



Weston Favell Allotment News

Spring 2023 Edition

www.westonfavellallotments.co.uk

Shared News. Views & Ideas

Established 1923 !

It may not be official but looks to me like spring has sprung. The birds and bulbs certainly think so!

Well that was last week and now the frost has returned, spoke to soon!

I hope your plot preparations are going well. The mild dry weather has certainly helped to get any projects underway. I've certainly been thinking about what seeds to sow. Maybe you've started sowing them at home on window cills or in propagators already.

Thank you to all those who joined us at the AGM back in October and for the mulled wine and mince pies in December at the HUT.

The committee have been busy during the dark months. Clive and David have been maintaining the water troughs by draining the system and testing for any leaks.

The working parties have started and a couple of plots have been cleared ready for new tenants. We're relacing plot numbers where they're missing.

A few more speeding signs have been erected which we hope you'll keep too. Keeping your speed down helps keep the road maintenance to a minimum for which my back will be grateful!

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5 & 10 Years Ago

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Extracts from Newsletter 5 years Ago - Spring 2018

Allan on Plot 13A - put his sunflower heads on the compost heap. In spring he spread the compost over his plot. The result was sunflowers amongst all his vegetables. Neither the vegetables or Allan seemed to mind. They spread sunshine to his plot.



Janet's - Lesson Never Learnt...

I do it every year. The first warm sunny day and I'm twitching to get the seed packets open that have been waiting under the stairs. Every seed packet already sorted into months for sowing, kindly indicated by the growing instructions on the back of the packet.

Usually they show a number of sowing months, but no, I disregard that each month has four weeks - and start to sow on the very first day of the month. No, I do not have a heated greenhouse, or a light source to increase light levels, I just have a windowsill! So I suppose it is inevitable that every year my first sowings end up being tall and leggy, and always need support. Well with the frost on the ground that I can see through the window perhaps this year I should wait just a little longer.



However, I do know the saying "he who hesitates is lost". I have, in the past, delayed the sowing of certain seeds, only to discover at the end of the growing season, the packet still unopened and the seeds still unsown.

This year I am not taking that risk, my first set of tomato seeds are already planted and growing. Ever the optimist this year is going to be different, !! **Janet**



On this point it may be worthwhile getting part of your plot warmed up ready for planting. One of the biggest causes' of seed failure outside is the temperature of the soil. (ie. Planting too early in spring)

Why not cover an area with cloches or polythene sheeting ready to sow or plant out when the soil is good enough to walk on. You'll be surprised that the soil can warm up by 5-6° by doing this and seeds need at least 10° to germinate.

Slug Pellets

Slug pellets (the blue ones) containing metaldehyde are a particularly toxic poison which not only kill molluscs but are a danger to humans and wildlife such as birds, earthworms & pets. Alternative pellets containing ferric phosphate (available from the Hut) and have proven to be just as effective.

Natural alternatives to slug pellets include:

- target water to the bases of plants watering the whole bed gives slugs & snails an easy route to travel across.
- Wood chip paths dramatically reduced slug and snail numbers.
- Lift old scaffold boards near your crops every few days and dispose slugs hiding beneath.
- Make a pond to encourage frogs and toads to your allotment will help for free!



And finally... your drinking water quality will improve too

Metaldehyde is toxic to humans, yes we need to consume a lot to start convulsing (!) but there was a case in 2013 in Essex where levels in river water were 100 times higher than EU regulations allow. Metaldehyde cannot be filtered out of drinking water, so you've definitely been consuming it for years.

Notice Board

Spring 2023

Available now from the HUT

Onion Sets	Sturon	300g	£1.50
Onion Sets	Red Baron	300g	£1.50
Shallots	G. Gourmet	300g	£1.50

Hut Supplies

The hut stocks a good range of quality products at competitive prices. This includes specialist crop fertilisers, canes, string and plant labels.

See the web site for our Hut price list of machinery and available essentials.

