



HARLOW HILL ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

WINTER 2024 NEWSLETTER

For all Plot Holders and Associate Members

Hello Everyone! I am writing this in early February, and it snowed during much of yesterday. An early visit to the allotments this morning revealed a good four inches of the white stuff. Judging by the absence of human footprints, I was the first person there this morning, but other footprints revealed that what was almost certainly a fox had beaten me to it. The latter's footprints incidentally took a rather erratic course, following its nose no doubt. Prior to the snow, there hadn't been much serious rain for several days, something that hadn't happened for months. The very wet autumn and winter has made the ground so soaking wet that any serious gardening has been virtually impossible.

Furthermore it has got to my broad beans, half of which I sowed in the open and all of which germinated, and the other half of which I sowed in pots and transplanted. But they now look a sorry sight, and few if any will survive the winter. So this year no nice fresh broad beans at the end of June. But

all is not lost, and in March I shall set a row of the variety called Witkiem; they are medium height, and over the years have been a good choice on a windy site like ours. However, my leeks still look happy. I shall leave them to fatten out well into March before I start lifting them. This year, I shall sow them in early April, not late April as I usually do.

Despite the all-pervading wetness, the nights are getting shorter, and the days are getting longer. There are catkins on the hazels in the hedges (more than a bit early), snowdrops are in full bloom, the daffodils in bud and the birds are beginning to twitter. Happy allotment days are not far ahead and there is cause for gardening optimism. So have a good gardening year and hope you can get on to your plot very soon. A special welcome to new plot holders. To those completely new to gardening: hold what you have! - don't let what you have spent a lot of time clearing and cultivating revert to what it was like before you started.

Keith Wadd



BEE NEWS

Peter Gregory reports that "the two colonies were alive about a week ago, so hoping to get them through, but it's been a hard winter for the bees because of the amounts of wind and rain that we've had."

ALLOTMENT SHOP OPEN AGAIN



The Allotment Shop re-opened on Saturday 3rd February, and did a brisk trade, particularly in bags of compost and manure. For those who want a bit of extra help in carrying heavy bags of compost, manure etc. from the allotment shop to their allotment plot or car, there are wheelbarrows at the shop.

The shop will be open every Saturday 10.30 – 1200 till the end of June, just once a month in July (13th) and August (10th) and then every Saturday in September, October and until 16th November. The opening dates are on the allotment site gates and on our website (www.harlowhillaa.org).

A price list for the shop has been sent out by email to all plot holders and associate members and a copy is also on the website. You can pay in the shop by bank transfer, credit or debit card (we now have a card reader), cash or cheque. Bank transfer is still our preferred method.

We've got a few new stock items for 2024 :

- Miracle Gro All Purpose Peat-free compost, which contains a formulation that is supposed to ensure that your plants are fed for 3 months, providing the optimum structure for roots to grow strong and preventing them from drying out.
- Tomorite Grow bags which are extra-large peat free organic planters enriched with Tomorite. Perfect for fruit and vegetables such as tomatoes, peppers, aubergines, melons, courgette, marrows, and cucumbers.
- Fleece & Fabric staples to secure your fleece, environmesh or netting.

Several new people will be helping in the Allotment Shop this year as well as some old hands. We're very grateful to everyone who has volunteered to help.

Please use the Allotment Shop. Our prices are very competitive, it raises money for the association and you don't have to carry your goods very far! Just come in and have a chat and a look around if you've not used the Shop before. We've a shelf full of gardening books which you can borrow too.

If you have any questions about the Allotment Shop, please contact me by email:

dicken.angela@hotmail.co.uk

Angela Dicken

AGM ON THURSDAY 21st MARCH: SPEAKER WILL BE HARLOW HILL PLOT HOLDER

This year's AGM will be at **7.30 p.m. on Thursday 21st March at the Green Hut on Beckwith Avenue**. All plot holders and associate members please feel very welcome to come along. The speaker this year will be Anna Gugan, one of our plot holders. Anna shares plot 24B with Claire Cartledge. Anna and Claire have only taken on plot 24B this last year, and already they have created a very interesting and unusual allotment garden on it. Come along and hear all about it, the plants and features in it, what Anna and Claire are trying to achieve, and what inspired them.

After Anna's talk there will be the business of the AGM, which includes the annual reports, the annual accounts, the election of officers, changes to the constitution, and the presentation of the annual prizes. One of the agenda items will be an opportunity to discuss large trees on plots. Plot holders are invited to raise items of interest and concern under Any Other Business before the meeting is concluded. At least one new committee member is needed, so please consider putting your name forward.

