

It's that time of Year

We've experienced extremes of weather with one of the warmest and driest Aprils on record followed by a cooler, wetter May. The cold April weather slowed plant growth and the rain conspired to keep us away from our plots and let the weeds proliferate, so most of are making progress a bit later than usual. But things will start to catch up as we move into summer.



It's time to earth up your spuds – applying soil around the base of potato stems will reduce tubers' exposure to frost as well as keeping them in the dark to stop them turning green. Thin out direct-sown crops such as spinach, carrots and lettuce. Move leeks and brassicas to their final positions.

Keep an eye on your crops for early signs of pests or nutrient deficiency – e.g. if the veins of leaves on your tomato plants are green but the spaces between turn yellow this is a sign of magnesium deficiency. This can be caused by overstimulating growth by using fertilisers with high content of other nutrients.

Remember to: ventilate your greenhouse on warm days and consider using blinds or shades to avoid excessive temperatures, and damping down pathways to maintain moisture levels (and discourage mites).

It's time to protect plants from the heat. Apply mulches around plants to reduce the amount of moisture escaping from the soil. Consider applying temporary screens where plants are exposed to directly sunlight for long periods of the day. If you are planting out new seedlings, these can get some protection from the sun if located where they benefit from shading from established nearby plants.

And there's still time to fill any gaps on our plots with late season seeds. Salad crops – lettuce, endive, radish, mustard and cress - can be planted and harvested within a few short weeks but beware of ants, aphids and slugs/snails.

For meal ideas for the time of year see the Seasonal Recipes on our website.

Jobs

June: Pinch out growing tomatoes and broad beans. Inspect plants regularly - water and remove pests whenever necessary. Thin out directly seeded beds.

July: Feed tomatoes and other fruiting vegetables. Thin out hard fruit if there are exceptional numbers of budding fruits.

Plant

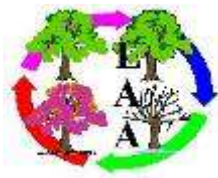
June: Sow salad vegetables, beetroot, carrots, cucumbers, peas, pumpkins and squashes, fruiting plants (peppers, tomatoes, aubergines). Plant out sweetcorn, brassicas and courgette seedlings.

July: Sow beetroot, French beans and peas. Plant out cabbages, cauliflowers and other brassicas for harvesting during autumn/winter.

Harvest

June: Chard, French beans, garlic and onions (if leaves are turning pale), early potatoes.

July: Courgettes, onions, salad vegetables, cherries, strawberries, raspberries, currants and gooseberries.



Update from the Committee

Annual General Meeting

The Association's 50th AGM was held on Wednesday 22nd April, at the Jack Lee Hall, Woodside House, Welwyn Garden City.

Alec Bright was welcomed to the Committee and Mick Pestle, having recently stepped down, was presented with an engraved copper trowel in appreciation of his time on the Committee.

Several issues raised at the previous Annual General Meeting have been addressed by the Association over the past year:

- The road surface at entrance to the Digswell site has been improved.
- A communal area has been created and a picnic bench installed at Broadwater.
- A "buddy" scheme has been introduced for new members that request support from more experienced Members
- Support has been provided to members with the installation of rainwater collection from shed roofs.

Additional site improvements include the introduction of a dead hedge near the pond and the relocation of the burning pile at Digswell, communal compost heaps at Broadwater, and rainwater storage vessels (IBCs) and durable plot markers at both sites.

It has been another strong year for the Association, with full occupancy at both sites and typical waiting list times of around one year.

Finances - The Association is in a healthy position with final accounts were signed off in March There has been an increase in income from the collection of rent/subscriptions supplemented by income from the shop and seed scheme. Expenditure has also increased, with investment in maintenance and site improvements at both sites. Year-on-year comparisons are slightly distorted due to the change to the Association's Allotment Year (now starting Autumn, previously Spring) for which some collected rental income is still due to be paid to Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.

Special Thanks - Andrew thanked: thanked John Lavelli, Account Examiner, for his help in finalising and signing off the accounts, Matthew Hannah and Simon Chard for undertaking health and safety inspections at both sites, and Carrie and Marc Terreblanche for catering at the annual BBQ, and to guest speaker - Kate Sheard.

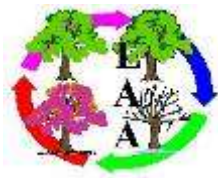
Committee Members - All Committee members were prepared to continue in their current roles and there were no objections so the committee will continue with its current membership.

Guest Speaker - Kate Sheard, from the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust gave a presentation on creating space for nature – the slides are available from the "Forms and Downloads" page at the LAA website. Kate has provided the Association with some advice following visits to both sites and offered to return to both sites later this year to make further recommendations on how to improve them as wildlife habitats.

The meeting ended with discussions about potential improvement opportunities and a raffle. Minutes of the AGM were circulated by email to all members at the end of April.

