



## It's that time of Year

Having experienced some of the wettest, driest and coldest and coldest months on record, plants seem to have recovered and our plots are looking much greener than usual following some mild and reasonable wet weather. It's now warm, with a chance of long dry spells, as we move into the busiest time of year for harvesting soft fruit, early tree fruit and vegetables – a time of year for watering and picking.

August is the month of plenty and, just as there is a wide range of fruit and vegetables to pick each day.

Picking at this time of year requires almost daily trips to collect vegetables and fruit: peas, beans, carrots, beetroot, sweetcorn, tomatoes, peppers, courgettes, potatoes, onions, berries, and early hard fruit. But it's also the time 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 are away.

After digging up early vegetables and before leeks and winter cabbages, there is a chance to catch crops – grow radishes and other fast growing vegetables

It's still a time of year when we need 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 or bespoke screens.



## 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: clear away any dead foliage and add as much as you can to your compost heap (a good time of year to build a new compost heap).

## Plant

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

September: overwintering onions and green manure

## Harvest

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

September: beans, tomatoes, potatoes, apples and pears, squashes and beetroot.



## Update from the Committee

**Committee Membership** - Annette Bloor had stepped down from the Committee. At its last meeting our Chair registered a vote of thanks to her for her valuable time on the Committee.

**Summer Barbecue** – Please join us at the 2021 Summer BBQ at the Digswell site on Sunday 12th September from 1pm. Burgers, sausages, vege-burgers and hot/soft drinks will be provided but please bring salad, fruit/dessert, cake, wine etc. to share with others, as well as crockery and cutlery for your own use. The cost is £6.00 per adult, £3 for a child, or £20.00 for a family of two adults and up to 4 children. Payments can be made (before Friday 30<sup>th</sup> August) via site reps, committee members or at the Digswell Shop on opening days. We look forward to seeing you there!

**LAA WhatsApp Group** – If you would like to join the Association’s WhatsApp group please ask your site rep to add you to the circulation list.

**Security:** Options for security cameras are being looked into for the Digswell site. If a cost-effective solution can be found it will be implemented and, if successful, could also be implemented at Broadwater.

**Digswell** – There is a problem with the water pump at the site. We are expecting a new one to be installed within the next few weeks.

Future work parties will be scheduled to coincide with shop openings, with the next one taking place on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> August.

**Broadwater** – The site inspection is complete and only a few plots are of concern – those plot-holders will receive notification shortly.

**New Members** – Since the last newsletter was issued we have been joined by James Reeve and Neal Brown. Welcome to the Association and let's hope you have many enjoyable and productive years with us.

## Summer Growing Tips

**Mulch:** Spread a 1- to 2-inch layer organic matter (e.g. compost/manure/grass clippings) around plants. This will reduce evaporation, suppress weeds, and help prevent the soil around plant roots from overheating.

**Watering:** Water plants early in the morning to reduce evaporation and avoid foliar diseases. Concentrate watering on plants which are ripening - especially fruits and legumes.

**Provide shade:** Legumes, brassicas and beets benefit from partial shade during the hottest part of the day. Ideally they should be planted so that they are in semi-shade during the afternoon. If not then they can be protected using a temporary screens/cloth.

**Plant successively:** Re-sow crops such as beans, beets, carrots and salads lettuce at intervals of two weeks or more. Not only does that spread out the harvesting period but it gives plants a greater chance of avoiding periods of extreme weather conditions and exposure to pests.

**Harvest:** Pick crops early or late in the day. Produce will stay crisper, fresher and tastier than fruit or vegetables harvested during the heat of the day.





## 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							



## Watch Your Space

As we move through the years, spaces appear on your plot. For example, I'm about to dig up my garlic bulbs and cut back my broad beans, and my peas won't be far behind. To maximise growing space, and to help prevent opportunistic weeds from doing that for me, I have some filler crops up your sleeve.