Refreshments will be provided at the AGM.

The following two trophies will be awarded at the AGM:

ROLAND BUCKTON CUP FOR MOST IMPROVED PLOT GOES TO ANNA AND CLAIRE

This year the prize has been awarded to Anna Gugan and Claire Cartledge of 24B. In February last year they took on a plot that had been untended for a full year and set about re-landscaping it in an innovative way. Work continues, but a major change has been achieved and been commented on by many neighbouring plot holders.

Three other plots were also in the running for the prize, Marek Jagucki of 23B, Anthony and Julie Rogers of 35A, and Diane and Kevin Hope of 41B, all of which had much to commend them, but they were just pipped by Anna and Claire on 24B.

Richard Wriglesworth

HARRY NEWPORT TROPHY FOR THE BEST LEEKS

I did the leek judging in early November – it seemed a good idea to do it before most of the leeks were eaten. I was looking for a leek bed of at least around twenty leeks, with all the leeks a good fat size, and all of them looking healthy and happy and well looked after. Those which looked tatty, however big and fat they were, didn't score highly. I reckon I saw every leek on the allotments which is as it should be, and those on my short list more than once. The well-deserved winners were Paul and Pauline Knight of plot 31A, but it was a close call. Overall, I thought the standard was much improved this time – maybe the damp summer helped. I still take the view that leeks tend not to do well in raised beds, but if that is where they have to go, I suggest planting them deep.



Keith Wadd

LETTERS TO BE SENT IF PLOTS CAUSE CONCERN

Where the condition of an individual allotment plot on the site causes concern, a letter will be sent to the plot holder stating that the committee member overseeing that plot will be monitoring progress made on it during the forthcoming year. This is to ensure that the requirements of the tenancy agreement are being complied with. It is a tenancy agreement requirement that a plot is substantially cultivated (at least 75% of a plot should be under cultivation), that weeds are kept under control and do not spread their seeds into neighbouring plots, and that the general level of tidiness on the plot is satisfactory. There is no wish whatsoever on the part of the Harlow Hill Allotments Association committee to be fussy, officious, unfriendly, or draconian. However, the committee members have a responsibility to ensure that the tenancy agreement is complied with by plot holders. Furthermore, over fifty people are on the waiting list and facing a wait of nearly three years before they can expect to be offered a plot. If there are emergencies or other special circumstances that are causing plot holders to have difficulty in complying with the tenancy agreement, they should make their committee member aware of the situation. They should also feel welcome to ask for advice.

Don't forget – the deadline for paying your rent is 29th February 2024.

HHA WEBSITE AND FACEBOOK PAGE

Our website can be found at www.harlowhillaa.org. The website has lots of useful information about our allotment site including all our policies. The password for the members area is: **Beesmakehoney**. We have a Recipes page in the Members' Area to share our favourite recipes for using our lovely garden produce. We've just added a new recipe for Roasted Jerusalem Artichoke puree (which also features later in the newsletter) and there's a few courgette recipes, but it would be great to have some more suggestions. If you have any favourites, please send them to dicken.angela@hotmail.co.uk.



We hope that our Facebook page, which gives images of our produce, allotment events, together with sharing tips and plants, will help us all to get to know each other more and to share our gardening experience. If you want to join the Facebook group, search for Harlow Hill Allotment Association and request to be added. This is a private group and only allotment holders will be admitted.

COFFEE GROUNDS NOW AVAILABLE AGAIN

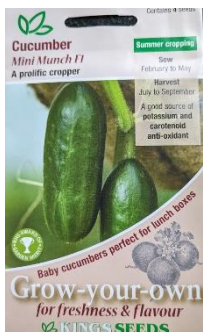
Before Covid we used to receive a regular supply of coffee grounds from Betty's at Harlow Carr. They are now available again on our site and can be collected free of charge from two dustbins near the entrance to the allotments shop. Please feel free to help yourself. The bins will be topped up on a periodic basis.

