



It's that time of Year

It's warm, there are long dry spells, and it's the busiest time of year for harvesting soft fruit, early tree fruit and vegetables – a time of year for watering and picking. There is a wide range of fruit and vegetables to harvest throughout the coming months: peas, beans, carrots, beetroot, sweetcorn, tomatoes, peppers, courgettes, potatoes, onions, berries, and early hard fruit.



After harvesting vegetables there is a chance to plant crops such as leeks and brassicas for winter, to continue sowing carrots (except during the hottest, driest spells), and catch crops – i.e. leaf salads, radishes and other fast-growing vegetables that can grow in the gaps between main crops or the spaces that are created when main crops are harvested.

If you have excess produce there are tips and recipes for preserving fruit and vegetables on the LAA web-site- see link below:

<https://longcroftallotmentassociation.org.uk/and-cooking-them>

Summer is a good time to prepare compost to boost next year's soil health – there are plenty of weeds and unwanted plant growth to dispose of and the warmer weather speeds up the rotting process and there are plenty of weeds to dispose of. Remember to combine green and brown wastes: green waste (leaves, flowers and lawn clippings) is rich in nitrogen whilst brown waste (raw paper and cardboard, wood, ash and egg shells) is rich in carbon. If your compost is slimy then increase the browns. Adding comfrey, stinging nettle leaves or horse manure will accelerate decomposition. The process of decomposition needs oxygen so your compost should be regularly turned to introduce air.

Finally, if you are going on holiday then give your plot a thorough soaking before you go.

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

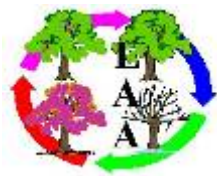
August: carrots (the last of the year), spring cabbage, new strawberry plants

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

Summer Barbecue - Please join us at the 2023 Summer BBQ at the Digswell site on Sunday 10th September from 12:30. 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. Contact any Committee member if you would like to come along to enjoy the food and drink, meet old friends and make some new ones.

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.

Digswell— There will be a work party on Saturday 16 September from 09:30-12:00. Further details to be provided closer to the time.

An email has been sent to Digswell plot-holders concerning the introduction of a natural pond on the site. Positive responses were received from several members. The Committee will now give thought to details such as dimensions and design, and agree how the pond can be progressed.

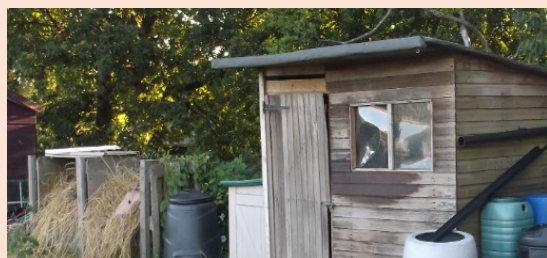
The problems experienced with the pump seems to have been overcome and that at the moment the use of mains pressure to fill the tanks is satisfactory.

Broadwater – The working party of 8 June was a great success and an area close to the car park has been prepared for the two bee-hives that we are planning to host. Many thanks to those who helped out on the day.

The condition of the pond has deteriorated and a working party will be arranged to help restore it. Details to follow.

Dust and other construction waste from the Bio-Park demolition has continued to be a problem which has been reported to the Council. A response has been received stating that a construction management plan (CMP) had been developed for the site to ensure that construction waste materials travel as short a distance as possible and to control dust generation. The Council consider that this plan has not been adhered to and have requested that urgent action be taken by the demolition contractor to prevent these issues from occurring again.

New Members – Since the last newsletter was issued we have been joined by Adam Murfitt (D108A), Mr. Rod Gammon (D172), Miss Nola Pocock (D110), and Ms. Kirsty-Marie Nolson and Mr. Luke Ward (B18). Welcome to the Association and let's hope you have many enjoyable and productive years with us.



Down at the Shed

There are still a few chances to stock up with compost, canes and other bits and bobs - the LAA shop will open on the following Saturdays between 09.30 and 12.00: August 19th, Sep 23rd, and Oct 21st.

Preferred payment is via card, ideally touchless.



Crop Planner

	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
key:							
Broad Bean	harvest	harvest	harvest		sow	sow	
Runner Bean	sow	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest		
Pea	sow	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	sow	sow	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



National Allotments Week (7-13 Aug)

National Allotments Week is a National Allotment Society initiative to publicise the benefits of allotment gardening to individuals, communities and the environment. Allotments enhance local biodiversity, improve the health and well-being of plot-holders, and growing and fresh fruit and vegetables boosts health and nutrition at home.



The initiative has been running for twenty years and this year it will run from 7th-13th August. There's a different theme each year and the focus for 2023 is soil health.

In the UK, we have a rich variety of soil types, land uses and local climate characteristics which provide diverse habitats and agricultural opportunities that benefit us all. Healthy soil supports a range of environmental, economic and societal benefits. These include food production, climate change mitigation and increased biodiversity.

