



HARLOW HILL ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

WINTER 2022 NEWSLETTER

For all Plot Holders and Associate Members

Welcome everybody to another gardening year, and hope it is a happy one with plenty of successes. So far, things are happening early. The bulbs are pushing up, the snowdrops are in flower, it's light in the evening till after five, and the birds are starting to twitter. It was a good January too: dry and sunny, and no snow. However, dark warnings about heavy snow have just flashed across my computer screen: usually scaremongering that never materialises, but you never know.



Allotments in winter

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This year's AGM will be held in the Green Hut on Beckwith Avenue **at 7.30 p.m. on Thursday 17th March** Joe Lofthouse from RHS Harlow Carr will give a talk about No-dig Gardening, and this will be of considerable interest – we've lots of No-diggers and lots of Diggers at Harlow Hill, plus a few hybrids. This will be followed by tea/coffee & cakes, then the official business of the AGM. It is your opportunity to have your say and influence the running of the allotment site. Topics for discussion will include the use of weed-killers, hosepipes and water usage, suggestions for improving the site and our Open Day, plus other matters you may wish to raise. We will be electing the Committee, who of course are accountable to the members. The trophy for "The Most Improved Plot" will be presented to Stephanie Byrnes (plot 44A) and the trophy for "The Best Leeks" to Mike and Jean Lowsley (plot 26A(i))

The AGM will take place in person and we will have some Covid-19 Safety measures in place e.g. windows open and chairs spaced. You are encouraged to wear a face covering during the meeting.

The papers for the AGM will be sent out about a month before the meeting. We look forward to seeing you there – try to get along.

THE ALLOTMENT COMMITTEE

As many of you know, Harlow Hill Allotment Association is a self-managed site subject to an agreement between the trustees of the allotment association and Harrogate Borough Council. A proportion of the allotment rent is paid to the Council. In order to be self-managed, we need a committee of people to run the site, which should consist of Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Lettings Manager, Site Maintenance Manager and 5 other committee members. Currently the post of Chair is vacant and our Site Maintenance Manager, Paul, has said that he intends to stand down at the end of 2022.

Many of you volunteer to help at work weekends, unloading deliveries, in the allotment shop, grass mowing etc. which is a fantastic help. It spreads the work and also develops a sense of community. We do need some new blood on the committee, so if you are interested in helping out in a more official way please don't hide your light under a bushel. Your allotment site needs you. If you need more information please contact me or any of the Committee members.

Paul Knight has been a wonderful Site Manager. He's worked hard to improve the drainage across the site – it's so much better than it used to be. He's overseen the hedge-cutting, and dealt with countless smaller tasks from replacing gate posts and plot posts to getting the mowers serviced and mending the locks. We are very grateful for all his hard work, and his are going to be big boots to fill. However, all the jobs don't need to be done by one person – we can share out the tasks between a number of people to make it easier. If you think you might be able to take on one or more of these maintenance tasks, please get in touch with me or a member of the Committee. Ideally we would like to be able to let any volunteers shadow Paul before he steps down. Please give it some thought.

Angela Dicken

ALLOTMENT POLICIES

Members of our Committee have recently carried out a review and update of our policies to bring them up to date with current guidance and our current rules. All our policies can be found in the Members' Area of our website www.harlowhillaa.org. The password for the Members' Area is “Beesmakehoney”. Copies of the policies can also be obtained from me.

Angela Dicken

ALLOTMENT SHOP

Following the coronavirus pandemic, we've had a rethink about when we open the allotment shop. This is the plan for 2022.

Month	Opening dates 2022	
	Saturday 10.30 – 12.00	Sunday 10.30 – 12.00
Feb	12 th	27 th
March	12 th	27 th
April	9 th	24 th
May	7 th	23 rd
June	Closed	Closed
July	9 th	Closed
August	Closed	Closed
Sept	10 th	25 th
Oct	8 th	23 rd
Nov	12 th	Closed



Allotment shop in winter sunshine

We will also do orders by email on each of the Saturdays when the shop is open. I'll put the opening days on all the gates and the noticeboard and send out reminders with the price list once a month. Unfortunately some of our prices have gone up due to increased costs from our suppliers.