The website also has up to date information on Hut sales and archives of Newsletter back issues

<http://westonfavellallotments.co.uk/Price%20List.htm>



IF YOU FORGOT
TO ORDER YOUR
POTATOES

THERE WILL BE
SOME AVAILABLE
FROM THE HUT

(all varieties £2.70 for 2Kg)

AS WILL SPRING
PLANTING
ONION SETS

**Sorry! All Main Crop
Potatoes Now Sold Out**

*Please Remember that
Bonfires can only be held
until the 31st March.*

*Get your old wood and
prunings nice & dry so they
don't make too
much smoke and
annoy the council
& local residents.*

*Thanks for your
co-operation*



CRIME SCENE DO NOT CROSS

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We're sorry to report that thefts from plots do take place on the site.

We ask that you're vigilane, lock the gate and don't store desirable items near access paths or roads close to your plot.

Please do report all thefts to the local police and get a crime number.

The police may not attend but by getting a crime number it can help to build a record for investigation.

Please don't give strangers access and remember to lock the gate.

CRIME SCENE DO NOT CROSS

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Weston Favell Open Gardens And Allotments 2023

Sunday 2nd July 1.00pm – 5.00 pm

Weston Favell Open Gardens will take place a little later than usual on 2nd July

There will be 8 - 10 gardens open around the village, within easy walking distance of St. Peter's Church and Church Hall

The church will be open with music and flowers, and there will be refreshments available in the church hall during the afternoon.

There will be the usual tombola, Jackie with her enticing hedgehog stall and a display from the Northamptonshire Bonsai Society all in the Church Hall.

The Allotments will be open all afternoon for visitors and we hope to celebrate the centenary of the opening of the Allotments from 1923 to 2023 at the same time.

Watch this space!

Some History.. The Allotment site was purchased on the 3rd October 1923 by Northampton Borough Council. At that time the town boundary was Park Avenue with mainly farmland between there and Weston Favell Village.

Allotments have a long and interesting history; until the 1908 Allotments Act they were provided on an ad-hoc basis dependent on the goodwill of the local landowner.

Each plot was measured out at 10 "poles" which we still use today. One pole is 5.5 square yards. 10 poles was deemed enough to feed a family of four.

Some historical events leading up to and during 1923:



Royal Welsh Fusiliers at Northampton. (1)

Soldiers on parade in Market Square prior to the first World War
In later weeks they were billeted in tents on the Racecourse.



Huge crowds at the 1923 cup final.
Bolton Wanderers v West Ham (Bolton won 2-0)



The Austin 7 was launched in 1923: Relatively affordable, it became Britain's best selling car! I wonder if it was used to transport plants and materials to the allotment!

Pumpkin Competition

There is a pumpkin competition later in the year usually held at Harlestone road.

We're guessing it will be organised as before with 3 classes:

- The heaviest pumpkin *grown on a Northampton site (not bought in!)*
- Children's class
- The carved pumpkin class



With the latter 2 classes pumpkins can be bought in. That's all the information we have at present!

We mention so you can get your seed and plots prepared!

Water Storage

Chris who has had an allotment (forever!) advises that its worthwhile and definitely a good idea collecting water from your sheds and greenhouses. (Guttering can sometimes be salvaged from skips and be recycled on your plot).

If this dry spell continues it could mean that the water supply is low and prioritised by the local council to conserve for drinking.



We're only in March and already my water butts are below half full. Remember as well to mulch your plants to keep the moisture in. It also saves carrying watering cans quite so far!



