

Newsletter

Ash Road Allotment Association

The Newsletter

Anything for the newsletter? Please let me know. Chris Martin (Plot 59). Mobile 07939 559 424. Email: chris.e.martin@ntlworld.com

Coffee and Advice

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!



Do we have your email address?

We've used a new mailing list to send out this month's newsletter. This has been drawn up from email addresses given at the time your allotment fees were paid, so it is usually the email address of the named tenant only.

However, it may not be as complete as it should be. Please send any corrections or additions (together with your name and plot number) to ash_road_allotments@aol.co.uk

In particular if you work your plot jointly with someone else, your partner/spouse etc and they would like also to receive their own copy of the newsletter, please let us know their email address, also confirming the plot number and their name.



Early Primulas in Flower

The welcome sign of primulas now in flower on the allotment site. It's an encouraging sign that we are half way through winter and that the plants are sensing the slowly lengthening days. Will spring be coming in a few weeks? Let's hope so.

Security Alert!

The spate of 'break-ins' of sheds across the site continues and different parts of the allotment site are being targeted on different nights. Generally speaking, except in isolated cases, there has been little serious damage, other than doors opened. However, thefts have occurred of power tools, strimmers and the like. In general, normal garden tools and other items are left undisturbed.

Here are some steps to take to make our site less of a target:

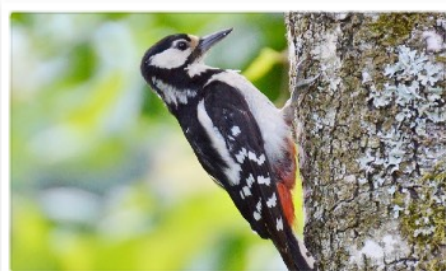
- **DO NOT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES LEAVE VALUABLE ITEMS, STRIMMERS AND POWER TOOLS IN SHEDS - remove these items immediately.** If the burglars keep finding these items it will only encourage them to come back and break into other people's sheds! We need to become a "no power-tools left in this shed overnight" site!
- **Don't lock your shed** (locks imply there is something valuable in them and they will just destroy the lock or door to get in).
- **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.**



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34 Species Spotted



Last month's Newsletter reported that the list of birds species seen on the Allotments had risen to 29 species in total. The full list of names was included. Thanks to keen birder, Greg Potter, on Plot 7, his observations have now added another five species to the list, taking us to 34.

Greg's additions are:

Great Spotted Woodpecker (pictured above - and I'm sure many of us will have at least heard the sound of this bird's 'drumming', echoing from Batcliffe Woods);

Blackcap (which Greg saw among his broad beans)

Chiffchaff;

Fieldfare;

Garden Warbler.

Do let me know if you see any more species in the coming weeks - especially as the season starts to change. Email details to chris.e.martin@ntlworld.com



Seed Swap

Know that feeling when you have packets of seeds and far more than you can use? Darren Turnor has come up with a great idea - a 'Seed Swap' to exchange veg/flower seeds. He is inviting people to join him on **Saturday 3rd March, 1.00pm at the 'East of Arcadia' pub/bar on Meanwood Road, Meanwood, LS6 4HQ.**

Bring your surplus seeds to swap for other people's seeds. Please only bring along seeds that are newly purchased or that have been stored appropriately somewhere dry. All welcome. This is a great opportunity for current and new plot-holders to exchange and share their seeds, ideas, hints, tips and knowledge. No exchange of monies. Darren will bring along some sealable bags to use. The venue offers tea/coffee, cake and (of course!) real ale. Any questions, contact Darren through the Facebook page.

Plot Inspections

Winter is the quiet period, but this should not mean plots are left overgrown or neglected. **Initial plot inspections will take place THIS MONTH** to make sure plots show evidence of being kept clean and tidy and being used, or that improvement work is at least underway. Inspections will also aim to identify any safety issues. Remember that 60% of the area of a plot should be being used for the production of edible crops. Allowance will be made for those plot-holders who have only recently taken up their tenancy.

It is only fair that we draw attention to plots that appear to be abandoned or neglected early in the year so that we can give plot holders the chance to take remedial action, or re-let plots in time for the 2018 growing season.

For Sale

Honda Izy HRG 416SK self-propelled petrol lawn-mower for sale (latest version). 16 inch (41cm) width of cut. Easy-start Honda engine. Steel mower deck. Blade break. 50mm grass bag. Free oil, petrol stabiliser fluid and spark-plug. 7 months old. Minimal use. Excellent condition. Includes factory checklist/set up warranty and date of purchase and manual. £250. [Description and validity of content of this advert is the responsibility of the seller. Would-be purchasers are asked to satisfy themselves of details.]

If you are interested in this item, please email ash_road_allotments@aol.co.uk and we will put you in touch with the seller.

VOLUNTEER



Work Party

The next 'work party' will be held on **Sunday 4th March at 10.00 am.**

Coffee and cake will be provided afterwards at the Hut at 11.00.

The task will be to help prepare an overgrown plot to get it ready to let to a new tenant. This will be the latest in a series of vacant and overgrown plots that have been cleared by work parties in the last couple of years. The programme has had a great success rate in drawing new tenants onto the site, thereby bringing overgrown plots back into use and helping make sure Ash Road Allotments continues as a thriving site.

Work parties are where we ask plot-holders to volunteer an hour of their time to take part in a communal activity for the wider benefit of the site. They are a great way to get to know other plot-holders and it's fun to get involved in a shared task. The work parties are informal, so please come along and help out.

If you are able to come, please do email

ash_road_allotments@aol.co.uk or let one of the Committee members know you will be coming. We look forward to seeing you there.

Growing Onions

Onions and garlic can be very rewarding crops on an allotment and relatively straightforward to grow, so here are some tips.



Plant your onion 'sets' (small, immature bulbs) when the soil is fit to be worked - typically late March/early April. Early planting develops good-sized onions.

Plant sets 7-10cm away from each other in rows. Just grasp them at the top (the pointed, tassel end) with the root end down and push them into well-prepared soil the full depth of the bulb. The soil should just barely cover the top of the onion sets. After you've placed your sets in the ground, firm the soil and scatter some long-lasting fertiliser (bonemeal or blood, fish and bone). You may need to cover with netting or horticultural fleece for the first few weeks to deter squirrels and birds from digging them up. Water if dry in May and June.

Look for yellowing foliage and stems which are beginning to fall over as key indicators for ripe onions. This is likely to late summer, so from late July/early August stop watering to encourage the onions to ripen. Choose a forecast period of dry, sunny weather for 2-3 days when you dig them out so they can be left in the sun to dry, or put them in shed with lots of ventilation. When completely dry, flake off remaining soil and cut off some of the top foliage to store in a cool place. Remember - some varieties of onion can also be planted in autumn to overwinter and produce a crop earlier in the summer the next year!

Growing Garlic

Plant the small, individual cloves that break off from the garlic bulb after you have taken off the skin. The outer cloves of each garlic will produce the largest bulbs at harvest time. Don't break them up until you plant them, though. The cloves can be planted when the soil is fit to be worked, usually about mid March - the soil must not be waterlogged, as garlic prefer drier soil. Plant each of the individual cloves the full depth of the bulb 7-10cm apart, and firm the soil. Protect from birds and squirrels. Water in dry spells.



Harvest garlic when the tops have turned mainly yellow. Treat the bulbs gently when picking or they will bruise, but pull the heads up and let them dry for a few days in the sun or well-ventilated shed, and then cure them in an airy place. Braiding is an excellent way to store them. Again, some varieties of garlic can be planted in late autumn for a summer harvest the next year and these will give you larger bulbs.