

Newsletter

Ash Road Allotment Association

The Year of Coronavirus

This has been a difficult year for everyone. The Covid virus has dominated all elements of life. The Allotment Committee hopes that all of our plot-holders, together with family and friends, remain safe and well.

Inevitably, it will be some time before everything can return fully to normal, but the Committee has worked hard to make sure that the site has continued to run and operate safely. In particular, by running our allotment shop 'virtually' for most of the summer and, more recently, by restarting the regular Sunday coffee mornings (in 'Bring Your Own' form!) we have tried to make the best of things.

For those plot-holders who had to 'isolate' for many weeks the 'Lockdown' was clearly a very difficult time. Fortunately, however, and in contrast, many were able to take advantage of the fact that visits to an allotment were still allowed. I know that being able to come to the allotment served to remind me of what a privilege it is to have a plot of land to grow food and enjoy fresh air in the middle of a large city. It has been a real inspiration to see the site so busy this spring and summer, despite all the troubles elsewhere in people's lives.

Let's hope the worst is now over and we can look forward to better times and happy growing.



Allotment News

The Covid pandemic regrettably meant that we had to cancel the usual social events that we would normally hold during the spring and summer - including our Annual Show. It also hasn't been possible to organise any volunteer 'work parties' since March. Nevertheless, I am pleased to be able to list some of the activities and improvements that we have been able to achieve on the site since the start of the allotment year:

- Planting 300 saplings along the boundary fence adjoining Batcliffe Woods, that in the long-term should grow into a stronger and better boundary hedge and be good for wildlife.
- Installing solar panels on the Hut roof to provide power for lighting the Hut and, in due course, to enable us to move to electric-only strimmers for hire to plot-holders.
- Making further improvements to the water supply system - the last of the baths was connected into the new uPVC pipe. A further maintenance programme is also underway.
- Installing concrete storage bays for manure and wood chip.
- Pruning some of the overgrown trees on site and also on the boundary alongside Batcliffe Woods.
- Trimming back overgrown vegetation along the bottom path to the Rokeby Gardens entrance.
- Increasing parking space on the two car parks.
- Creating a new lettable plot close to the main car park.
- Changing to peat-free compost for the 40 and 60 litre bags of compost that we stock in the Allotment Shop.
- Raising £166 from the charity spring plant sale! A big thanks to all who donated plants and all those who bought them! Proceeds to Homeless Street Angels.

Blackberries



When your blackberry harvest is over it's time to prune! Blackberries fruit on the previous season's growth and once a cane has fruited it will not fruit again. Cutting out spent canes to the base will encourage new ones.

For **summer fruiting raspberries** the same rules apply, but **autumn fruiting raspberries** fruit on the current season's growth, so you'll need to cut them back in February.

Blight



'Blight', is now present on the site. It usually starts in potatoes, but can spread to peppers and tomatoes.

Symptoms include brown freckles, or patches on leaves and a yellowish border spreading from those patches. Leaves/ stems quickly shrivel and rot. **Please check regularly. Blight will spread, so please try and control it.**

Remove affected leaves. In more serious cases cut off **all** foliage and stems and dispose in a bin, not in your compost heap. Removing affected foliage prevents the disease spreading down into the tubers and causing them to rot. If tomatoes become infected your crop can be wrecked in a week. Crops grown in polytunnels are less at risk because the mould spores are spread by rain drops.

Top Tasks for August

- **Pick Regularly** - Beans and courgettes need frequent picking otherwise beans turn stringy or courgettes grow too large. Don't allow beetroot etc to get over large as they get woody and tasteless.
- **Keep Weeding** - they are loving this damp summer!
- **Feed tomatoes and peppers**
- **Harvest potatoes**
- **Make the most of your Harvest** - read up about blanching, freezing and bottling your harvest and look forward to enjoying those nutritious meals in the winter.
- **'Think Fruit'** - don't let your harvest go to waste. Many types of berry fruits freeze well and you can open freeze them on trays, bag them up and store in your freezer for future use.
- **Protect your Crops** - remember to net your fruit and also your Sweet Corn. Birds and squirrels are ever ready and the squirrels on our site know exactly when sweetcorn is ready.
- **Don't Waste Food - Share!** - if you are going away, or have too much produce to use, why not ask your plot neighbours if they would like some? You could also post a message on the Facebook page with your plot number and specifying which bush/tree is free for picking; or post a sign on your plot. **But... PLEASE.... ONLY pick from someone else's plot with their permission.**
- **Keep paths clear and mown** - the rain has meant a good summer for weeds and grass. Please keep paths clear between the plots so that you and your fellow plot-holders can walk around the site safely. A strimmer or mower can be hired from the Hut for £3 for 3/4 hour.
- **'Being a Good neighbour'** - If you are strimming or mowing etc, please consider your neighbours. Equally although we are not an 'organic only' site, please be careful with use of pesticides and other gardening chemicals - always follow the instructions for the product; always minimise use and always have regard to the need to ensure the protection of bees and beneficial insects and other wildlife on site; and always ensure you are not affecting neighbouring plots.
- **Summer Prune** - cherry trees, gooseberry and currant bushes after harvest and tidy strawberry beds. Thin out apple, pear and plum fruits to get bigger fruit and so branches don't break.
- **Plan Ahead** - If you are a new plot-holder think about preparing for your autumn planting. Cabbages can be planted out in September or October (for harvest in spring); onions, garlic sets and overwintering broad beans can be planted in October (for harvest in June). New strawberry plant can also be planted out in early autumn, so that they get an early start. For fruit bushes autumn is the time for planting new bare-rooted fruit bushes and the winter is the ideal time for planting bare-rooted fruit trees.

