



It's that time of Year

It's been another hot, dry summer and we still need to protect plants from the heat and few opportunities to plant out seedlings. With so little rainwater to collect, the focus should be on enabling the soil to retain moisture by applying mulches around the base of crops. It's also installing temporary screens where vulnerable plants are exposed to direct sunlight for long periods of the day.

There is usually a wide range of fruit and vegetables to harvest at this time of year: peas, beans, carrots, beetroot, sweetcorn, tomatoes, peppers, courgettes, potatoes, onions, berries, and early hard fruit. However, many crops, particularly soft fruits, are providing less than average yields.

If you are fortunate enough to have surplus crops there are numerous ways to preserve them. freeze beans and herbs, store squashes and convert other produce into jams, chutneys and pickles. Check out the LAA website for jam and chutney recipes and for tips on preserving excess crops.

<https://longcroftallotmentassociation.org.uk/seasonal-recipes>

It's the time of year when most of us go on holiday so there's often a need to make arrangements with fellow allotment holders to take care of watering and harvesting while we (or they!) are away.

Finally, keep an eye out for details of the latest Kings Seeds catalogue. This contains a wide range of seeds, onion sets, seed potatoes and more – at discounted prices to allotment associations. It's usually available during September, with a late-October deadline for placing orders.



Jobs

August: Dry out onions/garlic, mulch the soil to retain moisture, pinch out growing beans (French and runners), prune summer fruiting raspberries, thin tree fruit and weed around the base of fruit trees.

September: Prune soft fruits, pick off any rotting fruit, plant out strawberry runners.

Plant

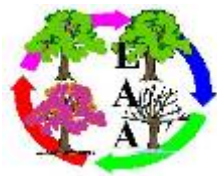
August: Carrots (the last of the year), spring cabbage, new strawberry plants.

September: Spinach, spring onions, spring cabbage, garlic, herbs and salad crops.

Harvest

August: early sweetcorn, beans, courgettes, plums and gages, potatoes.

September: Hard fruit, cabbages, beetroot, onions, maincrop potatoes, French and runner beans, sweet corn, tomatoes, chard, turnips.



Update from the Committee

Summer Barbecue – The 2026 Summer BBQ will take place On Sunday 13th September from 12:30 at our Digswell site. Please try and come along to enjoy the food and drink and meet fellow plot-holders.

Marc and Carrie have kindly volunteered to be our grill-meisters and plan to offer chicken wings (spicy and non-spicy) and BBQ ribs in addition to burgers and veggie-burgers. (Please note that you are welcome to order several items to make up your plate)

Tea/coffee/soft drinks will be provided but, as usual, please bring salad, fruit/dessert, cake, wine etc. to share with others, as well as crockery and cutlery for your own use.

The event continues to offer great value with costs remaining (for yet another year) at £6.00 per adult, £3 for a child, or £20.00 for a family of two adults and up to 4 children.



Seed Catalogue – Copies of the latest Kings Seed catalogues will soon be available in the shed at Broadwater and the kitchen at Digswell. Members will also be able to view the catalogue online at the NAS website – details will be sent to all members by email as soon as these are available. The scheme provides members with discounts of up to 50% relative to retail prices and generates a small profit for the Association.



Work Parties - The next work parties will take place from 09:30-12:00 on Sunday 23rd August at Digswell and Sunday 6th September at Broadwater.

New Members – Since the last newsletter was issued, we have been joined by Nicola (D106) and Barbara (D120). Welcome to the Association and let's hope you have many enjoyable and productive years with us.



The LAA Shop

There are now only three more opportunities before Christmas to visit LAA shop at Digswell. It will open from 09.30 to 12.00 on the following Saturdays:

August 22nd, September 19th, October 24th

If you have suggestions regarding what else the shop might also stock, please let us know.



Mulch Better Gardening

Mulch is a soil covering which is used to retain moisture in the soil (and to moderate the flow of water during heavy rainfall which could wash away nutrients), suppress weeds and help insulate plant roots from extremes of cold and hot weather. Mulches are best applied from mid- to late spring, when annual weeds have not yet germinated, and autumn, as plants are dying back.