Summer Barbecue – The 2026 Summer BBQ will take place On Sunday 13th September. A time to enjoy the food and drink and meet fellow plot-holders. Tickets (£6.00 per adult, £3 for a child, or £20.00 for a family with up to four children) can be paid for by bank transfer or via a card when the shop is open.

New Members – Since the last newsletter was issued, we have been joined by Prisca (B11), Basia and Marcin (D162), while Iffat and Sardar (D120) have rejoined. Welcome (and welcome back) to the Association and let's hope you have many enjoyable and productive years with us.



Crop Planner

key: sow
 plant
 harvest

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



Perennial Crops

Perennial crops are a useful addition to any allotment plot. They provide harvests year after year with minimal effort. Whilst annuals need replanting each season, perennials establish strong root systems which require less attention – occasional weeding, thinning or pruning, and annual feeding/mulching. And they free up time for plot-holders to attend to those needy annuals.

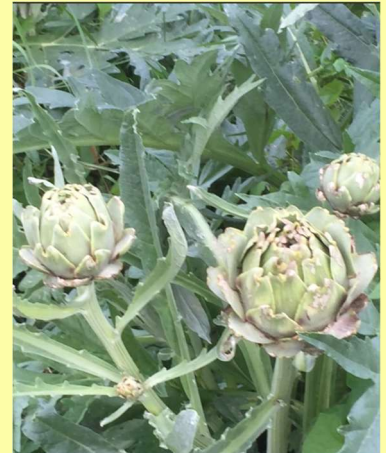
Perennials improve soil health because their established root network reduces soil disturbance and the stronger root network is resilient to pests. Once established, perennials need less watering and weeding than other crops. Many perennials provide early or late harvests, while some are productive all year round.

Perennial vegetables

- Asparagus (produces spears every spring for up to 20 years)
- Globe Artichokes (cut back in autumn to encourage fresh growth).
- Perennial Kale (produces greens all year)

Perennial fruits

- Rhubarb (hardy, low-maintenance, early crops)
- Strawberries (produce fruit for several years)
- Berries and Currants (winter prune for vigorous growth)
- Hard and soft fruit trees (last for decades)



Growing Potatoes in Containers

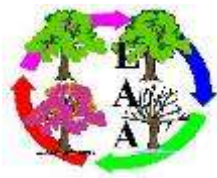
There are plenty of advantages to growing potatoes in containers or grow bags. The crops take up less space and can be re-located if necessary, they are easier to harvest (and seem to have greater yields) and their roots and seed potatoes are not left in the soil to provide unwanted crops in the following season.



you can buy specialised potato barrels and potato bags, but you can grow potatoes in just about anything. Whichever you use, the capacity should be a minimum of 40 litres (enough for 5-6 potato plants) and they should be capable of draining excess water.

The growing medium should be largely a general-purpose growing compost rather than soil, and the plants will require either a specialist potato fertiliser or slow-release mixture such as fish, blood and bone. And the chitted seed potatoes should be planted above a 100-150mm (4-6") layer of compost.

Potatoes are a relatively thirsty but rot in wet soil, so require gentle watering until the plants are established, and more liberally when the foliage is established.



The LAA Shop



It is currently planned to open the LAA shop at Digswell from 09.30 to 12.00 on the following Saturdays: Jun 27th (originally scheduled for 20th June), Jul 18th, Aug 22nd, Sept 19th, Oct 24th.

If any of these dates are rescheduled, they will be updated on the LAA website at - <https://longcroftallotmentassociation.org.uk/events-and-news>

THE place to stock up with compost, garden equipment, fleece, weed suppressant fabric, compost, and other items. All payments are now contactless.

Summer Recipe

Upside-down Fruit Cakes

The following recipe for an upside-down gooseberry cakes (deliciously sweet and tart!) can be adapted for other fruits (such as rhubarb or a mixture of rhubarb and mandarin – see images below) and further embellished by the inclusion of spices such as cinnamon, ginger, etc.)

- Soft brown sugar
- Gooseberries (green or red)
- 2 large eggs
- 100g (4oz.) sugar
- A few drops of vanilla extract
- 100 g (4oz.) butter or margarine
- 100 g (4oz.) self-raising flour

Grease a round 8" cake tin with butter.

Cover the bottom of the tin with a generous quantity of soft brown sugar – a good few millimetres. Cover the sugar with a single layer of gooseberries (topped, tailed, washed and drained).

Make a sponge mixture by mixing the butter, vanilla and sugar, gradually combining the eggs and finally the flour. Bake in a moderate oven (180-200° C) for 35-50 minutes until golden brown and a skewer comes out clean.

Allow to cool, chill, turn out and serve.





Comments and Feedback



With thanks to Lilly and Rena for the photographs of their upside=-down cakes.

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

