



It's that time of Year

We've experienced extremes of weather with one of the coldest Aprils on record followed by record levels of rain in 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 earth 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.

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

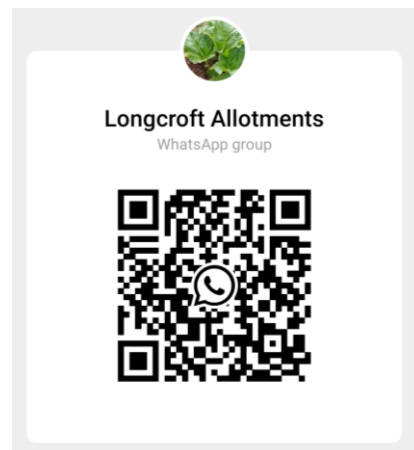
Summer Barbecue – The 2021 Summer BBQ will take place on Sunday 12th September - 1pm, at the Digswell site, Brockwood Lane. Please come along to enjoy the food and drink, meet old friends and make some new ones.

Membership Subscriptions – All members have paid their annual subscriptions with record numbers of ploholders paying on-line. A big thank you to all members for your prompt payment.

The subscription includes membership of the National Allotment Society which brings a range of benefits to all our members – see article below.

LAA WhatsApp Group: The WhatsApp group has been an enormous success with members receiving notifications of woodchip deliveries, sharing plants, and offering or receiving advice on our crops.

If you haven't joined yet you can scan this QR code using the camera icon within WhatsApp. Alternatively you can ask your site rep to add you to the group or use the following link: <https://chat.whatsapp.com/KtnsyXg91deAZygPjuDStT>.



Digswell – Health and safety inspections have been undertaken at the site and found to be generally in good order. Particular progress was observed with regard to those members keeping hens and the response to the recent avian flu outbreak

Broadwater – Plot inspections are getting underway as we move into the growing season.

Members are encouraged to make use of the deliveries of woodchip to both sites over recent weeks.

New Members – Since the last newsletter was issued we have been joined by Peter and Sue Blurton, Hanna Southgate and Philip Camm. Welcome to the Association and let's hope you have many enjoyable and productive years with us.



Summer Berries (or are they?!)

Summer brings the real start of the fruit season: gooseberries and strawberries are shortly followed by raspberries, cherries, currants, plums and gages. Nothing tastes more like summer than summer berries – either fresh with cream, raw or cooked in a dessert or preserved. But what is a berry?

A berry is defined a fleshy fruit containing many seeds. So cherries and plums are not berries. They are 'drupes' – a fleshy fruit containing a single stone/pit. In fact, raspberries, blackberries and strawberries 'aggregated drupes' and not berries – clusters of drupes with each drupe contains a single seed.

So, of the above fruits, gooseberries and currants are the only true berries. And, strange though it may seem, kiwi fruits, aubergine, tomatoes, chilli peppers, cucumbers and bananas are all berries!



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



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: June 12th, July 17th, 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.



Greener Fingers – Reduced Peat Compost

At the LAA shop we have made the decision to move away from the current 100% peat-based Clover compost to a reduced peat formulation which also contains loam. This is slightly more expensive, but the Association's view is that, in terms of its impact on the environment, moving away from peat makes sense. In addition, advice from our stockist, HSL, is that the reduced peat mix is actually a better growing medium.

Peat is the accumulation (over many centuries) of decaying sphagnum moss which has grown in bogs. Peat bogs provide a unique habitat for many rare indigenous species of flora and fauna. Peat, in its natural setting, is also a natural carbon store - when harvested, the exposed peat oxidises releasing carbon dioxide to the atmosphere. Also, because of their water retaining property, peat bogs soaking up excess rainfall and reduce the risk of local flooding.



Non-commercial gardeners account for approximately two thirds of peat used in the UK but the government intends to ban the sale of peat-based compost in garden centres from 2024. Peat-free and reduced-peat composts are becoming increasingly available, using a mixture of sustainable organic materials such as wood fibre, bark, coir, composted garden waste and - less commonly - re-cycled cardboard, straw, sterilised soil, vermiculite, perlite, grit, manure and wool. The ability of these products to retain water differs from that of peat (some can retain more water, others less) and so may require less/more frequent watering.

All composts are supplemented by the addition of fertilisers, so products with reduced-peat content need not affect plant growth. In fact, of all the compost that the Royal Horticultural Society now uses in its gardens, only two per cent now contains peat (see www.rhs.org.uk/peat for more information).



National Allotment Society

All members of the Longcroft Allotment Association are also affiliate members of the National Allotment Society, This brings a range of benefits to our Association:

- Members benefit from Allotmenters' Liability Insurance rs with £5million liability cover for accidental injury or damage to property.
- The NAS can provide access to initial legal advice on a range of issues e.g. tenancy agreements, rent rises, health and safety, data protection, etc.
- The Kings Seed scheme, which offers further discounts for bulk orders from the already discounted catalogue.
- 1 magazine every quarter – Longcroft Allotment Association receives a number of hard copies of the magazine and a link to the digital version of the latest magazine is provided in the email which was sent with this newsletter.
- Advice and support to the Longcroft Allotment Association if either site is under threat (councils who are considering selling allotment land are obliged to seek the opinion of the National Allotment Society)

For more information see <https://www.nsalg.org.uk/join-us/membership-benefits/>.



Allotment Quiz

1. Pentland Javelin and Charlotte are varieties of which vegetable?
a) onion b) potato c) bean
2. Which of the following is also known as Tuscan Black Kale or Lacinato?
a) Cavolo Nero b) Redbor c) Pentland Brig
3. A deficiency in which nutrient results in plants developing yellow leaves?
a) magnesium b) potassium c) nitrogen
4. Which term refers to the collection of specise which includes ladybirds?
a) Coelenterata b) Lumbricina c) Coccinellidae
5. What is the standard unit of measurement for the size of an allotment plot?
a) mole b) pole c) vole
6. How many bacteria are ther in a teaspoon of soil?
a) 1 million – 10 million b) 10 million – 100 million c) 100 million – 1 billion
7. What family does Elephant Garlic belong to?
a) onion b) garlic c) leek



(see answers below)



Summer Recipe

Gooseberry Fool

A traditional refreshing summer dessert that goes well with crisp shortbread. You can substitute the double cream for Greek yoghurt or thick custard (or a mixture of the above).



- 400g (1lb) gooseberries
- 100 (4oz.) white or golden sugar
- 300ml (½ pint) double cream or Greek yoghurt or thick custard
- Sprig of mint or head of elderflower (optional)
- Vanilla seeds from one pod or half a teaspoon of vanilla extract (optional)

Top and tail the goosberries. Heat in a pan with half the sugar until soft and the fruit starts to burst. Allow to cool, and then chill in the fridge.

Beat the cream (or substitute ingredient) with the remaining sugar until thick. Combine with the chilled gooseberry syrup – either totally combined or rippled.

For extra richness add either a head of elderflowers or a sprig of mint to the gooseberries before cooking them and/or add vanilla pods/extract to the cream mixture.

Comments and Feedback



Quiz answers: 1 b), 2 a), 3 c), 4 c), 5 b), 6 c), 7 c)

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.

