



**WESTON FAVELL
ALLOTMENT**



**MULLED WINE & MINCE
PIES**

Sunday 17th December 2023

Summer House , Graspin Lane

From 10:30am

Mince pies, Mulled wine

(non-alcoholic too)



Season's Greetings from our Chairman

Dear All, Welcome to the Christmas edition of the Newsletter.

Allotments can provide enjoyment, well-being from fresh fruit and vegetables but also to our mental health. There is no escaping they require a significant commitment of time and effort.

We can now look forward to a couple of months of relative rest until the New Year.

Until then, I wish you all a Fantastic Festive Season and Best Wishes for the New Year!



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Composting – Speed it Up

Who Runs Weston Favell Allotments

The subject of who runs Weston Favell Allotments came up at the AGM. There is a misconception that Northampton Council manage and run the site. This is not the case.

The site is self-managed by the elected committee members under the jurisdiction of Northampton Council who own the site. We're the only self-managed site in Northampton.

The committee meet every 2 months to discuss finance, the secretary's report including; plot lettings and/or evictions, the waiting list for plots, topics for the Newsletter and Web site, shop sales and working parties.

We think the committee get things done whereas there is usually a wait if the Council have to deal with any maintenance, disputes, security or other issues. As we're on site we're more approachable, accessible and if a plot fails to care for their plot adequately, they are evicted.

Rogues Gallery - Who are the committee?

Clive Leach - Vice Chair



Site management including emergency services, security, maintenance (gates, locks), fence boundaries and tree surgery, plot inspections and plot letting.

Site Buildings and services including conveniences
Clive is usually the first point of contact for any site issues and liaison with the Council.
Clive takes a big role in the Working Parties with Ed

Fran Woodley - Secretary



Fran manages the administration of Weston Favell Allotments and communication with plot holders.
Fran is usually the first point of contact for plot holders and as such sends and receives emails, compiles rent letters with treasurer, carries out plot inspections, letting and evictions of plots and liaison with the Council.
Fran's many roles also include the Seed ordering with Kings Seeds, Insurance for the site and our membership of the NASLG (National Allotment Society).

David Walpole



David looks after the machines, the shop and is an overall adviser on site issues such as management, security, maintenance. David manages the ordering of stock for the shop and negotiates hard to get the best produce and products at the best price for plot holders.

David is also a reliable source of information on growing and cultivating your plot.

Clare Herbert - Treasurer



Clare manages the income and expenditure of the allotment. A big part of this is the setting of rents with Clive and Fran in liaison with the council. Compiling the rent letters and rent collection, banking and administration.

Clare also accounts for the income and expenditure of the shop and seed orders.

Carol Hill & Chris Hill (Carol's husband)

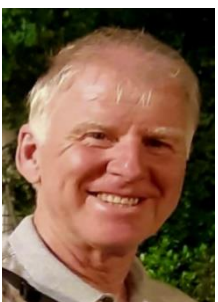


Carol contributes her experience and acts as the committees Legal Adviser particularly on issues of crime, disputes and property. Carol writes and records the meeting minutes and brings a valued different opinion to decisions.

Carol and Chris have a couple of plots (which I aspire to especially the crops and flowers they grow).

Carol's husband Chris brings valued help and advice to site management and maintenance issues. Chris and Carol monitor the water consumption on site and control the Anglian water bills.

Mike Kirkland - Web site design and Maintenance



Mike used to supply all the printed material used by WFAA. Mike also used to be the editor of the Newsletter. He instigated the WFAA Web site and maintains the site. Mike has 2 plots which along with Janet, Mike's wife, are renowned for their well maintained plots, dahlias and other produce.

Sue Wray - Events



Sue organises the events for the allotment association including Weston Favell Village show, Open Gardens and Hidden Gems and the Mulled Wine and Mince pies being held at the Summer House near the Graspin Lane entrance on the 17th December.

Ed Taylor - Working Parties



Ed takes the major role in organising and the "heavy lifting" of the Working Party tasks with Clive. This involves clearing unkempt plots, site and road maintenance and repairs (caused by too much speeding) gate and fencing repairs and helps in the shop.

Deborah Cuthbertson - Chicken and Livestock Monitor



Debbie monitors all the chickens and livestock kept on site and advises plot holders on regulations and safety. Debbie also works in the shop on Sunday mornings

Trevor Berry - Newsletter



Trevor (me) puts together the Newsletter with assistance from Geny, Wendy, Fran and Carol. I assist with site maintenance clearing plots maintaining the water tanks, making and erecting signs and assist in the shop.

I contributed to the Allotment Centenary celebrations helping Carol with the Allotment History and arranging the plant sale.