Seed Advice

Honestly I admit when I first started at the allotment my success rate with seed germination was a bit hit and miss. Over time, to achieve a high rate of germination I've learnt these are the requirements to be aware of:

- water required (sparingly)
- optimal temperature
- planting depth of the seed

Some tips I have learnt are:

- Read and follow the instructions on the seed packet! Check the expiry date.
- Start germination indoors in biodegradable pots to avoid handling the seedlings
- Use a quality seed compost, give them the best start possible. This also avoids spreading fungal and bacterial diseases.
- If direct sowing, ensure you have removed any large pebbles, and have broken up the soil to a relatively fine consistency to allow seedlings to grow through easily.
- Pre-soak seeds before planting. Plants lie dormant until the seeds detect enough regular moisture to be able to grow. This is particularly useful with seeds such as beans and peas.
- Store seed properly - Store in a cool, dry place, away from the sun. Old tablet or vitamin bottles are useful containers for seed.
- If I don't know the age of the seed or I think they are a bit old, I lay the seeds between two layers of moist kitchen roll, pop them in a plastic bag and sow the germinated seeds.
- Make sure that seeds are kept moist (not wet). Mist regularly
- Ensure the soil temperature is appropriate for the seed. Optimum soil temperature for seed germination is around 60 -70 F (15-20 C). However, most of the seeds can germinate when the temperature remains in the range of 45-85 F (7-30 C).
- If you are germinating direct into the ground, protect the seedlings from slugs and pigeons, who seem to find them delicious.
- If I have collected seeds from my own plants, I tend to plant them in the same type of soil, etc – on the belief that once successful...!

Some seeds I find are just too difficult to germinate, so I've opted for buying ready grown seedlings/plants such as

- Celeriac
- Aubergine
- Parsnips
- Asparagus (better to buy crowns)

Order seeds from Kings Seeds contact Fran for more details

Thanks Geny – Plot 84

(Geny see our article about sowing parsnips ; Newsletter Spring 2022 – worked for me, Ed!)



Seedy Saturday

On 12th February Seedy Saturday went with a swing. A few plot holders from Weston Favell were there namely Debbie from plot 49

Debbie was helping with seedy advice and a few of the donated seeds came from another plot holder. Lots of people with food, books, stalls as well as the seed swap.

Hope to see you February next year!



Pruning Soft Fruit Bushes

Blackcurrants

Blackcurrants produce fruit on the previous years wood (growth). This can be identified by the difference in the colour of the stems. The new stems are grey or light brown in colour. Don't prune these very much. Prune off only the weak ones from the base, any that cross other stems or in the way of a path.

The older stems get a darker almost black colour and after 2-3 years these need cutting from the base but don't cut them all out at the same time. Advice is to remove no more than a third of the bush any year in early spring, starting with the older/darker stems.

Blackcurrants like slightly acid soil so mulching with fir tree chippings is a good idea. Avoid mulching too near the base of the plant.

Feed with Growmore (3oz per square yard) in February/ March.



Raspberries

Raspberries fruit either in summer or autumn on this years wood.

Summer fruiting varieties need to be pruned after fruiting. Prune out the older stems that had the fruit on this year usually brown with flaking "bark". Leave the new wood which is usually a lighter pinker/reddish colour.

Pull up (or dig and cut roots off) suckers of new growth if they're in the wrong place.

Support the canes with wires or a teepee of bamboo canes.

This prevents the stems falling over into the dirt when they get heavier with fruit. This saves your fruit and makes picking much easier.

Autumn fruiting raspberries bear fruit on the top part of the current seasons canes, extending back from the top over 12" or more, depending upon the variety. The fruits ripen from the beginning of September until stopped by the autumn frosts.

They don't pick as easily as summer fruiting varieties. They're not usually attacked by birds so don't need netting.

Pruning - each Feb cut down all the canes to ground level. The following spring new canes are produced which crop in the autumn. These don't need thinning as they're not they're long enough.

Raspberries also like slightly acid soil so mulch with fir tree chippings but avoid mulching too near the base.

Feed in spring with Growmore (3oz per square yard) in February/ March.



Red and White Currants

Pruning Red and White currants is different to blackcurrants. To distinguish blackcurrants from redcurrants prune a small branch. Blackcurrant wood smells of blackcurrants but red currants have no smell or smells of leaves.

