

WFAA Allotment News Summer 2023

Shared News, Views & Ideas

Website: www.westonfavellallotments.co.uk
Email: westonfavellallotments@gmail.com



The Seasonal Weston Favell Allotment Association Newsletter

The Weston Favell Coronation Celebrations



Well the Platinum Jubilee celebrations in the village were such a huge success it was decided to try again for the Coronation, but on a smaller scale!

Once again we had a children's play area on Peter's Patch with a Bouncy Castle, Football Shootout and other smaller games such as Splat the Rat, Hook a Duck and many more. There was music in the church yard from a local group, and pulled pork or chicken filled hot rolls, lovely home made cakes and tea in the church hall with old fashioned music from the fifties on a wind up gramophone. There were just a few stalls, plants from a local nursery and second hand books alongside a stall from the Bold Dragoon, selling drinks. There was more beautiful face painting and then entertainments as well, Morris Dancers from the Rose and Castle Group, singing by the children from Weston Favell Primary School and dancing by the Smiles group, all much enjoyed by another large audience.

The event was organised by The Weston Favell Village Residents Society alongside St Peter's Church whose facilities were much used, with the church open for viewing the Coronation themed flowers and lots of lovely watercolour paintings of all the churches in Northampton, painted by a local artist and up for sale.

Another great community Event.

Soon to be followed by Weston Favell Open Gardens and Allotments, Hidden Gems in this lovely village, on Sunday 2nd July 1:00-5:00pm

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Going Back in Time

Weston Favell Allotment is celebrating its centenary this year.

The allotment site was first acquired and created by the Northampton Corporation in October 1923. See the News item included.

To celebrate the allotments will be part of Weston Favell Open Gardens on the 2nd July.

We're laying a centenary plaque at the Summer house at 3:00pm with a time capsule buried underneath. Ideas of what to include in the Time Capsule can be sent to the email address above.

A plant sale (weather permitting), Allotment History, the National Allotment Society (NSALG) and members of the allotment committee will be on hand to meet and answer questions.

Weston Favell Garden Society and
Weston Favell Allotment Association



Weston Favell Open Gardens and Allotments



**‘Hidden Gems’
Sunday July 2nd 2023
1pm to 5pm**

The Allotment will be open as usual from 10:00am. They'll be a plant sale, plaque unveiling, National Allotment Society information and plant growing and garden information. If you have spare seedlings or spare cuttings you could donate they'd be welcome.

The Allotments will be open to visitors until 5:00pm.

Allotment Wildlife

We're fortunate to see a range of wildlife on the allotment site. Woodpeckers, hedgehogs, newts and partridges are frequent Visitors to the site. We all need to respect the wildlife and give Them every chance to thrive. They are great to see and hedgehogs, especially, are our friends eating slugs and snails.



We have had reports of hedgehogs being caught in netting and cutting their legs in the struggle to get free. It's mainly the plastic industrial type of netting used to create borders on building sites. Please try to raise the netting away from the ground by about 10 inches so they can come and go. (Try placing a piece of wood on a couple of flowerpots to raise the netting)

Pictures from my plot - Trevor



Community Allotment

Some of you will know about the Community Plots that Wendy, Janet and other volunteers run every Wednesday. The Community plots are run for the benefit of those who need reassurance and confidence to start mixing with others and perform practical outdoor activities.



It's now ten years since we started running our Community Allotment! We currently have a team of six volunteers and the people who work with us are referred through the charity Re:Store. We work on two full plots and two half-plots, with some of our participants growing vegetables on their own mini-plots. We teach people basic skills so that they can grow their own fruit and vegetables and there is always produce for people to take home. Over the summer and autumn months we send boxes of produce to the Briar Hill Food Bank, which are much appreciated.



We have a small greenhouse and grow all our own plants for the plots. We have enough seeds, tools and equipment for everyone. We meet on a Wednesday morning for two hours with a break for coffee and biscuits. We have some people who have been working with us for years and some who have just joined this spring.

We would like another volunteer to join our team if anyone is interested? If you enjoy growing vegetables and would be happy to work with and chat to one or two members of our group, you would be most welcome. The commitment is two hours on a Wednesday morning, although we don't meet every week over the winter months! I'm in the hut most Sunday mornings if you would like to know more.

Wendy Nugent (Plots 222 and 223)



Soil & Fertilisers and N-P-K (not a car park!)

Step 1 Soil Types range from;

Sandy soil gritty, drains and heats up quickly, often lacks nutrients and acidic.