Other (much appreciated) Helpers include:

Wendy Nugent – (past chairman) Community Plot, Advice, Newsletter articles and shop

Janet Kirkland – (Mikes better half) Community Plot and Newsletter articles

Denise Dennis – Community Plot

Geny Foster – Newsletter articles and shop

Whilst the general roles of the committee members are listed above the different members contribute to other tasks when able. We do seem to work to our strengths but the senior members go over and above with what they contribute and achieve.

Here's a list of some of the tasks and duties we've dealt with in recent months

Plot clearing; road mending; gate repairs; report and investigate theft or security access issues; Sign creation and erection (plot numbers and speeding signs). Mystery Golf balls driver; disputes between plot holders; Paths between plots – encouraging plot holders to maintain and give access;

Event signs and management; plant sales; Newsletter and articles; Water consumption and bills; Water tank and pipe maintenance; Shop and machines; rent invoices, letters and emails; plot holder communications; plot inspections, letting and evictions; Access, gate maintenance and security;

Notices; bonfire watch; rubbish management and removals; meetings; website; pricing policy and price lists; livestock; tree and border maintenance.

Bonfires

We received too many complaints about smoky bonfires in October from residents in Ridgeway. If you remember we had some very mild and sunny weather during October and people were enjoying being in their gardens. Smoky bonfires spoilt this for local residents.

Some of these complaints were directed to the council environmental health officer whose first reaction is to put a complete ban on bonfires.



The allotment management team investigated and found some of the bonfires were in Ridgeway itself or from the tennis club! However, there continues to be some very smoky bonfires where plot holders are not drying the material sufficiently before burning.

I find if I heap the material and put a cover on top leaving the sides exposed then the cover keeps the rain off but the wind blows through the sides drying the material. I also keep the material until November before attempting to burn. I collect as much wood as possible so the fire gets good and hot then add dry waste a small amount at a time.

However the discussion at the AGM agreed the following “*Bonfires should be discouraged as much as possible with more stuff being composted and that which can’t, being taken away to put in home bins or taken to the tip*”.

As a result in 2024 the “*bonfire season*” will be put back a month starting on the 1st November until the 31st March.

Annual General Meeting

If you disagree with the outcome of some of the policies then come to the AGM held in October each year to support the committee and add your view. Alternatively add your support to the Allotment Management Team by bringing your skills to help. Do you know anyone with a tractor who could help with grass cutting, ploughing, or road mending? Have you admin or computer skills. Your help with specific projects or from time to time would be very welcome.

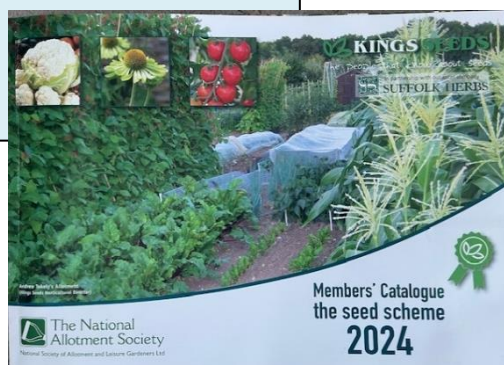
Contact the committee or send an email to Westonfavellallotments@gmail.com

Kings Seeds

Still time to order your Spring Seeds.

To Order Online: Access the web site of National Allotment Society, log in to www.nsalg.org.uk and go to the “Members Area”.

If you haven’t ordered before contact Fran



Potato Orders

Seed potato deliveries usually arrive in February so don't worry about your order if it hasn't arrived yet.



THE HUT

Remember - the Hut will be closed after the 17th December until Sunday 7th January

Our Community Plot Wins Community Foundation Award

Congratulations to Wendy, Janet, Denise and all the helpers on the Community plots. They were the winners of the "Happy & Healthy Communities Award" at the Award ceremony

Held at the Royal Theatre on November 29th this year (2023). A film was shown at the Award Ceremony featuring the people who use the community plots. This received an emotional response from those present.



Northamptonshire Community Foundation is the county's leading independent grant-making charity.

Remember you could be a part of this team by going along and meeting Wendy, Janet or Denise on a Wednesday morning at the allotment site. (they next meet in Spring 2024).

See the article in the Northampton Chronicle and Echo by following this link below:

<https://www.northamptonchron.co.uk/news/people/in-pictures-all-the-amazing-winners-at-northamptonshire-community-foundation-awards-4428849>

PEAT BASED COMPOST –

A question was raised at the AGM as to why the shop was selling peat based compost? There is meant to be a ban introduced on the use of peat based compost.