Red and white currants are pruned the same way as gooseberries. Each summer, in late June/July (no earlier) prune this year's growth to leave 5 leaves (about 3-4 inches of the new wood) this removes any aphids and mildew on the tips of the new shoots.

In autumn (November to February) cut back the leaders (new growth) by one half to a bud facing in the required direction. This concentrates the bushes energy into the remaining half of this years growth.

Feed with Growmore (2oz per sq. yard) in early spring and 0.5oz of potash when the bush has flowered.



See the RHS video here: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/videos/advice/Redcurrant-pruning>

With pruning I'm learning "less is more" (less pruning more fruit) otherwise you end up with little or no fruit!

Growmore, Sulphate of Potash and Sulphate of Ammonia are all available from the Hut on a Sunday morning.

No Dig continued from Winter Newsletter

Wendy who has been No Digging for a while now added.

I have two plots on which I grow fruit and veg using No Dig principles, with my main guidance coming from Charles Dowding (books and YouTube videos). I started because I had been advised not to dig by the consultant who replaced my knee and I thought that might mean I would have to give up my allotments!

I was somewhat skeptical about No Dig at first but have discovered I get much better crops and can often sow earlier in the year as the ground is so crumbly and easy to make drills.

I gradually converted both allotments to No Dig (although I still grow potatoes conventionally). The main requirement is a seriously large volume of compost. You have to be dedicated to produce enough and layer it well so that it rots down reasonably quickly. I have five compost bays on my plot and five at home for the garden. I can just about make enough to add compost to beds every year although sometimes they have to wait a bit longer.

Starting off with a very weedy plot and covering it with cardboard and then compost is possible and will defeat most weeds. Brambles might need to be dug out and bindweed survives quite a while but it can be done if you persevere. When I took on my first plot in 2008 I cleared and dug part of it and covered part with cardboard/compost.

I would encourage anyone to have a go and would be very happy to talk to you about how I grow vegetables. I'm usually around on a Sunday morning at the hut and spend a lot of time on my plots!!

Wendy Nugent Plots 222 & 223

DAHLIAS

I have been asked to write a piece on growing dahlias. I must point out from the start that this is what I do and not what you might have read in books or on the internet.

Some of you might have seen my dahlias flowering on plots 98 and 99 on the top road. I have grown them most of my life. I think I got the bug from my father who grew them every year for the Southport Flower Show.

It won't be long now before I take mine out of hibernation and start them off and into growth for the coming year. I tend to leave it until end of March but keep them away from any chance of frost. I check each one for any over winter damage then plant them into whatever pot or bag I can find as some of the tubers have become very large. Plant pots are first choice but then I use old compost bags which I roll down, as I can get 2 or 3 in the bottom of each. Ordinary allotment soil mixed with a bit of compost is good enough to start them off.



I never bother with taking cuttings I just divide the tubers, most of which break into 2 or 3 clumps quite easily. For the first month or so I keep them under cover in a plastic cold frame which I put up each year.

Usually its mid-April when I look to plant them out in situ. They need to be a good 3 foot apart as each will grow 2feet wide. They will also need a stake for tying them to as it gets very windy on the allotment and will cause damage to the stems which are not the strongest.

As the plants start to flower I regularly “disbud” them. Most dahlias will produce a head that has 3 flower buds at the top of each stem. You could, if you wish let them all grow and open but the flowers will be smaller. The term “disbudding” refers to taking the 2 side buds off as soon as possible, giving the centre bloom the best chance to look stunning. For the best display and for cut flowers I do this probably twice a week at the height of the season. Most of the flowers on our allotments are grown for cutting and to take home.

Dahlias are hungry plants so feeding is important and so is watering. Although the tubers store water the new growth will quickly wilt in dry weather so I make sure I water once a week minimum if we have had no rain.

As I mentioned earlier frost will surely kill off your dahlias and as winter approaches it is important to be aware of any threats. I wait until the first light frost which will turn all the foliage black and if left would go all mushy. Some growers leave them in the ground all year risking that we don't get a very cold winter. If we do, then they will likely to have rotted.