Clay soil (heavy soil) sticky when wet. Slow draining and to warm up. In summer bakes hard, leaving wide open cracks on the surface.

Silt soil compacts in your hands, eroded by the wind if unplanted

Loams A mix of the best bits of clay, sand & silt. Fertile, easy-draining and to dig.

Chalky or lime-rich soils are largely very alkaline, made up of calcium carbonate

Soil testing and test kits

Testing your pH level

In order to get the best out of your plot and crops it's worth testing your soil pH. In the UK this ranges from 3.5 (strongly acid) to 8.5 (strongly alkaline), with 7 being neutral.

Most fruit & vegetables prefer soils that have a neutral to slightly acidic pH. To test your soil you can use a digital probe tester or a kit with litmus papers.

There are also homemade tests you can carry using vinegar to test for alkalinity or baking powder to test for acidity.



Easy Soil Testing for pH

This test gives an approximate pH of your soil.

Take two spoonfuls of soil and put one each of two containers.

To the first add enough vinegar to cover the soil; if it fizzes or bubbles the soil is alkaline.

To the second add some distilled water (or rain water) until you have a thin slurry. Now add a couple of spoonfuls of baking powder. If it fizzes the sample is acid.

If neither sample reacts you have neutral soil.

The acidity of your soil will also help you to identify which plants you can grow more easily and if you need to add extra improvers to the soil. Soil testing kits can be bought at garden centres or online.

If your soil is on the acid side then you can apply garden lime to make it more alkaline. If however your soil is very lime rich (alkaline) then you can use acidifying materials like sulphur - it all depends on what fruit and vegetables you wish to grow.

All soils can do with being conditioned from time to time, adding back in the precious nutrients lost over seasons of growing.

Alongside this, it is always worth adding bulky organic matter to your soil every year (good rotted compost, well dug in) this helps improve the general fertility of your soil and its ability to retain moisture during the summer.

Some soil testing kits will also be able to provide you with the levels of nutrients found in your soil - and so tell you what you need to add e.g. potash (K), phosphate (P), magnesium, nitrogen (N) etc. to create the best conditions for the crops you wish to grow.



The chart below is an example of the fertiliser to use for certain plants.

FRUIT OR VEGETABLE	NUTRIENT NEEDED (1)	NUTRIENT NEEDED (2)	FERTILISER
Beans	Phosphorous	Potassium	Growmore, Fish Meal
Potatoes	Phosphorous		Potato Fertiliser
Brassicas	Potash	Potassium & Nitrogen	Nitrate of chalk, Rose fertiliser
Tomatoes	Potash	Phosphate & Nitrogen	Tomato Feed (see below)

N-P-K

If you've seen or bought packs of fertiliser from the allotment Hut you will have seen these letters written on the packs.

What do these letters mean on the packs of different fertilisers we sell in the shop.

- N - Nitrogen
- P - Phosphate
- K - Potash

On the packs next to these letters is written some numbers. These illustrate the amount of that particular nutrient that will be added.

For example:

- Nitrate of Chalk (super for brassicas) is high in Nitrogen and will increase these levels when added to your soil. Nitrogen stimulates leaf growth.
- Bone Meal is high in Phosphates and is good for the plant to grow strong root systems.

Check the table below for all the fertiliser details then you can add back the nutrients to create the soil conditions your plants prefer.

	Nitrogen (N)	Phosphates (P)	Potash (K)
Nitrate of Chalk	15.5	0	0
Ash (Wood)	0	2-4	5-15
Bone Meal	2-4	27-30	
Compost	2-2.5	0.5-1	0.5-2
Growmore	7	7	7
Farm Manure	0.4-0.8	0.2-0.4	0.4-0.7
Fish Meal (FBB)	8-9	9-10	1
Potato Fertiliser	6	10	10
Sulphate of Ammonia	21	0	0
Poultry Manure	4-6	3-5	2-3

News Items

Organic Nutrients

Whilst the discussion and details above deals with soil types it doesn't consider those who aim for completely organic plots and produce.

For natural soil conditioning adding well rotted manure is always a good idea. I've heard adding spent coffee grouts adds nitrates to the soil.

I hope to sowing green manure onto my plot in September.

If you know other natural organic soil conditioning methods please let us know it would be very welcome to get other ideas,

As a follow on to the N-P-K information above. David and I were discussing Tomato Feed in the Hut on Sunday. Here's a comparison for you:

The Tomato feed in the Hut is slightly more expensive but is much better quality! Your tomatoes (and other plants) will thank you!