Plot holders were recently requested to complete a short questionnaire about the shop. Comments were positive including “It is great value for money and we are lucky to have it” and “The shop provides an excellent service. Thanks to all involved.” Suggestions for additional items to be on sale were silver sand, bulk-buy Strulch and wooden plant labels. We

now have silver sand and wooden plant labels and we'll order the Strulch as soon as we have some space to store it. We're aiming to be as environmentally friendly as possible; all our composts are peat-free and we are trying to reduce the plastic in the shop. The bags we use are fully recyclable.

Shop sales in 2021 were £3487 compared to £2682 in 2019. Thank you to everyone who supports the Allotment Shop.

Angela Dicken

SITE MAINTENANCE



Hedge clipped between ginnel and shop

The work weekend in September saw the hedge cut from the ginnel gate to the shop. Also the nature reserve and adjacent hedge were tidied. The cutting of the hedge behind plots 1-3 (near to the shop) and along the ginnel were carried out by a contractor in October and the work was well-received by both plot holders and the people in the adjacent houses. We are a model landholder in terms of keeping the public footpath along the ginnel free of overhanging twigs, branches and other vegetation. Additional taps are being installed beside plots 21 and 26 at the far end of the upper site and they will be particularly welcomed during busy periods in the summer.

Many thanks go to Paul Knight for taking responsibility for all this valuable work and to the people who helped Paul with the digging.



Two more taps being installed

ALLOTMENT NATURE RESERVE



Nature Reserve with pond in foreground

The Nature Reserve, plot 63B, is on the Small Site on the other side of Beckwith Avenue. It backs on to the ginnel and can be viewed by standing on the low wall or peering through the hedge or going onto the small site to take a walk round. It consists of a small frog-friendly pond and quite a lot of unrestrained vegetation. It was discussed at the recent Committee meeting (21st January), and agreed it could be managed better and given focus so that it could become more of a feature. Bird boxes and bat boxes on it were suggested. Subsequently, Stephanie Byrnes and Tricia Wilson have kindly agreed to look after it with volunteers to help do some clearing when required.

WAITING LIST

There are now 45 people on the Harlow Hill Allotment Association Waiting List. The waiting time is approximately 3 years. 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. If you can't look after your plot for any reason, please let your designated committee member know so that they are aware of the situation.

HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY

SAFETY FIRST

The HHAA has a detailed Health and Safety policy. The basic principle for all plot holders is that they should ensure that on their plot the risk of injury to themselves and others is minimised. Children on the site should be carefully supervised.

Plot holders should carry out health and safety checks on a regular basis. In particular they should make sure that there is no hazardous rubbish such as broken glass. Pesticides and chemicals if kept on the allotment should be in a securely locked shed. It is a good idea to have a first aid kit in the shed, or somewhere handy. Strong shoes should be worn when plot holders are working on the allotment, or when using a mower. Vermin are also a hazard. Rats carry 70 diseases, including Weil's disease which can be fatal; check and report signs of infestation and regularly keep an eye on waste storage areas and compost bins. Even though the risks are small, there are also a number of other hazards that plot holders should be aware of; these include tetanus, skin irritations, legionella and the careless use of garden tools and mowers.

Plot holders should also be aware of hazards to wildlife, particularly from low-level fruit netting, pesticides, and slug pellets.

The Committee has a responsibility to monitor the safety of the site and raise awareness of possible dangers. It carries out its responsibilities by taking action to reduce the risk from hazards that are reported, and ensure that all plot holders are aware of their own responsibilities with respect to Health and Safety issues. A log book where plot holders can report any issues and incidents is kept in the hut next to the Allotment Shop.

The full Health and Safety Policy can be read on the website www.harlowhillaa.org Members' Area - password "Beesmakehoney". A copy can also be obtained from the Secretary.

Suggested First Aid Kit:

- a small selection of adhesive plasters
- antiseptic ointment,
- sting relief cream,
- a pair of tweezers for removing thorns etc. and
- a gauze or lint pad to use as a compress to stop bleeding, if badly cut.

POST COVID

Though all restrictions have now been lifted, to be on the safe side, plot holders may still wish to maintain a degree social distancing. Let's keep everyone safe.

SEED ORDER

42 people ordered seeds through the Kings Seed Order this time, and it generated £238 for the association. The seeds were delivered just before Christmas. Many thanks to everyone who supported the seed scheme.

