



## It's that time of Year

April is a lean month for harvesting anything other than brassicas but an exciting time of year in many other respects. The first seedlings are starting to appear, it's time to plant other seeds to follow, and we can start to find time to visit our plot in the evenings.

Established plants will need feeding, seeds need to be sown, and young seedlings will require potting on.

Give peas a chance! It's a good time install supports for emerging pea plants and frames for climbing and runner beans.

As we move into May and June it's the time to plant seeds directly into the outdoor soil and to collect those early soft fruits. But with it comes that brace of gardeners' enemies: dry spells and the onset of pests.



## LAA Update

### Update from the Committee:

**Annual General Meeting** – The Association's 45<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting was held on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> March in the Jack Lee Hall, Woodside House.

**Changes to the Committee** - Andrew Hepher had become Chairman in the middle of the year and was formally proposed and seconded to continue as Chairman. Andrew has taken the role from Philip Fotheringham who had had been a long-standing Chairman (and previously Treasurer) and, in recognition of this, proposed that Philip be made a Life-member of the Association.

## Jobs

April: Erect pea-sticks and bean supports, prune cherry and plum trees. Keep an eye on pests – slugs/snails, aphids

May: Harden off plants by leaving them outside during the day and under cover at night. Ensure plants do not dry up.

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

## Plant

April: **Outdoors** - second earlies and maincrop potatoes, carrots, beetroot, parsnips, squashes, French & runner beans, sweetcorn. **Indoors** - tomatoes, aubergine and other fruiting veg.

May: Basil, beetroot, Brussels sprouts, cabbages, carrots, courgette, squash, pumpkin, cucumber (under cover), French and runner beans, lettuce, peas, sweetcorn, cauliflower, sprouting broccoli.

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

## Harvest

April: (More) Rhubarb, spinach and chard, spring cabbages, asparagus

May: Broccoli, cauliflower, lettuce, spinach, spring cabbage, asparagus

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



**Changes to the Committee (continued)** - Paul Davis, the Treasurer, had decided to step down from this position and Sam Hayton had agreed to take over the position of Treasurer. Our thanks go to Paul for his work on the Committee as both Treasurer, and for updating our web-site and email address.

Other existing members were re re-elected and Ian Cocksedge has agreed to join the Committee.

**Annual Subscriptions** - In order to balance income and expenditure for 2019/20, the Committee has deemed it necessary to raise the annual subscription for main tenants from £5 to £10. That for joint members and associate members will remain unchanged at £5.

**Health and Safety** – During the past year a Health and Safety policy had been set up for both sites, details of which were now on the website.

**Social Activities** – The barbecues has been a successful annual event and will be repeated in summer 2019. Members were invited to suggest additional social activities and we will keep you posted as these develop.

**Guest Speaker** - James Homer (Officer for Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council with responsibility for allotments) gave a talk explaining the problems for the Council in managing approximately forty five allotment sites in Welwyn/Hatfield.

(full minutes of the AGM have been sent to members and copies are available from the web-site)

**Digswell** – The next Work Parties is scheduled for Saturday 6 April – please help out if you can.

**New Members:** Since the last newsletter was sent out we have been joined by Mr Scott Rayne. **Welcome to the Association and let's hope you have many enjoyable and productive years with us.**



## **Down at the Shed**

The Shed is now open until autumn. Opening hours are 11:00-12:30 on Sundays throughout the summer – ***the*** place for canes, netting, value fertilisers, manures, composts and light gardening equipment.

All goods are top quality and excellent value compared with local garden centres and DIY stores. Many items are still on special offer following the March sale.

The importance of the shop to the Association was raised at the AGM (see above) and we are keen to increase its usage by members at the Broadwater site.





## Crop Planner

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



## Plant Diversity

Growing many different types of plant close together creates several small natural ecosystems which, in turn, creates habitats for a wide range of creatures. This increases the chances of encouraging natural predators and helps to ensure that no single pest population is large enough to create problems.

Growing different plants together – companion planting – brings other benefits. For example, carrot flies are attracted by the smell of young carrot plants, but if strong-scented herbs or garlic/onions are growing amongst the carrots the carrot fly become confused.

A good approach is to plant some flowering plants between crops. Generally, these will attract hoverfly and ladybirds and occasionally bring further advantages – Cabbage White butterflies prefer to lay their eggs on Nasturtiums rather than cabbage plants, thus providing a natural decoy.



Other parts of the allotment can also support wildlife – log piles provide shelter predatory insects and compost heaps are ideal habitats for beetles and centipedes and provide a warm, safe haven for slow worms and hedgehogs.

