

Newsletter

Ash Road Allotment Association

The Newsletter

Anything for the newsletter? Please let me know. Chris Martin (Plot 59).
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Coffee and Shop

Remember you are invited for ***FREE* coffee on Sunday mornings**. Come along to the Hut at 11 am. Listen out for the 'Air Horn' that announces coffee is served. If you are new to the site it's a great way to meet your fellow allotmenters!



Remember that we also have an **allotment 'shop' at The Hut**. This is open every Sunday from 10.30am. There is a wide range of items to help you on your plot (subject to availability), from various types of netting and horticultural fleeces, to fertilisers, compost, canes, gardening gloves etc. All at reasonable prices. Come and take a look.

A price list is attached at the back of this newsletter and also pinned to the notice board on the outside of the Hut.

We're hoping to increase the range of items we stock over the next few months. If you have any suggestions for other items that we might consider stocking please let a member of the Committee know or email ash_road_allotments@aol.co.uk



Snow Returns

Snow returned to the allotments earlier this month. The photo was taken on the 1st of March, when the snow was definitely deep and crisp and even. I think this is probably the heaviest snow we've had for a couple of years. It looks like we may well have some more before spring truly arrives, so we may have to be patient, despite seedlings sprouting and potatoes 'chitting' at home.

Site House-keeping

Now is a great time of year to tidy up the allotment in time for the start of a new growing season: Key priorities are:

- check and repair any damage from winter storms
- check and address safety issues. You must ensure that paths around plots are clear and free of hazards. **Overhanging trees and bushes must be cut back.**
- Broken glass or any other potentially **dangerous material should be safely removed from all plots.**
- Make sure you **have a sign on your plot that displays your plot number.**

We hope that the spate of 'break-ins' of sheds that marked the winter has stopped. But everyone needs to stay vigilant:

- If you see someone on site who you do not know, ask who they are and which Plot is theirs.
- Phone the Police non-emergency number 101. Do report **ALL** incidents if you suffer loss/damage, or if you see intruders.
- Always scramble the gate padlocks.



Find us on:
facebook®

Our Facebook page has the name Ash Road Allotments Association. Follow the link - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1115906655100815>. To 'sign up' click on 'join', or email Lynne with your plot no at: lynneesnowden@aol.com. Use the page to share ideas or news or to contact the Committee.



Goldcrest Sighted

Last month's Newsletter reported that 35 species of birds species had been seen on the Allotments. The list of names was included in the January and February newsletters. Since then I happened to spot an additional (36th) species - a Goldcrest (stock photo above). Something I have never seen before. It was part of a flock of small birds foraging through the trees in the 90s plots, not far from the Hut. At first I thought it was a wren, but then saw the yellow stripe on its head. A really special sight.

Do let me know if you see any more species in the coming weeks - especially as we are now coming into Spring (hopefully!). Email details to chris.e.martin@ntlworld.com

Bees and Beekeeping

Many of you will already know that we have a group of six bee hives on the Allotment site. These bees benefit us all by pollinating many of the crops that we grow. They also produce some excellent honey.



The current Beekeeper, Bill Cadmore, has offered to organise a training event for plot-holders who may be interested to learn about beekeeping. The event would take place on the allotment site later this Spring and he would supply all the suits and equipment. Details are still being worked out and there would be a charge for this training, but if anyone is potentially interested in such event could you let a Committee Member know at the Hut, or email ash_road_allotments@aol.co.uk.

Plant Sale

Remember that we have our Spring Plant Sale on Sunday 13th May. This is a great way for plot-holders to get low-cost vegetable plants and seedlings for planting out this summer. The sale also raises money for charity.

But we need your help.

Would you be prepared to sow some seeds now that could grow into plants for the sale? You could either do this at home and bring plants to the sale in May, or there is some space in the communal greenhouses that we are setting aside for growing for this purpose. Contact Malcolm at the Hut or email ash_road_allotments@aol.co.uk if you would like to volunteer.



Art in a Shed - Save the Date!

Leeds is going to be taking part in the 'Chelsea Fringe' this year on **Saturday 19th and Sunday 20th May**. This is run in parallel with the Chelsea Flower Show. We're thinking about doing '**Art in a Shed**' at Ash Road Allotments as a fun way of exhibiting art and perhaps also introducing more people in the local community to allotment growing. If this is something you might be interested in, please contact Claire at greenyardplants@gmail.com for further information, or to register your interest in participating.

Greenhouses



There are some communal greenhouses on the site. There is some space still available for people to 'rent' for the season to use for growing seeds. Please contact Malcolm for details, either at the Hut on Sundays or by email at ash_road_allotments@aol.co.uk.

Manure & Wood-chip



Fresh supplies of manure are being delivered soon. There are also supplies of wood chip still available. These can be found in two locations, alongside both of the car park areas. Please arrange payment BEFORE taking anything. The cost is £1 per barrow-load. Speak to a member of the Committee, or ask at the Hut on Sunday or or email ash_road_allotments@aol.com.

Please note that the gravel material piled close to the main trackway and car park is not to be taken. This material is for use by the Committee for site maintenance only.

Things to do in March

Spring seems to be delayed this year, but when we do get a fine day now's the the time to get busy if you want a good harvest later. Here are some suggestions for tasks this month.

Tidying

- Tidy after the winter; complete pruning of fruit trees, bushes and canes while they are still dormant.
- Tidy strawberry beds - remove dead leaves and any remaining 'runners' and clear old beds.

Digging

- Ordinarily now would be the time to clear overgrown beds and dig-over. But this should not be done if the soil is too wet. The next stage should be to prepare beds for planting (ground dug and raked to a fine tilth). This can only be done when weather and ground have warmed up and dried somewhat.

Sowing and Planting

- Last chance to plant bare-rooted fruit trees and bushes.
- 'Chit' your potatoes if you haven't started (egg-boxes are great) in a well-lit position and frost free (so sheds are generally not suitable). Planting potatoes out in their beds is an April activity in our area, Easter is the traditional date, to allow enough time so that when shoots emerge the last frost has occurred (and this is mid to late May in most years). But the key is that the soil needs to be at about 10c+ when you plant, so this year we may need to wait longer for suitable soil conditions.
- Even if your seed packets say seeds can be sown directly outside in Spring, this should only be done IF and WHEN soil and weather has warmed and the ground is not waterlogged. Cold frames, cloches and fleece can help seed germination.

Overgrown Plot?

If you have just taken on an overgrown plot it is easy to feel daunted. Here are some thoughts that may help:

- **Clear/dig drainage** around the edges of your plot if needed.
- **Talk to your plot neighbours.** They may have useful advice.
- **Assess what plants you have on the plot and if they can be kept** (eg. fruit trees or bushes can be revived with pruning).
- **Are there any features that could be cleared or re-used** - raised beds, paths, structures or a shed?
- **Work out a rough plan** of where you want growing areas and paths to be and roughly what you'd like to grow where (you won't do it all at once, but it's helpful to have an end in mind).
- **'Little and often'** - don't try to do too much all at once; but make sure you visit your plot often, so that when you have cleared the weeds you don't come back and find they have all regrown.
- **You won't clear a whole plot in one year.** Better to clear a small section and get something planted. Bringing a whole plot back to 'life' will take a couple of years and more. Use tarpaulins to cover the areas you won't get to clear this year and this kills the weeds. You can lift the tarpaulins in stages to clear your plot section by section.
- There are many different ways to allotment heaven.. some advocate a **'no dig'** or **'permaculture method'** and there is plenty of advice on the internet.
- **Do not use a rotavator** - unless you've cleared the weeds first. You will simply chop the roots of the perennial weeds (dandelion, couch grass and bindweed) and each fragment will sprout another weed. Good luck!

Allotment Shop Price List 2018

The following are available to purchase from the Allotment 'shop' in the Hut (all items subject to availability). Please come to the Hut for advice or to purchase on Sunday mornings, or at other times if you see the Hut is open or a Committee member is on-site.

'Gro-Well' Multipurpose Compost	60 Litre bag	£5.15
Peat-Free Multipurpose Compost	50 Litre bag	£5.15
Gro-Bag	4 Plant size bag	£3.50
'Strulch' - straw mulch	Large Bag	£8.00
Perlite	1 Litre	80p
Vermiculite	1 Litre	80p
Garden Lime	1kg for 50p	3kg for £1.25
Growmore	1kg for 75p	3kg for £2.25
Bonemeal	1kg for 80p	3kg for £2.25
Sulphate of Potash	1kg for £1.80	3kg for £4.60
Organic Pellets	1Kg for 85p	3kg for £2.40
Rootgrow	360g for	£8.50
Fleece (Light)	45p per linear metre	
Fleece (Heavy)	65p per linear metre	
Groundcover - 1 metre wide	£1.10 per linear metre	
Groundcover - 2 metre wide	£2.10 per linear metre	
Anti-Bird Netting	£2.10 per linear metre	
Debris Netting - 2 metres wide	£1.60 per linear metre	
Enviromesh - 1.8 metres wide	£2.40 per linear metre	
Canes - 8 feet (2.4 metre) length	75p each	
Slug Pellets	£2.60 for 800g	
Liquid Feed	£2.60 for 1 Litre	
Gloves (Various)	£2.00 per pair	
Jute Twine	£3.65 for 500g	

Hire of Equipment

Mower	£3.00 per half hour
Stimmer	£3.00 per half hour