Restoring Overgrown Areas

It's been a good year... for weeds! Here are a few tips on how to deal with them now and to suppress their return.

Cut tall weeds down to the ground, ideally before they've had the chance to seed. Other than bindweed, couch grass and dandelions these can be composted.

Cover the ground with cardboard so that no light can reach the ground. Cover this with a deep layer of mulch which can include any or all of the following: compost (from the shop or from your compost heap), manure, leaf mould, straw, grass cuttings, and coffee grounds. This should be at least 50mm (2") thick but results will be better with a greater thickness a mixture of all of them 15-20cm thick.

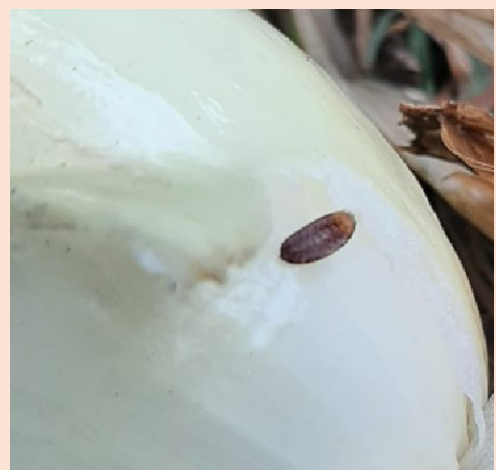
The cardboard barrier will restrict growth from any seeds/roots that remain in the soil. By the spring it will decompose to forming a loose, friable soil which can be easily hand-weeded or hoed.

Allium Leaf Miner

The allium leaf mining fly (*Phytomyza gymnostoma*) has arrived at Broadwater. This pest, also known as the allium leaf miner, was first detected in the UK in 2002 and is now widespread. It feeds on leeks, onion, chives, shallots and garlic.

The larvae feed on the outer layers of onions and initially cause minor damage. Affected plants rot prematurely and suffer from twisted foliage. As the onions dry the pupae can find their way into the ground and infect the next generation of crops.

The cylindrical brown pupae are about 3mm long and can be found between layers or embedded in bulbs. They develop into flies which are most active between March and April and again between September and November.



There are no suitable pesticides so they must be controlled by a combination of natural means, including covering crops with insect-proof mesh when flies are active, removing infected crops, and crop rotation.



Caring for Summer Fruit

Cover your bushes with netting as fruits ripen to prevent birds from taking advantages - raspberries are the least likely to be affected but strawberries, currants and blueberries are at risk if left unprotected.

Replace old strawberry plants – they will be sending out runners during the summer which can be used to create new plants. It's simple to peg down the strongest runner into a pot of compost to create a new plant. Once it the root is established detach the new growth from the original and plant elsewhere. Discard any weak or diseased plants.

After summer-fruiting raspberries have finished producing fruit, cut the canes back to ground level.

Summer prune hard fruit trees (soft fruit trees should be pruned in the early spring to help avoid silver leaf disease). Cut this season's new pear/apple tree growth back by a third to allow light to reach the developi9ng growth.

Summer Recipes

Mary's Blackberry Cheesecake (serves 8-10)

A delicious cheesecake base which is suitable for other toppings such as blackcurrant, strawberry or mixed fruit syrups.

For the base:

- 200g (8 oz.) digestive biscuits
- 75g (3 oz.) butter
- Crushed hazelnuts (a small a handful)

For the cheesecake:

- 300g (12 oz.) double cream
- one pack cream cheese
- Seeds form one vanilla pod (or ½ teaspoon vanilla essence/extract

For the topping

- one tablespoon water
- 50-75g white sugar
- 75-100g (3-4 oz.) blackberries

Melt the butter in a saucepan. Take of the heat and add the digestive biscuits and pound until the mixture has the texture of a dry crumble mix. Add the hazelnuts if you Spread the mixture evenly across the bottom of a 200mm (8") round oven-proof dish.

Combine all the cheesecake ingredients and stir until smooth. Pour over the cheesecake base and bake in a pre-heated oven set at 150°C. Remove from the oven after 45 minutes and allow to cool at room temperature for about an hour and then refrigerate.

Add the sugar, fruit and water to a small saucepan and simmer gently until the blackberries have broken down and the mixture starts to thicken. Allow to cool and refrigerate.

Pour the fruit mixture over the cheesecake when served.





Polite Reminder

Gate Security

To keep our sites secure please do not allow access to anyone you don't recognise and don't share the security code with non-members.

Also, please ensure that the gate is kept locked whenever it cannot be observed, and that it is always locked if you think you are the last plot-holder to leave the site.



Comments and Feedback



With thanks to Val Gibbs for the page one photograph and Rachel Burden for the image and information about the allium leaf miner.

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

