

Allotments

Newsletter

2016



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Chairman's Rambling Greetings, it time for my annual ramblings and roundup of the year. By now, you should have received your annual bill. I am sorry to say we have had to increase the cost by 1p per square metre. It's a small increase but helps with the rising costs. The annual water bill seems to be rising year on year. With this in mind, please be careful with your water usage, don't leave hoses or sprinklers unattended, as besides the cost, it is unneighbourly to other allotment holders.

You may have noticed that we have been a lot more proactive this year with maintenance on allotment sites and we are working our way through a list which has been compiled with the help of the site representatives. If you notice any areas that need attention, contact your representative or the office and they will ensure the information is passed on to the Allotments Committee, who approve the maintenance budget and oversee the workload.

During the last few years we have experienced quite a few embarrassing situations in respect of contacting tenants and issuing termination notices because we were not made aware of changes in circumstances, which resulted in plots not being maintained correctly. We are a sympathetic bunch and understand that informing the office of changes is often the last thing on your mind, but could I ask you try to keep us updated? It will help to avoid embarrassment on both sides.

At the time of writing this piece, it is still early on in the Winter season and already a number of petty crimes have been reported on the allotments, stealing of wheel barrows, tools and chairs, damage to sheds and greenhouses etc. Please stay vigilant, thieves know that there is little activity on allotments at this time of year and they take advantage. If you are a victim of an allotment crime, please report it to the police and inform the office.

I hope everybody had a productive year and enjoyed the 'good' weather. Allotmenting is a fantastic way to keep fit and healthy. There is always somebody on your site who has that little bit more knowledge than you, tap into that knowledge and experience, share and exchange ideas. Most of all, enjoy your allotment!

All the best, John Veevers

Allotment Office Hours

Janine Holt - Assistant to the Town Clerk can be contacted Monday—Wednesday between the hours of 8.30am and 4.00pm, her direct line is 01539 793495.

John Belshaw—Handyperson works a five day week and can be contacted via the office on 01539 793490

General Office Open 9.30am—12.30pm everyday. After 12.30pm calls can be left on the ansaphone.

Mayors Christmas Coffee Morning
Kendal Town Hall
9.30am—12.00 noon
Saturday 17th December 2016
All Welcome

Storing Allotment Produce for the Long Winter Months



Allotment holders will have been busy over the last few months making jam, pickles, chutneys and freezing fruit and vegetables. However, many vegetables can be stored and kept fresh in their natural state for long periods. Beets, carrots, parsnips, swedes and turnips can be left in the ground as long as the temperature does not fall below -6°C : just cover them with a thick layer of mulch until you want to use them. Frost hardy leeks can also be left in situ until required. However, vegetables left in the ground will be damaged by extremes of weather and if the ground is frozen solid they will be difficult to harvest!

To store vegetables such as beets, carrots, parsnips, pumpkins, swedes, potatoes, cabbage, winter squash and turnips you will need a dry, cool but frost free place such as a car free garage attached to the house.

Garden sheds get too hot and too cold to preserve food unless they are well insulated or kept frost free. The root vegetables should be layered in barrels or crates of damp sand (only just moist) or sawdust and should not touch one another. After curing for one to two weeks in a dry dark place, potatoes can be kept in heavy paper bags or hessian sacks in a cool dark place for up to six months. Check regularly and remove rotten produce. If the temperature gets above 10°C the potatoes can sprout.

Winter squash store well in a cool dark place, set a fair distance apart on slatted shelves. This ensures a good air flow and discourages mould but you should move them around occasionally. They can also be stored hanging in nets. Squash will keep much better if they have been hardened off in the sunshine for a week or two and you have left an inch or so of stem.

Winter cabbage cut at the end of autumn can be stored nestled in straw/shredded paper on slatted shelves. Make sure you take away the outer leaves to avoid storing slugs.

Onions can be dried in the sun and then stored at room temperature braided together or hanging in a net: garlic can be kept in the same way.

Article from Issue 3 2016 Allotment & Leisure Gardener

Top Tips

- Harvest produce to store when it is in peak condition
- Be careful when you handle it: bumps and bruises will cause vegetables to rot
- Research which variety stores better
- Check on a regular basis and remove rotten items



Allotment Competition Winners 2016

1st Place	8 Wattsfield	Mr & Mrs Batchelor
2nd Place	33 Wattsfield	Mrs Howarth
3rd Place	5 Coley Barn	Mr Dent
Runner Up	27 Wattsfield	Mr Houlsworth
	37 Wattsfield	Mrs Bell
	8 Crow Tree	Mr Robinson
	12 Crow Tree	Mr Silk
	39 Coley Barn	Mr Watson
	27 Underley Rd	Mrs Cassel
	11 Greenside	Mr Johnson
	29 Greenside	Ms Crossley
	4 Castle Hags	Mr Rigg

Best Plot 2016—8 Wattsfield



ANNUAL SOCIAL GATHERING

The annual meeting has been poorly attended in the last couple of years and we are looking for an alternative event. Would people be interested in attending a less formal event once a year? Possibly a BBQ on a site? If you have any suggestions please let me know. If you are interested in attending an annual event, please register with the office.