Coffee grounds are a valuable fertiliser as they contain important nutrients that promote plant growth. Just sprinkle some grounds on to the soil and lightly rake them in. Worms are particularly fond of them. The coffee grounds are also a very good organic means of deterring slugs and snails as they do not like the roughness of the grounds. Spread the grounds around vulnerable plants. Coffee grounds will also improve the compost heap as they are an excellent source of nitrogen. For gardeners that use mulch to help retain moisture in the soil, try creating a mulch by mixing coffee grounds with leaf mould, but apply lightly as some plants could be sensitive to caffeine. (adapted from information by Lewis Spencer)

SOMEONE NEEDED TO LOOK AFTER THE MOWERS

A volunteer is needed to keep an eye on the condition of the mowers, willing to do simple maintenance on them when required, and take them for repair when this is needed. We already have two people – Shona & Simon - who purchase the petrol, so it's just a case of looking after the mowers. If anyone is willing to take on this role, please contact Steph by emailing HHAA.sec@gmail.com.

SEED ORDERS



This year we had 40 seed orders (up 1 from last year). The total value of the orders was around 20% higher than last year. We received £250 worth of discounts for the orders.

16 people ordered seed potatoes from Acorn Garden Supplies and 8 people ordered onion sets, which we had for the first time this year.

HARROGATE & DISTRICT ALLOTMENT FEDERATION



The Harrogate & District Allotment Federation AGM took place on 30th January at Oatlands Club. Following the business meeting, Chris Searle from Ripon in Bloom talked about how they will use the £500 donation from last year's Allotment Show to refurbish Bedern Bank which is just below Ripon Cathedral. Removal of weeds and some replanting should see the area looking much better by late Spring. David Shaftoe from Open Country – HDAF's 2024 charity – then spoke about their fantastic work helping people with disabilities to access the countryside. Open Country have an allotment on the Jubilee Site, which is off Bilton Hall Drive between Starbeck and Knaresborough. Their allotment has raised beds and wheelchair accessible beds and, as well as growing lots of fruit, vegetables and wildflowers, they use their allotment for cooking food, making smoothies using a smoothy bike (!) pressing apples and doing crafts like making scarecrows and painting. Their wildlife garden earned them a Wildlife Gardening Award in 2023 from the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust.

On 26th March, HDAF will hold the annual Site Chairs' meeting to share good practice and ideas for improving our allotment sites. We hope to also have a short talk from a local PCSO about preventing vandalism on allotment sites.

This year's inter-site competition is entitled **"OVER THE RAINBOW"**. Sites are challenged to produce a display of vegetables, fruits and flowers on this theme to display at the Allotment Show, which this year will be held on Sunday 18th August in the Sun Pavilion in Valley Gardens.

This year's site judging, when all the sites in Harrogate are judged against set criteria, will take place on Thursday 27th and Friday 28th June. The judges will be Simon Collier, retired Head Gardener from the Valley Gardens and Rob Snow, Chair of Knaresborough Allotments and Self-Help Scheme. In 2023, we achieved a Gold Award, so let's aim to do it again.

HAVE YOU TRIED GROWING JERUSALEM ARTICHOKE?



These vigorous perennial plants are easy to grow and they're nice to eat.

They're grown from tubers rather than seed. Choose high quality tubers that are firm, disease-free and have several eyes or buds. They like a sunny site with well-drained soil, preferably slightly acidic with a PH level from 5.8 to 6.5. Plant the tubers in early spring after the last frosts. They should be planted 2 to 3 inches deep, 12 to 18 inches apart. Keep the soil moist, especially during dry spells, but avoid over-watering and soggy soil. Applying a layer

of mulch is beneficial as it helps to keep the soil moist and discourages weed. Jerusalem artichokes are fairly low maintenance, but they will benefit from some compost or a balanced fertiliser once or twice during the growing season to encourage vigorous growth. Bear in mind that they spread rapidly once they get established and can become invasive.

They will develop tall, sturdy stalks with bright yellow flowers. Many gardeners leave the flowers, but other gardeners remove them so that the plants can put their energy into developing the tubers.

Harvesting Jerusalem artichokes is best done in late autumn when the foliage has died back. Dig round the base of the plant but not too close, then gently lift the plant taking care not to damage the tubers. Shake off any soil and trim the stems and the roots.

Jerusalem artichoke tubers are probably best eaten straight away when their flavour is at its peak, but they can be kept for several weeks if stored in a cool dark space. They can be eaten raw or cooked in a variety of ways: steamed, roasted, sautéed, or added to stews, soups or stir-fries. (See tasty recipe below)

Sian Gamble

The "Jerusalem" description is nothing to do with the city of that name but derived from the Italian "girasole" meaning sun follower and indicating the likeness of the plant's yellow flowers to those of the sunflower (See Hessayon, "The Vegetable Expert).