I dig mine up every year, checking for damaged tubers that might rot in storage, cut these off, and clean the rest up. I cut the foliage down to about 2 inches from the top of the tubers then I take off as much soil as possible and wash them before drying them upside down in the green house over the next week or so. You need to turn them up so that all the moisture drains out of the stems. When dry I, store them in "spent" tomato compost.

Let me explain. Every year we grow tomatoes and cucumbers in the green house and the end of their growing season coincides with the need to store the dahlias which then need to be kept dry, and dark so for me the ideal thing is to cover the dahlias in the old 'dryish' compost. I say kept dry but not so that the tubers shrivel up. I keep an eye on them to make sure the tubers are still firm and if necessary dampen NOT WET the soil. You could also cover them in shredded paper (which I have done in the past) or anything similar which will keep them dark, dry and frost free.

I do enjoy growing my dahlias and the sight of them in summer and autumn brightens my time at the allotment. I hope you enjoy seeing them also and might be encouraged to have a go yourself. I'm not an expert by any means but if you see me on the plot, and want to ask me anything about how I grow them please stop and have chat.

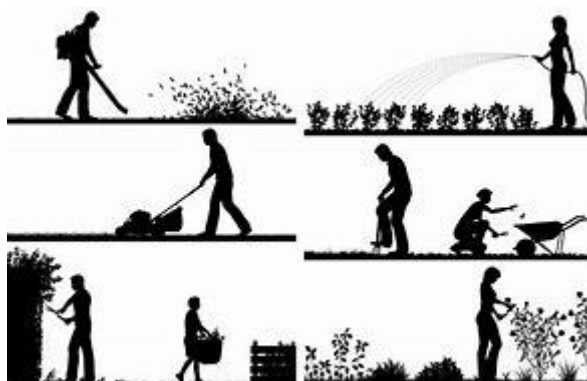
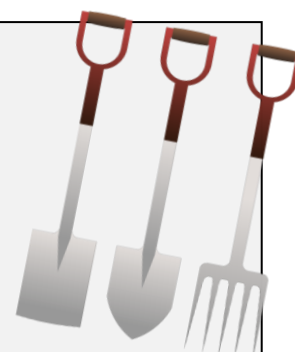


Mike

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BILLING GARDEN STORE
The Causeway, Great Billing, Northampton, NN3 9EX



shaw trust

shaw trust



Shaw Trust is a national charity working to create brighter futures for the people and communities. They support people by providing employment opportunities, skills development training, health and wellbeing services across the UK. By shopping at Billing Garden Store you'll help invest back into the community.

Billing Garden Store - Shaw Trust Garden Centre offers a wide range of garden products, tools, plants, garden furniture and landscaping products all at competitive prices

Some examples are below:



The Garden Store at Great Billing welcomes plot holders from Weston Favell Allotments. They have kindly agreed to give a 10% discount off any purchases plot holders make.

Please Note:
The Discount offer of 10% Off EXCLUDES the following:
Furniture; vouchers, retail food and clearance lines.

To get your 10% off just print or show the Newsletter voucher below at the checkout.

Shaw-Trust and Billing Garden Store

Welcomes Weston Favell Allotment Association plot holders

Show or print this voucher on your Mobile or Newsletter and receive 10% off.

Offer Excludes: Furniture, Vouchers, Retail Food and Clearance Lines

This Seasons code is: WFAA_10Mar1923



Credit and Thanks for contributions to this Newsletter edition go to:
Frances Woodley - Content adviser and contributor;
David Walpole- All round Yoda; Mike Plots 98 & 99 Website & Dahlias
Sue Wray - Events Wendy - No Dig
Geny Foster (Plot 84) - Seeds Janet and Allan (5 & 10 years ago)
Chris Osborne - Water Saving; Trevor Berry Plot 18 - Ed

If you would like to contribute to the Newsletter get in touch.
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