The ban has not come into place yet and our wholesaler has stock that they need to sell. We thought we'd try some and the consensus seems to be to continue to purchase while available.

David contacted our supplier Gro-Well and they kindly replied with the following detailed information.

Update from our Wholesaler - Gro-Well

At Gro-well we're constantly asked by customers, "what the current situation is regarding the proposed peat ban and how it will affect them?"

We hoped for clarity from Government and Suppliers. Unfortunately none has been forthcoming, so this is our best guess of the current situation:-

The expected announcement in the recent King's Speech of legislation banning Retail Peat at the end of 2024 and Commercial use by the end of 2026 did not happen.

The reality is that without the Government announcing primary legislation a peat ban is unlikely to occur.

The most informed opinion currently comes from former Conservative DEFRA Minister, George Eustice MP in a recently published article for Horticultural Week.

Mr Eustice MP said "his best guess is that nothing will happen this side of the election and any Government would need primary legislation. That being the case a 2024 election means the earliest a new Government Bill would be 2026. Then to get through Parliament, so that's 2027. "

In 2024 there will be both peat and peat free composts available from the major manufacturers.

The overriding movement of the industry is undoubtedly towards a peat free future. The only real debate will be how long the journey will take to achieve this.

As we receive further information from our sources over the coming weeks and months we will continue to update you - Gro-Well



Peat Farming – The Environmental Effects!

Harvesting peat releases this stored carbon into the atmosphere and accelerates climate change. In the UK, nearly 80% of our remaining peatlands are in a degraded condition, and that degradation is responsible for an incredible 4% of our annual greenhouse gas emissions.

[*Click the following link for more information*](#)



<https://nhsforest.org/resources/environmental-vandalism-how-and-why-to-stop-using-peat/#:~:text=Harvesting%20peat%20releases%20this%20stored%20carbon%20into%20the,incredible%204%25%20of%20our%20annual%20greenhouse%20gas%20emissions.>

Is there a ground swell of opinion amongst plot holders that we should implement a self imposed ban on Peat? This would affect the demand to suppliers if they were not selling their stock so they bought less.

On this subject what better time to include some composting tips. By making or improving our composting we can reduce the need for peat based compost!

COMPOSTING – GET STARTED GUIDE

My first compost pile wasn't great. A corner of my plot had three pallets around it, and I simply dumped my waste there.

I didn't pay much attention to the intricacies of composting, but when I dug down after two years I got compost.

If you're patient it's pretty hard not to get compost – eventually. But at the same time, by getting some of the basics right, you can get better compost, faster, and in a way that is more optimal for the environment. You certainly shouldn't have to wait the two years that I did!



Compost bin with a mix of "greens and browns". The shredded paper helps to absorb excess liquid.

Compost Bins have the advantage over a pile as they maintain the structure, and some bins are insulated, which can help keep the compost warm, speeding up the composting process.

Avoid adding cooked food and dairy products to compost as these are likely to attract mice and rats.

Add roughly an even mix of brown and green material to your compost, or a little more green than brown.

Brown here refers to materials high in carbon, such as cardboard, paper and leaves. Greens refer to items high in nitrogen, such as grass and weeds, plant material (cabbage leaves etc). It's important to remember that not all greens are green - coffee, for example, is also high in nitrogen, and so is called a green despite being brown in color.

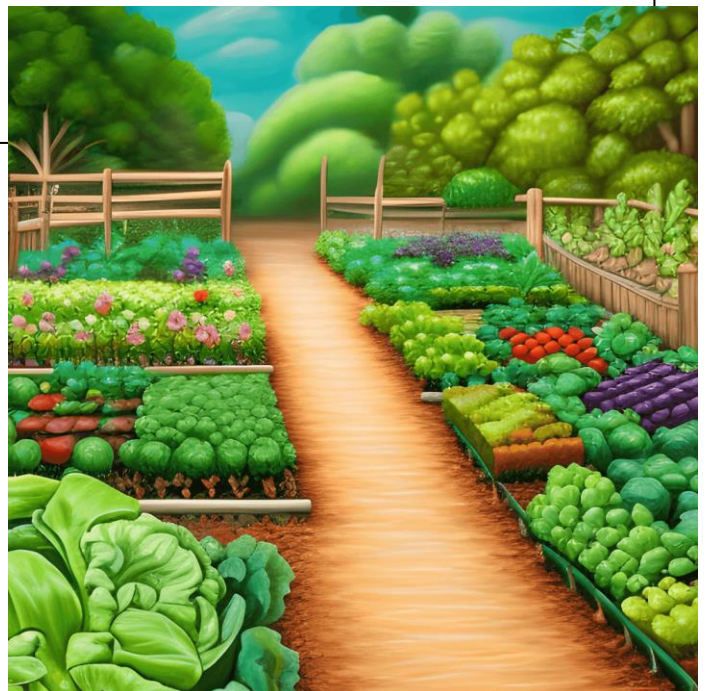
Composting will also take place more quickly if you break up the material, as you're providing a greater surface area for the bacteria to work on.