Please remember to inform the office if your circumstances change. Myself and John Belshaw visit the allotments approx. every 6 weeks. As you know, I contact tenants who appear not to be working their plot. So if something happens and you are unable to work your plot, please telephone or email the office and let me know, this will avoid me wasting time writing to you and hopefully avoid any upset at times when you are already under pressure.

Green Manures

If in doubt, get the green manure seed out!

When you have an awkward spot on your allotment and you are not sure what to do with it, think about planting green manure. If you don't, Mother Nature will plant her version in the form of weeds.

The best time for sowing green manures is the latter part of the year. The main crops have been lifted, and the winter rains will be coming.

Sowing green manures in an empty bed on your plot is a great way of suppressing weeds, as they help to preserve soil fertility and prevent the nutrients being washed out by heavy winter rain.

Article from Issue 3 2016 of the Allotment & Leisure Gardener

Underley Allotments Community Project



The aim was to tidy up the entrance to Underley allotments from Hallgarth. We have been successful in persuading South Lakes Housing to improve car park drainage. In addition we have planted fruit trees on a south facing wall, developed a small pond and a herb garden plus flower garden and seating area on an abandoned allotment. This is an ongoing project so over the winter we hope to get some of the large trees pollarded and further enhance the area with a monthly meeting. A sign has been put up which explains the project and we hope to get more members of the allotment community involved.

Chris, John, Hamish and Bryan—Underley Allotments.



Kendal Pollinators Project

Getting Kendal Buzzing

The Kendal Pollinators Project was launched on 16th November 2016 at the Unitarian Chapel. After a year of preparation, discussions and seeking funding, South Lakes Action on Climate Change, Kendal Town Council and South Lakeland District Council are about to start a buzzing new project. This will see schools and community groups in Kendal invited to join in with a range of projects which will explain the importance of, and create homes and habitats for pollinating insects.

Objectives

The project aims over 3 years to develop a corridor buzzing with life on the canal tow path through the middle of Kendal. Schools and community groups will be asked to develop plots on the canal tow path which will, in different ways, explain the importance of and encourage pollinating insects. This will form an outdoor public gallery of mini-projects, ideas and experiments all about the importance to us all of our pollinators.

Who is involved?

We are seeking to recruit 5 schools and 2 community groups to work with us on the Kendal Pollinators Project. Each of these will develop their own mini-project, which they will choose depending on their interests and resources.

More info

Kendal Pollinator Project is delivered by South Lakes Action on Climate Change.

Kendal Pollinators Project employs a consultant to manage and support the project. To register your interest, or for a chat about the project contact Stuart Lockton by phone on 07967 630956 or e-mail stuart@activelearning.org.uk



Whether or not you are a new or experienced allotment holder you may still have lots of questions and queries about why particular crops grow fantastically every year and why others are hit and miss! The exciting thing about growing, be it veg, fruit or flowers is that we are always learning and often what you learn triggers more questions. So if you would like to expand your knowledge and practical skills why not come and join us on one of our courses.

In January we are starting a C&G's Level 2 Diploma in Work based Horticulture which runs once a week for 33 weeks and gives you practical skills as well as a good level of knowledge so you know why you do things in a particular way. The course covers subjects such as soil, establishing plants, pest and diseases, propagation and more. It is a nationally recognised qualification so if you are thinking of working in the horticultural industry it's a good place to start.

Alternatively, if you have limited time but would like some more information about particular subjects we are also running a series of Grow More, Grow Better half day workshops that run one Monday a month and are covering - Greenhouses and Polytunnels, Planning your Vegetable Garden, Principles of Pruning, Apples, Vegetative Propagation and Gardening with Wildlife.

For more information please go to www.growingwell.co.uk/learning/ and then choose horticultural training or courses. Alternatively email hazel@growingwell.co.uk or phone 015395 61777.

Growing Well is based at Sizergh Barn just outside Kendal.

James Wong—again

Those of you who are loyal readers of the annual KTC Allotment newsletter, will remember that I wrote about James Wong last year.

James Wong's revelations are the subject of my discussion this year too, because he delivered a bombshell during Gardeners' Question Time in October. It concerned coffee grounds.

I've been putting my daily coffee grounds on one piece of border by the front door for the last 10 years, thinking that it is an ideal fertiliser. However, I was wondering why plants just did not seem to thrive there, and put it down to the shady and wet position facing east. I tried Heuchera and Hellebores as a last resort, but even they failed.

At long last, and in desperation, I dug everything up this summer and decided to put it down to gravel.

Now James has come to my rescue with an explanation. It's the caffeine.

It seems that caffeine is a natural herbicide that gets released into the soil from the living coffee shrub so that weeds can't grow near them. This stops competition for nutrients. It is even reported that caffeine can build up so much in the soil that the coffee plants themselves might suffer.