Most mulches are made from organic matter - e.g. compost, woodchip, seaweed, well-rotted manure, straw, shredded cardboard or leaf mould - which improve soil structure. Eventually, mulches of this nature break down to form humus which enriches the soil. Because organic mulches degrade over time, they will require periodic replacement.

Organic mulches should be applied to a depth of 50mm (2") and applied so that they are not in direct contact with plants or trees. Mulching close to tree trunks can suffocate the roots and harbour rodents which can damage bark. For other crops, contact with the plant can help spread disease and restrict the flow of water to its roots.

Non-organic mulches take two main forms: sheets and shingles. These achieve most of the effects of organic mulches (other than degrading to improve the soil) but can have disadvantages.

Black plastic and weed-suppressing sheets can restrict air and water movement and, in some cases, can cause plants to overheat. Woven fabrics can overcome the former to some extent and slits can be made in the fabric, allowing direct planting through it.

Whilst this is not the case for mulches based on shingle, pebbles, gravel, stone chippings, etc. (for which dark colours can be selected to warm the soil or light colours to reflect heat), these are time-consuming and difficult to remove.

For more information on mulching (and other ways of reducing reliance on mains water) see the Royal Horticultural Society's web page: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/science/mains2rains>



Waste Disposal from our Allotment Sites

Unfortunately, we have recently seen waste from the Broadwater allotment site (plastic bags and pots etc.) deposited behind the communal compost bins, and even outside the entrance gates - the latter prompting a complaint from a local resident.

This is, of course, completely unacceptable. Any such waste produced on an allotment plot is the responsibility of the owner to remove from the site and dispose of responsibly.



Crop Planner

key: sow
 plant
 harvest

	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Broad Bean							
Runner Bean							
Pea							
Potatoes							
Leek							
Onion / Shallot							
Garlic							
Beetroot							
Carrot							
Swede / Turnip							
Courgette							
Pumpkin / Winter Squash							
Tomatoes							
Chilli / Aubergine							
Chard/Leaf Beet							
Cabbage							
Kale							
Black/Redcurrants							
Raspberries							
Strawberries							
Fruit Trees							



Courgette Fritters

Perfect served with a squeeze of lemon and some mayonnaise on the side.

- 3 medium courgettes, grated
- 100g (4oz.) feta cheese, crumbled
- 2 spring onions, sliced
- 2 large eggs, beaten
- 50g (2oz.) plain flour
- 1 handful fresh mint, chopped
- 2 tbsp sunflower or rapeseed oil
- Crushed black pepper

Place the grated courgette in a clean tea towel and squeeze out as much of the juices as possible.

Mix the strained courgette with the feta, spring onions, mint, flour, and eggs. Season with black pepper (the feta shouldn't need any additional salt).

Heat the oil in a shallow frying pan over a high heat.

Form patties of the batter 75mm-100mm (3"-4") in diameter and 20mm-25mm (½" - ¾") thick by dropping into the pan and flattening with a spatula.

Fry for 3-5 minutes on each side until golden brown or slightly darker if you like them crunchy. Drain on paper towels and serve hot.



Helpful Insects

While we all recognise the benefits of bees when it comes to pollinating our plants, its all too easy to overlook the contribution of other insects. Here are a few six-legged friends who also play their part:

Lacewing – Adult lacewings commonly green but are also found in blue and brown. Adult and lacewing larvae help vegetable growers by dining on aphids. They can be attracted to plots by growing aromatic plants such as dill, fennel, coriander and angelica.

Hoverfly – Adults, which resemble wasps, are amongst the best pollinators and their larvae typically eat 1,000 aphids each as they mature. They can be attracted to plots by growing dill and lemon balm.

Ladybird – the ladybird larvae looks nothing like the adult and is one of the most effective aphid-eaters, consuming as many as 100 aphids per day. They typically lay their eggs amongst aphids and are attracted to fennel and tansy.

Ground Beetles - These predatory minibeasts will feed on slugs and various bugs, including leatherjackets and cutworms. They can be encouraged to take residence in strategically placed logs or flower pots.



Comments and Feedback



If you have any news, tips, features, recipes or photographs that you would like to submit for future issues of the Newsletter please send them to...

Newsletter Editor: email@longcroftallotmentassociation.org.uk.

Visit the Longcroft Allotment Association website: www.longcroftallotmentassociation.org.uk