HARRY NEWPORT PRIZE FOR BEST LEEKS

I was asked to judge the prize this time, and in November. I could be seen on several occasions going from plot to plot to look at what was on offer. Occasionally I was viewed with suspicion and had to explain. The judging was earlier than in previous years to ensure that there were plenty of good leek specimens still uneaten. I gradually developed what I thought to be appropriate criteria. For a start, I decided it should not be decided on the best individual leek or pair, but a bed of around twenty leeks at least. Next I thought that the leeks in the bed should be quite big and also look nice. By look nice, I mean a nice blend of white stem/stalk and bright green leaves, and not looking straw-coloured and tatty. Finally, I decided that no one should win the prize two years in succession. In the end I chose as winners the leeks of Mike and Jean Lowsley who had won the prize two years ago. The leeks were splendid specimens.



As a general comment, the leeks on open ground seemed to do better than the leeks in raised beds. My experience of growing leeks is that they like a damp (but not wet!) soil, and in a dryish season like last year the top few inches of raised beds can easily dry out. So if the leeks are in a raised bed, I suggest maybe set them quite deep when transplanted, and water them lightly and frequently throughout the summer and early autumn. For what it's worth, I set my leek seeds out in the open towards the end of April; they're good germinators but need plenty of weeding, and I transplant them to where I want them around the end of June. They are unlikely to make much bulk if you transplant them after late July. They're actually a marvellous allotment gardener's crop; many of them keep going till the following April (but they're no good if they start sending up a flower stalk) and they are immune to wind damage.

Keith Wadd

COULD ALLOTMENTS BE AS PRODUCTIVE AS CONVENTIONAL FARMS?

A recent two year pilot study conducted by Dr Beth Nicholl of the University of Sussex asked 34 volunteers to monitor the yields of fruit and vegetables grown on their allotments and gardens with minimal pesticide use. Between March and October, these growers were able to harvest 1kg of insect-pollinated fruit and vegetables such as tomatoes, beans, apples and strawberries, per sq. metre. These yields are comparable to conventional farms. The plot holders also recorded more than 2,000 pollinating insects among their crops, making their growing spaces much more biodiverse than conventional farms.

The report suggested that allotments and community gardens could play an important role in our food production, reducing imports and improving our food security.



Autumn sown broad beans making good growth

Dr Nicholl said "In a world of increasing urbanisation in both the developing and developed worlds, producing food in and around cities has the potential to improve both nutritional and health outcomes, alleviate poverty and simultaneously provide habitat for wildlife and create sustainable cities."

So we need to keep growing and keep encouraging our Council to increase the number of allotment plots available. As we all know, allotments became very popular during the pandemic and the demand hasn't declined. In November 2021, there were 614 people in the Harrogate District waiting for an allotment plot.

Angela Dicken

ALLOTMENT SITES MEETING WITH HARROGATE COUNCIL

The annual meeting was held on 30th November 2021. The Council is hoping that there will be new allotment sites as part of housing developments at Green Hammerton, Edwin Park, and Ripon Barracks. They will be managed by a private company. New allotment sites are already being considered at Yew Tree Lane and at Highfield Farm Knaresborough. Waiting lists across the district at the end of November 2021 were reviewed. Most allotment sites now had more people on their list than when numbers were last reported in 2019.

Policy on cutting down and planting trees was discussed. It was generally agreed that any trees planted on allotments should be native trees or fruitful trees preferably on dwarf stock. Leylandii and willow should not be allowed.

The Management agreements between each allotment site and HBC are due for renewal on 31st March 2023. This coincides with the change to the Unitary Council, so it is hoped that it can be all sorted out before the change happens. It is hoped that the HDAF will be able to negotiate on behalf of all the allotment sites, so that we continue to have the same agreements across the district.

WASTE NOT WANT NOT



Spring is round the corner but the weather is still iffy. Thoughts turn to energy prices and the worries that many families have right now. This is when we can bring a ray of sunshine to other people and share some of our lovely produce. There will be loads of rhubarb coming up soon and this is always a favourite in the “pay as you feel” cafes as we make wonderful crumble and custard. It warms everyone's hearts in these cold times.

So an advanced thank you for anything you have that can't be used for you and yours. The yellow boxes by the allotment shop are emptied on Mondays. *Sian Gamble*

IT'S YOUR NEWSLETTER

Don't forget, this is your newsletter, so if you have any ideas or information you would like to share with your fellow plot holders, please send your contributions to Keith or Angela.

Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit;
Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad