at the entrance to the main site was very muddy and unpleasant during last winter, and although it was a particularly wet winter, similar spells of wet weather could happen again. The work will be carried in the autumn. The small site entrance will be reviewed next winter.

HARLOW HILL ALLOTMENTS GAIN WILDLIFE GARDENING AWARD



Thanks to Angela Dicken for applying for this award and submitting a written description with photographs of the wildlife site's credentials. The award has now been received, and the plaque will be displayed near the pond.

HEDGEHOG AWARENESS WEEK

We were contacted by the Harrogate District Biodiversity Action Group with respect to Hedgehog Awareness Week which was from the 5th – 11th May. The Biodiversity Action Group also supplied helpful tips for keeping hedgehogs safe. These include:

- before using a strimmer make sure the area to be cleared is hedgehog free
- stop or reduce the amount of chemicals used on plots and gardens, ensure netting is kept at a safe height and
- check compost heaps before sticking the fork into them.



Slug bait is a chemical to avoid, particularly as slugs and snails are part of a hedgehog's diet. There are now organic slug baits. Plastic netting is a danger to hedgehogs, and several years ago I came across a dying hedgehog hopelessly entangled in it.

The good news is that there are hedgehogs on our allotments. Let's treasure them.

MOWERS

Many thanks to Alan Walker for volunteering to look after the mowers, an important job at this time of the year. Plot holders can also help as there is now a hand brush in each shed for cleaning the wheels etc. after use. Please also try to ensure that nothing that can get entangled in the mower, especially plastic or metal, is left on the paths and ride. A quick inspection of the paths and ride before mowing is also helpful.

Many thanks too to Anthony Rogers who has volunteered to be the “handy man” to do the various small jobs that occur around the site from time to time.

HARROGATE & DISTRICT ALLOTMENTS ANNUAL SHOW

This year's Harrogate & District Allotments Federation Annual Show is on **Sunday 18th August** in the Sun Pavilion in the Valley Gardens. The schedule and entry forms are on the HDAF website

www.thehdaf.co.uk and on our own website

www.harlowhillaa.org in the members' section.

There's some advice and tips about entering the show on the websites too. Hard copies of the



schedule and entry forms will be put in the sheds near the allotment shop and on the small site in early June and will be available at the Open Day. Tickets for the Show raffle will be on sale at the Open Day too.

You don't have to be an expert gardener to enter. You can enter as many classes as you like for just £4 per adult and £2 for children and there's something for everyone to enter – vegetables, fruit, flowers, baking etc. - so please consider giving it a go. Harlow Hill usually has the most exhibitors – though we lost our place to North Outfall Allotments last year, so it would be good to re-instate that tradition. We also have on our site several families with children, so it would be good if they could be encouraged to enter too – there's lots of fun things to try e.g. a boat made of vegetables, a planted child's wellie, four decorated cupcakes, a tree grown from a seed -and much more. There's a cup for the child from Harlow Hill Allotments with most points too.

Harlow Hill will be running the tombola stall again, so we'll soon be asking for gifts, toiletries, bottles of booze, confectionery, children's toys etc. and perhaps those not entirely welcome Christmas presents. Further details about where to leave these will be given nearer the time.

We'll also be looking for helpers – for the tombola stall, for helping to set up the Show (from 7.00 to 9.00) and clearing up (1600 – 1700). If you think you can help, please contact Angela Dicken email:

dicken.angela@hotmail.co.uk But even if you are unable to help, why not come along for a look round, see some really good vegetables, flowers and other exhibits, have a go at the tombola, and chat with fellow gardeners. The Show is a charity event and this year's proceeds from the Show will go to Open Country.

WAITING LIST

Since the end of January, 3 plots have become vacant and been re-let, and 9 people have been added to the waiting list which now stands at 58. The person at the head of the list has already been waiting 2 years and 8 months.

INHERITANCE OF PLOT NOT ALLOWED

The Committee at its recent meeting agreed that a plot holders' sons/daughters cannot inherit an allotment plot which their parent(s) hold the tenancy of. They must add their name to the waiting list like everyone else.

The committee also discussed the difficult issue of proxy plot holders. This was defined as parents/partners/ friends/sons and daughters doing the majority of the work on the plot in the absence or incapacity of the named plot holder. There are several examples of this on the site at present. Whilst it is entirely permissible for this to happen on a temporary basis for medical and other personal reasons (though it is recommended that the appropriate committee member should be kept informed), bearing in mind the long waiting list it is preferable that it does not happen on a permanent or semi-permanent basis even if the plot is maintained in a satisfactory condition.

WATER BUTTS

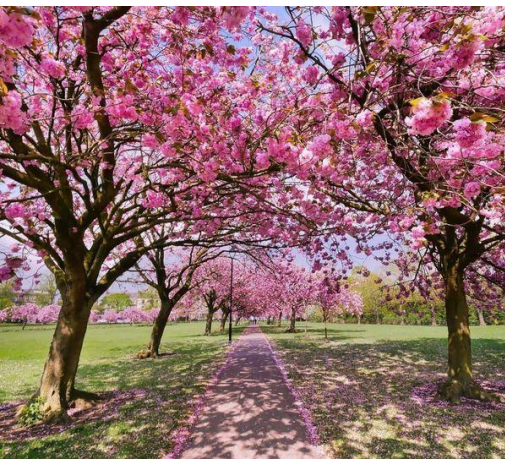
Envii Water Butt Klear tablets have been purchased for putting in the water butts. They are organic. These tablets are being used to keep the water clear, stop any unpleasant smells in any stagnant water and the tablets have some plant nutrients in them. Initially we intend to put a first dose in all the water butts around the site (on 28th May) and then a couple of weeks later put further doses in two of the butts that are particularly bad. Additional doses will be applied through the summer if necessary.

WATER LICENCE

If you want to use a hosepipe to water your plot, don't forget you need to purchase a water licence for **£15**. The licence is for a hand-held hosepipe used **for a maximum of 30 minutes per day and not for sprinklers or unattended hosepipes**.

The water barrels must be filled before connecting the hosepipe and must be re-filled immediately if any plot holder using a watering can requests it.

YORKSHIRE IN BLOOM JUDGING



Harrogate in Bloom has entered Yorkshire in Bloom again this year. Our allotment site is usually on the judges' route and, as we're the only allotment site in Harrogate that they see, we're representing all the Harrogate sites. We usually invite representatives from the other sites to meet the judges and we put up a small display to highlight everything that we do on our sites such as Open Days, fund-raising, links to community groups, our efforts to improve biodiversity and, of course, our wonderful produce. The date for judging is not yet confirmed, but it is likely to be in the week commencing 15th July. We'll let you know the exact date as soon

as we can. It's particularly important that those of you with plots near the main gates have your plot looking tidy.

Angela Dicken

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

OPEN DAY

Saturday 15th June

WORK WEEKEND

Saturday 22nd June & Sunday 23rd June

SITE JUDGING

Friday 28th June

YORKSHIRE IN BLOOM JUDGING

w/c 15th July

PICNIC ON THE PLOT

Sunday 11th August

ALLOTMENT SHOW

Sunday 18th August

AUTUMN SOCIAL

Thursday 24th October, Harlow Club.



Please feel welcome to submit articles (even of a controversial nature), news, plant trials, photos etc.

Keith Wadd, Editor, email: tansley22@btinternet.com

Formatting/Layout by Angela Dicken.

Harlow Hill Allotment Association website:

www.harlowhillaa.org

On Facebook we're Harlow Hill Allotment Association.