Keith Wadd

LONGLANDS COMMON PROJECT

This 30-acre project between the Harrogate Greenway and Bilton Hall is looking to expand soon. It will include a 5-acre Food Forest which Harlow Hill plot holder, Graeme Knowles-Miller, is helping to initiate. Graeme is asking gardeners to take cuttings/divide roots/propagate fruit trees and bushes and donate them to the project next planting season, preferably named varieties - for educational purposes. Please feel free to contact Graeme at g.kmiller@icloud.com for further information about the project and what is being looked for.

ROASTED JERUSALEM ARTICHOKE PUREE

Roasting brings out the natural sweetness of Jerusalem artichokes

Ingredients

500g Jerusalem artichokes

125g shallots (finely chopped) 2-3 tablespoons olive oil.

4 sprigs fresh thyme

30g butter (or vegan alternative)

125g double cream (or vegan alternative)

salt & pepper to taste.

Method

Preheat the oven to 200°C.

Prepare the artichokes: Scrub the tubers under cold water to remove any dirt or peel them if preferred. Cut them into small bite-size pieces or slices.

Season: Place the artichokes and finely chopped shallots in a bowl and drizzle with olive oil, salt and pepper. Toss well to coat evenly.

Roast: Spread the seasoned artichokes in a single layer on a baking sheet lined with parchment or aluminium foil. Make sure they are not too crowded - to ensure even roasting.

Roast in the Oven: Place the baking sheet in the pre-heated oven and roast for about 25-30 minutes. Jerusalem artichokes are golden brown and tender. You can toss them halfway through the cooking time for even browning. Add butter and thyme for the last 10 minutes.

Puree: Once roasted, transfer the mix to a food processor and blitz till smooth, add cream and check seasoning.

Serve warm as a side. Looks posh smeared across a plate as well!

Freezes well.

Sian Gamble

10 TIPS ON GROWING SWEET PEAS FROM SEED

- Start indoors Begin seeds indoors about 4 to 6 weeks before your last frost date to give them a head start.
- Soak seeds Soak seeds overnight in water to soften their hard outer coating, promoting faster germination.*
- Use quality soil Plant seeds in well-drained soil rich in organic matter to provide nutrients for healthy growth.
- Provide support Sweet peas are climbers, so set up trellises or supports for them to climb as they grow.
- Water regularly Keep the soil consistently moist but not waterlogged. Avoid letting the soil dry out completely.
- Sunlight Place seedlings in a location that receives full sun for at least 6-8 hours a day.
- Thin seedlings Once seedlings have sprouted, thin them out to give each plant room to grow and thrive.
- Fertilise Feed plants with a balanced fertiliser every 2-3 weeks to encourage healthy foliage and abundant flowers
- Pinch tops Pinch off the growing tips once plants reach about 6 inches high to promote bushier growth and more flowers.
- Deadhead regularly Remove spent blooms to encourage continuous flowering throughout the season and prevent seed formation which can signal the plant to stop blooming.

By following these tips you should be well on your way to enjoying beautiful and fragrant sweet peas.

* n.b. Some reservations have been raised about the need to soak the seed, as it is not needed with fresh good seed.

Sian Gamble

WHAT OUR SITE USED TO BE LIKE



The former observatory on nearby Nursery Lane.

The Ordnance Survey Map of 1849 shows that our allotment site at that time was just small fields, probably used for grazing horses. There were few buildings on Harlow Hill, just the Harlow Hotel (now the Shepherd's Dog) and the Observatory on Nursery Lane (the top of which is still a magnificent all-round viewpoint – usually open to the public on heritage days). The allotment site must also have been a good viewpoint at that time with unobstructed views across the Vale of York. Otley Road was the major road (as it still is), and a splendid turnpike milestone still survives close to what is now the junction with Beckwith Road. The only other important road in Harlow Hill was Pannal Ash Lane, now Pannal Ash Road. The ginnel footpath beside the allotments is shown as a track on the 1849 map, and beside the path somewhere near the allotment site was a pond.

Keith Wadd

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

29 th February	Deadline for rent payment
21 st March	HHAAGM at 7.30pm in The Green Hut
27 th & 28 th June	Annual Site Judging
18 th August	Annual Allotment Show in the Valley Gardens



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

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Harlow Hill Allotment Association website: www.harlowhillaa.org

On Facebook we're Harlow Hill Allotment Association.