Poundland £1.60 for 600ml N-P-K 2-0.44-4.40



Our Hut £3.60 for 1 litre N-P-K 4-5-9



Wilko £7.95 for 2.5 litre N-P-K 4-3-8

Growing in Drought Conditions

We were contacted by Chris Osbourne (Plot 56) and David Garlick (plot 57) about water conservation and growing in drought conditions.



We've mentioned before about collecting as much water as you can from your sheds and greenhouses, mulching and adding well rotted compost which all help your soil to retain moisture.

Chis and David ask if you've changed what you grow as a result of the hot weather? We'd be very interested to know so a survey may follow. Watch this space.

More information from the rhs: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/vegetables/drought-care>

The Hut!

*As You're all aware Prices are fluctuating too quickly.
We try to ensure good prices and quality
Open Sunday Mornings 10:00 – 12:00 (ish)*

	1.5kg	2kg	20kg	25kg
Lime	£0.60			
Growmore		£3.20		£38.00
Fish, Blood & Bone		£2.35		£28.00
Potato Fertiliser		£4.70		poa
Bonemeal		£2.35		poa
Sulphate of Potash	£3.45			
Sulphate of Ammonia	£2.00	(Ideal for Composting)		
Rose Fertiliser	£2.40	(High Potash)		
Nitrate of Chalk (High Nitrogen)	£1.60	(Ideal for Brassicas)		
Chicken Pell. (E. Bird)	£1.10		£10.50 for 15kg	
Onion Fertiliser		£3.80		
Doff Tomato Feed 1ltr		£3.60		

Sundries	
3ft Canes	15 for £2.55
4ft Canes	10 for £3.50
8ft Canes	5 for £3.50
Green String 200g (Out of Stock)	£2.60
Plant Labels 4"	£0.50 for 25
Butterfly Netting 2m Wide	£1.60 per mtr
Bird Netting black, 2m wide	£1.15 per mtr
Bird Netting black, 4m wide	£2.20 per mtr
Debris Net (fine gauge) 2m wide	£1.30 per mtr
Debris Net (fine gauge) 3m wide	£2.00 per mtr
Fleece 1.5m wide 30 gauge (Thermagro)	£0.45 per mtr
Ground Cover 2m wide (Permatex)	£1.40 per mtr
Mulchtex 2.5m wide	£1.00 per mtr
Doff Organic Slug Pellets 400g	£3.55

Equipment

Equipment for loan to plot holders;

Petrol Rotovators * £10.00

Strimmers * £5.00

Lawn Mowers * £5.00

Hedge Cutters * £3.00

Overgrown Plot Clearance

(operated by Clive)

Wheeled Trimmer * £10.00

Brush Cutter * £5.00

** This is not a cost to hire the equipment
but to cover fuel and maintenance*

Horse's (Mare's) Tail Treatment – The Organic Treatment

I read somewhere that Horsetail refers to the horticultural variety whereas Mares tail refers to the water grown variety.

Source: <https://chat.allotment-garden.org/index.php?topic=108544.0>

Horsetail, which is the almost unchanged descendants of Horsetails from the Carboniferous Period, have two parts to their life cycle.

In spring the first phase grows. This is a shoot with a cone at the top. This cone can shed many spores but these spores rarely produce new plants as they require a lot of moisture. But cut them off before they ripen just to be on the safe side.

After the fruiting bodies the stems with leaves in whorls around them are produced. The outer wall of the leaves and stems are thick and contain silica deposits causing it to be difficult to kill with herbicides.



The underground part of the plant (the rhizome) can go down for six feet or more into the soil, making it very difficult to dig out. And it will regrow from the smallest piece of root.

The growing conditions that horsetail likes are those that mimic the conditions that existed millions of years ago – acidic soil (low pH), low oxygen (wet or compacted soil), and very low nutrients.

Moist or boggy soil provides all three conditions, but in many cases dry soil is also acidic, compacted and lean.

So, we now know the enemy - how can we combat it? Simple, just create conditions that it doesn't like.

First of all, acidic soil can have the pH raised by the addition of lime at the rate recommended on the package. Wait at least two weeks before adding any fertilizer, since lime and fertilizer tend to cancel each other out if applied together. Meanwhile, water in the lime.

Then dig as much compost, manure or other organic material into the soil as you can. This will open up the soil structure and aerate it. It will encourage worms that will also aerate it and will improve the nutrient content. These treatments will create a soil that Mare's Tail will not like. Repeat these treatments on badly infested areas again in subsequent years.