Further information is available from the Br6thers web-site - <https://sixbrotherspestcontrol.com/garden-pests-natural-guide/>

## What a Squash

Squashes are nutritious, delicious and attractive. They also offer a wide variety to choose from.

Most of us grow our plants from seed – it can be a challenge but it's the cheapest and most rewarding method. The following tips can give your plants a head start and valuable extra days' growth.

Plant seeds during April in approximately 1cm deep in rich compost and allow to germinate in a warm place. Keeping them above 15°C should result in seedlings after 10-14 days which will be ready to harden off towards the end of May. Meanwhile prepare their beds by removing all weeds and large stones and fork in well-rotted manure/compost and a handful of slow release fertiliser – squashes are 'hungry' vegetables.



Plant during warm weather and place them at least 60cm apart (1m for trailing varieties). Water sparingly during the first few weeks as young plants are prone to rot. Gradually increase the amount of water as the plant grow.

Pinch out when the stems reach 60cm (usually around the height of summer) and, if there are more than 5-6 fruit on each plant pick off the excess to encourage growth. As the fruits grow raise them above the ground to prevent damage through mould and pests.



## Keeping Hens

Under the 1950 Allotment Act, the keeping of hens (and rabbits!) is permitted on allotments, so long as they are for the tenants own use and not for business or profit. For the Longcroft Allotment Association the maximum number of hens allowed per plot.

Cockerels are not normally allowed and if the animal is deemed to be a nuisance or health hazard, or if their well-being is not adequately allowed for, they can be removed.

The animals' basic needs must be met by the plot-holder, and cannot be taken lightly. As a guide, you should expect to be able to visit them once per day (to feed and water the hens, and to collect eggs) but, under some circumstances (e.g. extreme weather), they may require two visits per day. They will reward you with up to an egg per day per hen, a ready supply of chicken manure, and help with pests (hens love scratching around for slugs and snails to supplement their diet).



Keeping chickens has grown in popularity over recent years as there are a variety of hen houses and coops available on-line to match available space and your budget.

Further information on keeping hens, including advice on good husbandry, is available from the British Hen Welfare Trust <https://www.bhwt.org.uk/>.

## Spring Recipe

### Spring Greens with Lemon Dressing

Nutritious greens with strong lemon flavours for a healthy (and tasty) side dish.

- 250g (½lb) broccoli
- 450g (1lb) spring greens
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- zest and juice of one lemon
- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- Seasoning (salt/ground black pepper)

Make the dressing by mixing the garlic, lemon juice and zest, olive oil and some seasoning together.

Bring a large pan of water to the boil, then add the broccoli and greens, and cook for about 5 mins until tender. Drain well, then toss through the dressing and serve.





## Health and Safety on the Plot

Working an allotment is a great pleasure that brings us exercise and enjoyment. But it is also hard physical work. Our allotments should be safe places to work and there are a number of simple steps that we can take to ensure safety.

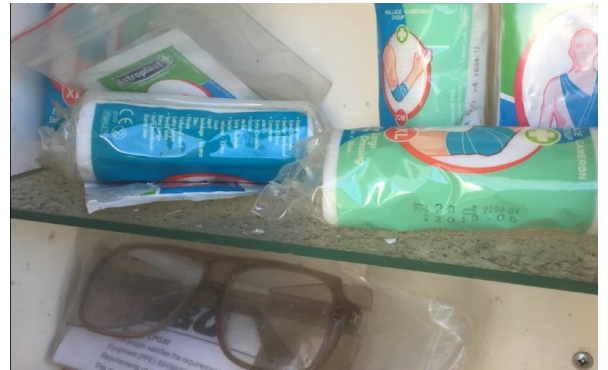
Working our plots is physical! To minimise the risk of damaging muscles or joints, warm up a little before undertaking digging or other strenuous tasks and break up large jobs into small manageable sections.

Please make sure that your gardening tools are in good condition, that you are dressed appropriately for working your plot, and that you understand how to use the equipment provided by the Association. If you use any pesticides or other chemicals then follow instructions with care and ensure that they are not accessible to children.

The Association provides a basic first aid box (in the locked kitchen at Digswell; and in the cabinet attached to the front of the shed at Broadwater). In addition to this, plotholders should consider whether there is a need to supplement this to meet any personal medical needs.

Take regular breaks and drink regularly – staying hydrated helps to maintain concentration.

(for more information about H&S see <https://www.allotment-garden.org/allotment-information/health-safety-allotment-garden/>)



## 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...

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Visit the Longcroft Allotment Association website: [www.longcroftallotmentassociation.org.uk](http://www.longcroftallotmentassociation.org.uk)