This biological effect is called allelopathy and is where one plant inhibits, or indeed, enhances, the growth of another, through the release of chemicals which are usually in the leaves. I was aware of this effect with laurel shrubs, walnut trees and eucalypts, but it had not occurred to me that coffee had it too.

Ten years of coffee ground is a lot of coffee, and no wonder nothing grows!

See James' article in the Guardian at:

https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2016/oct/23/coffee-grounds-are-not-good-for-plants-its-a-myth?CMP=share_btn_tw

Ros Taylor, Site Representative Wattsfield Allotments

Tidy plots and pathways Allotment plots, pathways and boundaries are to be kept tidy. Maintenance of the main access path is the responsibility of the Town Council, but side paths are the tenant's responsibility and these should be maintained on a side to edge basis.

Encroachment onto the paths and/or boundary is not permitted. Internal boundary hedges and bushes should be cut back by the tenant.

SHARING IDEAS

A couple of interested site reps and tenants have approached us about developing a Kendal Allotments page on

Facebook. This would be a useful forum to exchange ideas and information. The Town Council would not be responsible for the page.

What do you think? Would it be useful? All comments can be forwarded to Janine and she will pass them on.

allotments@kendaltowncouncil.gov.uk.

Spare Allotment Produce

This year we have been approached by a number of tenants with unwanted produce. Has anybody got any ideas on how we can make good use of this? We are happy to try and develop a central scheme, any useful ideas would be very welcome!

Sow Wild ---University of Sussex pollinator and insect survey.

In December 2015, Janine forwarded an email sent from the University of Sussex to allotment groups across the United Kingdom, seeking volunteers to take part in *Sow Wild*. This is a three year research project to track the effects of wildflowers in allotments and urban gardens upon pollinator populations. I volunteered for this and in spring of 2016 I became part of a 'citizen science' project with 150 other keen gardeners from Penzance to the Outer Hebrides.

In Spring 2016 I was sent a project pack, which includes a *ph*. test, a pack of wildflower seeds and sampling equipment with instructions on how to manage the 2x2m wildflower patch. Volunteers received either a mix of twelve different species, including grasses, containing amongst others Viper's bugloss, Wild Carrot and Rough Hawkbit. Or a twelve species mix that contained Wild Mignonette, Autumn Hawkbit, and Red Fescue amongst the mix. I confess to my ignorance of all these species, but to help we were also sent a comprehensive on-line guide to identifying the different species. The sampling equipment consisted of two sets of three pan-traps to collect insects. One set was to be situated in the wild flower patch with the second set placed on a site in the garden, at a distance from the wild flower patch.

At regular monthly intervals from May to August three traps were set in the wild flower patch and three in the control patch. They were filled with plain water with a drop of unscented detergent, to lower the surface tension of the water and left for forty-eight hours. At the end of each collection period the contents of the trap pans were counted, identified and the findings recorded. Again a very comprehensive document identifying insects was sent to each volunteer.

The insects collected from the wild flower patch and from the control patch were then separately placed in plastic jars that contained white vinegar as a preservative. At the end of the summer sixteen collection jars, well wrapped in cling film were returned to the University and the wild flower patch was cut back.

In Spring 2017 collection jars and further instructions will be sent out and the cycle will start again.

Taking part in the project was enjoyable, informative and not onerous once I worked out that the easiest way to separate and count the insects was to strain them through an old jelly muslin, stretched across a wire sieve!

Janine Lee-Griffiths, the researcher from the University of Sussex has kindly agreed to send an update on the geographic distribution of allotments and gardens taking part in *Sow Wild* and the year one findings, to include in a future newsletter.

With regard to any concerns about wild flowers seeding across allotments, there are no tap rooted weeds in the mix so normal hoeing to keep things ship shape should be all that is needed.

Elizabeth Kelly—Site Rep on Castle Drive Allotments

Stay vigilant over the winter months, this is the time of year when more break-ins on allotments occur.

Dates for Site Visits 2017

- 18th January
- 1st March
- 26th April
- 7th June
- 19th July
- 6th September
- 18th October
- 29th November

If you would like to meet us on site, please contact the office to make arrangements.

Pest Control

This year rodent activity has declined slightly across most allotment sites. Should you have concerns about rodent activity, please contact the office immediately.

Mapping Exercise on the Allotments

In December 2016 Janine and John are going to start the lengthy process of updating the database. This will include re-mapping each site, possible re-numbering and re-measuring of plots and checking and updating the information we currently hold.

We will do this exercise a site at a time. It can only be undertaken during the winter months, when our workload can be focussed more on allotments.

The first site to be re-mapped will be Canal Head. We will be undertaking our first visit to the site on 7th December 2016.

If anyone would like to be involved in this process, please contact the office.

We have vacancies for site representatives on Natland Road, Sedbergh Road and Town View allotments. If you are interested in becoming a site representative please contact Janine Holt. You will find a complete list of all the current site representatives at : <http://www.kendaltowncouncil.gov.uk/council-services/allotments/sites>