While you are digging to improve soil structure and incorporating organic material be careful to remove as much of the dark brown rhizomes as you can. Then don't forget the gardener's law "Never let it see a Sunday" - Frequently hoe off or pull out any top growths that pop up, and you will gradually weaken it.

There is no good chemical treatment available to the amateur gardener, although if you bruise the fronds of the Mare's Tail some glyphosate herbicides like 'Round Up' may help. Professionals who have had training in the use of herbicides can use other products which some consider are much more effective and work systemically.

Herbicides Solution Information used by professionals is provided below – Comprehensive Safety Precautions Required, effectiveness and availability unknown.

<https://www.allotment-garden.org/gardening-information/weed-control/control-horse-mares-tail-equisetum-arvense/>

Horsetail – the Troublesome Weed

A number of plot holders have been troubled with Horsetail (*Equisetum Arvense*) for many years. A few years ago an experiment took place in Oxfordshire where the area was badly infected with this persistent weed.

Three 10 pole plots were used;

- The 1st was double dug removing every visible trace of the root.
- The 2nd plot was hoed-off and seeded with perennial rye grass. As the sward of grass and horsetail grew it was mowed regularly, like an allotment path would be.
- The 3rd plot was hoed-off and covered with fresh pig manure mixed with straw.



At the end of the 1st year the double-dug plot was a mass of very vigorous dark green horsetail, it seemed even worse than before. The mown plot showed hardly any evidence of remaining horsetail, and the heavily manured plot showed a few yellowing fronds of horsetail. The mowing and manuring was repeated for a 2nd year, after which both plots were free of horsetail. They were then ploughed and rotovated back into general cultivation. No serious recurrence of the weed occurred.

David Plot 106 (2008)



NORTHAMPTON ALLOTMENT NETWORK (NAN)

Pumpkin Competition

To be held on Sunday 29th October 2023

AT HARLESTONE ROAD ALLOTMENTS

Any sites can enter Competitions

HEAVIEST PUMPKIN

TO BE GROWN BY PLOT HOLDER

BEST
CARVED
ADULTS



BEST
CARVED
CHILD'S



GATES OPEN AT 11am
WEIGH IN AT NOON
REFRESHMENTS AVAILABLE



Pumpkin competition details

I see a lot of the pumpkins around the site are doing well.

(I hear pumpkins are good for your eyesight – apologies for the small poster!)



Carol Hill another of our esteemed committee has been carrying out some brilliant historical research about Weston Favell Allotments at the Northampton Archive.

How the allotments came about and some of the stories from the Small Holding and Allotment Committee of the council back in the day.

You'll be able to read some of these articles of the past 100 years at the Summer House on the 2nd July on the Historical display board on Open Gardens day.

They'll also be many gardens to view in the village, refreshments in the village hall and a plant sale by the allotment shop.

See you there!

Going back in time to 1923!

WESTON FAVELL ALLOTMENT NEWSLETTER SUMMER 1923

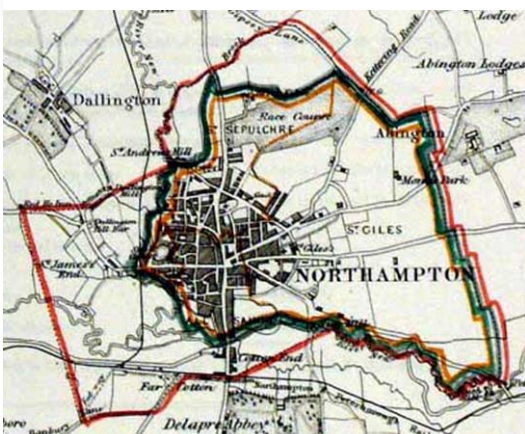
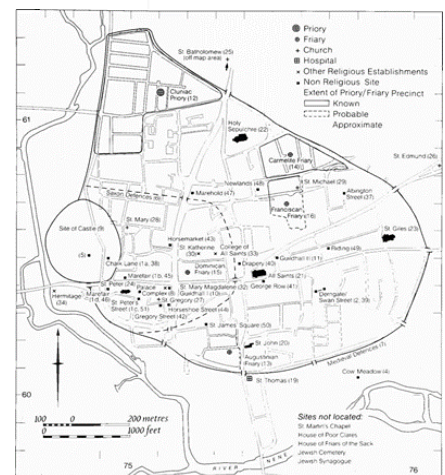
There is good news today, October 23rd 1923. The Corporation of Northampton has agreed to purchase 23 acres of land from the Northampton Boot and Shoe philanthropist Mr James Manfield.