Quick growing salad plants leaves such as rocket and radish grow quickly and fit in well with the late summer menus at home. I've been growing some winter squashes under cover (varieties: Crown Prince, Waltham Butternut and Blue Kuri) and these are almost ready for planting out. They will be ready to crop when the coldest weather returns and are perfect for hearty soups or a winter chutney (see December recipes on the LAA website).

Looking further afield, we're into the season when spring cabbages and other brassicas are ready for planting. Some broccoli varieties, if planted now, would be ready for harvesting during the autumn.

## 2021 – A Sluggish Year?

Is it me or are there more slugs around this year? Here are some tips to help keep them at bay.

- Slugs dislike dry ground so, if possible, water your plants early in the morning rather than the evening when they will be most active.
- Do not mulch young plants and protect established seedlings with cloches or tall collars made from old plastic bottles.
- Hoe the ground between your crops – young weeds provide a habitat for slugs and hoeing removes existing slime trails (which may guide other slugs to food sources).
- Dig over the ground in the winter to expose adult slugs and their eggs.
- Old plastic bottles (with the top section cut off and inverted) buried in the soil and partly filled with beer or milk will attract slugs which then crawl into the containers and drown.
- Decoy foods (e.g. comfrey or lettuce leaves) left near young crops attracts slugs that can later be collected by hand. The leaves should be covered to keep them moist.
- Create barriers: sharp sand and broken egg shells are commonly used (but are only effective when dry) as are copper strips which generate a weak electric current to deter slugs in all conditions
- Encourage slug predators, such as frogs, hedgehogs, beetles, centipedes and birds.

For more information about wildlife on allotment (both favourable and unfavourable) see <https://enablelc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/wildlifeonallotments.pdf>.





## Down at the Shed

The LAA shop has had an enormously successful year so far and will open on the following Saturdays between 09.30 and 12.00: August 14th, Sept. 11th, Oct 16th. The shop now stocks reduced-peat compost – see article below to find out more about its benefits.

The numbers allowed in the shop at a time will be controlled and usual distancing rules will apply.

Preferred payment is via a card, ideally iZettle touchless.



## Polite Reminder

### **Lawnmower care**

The mowers are provided to help members keep their plots tidy. Please empty the clippings basket return them in a clean state after use. If you find a mower is not working please report it to a site rep so that it can be repaired as soon as possible. They are one of the main expenditure items for the Committee and keeping them in good condition is in everyone's interest.

## Sweet Summer Recipes

### **Apple Traybake Cake**

A delicious cake which can be made richer by adding cinnamon and raisins or dates to the middle layer. Good on its own cold or hot with custard.

- 500g (1lb) Cooking apples (apples peeled, cored and thinly sliced)
- 350g (10oz.) Self raising flour
- 280g (8oz.) Caster sugar
- 225g (6oz.) Butter (or margarine)
- 4 Medium eggs
- 1 Teaspoon vanilla extract (or seeds from one vanilla pod)
- 2 Teaspoons baking powder
- 2 – 3 Teaspoons demerara sugar (to decorate)



Preheat oven to 180°C/350°F.

Line a large baking tray with buttered/oiled greaseproof paper.

Put the butter/margarine, caster sugar, eggs and vanilla into a bowl and mix. Sieve the flour and baking powder into the bowl and combine with the other ingredients. Add milk if the mixture is too thick and doesn't drop off the spoon easily.

Spread half of the mixture into the lined baking tray and then arrange half of the apples over the mixture.

Put the rest of the cake mixture on top of the apples and then arrange the remaining apples again on top. Sprinkle the apples with demerara sugar.

Bake for 45-50 minutes. The cake will be cooked when the skewer comes out clean.



### Gooseberry Upside-down Cake

A refreshing variation on upside-down cakes – there's a tartness to the caramelised top (bottom?) which is superb with crème fraiche.

Ingredients:

- Soft brown sugar
- Gooseberries (green or red)
- 2 eggs
- 100 g (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 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



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](mailto:email@longcroftallotmentassociation.org.uk).

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