Summer Recipes

We all have plenty of courgettes at this time of year. Here are a couple of recipe ideas sent in by Di and Colin Wood-Robinson. Bon Appetit!

Pasta with Courgettes and Blue Cheese (Picture right)

This is a very quick recipe, which only takes 15 minutes, or 10 minutes if fresh pasta is used. Serves two.

Ingredients:

- 2 tbs of olive oil
- 1 onion
- 2 medium-sized courgettes (300-400g)
- 75-100g blue cheese (dolcelatte or gorgonzola are suitable)
- 150g dried pasta (such as penne or fusilli)
- Parsley and Black pepper.

Method:

- Cut the onion in half lengthways and slice each half thinly. Fry gently in the olive oil until soft.
- Put the pasta on to boil.
- Meanwhile cut the courgettes into pieces 4-5cm long, then into matchsticks about 5mm thick.
- When the onions are soft, add the courgette matchsticks and continue to fry gently for 5 min, mixing and tossing the two vegetables.
- Cut the cheese into small pieces and then add the vegetable mixture. The cheese will form a thick soup. Toss it all together.
- Add the cooked pasta with a little of the pasta water to make a nice sauce.
- Top with chopped parsley and serve.



Baked Courgette Risotto (Picture right)

Ingredients:

- 2 tbs olive oil
- 1 Onion finely chopped
- 1 tsp sea salt (if you use)
- 180g (1cup) Arborio rice
- 500ml veg stock or water
- 400g chopped plum tomatoes (tin)
- 3 courgettes - medium finely sliced
- 60g parmesan cheese - grated
- black pepper
- 2 tbs chopped fine leaf parsley

Method:

- Preheat the oven to 200c (400f).
- Heat 3 litre oven proof pan (with a lid) over medium heat.
- Add olive oil, onion, sea salt and fry - stirring until onion soft and translucent, not brown.
- Add the rice and stir for a minute.
- Add stock and tin tomatoes and bring to a simmer.
- Stir in the courgettes and then sprinkle with grated parmesan and black pepper.
- Cover and bake for 25/30 minutes until rice is cooked. (Don't overcook as it will be too dry.)
- Scatter parsley over the top and shaving of parmesan if you wish.



Next Allotment Year

With late summer approaching (yes, already!) thoughts start turning to the next allotment 'year' (2020/2021) that starts on 1st October.

We send out bills for plot rents in September. However, if you are perhaps thinking that you might like to give up part of your plot to make life more manageable, or have decided to give up your plot completely at the end of September, please do let someone in the Committee know, or email ash_road_allotments@aol.co.uk as soon as possible.

We now have a very large waiting list (more than 50 people have their name on our list) and it would be really helpful to know what scope we might have to offer a plot for next year to people who are keen to get growing their own food.

It is also important that we have an up-to-date email and postal address for all plot-holders for when bills get sent out. **Please make sure that we have up-to-date contact details for you.**

Children's Safety

Parents need to closely supervise children AT ALL TIMES and not allow them to stray from your 'home' plot.

Staying In Touch



Our Facebook page is a great way to keep up-to-date with news about the allotment and you can also use it to contact the Committee. The page features regular news updates

and it is also a great place for plot-holders to post questions, or to share their own news and ideas with others.

The Facebook page has the name Ash Road Allotments Association. To 'sign up' click on 'join', or email Lynne with your plot no to: lynneesnowden@aol.com.

Contacting The Committee



As a 'self managed' allotment, the Allotment Committee is responsible for the day-to-day running of the site. You can contact the Allotment Committee by email at ash_road_allotments@aol.co.uk

You may also find a Committee member on site. Look at the notice board on the wall of the Hut (facing towards the main car park). If there is a number on display this should show you the number of the plot on which you should find a Committee member that day.

The Newsletter

After a break this year, we hope to resume regular newsletters. If you have any items for the newsletter please email Chris Martin at chris.e.martin@ntlworld.com. The newsletters will be sent out by email in 'pdf' document format.

Coffee and Advice

Although we can't provide the coffee at the moment, you're welcome to a 'socially distanced', 'Bring-Your-Own Mug and Beverage' coffee morning on Sunday mornings - at the Hut at 11 am. Listen for the Air Horn!