Mr Manfield as you might know is the prominent and respected Northampton businessman who lost his brother, Harry, earlier this year and whose aviator son was killed in WW1.

The Small Holdings and Allotment Committee will at last be able to create and let allotments to our residents as agreed in the Allotment Act of 1922.

There was mainly farm land between Abington, (Park Avenue South, Birchfield Road East) Billing and Little Billing. The farm land between Abington and Weston Favell village (High Street, St Peters church and the cottages)was sold by Mr Manfield and divided into allotments.

The maps show the old town defences and boundaries from 1883 – (with some artistic license on my part!)



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

Many landowners and farmers were reluctant to allow their workers to grow their own food because it might stop them wanting to work during the summer months when the harvest was due. The 1908 Act gave people the right to demand plots from the local authority within a reasonable distance from their homes.

Other News from the Era..

Social Media

See your local Newspaper the Daily Echo for all the latest local news and views.

Travel

Travelling from Northampton in the 1920's is still challenging. The main railway link is still between Northampton St. Johns St. (Blisworth) and Peterborough.

**NORTHAMPTON & LAMPOR
RAILWAY**



Blisworth Station

If you want to shop you can go by train from St Johns Street station or Blisworth to Peterborough. (Still no railway line to London as Northampton was missed due to the gradient in the land and the Nene Valley).

The LNWR tramway and sidings between Gayton, Duston, Brixworth and Earls Barton, and transhipment sidings were laid at Blisworth Station to deal with ironstone brought in by canal from local pits. So you could hop on a tram to Blisworth to get to Peterborough.

(I still find traces of iron ore in my garden near Rectory Farm).

(The London link didn't exist until the 1930's when coal was mined in Nottinghamshire. Northampton was avoided due to the increase in gradient and the Nene Valley.)

Road travel was still by Watling Street via Stony Stratford and Bletchley. Milton Keynes was only a very small village at that time.

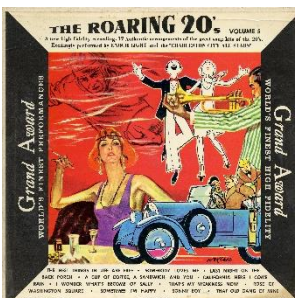


Local Allotment News - From Weston Favell

More and more people it seems are using motorised vehicles to transport goods and produce to and from the allotments. This is causing a problem as speeding is damaging the tracks.



We ask that all plots holders take caution. Use a low gear and speed when driving on the allotment.



Entertainment

Dapper suits and flapper dresses can be donned for dancing and music in London and in the local clubs. Big band music and dancing to the Charleston is the fashion of the moment.



Thoughts and Best Wishes

Our thoughts and best wishes go out to any plot holders who are unwell and finding work on their plots difficult.

Best wishes to Roger Darby (Plot 114) and Andrew Mookua (Plot 292) who are on the road to recovery and we hope to see them back soon.

Best wishes and apologies to anyone I've missed!

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

Chris Osbourne - History Research and Records

David Garlick - Water and Drought Ideas;

Wendy Nugent - Community Plot;

Frances Woodley - Secretary & NSALG Research;

Carol Herbert - Treasurer & Pumpkin Competition

Carol & Chris Hill - Minutes, Archive History Researcher and Plaque Hunters;

David Walpole- Shop, Machines, Help & Advice, Horsetail

Clive Leach - Chairperson and Site Maintenance,

Ed Taylor - Working Party; Debbie Cuthbertson - Chicken Keeping

Sue Wray - Weston Favell Events, Village History

Trevor Berry - Content, History Research, Layout and Presentation

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

westonfavellallotments@gmail.com

Committee Contacts:

Clive Leach Chairman - clivedleach@gmail.com (07970-597214); Fran Woodley Secretary - woodley11@virginmedia.com; Clare Herbert - Treasurer;

Members; David Walpole; davidbwalpole@gmail.com; Mike Kirkland;

Sue Wray - susanmwrap@aol.com; Carol Hill - carolehill@talk21.com;

Ed Taylor - e.taylor440@ntlworld.com;

Trevor Berry Plot 18 (editor) - trev.berry@icloud.com;

Deborah Cuthbertson - ms.d.cuthbertson@gmail.com

General Questions - Westonfavellallotments@gmail.com