You're aiming to get the compost to generate heat.

Try to avoid getting too much water in your compost, it's a good idea to cover it over at times of rain. Plastic sheeting will stop rain from getting in, if you put some sticks under the cover, you will help ensure the compost remains oxygenated.

Its good to turn the compost to add air. But if this is too hard you can add bulking materials such as scrunched-up cardboard, sawdust or wood chips (semi-decomposed is ideal, as fully fresh wood chips take a long time to break down).

Happy Composting



There was a Seedy Saturday Event in February 2023. Watch out for another in 2024. No dates or venue confirmed as yet

DECEMBER GROWING GUIDE

Although for many Winter doesn't officially start until the Winter Solstice (21st or 22nd December) we're using the meteorological calendar in this guide, so our Winter commences on 01st December and ends on 28th February (29th February in a Leap Year).



December can be a very productive time on the plot despite the short and cold days. This end period between one year and the next is the perfect time to finish off garden tasks and to prepare for the growing season ahead.

If you've been growing for a few years, or more, December is a good time to sit down and look back over the previous year and see what went well and what can be improved on.

Were there any crops you wished you had grown more of?

Something you grew and found that no one actually liked to eat?

Or perhaps a crop that failed and you'd like to find out why before next year?



**1 Way to get
fresh vegetables
in Winter**

Keeping a growing diary, or make plenty of notes as you go through the seasons, really will help you to improve year-on-year. Just because a guide says it is best to plant out in X month doesn't necessarily mean that will be the case where you are growing.

For example, what grows well in your garden may not work on an exposed site at the allotment. Due to a more sheltered garden seedlings can be planted out a good few weeks earlier than we can.

Growing to your own microclimate and space is key.

If this is your first season of growing, whether in the garden or on an allotment, you'll also want to sit and plan. Work out what vegetables you really enjoy, what space you have, and what you want to gain from your plot or growing space.

Do you want to have companion flowers for example, or if growing in a smaller space where are you willing to compromise on crop space?

It's time to get your thinking cap on!

Many Thanks to John Harrison for information used in this article.

Find more gems here: <https://www.allotment-garden.org/>

Speed up your compost with the following 10 tips:-

1. Add a layer of sticks and twigs at the bottom

Add a layer of sticks or twigs at the bottom of your compost to trap air inside the compost pile. Adding air allows composting and helps drain excess water.

2. Add old compost/soil

By adding in a little bit of old compost or some soil, you will ensure there is plenty of the right type of bacteria to start the composting process.

3. Use a hot water bottle to kick-start your compost

I filled a bottle up with steaming hot water (old washing up water) and dug it into the top of the compost. Repeat at least 3 times. By the 3rd day, the compost was hot, reaching 50^o.

4. Turn your compost

Turn your compost to introduce more oxygen into the mix.

5. Create Free Air Space in your compost

Composting heaps which have “free air space” are more effective. Add bulking materials such as semi-decomposed wood chips or fruit bush pruning’s to create air pockets in the compost.

6. Adding nitrogen-rich materials

If your pile is slow, the carbon: nitrogen ratio might be wrong.

To speed up the process try adding ‘greens’ – items that are high in nitrogen, such as grass clippings and manure (or coffee grouts).

7. Cover your compost

Cover your compost with plastic or other waterproofing to protect from rain. But leave an air gap

8. Getting the moisture ratio right – Not too Wet or too Dry

Wet compost slows down the process as it needs to breathe. Add dry material such as shredded paper or torn-up cardboard to soak up the excess moisture ---

9. Add easily digestible materials

Wood & leaves compost very slowly, if large in size. Grass clippings & shredded paper compost a lot faster. Adding chopped materials speeds up composting.

10. Reduce material size

By reducing the size of the compost ingredients, you can make it easier for bacteria to break them down.

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Credit and Thanks for contributions to this Newsletter edition go to:

Frances Woodley – Content adviser and contributor;

Carol Hill – Script Writer and Advice

David Walpole– Hut Suppliers and Growing Advice

Sue Wray – Mulled Wine and Mince Pies, Events

Trevor Berry Plot 18 – Editor

If you would like to contribute to the running of the allotment, the committee or the Newsletter get in touch:

Email: westonfavellallotments@gmail.com

