

# Welcome to your 2026 Allotment Newsletter

#NANW26



## Hello Plot Holders

The days are stretching out, the soil is slowly warming, and there's that familiar itch to get growing again. Whether you're a seasoned gardener or just starting your first bed, this is the perfect time to set yourself up for a productive and enjoyable season.

We're thrilled to see new tenants joining us. If you spot someone clearing a plot for the first time, say hello – a quick tip or friendly chat can make all the difference. A strong community grows better crops.



## Allotment Reviews 2025

Following the successful reviews in August 2025 the allotment competition winners were;

### Oakenshaw

**1st Prize**  
**Highly Commended**

**Plots 8 & 9 Mr J Fairhurst**  
**Plots 1 & 2 Mr T Sharp**  
**Plot 15 Mr Allwright**  
**Plots 31 & 32 Ms R Green**

### Best New Plot

### Springfield

**1st Prize**  
**Highly Commended**  
**Best New Plot**

**Plot 3 Mr D Little**  
**Plot 23 Mr D Hagar**  
**Plot 28 Mr A Spark**

### Park Top

**1st Prize**

**Plots 4 & 6 Mr J Fleming**

**1st Prize winners received a cheque for £25.**  
**Highly Commended and Best New Plot winners received a cheque for £20.**

At the Town Council meeting on Thursday 9th October 2025, Andrew Smith, Chair of Springfield Allotment Association, was presented with an award for his late father, Bert Smith. Bert dedicated over 40 years to the Allotment Association, offering advice and support to all allotment holders, this award recognises his commitment.

John Gasper was presented with an award for all his time and dedication alongside Bert, in helping to manage the site.

Jackie Fleming was presented with an award for everything he has done for Park Top Allotments and for all the help he has provided across other sites when needed.

Well done to all three allotmenters.  
We appreciate all you have done for GWTC.

## Allotment Reviews 2026

Allotment reviews will coincide with National Allotment Week 2026. The judging panel will visit the sites as follows;

<b>Oakenshaw</b>	Tuesday 11th August 2026 at 10.00am
<b>Park Top</b>	Wednesday 12th August 2026 at 10am
<b>Springfield</b>	Wednesday 12th August 2026 at 10.45am

All allotment winners will be notified in writing and invited to have their photograph taken receiving awards on their respective plots.

Please note 50% of your plot must be cultivated and maintained as stated in your Allotment Gardens Lettings Policy. Failure to do so, may result in additional rent being charged following the reviews.

## National Allotment Week 10th – 16th August

In 2026, National Allotment Week runs from Monday 10 August to Sunday 16 August 2026.

The theme for 2026 is "Grow to Learn", focusing on how allotments act as living classrooms – helping people of all ages develop practical skills, learn about nature, build confidence, and enjoy personal growth through gardening.

## Cockerels

A reminder that the keeping of cockerels is **STRICTLY PROHIBITED** by both GWTC and the National Allotment Association.

Anyone found to have Cockerels on their plot are in breach of their tenancy agreement.

If you have cockerel(s) on your plot, please remove them immediately as failure to do so may result in you being asked to leave the allotment site completely. GWTC reserves the right to revoke any tenancy.

## Rats

Allotment holders are encouraged to follow good practice to discourage pests.

This includes securely storing animal feed, avoiding leaving food waste exposed, keeping compost bins well managed, and ensuring sheds or structures do not provide easy nesting sites. Maintaining tidy plots and promptly harvesting ripe produce can also help reduce rats.

The responsibility for preventing and managing pest problems rests with individual plot holders. If a tenant finds evidence of rats on their garden, they are responsible for contacting Durham County Council Pest Control department. There will be a charge for this which must be paid by the tenant.

## Skips

Annual skips will continue to be provided for the benefit of allotment tenants. These will be on site on Saturday 11th April 2026.

## Allotment Rents

All tenants should have received their invoices for allotment rent for the 2026-2027 season with this newsletter.

Rents are due on or before Monday 6th April 2026. Failure to pay by this date could result in your tenancy agreement being revoked and the plot being offered to the next person on the waiting list.

Allotment rents for 2027-2028 will include an increase of 5% on this year's charges.



# SPRING 2026

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# Annual Growing Tips for the Year Ahead

## SPRING

March to May

- Start tender crops indoors.
- Direct sow hardy vegetables.
- Protect seedlings from late frosts.
- Stay ahead of weeds early.

## SUMMER

June to August

- Mulch generously.
- Harvest regularly to encourage production.
- Succession sow salads and beans.
- Check daily for pests.

## AUTUMN

September to November

- Plant overwintering onions and garlic.
- Sow green manures.
- Clear spent crops promptly.
- Save seeds from strong plants.

## WINTER

December to February

- Plan crop rotation carefully.
- Repair beds and infrastructure.
- Order seeds early.
- Spread compost and manure.

## Reminders

- Keep paths clear and safe.
- Remove non-compostable waste.
- Communicate if you're unable to maintain your plot.
- Make sure your contact details are up to date on our files.
- Keep allotment gates locked at all times.

# Crop Rotation

**Crop rotation on an allotment is the simple practice of growing different plant families in different beds each year to protect soil health and improve harvests.**

By moving crops such as potatoes, peas and beans, cabbage and kale, and roots and alliums (carrots and onions) around the plot on a three- or four-year cycle, prevents nutrients from being repeatedly drained from the same soil and reduce the

build-up of pests and diseases like clubroot or onion white rot.

Legumes help replenish nitrogen, heavy feeders like potatoes benefit from well-manured ground, and lighter feeders prefer soil that hasn't been freshly enriched. Even on small plots, rotating crops as much as space allows makes a noticeable difference to plant vigour, yields, and healthy soil.



# Water Harvesting!



**Collecting rainwater is an easy way to save money, protect the environment and keep plants thriving.**

Rainwater is often better for plants than water from taps, helping to reduce reliance on more expensive mains water, the cost of which seems to increase each year.

Some allotment sites have reduced reliance on mains water because it is too expensive. Water is not a right across many allotment sites.

# "Hugelkultur"

**Large mound like beds which do not require digging after initial construction for a few years.**

The beds comprise three layers of material; a foundation of small branches and wood debris.

The second layer is made from well-rotted compostable material, hedge clippings, grass, manure. The outer layer is soil into which the crops are planted/sown. These can last many years as they rot-down and can be restored.

# The Allotment & Companion Planting Planner

This is an online support for designing one's own plot. It is free to use and is recognised and recommended by the National Allotment Society. It can be accessed at [www.backyard-farmer.com](http://www.backyard-farmer.com).

Whether one is planting/sketching ideas for the coming season or refining your rotation plan, it's a handy companion for any grower.

Allotmentplanner.com is a free browser-base tool designed to help visualise and organise your allotment before the spade hits the soil.



# Oakenshaw Community Garden

**Re-siting and development of the Oakenshaw Community Association plot is currently underway.**

We met with the Chair and Vice Chair on the site in February 2026 where they explained their vision, the new plot and work achieved so far. Their plans include planting up the many tubs around the village with plants grown and sourced from the new plot.

# Plan for Purpose

**February into early March is prime sowing and planting of hardy early crops; Grow what you eat.**

Avoid huge harvests later in the year of a few crops. Rotation is vital, think diversity. Mix crops, grow flowers between vegetables.

Grow in association which encourages friendly insects, bio-diversity is the key to intercropping and remember, "keep watching the skies", birds are no respecter of your hard work.