



It's that time of Year

The warmer weather is stimulating the activity of crops, insects and weeds. It's important to water regularly and to continue to hoe and weed. These are the months of plenty!

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.

Onions will be ready from mid-July when they stop growing and the leaves turn yellow – if there are a few days forecast without rain, partially dig them up with a fork and allow to dry out for a few days in-situ before storing. There should be an abundance of crops so think about how to store any surplus: pickling, drying, freezing and preserving.

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

July: Feed tomatoes and other fruiting vegetables. Thin out hard fruit if there are exceptional numbers of budding fruits. Regularly turn compost to accelerate its breakdown.

August: Dry onions/garlic, mulch the soil to retain moisture, pinch out growing beans (French and runners), prune summer fruiting raspberries.

Plant

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

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

Harvest

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

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



LAA Update

Update from the Committee:

Summer Barbecue - The 2019 Summer BBQ will take place on Sunday 8th September - 1pm, at the Digswell site, Brockswood Lane. Come along meet old friends and make some new ones.

Broadwater – The loose posts on the boundary fence were repaired towards the end of March. We've also had a second delivery of wood chip to the site.

Digswell – The next Work Parties is scheduled for Saturday 29 June – please help out if you can. We'd like to prepare the site for the Anglia in Bloom visit.



Anglia in Bloom – WHBC if the Association would be prepared to include our Digswell site as part of the Council's entry for Anglia in Bloom, a challenge we have willingly accepted!

Anglia in Bloom is part of the RHS (Royal Horticultural Society's) Britain in Bloom competition - a campaign/competition to encourage the improvement of our surroundings through imaginative planting and landscaping.

This will be the second year that WHBC has entered the competition, and the first time it will have included an allotment site. Judging will take place on July 9th or 10th, so we have an opportunity to present the site at its best during the community work party planned for Saturday June 29th (9.30-12.30).

New Members: Since the last newsletter was sent out we have been joined by Mrs India Poile, Mrs Leeann Doherty, Mr Jon Tiley, Mrs Elene Reinart, Mrs Kate Sim and Mr Sam Miller. Welcome to the Association and let's hope you have many enjoyable and productive years with us.



Polite Reminder

Lawnmower care

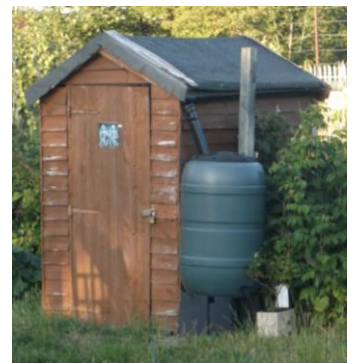
The mowers are provided to help members keep their plots tidy. Please adjust the cutting height as appropriate before use, and empty the clippings basket return them in a clean state after use. They are one of the main expenditure items for the Committee and keeping them in good condition is in everyone's interest.

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

		sow				
		plant				
		harvest				
	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Broad Bean	harvest	harvest		sow	sow	
Runner Bean	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest		
Pea	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest		
Potatoes	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest		
Leek		harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest
Onion / Shallot	harvest	harvest	harvest			
Garlic	harvest	harvest		plant	plant	plant
Beetroot	sow	harvest	harvest	harvest		
Carrot	sow	harvest	harvest	harvest		
Swede / Turnip			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	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest	
Cabbage	sow	sow	sow		harvest	harvest
Kale				harvest	harvest	harvest
Black/Redcurrants	harvest	harvest		plant	plant	plant
Raspberries	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest	plant	plant
Strawberries	harvest	harvest		plant		
Fruit Trees		harvest	harvest	harvest	plant	plant



Managing the plot as you get older

The physical tasks around the allotment inevitably become more challenging as we get older. But there are things that we can do to help reduce the effort needed to maintain our plots.

Grow fewer varieties – cutting back on the number of types of crop you grow will reduce the effort required to prepare seedlings. Also, once crops are established, they will require watering, tending, etc. at the same time.

Plant low maintenance crops – Perennial crops (such as fruit trees, fruit bushes, and some herb varieties) will reduce the effort required to prepare seed beds each year. If you can't get all of your planned crops planted in time, plant green manures to inhibit the spread of weeds and simplify the preparation of seed beds for the following season.

Grow in containers and raised beds – whilst raised beds take effort to construct, they make it easier to plant, water and harvest crops.

Get help from others - Family members, if available, are ideal but it may be possible to involve local schools, scout groups and other volunteers.

Reduce the (effective) size of your plot –Covering part of your plot or growing through fabric will reduce the amount of time required for weeding.



For more information see <https://www.allotment-garden.org/allotment-information/allotment-growing-as-you-get-older/> and <https://www.allaboutallotments.co.uk/gardening-tips-for-senior-citizens>.

Leaf Salad Crops

Unlike most crops, which are pollinated by insects or birds, sweetcorn is pollinated by the wind. For this reason, sweetcorn should not be planted in lines, but in blocks so that there is a chance of pollination regardless of wind direction.

Pollen is produced by the male "tassels" at the top of each plant. Below these are the female "silks" which catch fallen / wind-blown pollen.

Sweetcorn can be sown indoors from April but should not be planted out until there is no risk of frost - usually around early June. They should be planted 45-60cm (12 - 18") apart. As they grow during the height of summer they require regular watering, especially when the cobs are fattening up.

They are ready to harvest when the tassels turn brown when, if you peel back the husk the kernels produce a milky juice when squeezed. They lose sweetness from the moment they are picked so try and cook them as quickly as possible after harvesting,



Encourage Pollinators

Beetles, flies, bees, wasps all help to pollenate our crops, Some of these also help to combat pests and provide other valuable allotment services.

Whilst pollination is important, more pollination is more important as when too few flowers are pollinated the resulting fruit can be bitter or underdeveloped – this is true of strawberries, apples, tomatoes and other crops.

Flowers are what pollinators seek and we can help by: raising the blades on mowers, growing a variety of plants which flower over a long season. But pollinators need more than just flowers and we can do our bit to encourage them by ensuring they have access to water (e.g. a bowl or saucer filled with water and a few pebbles to reduce the risk of insects drowning) and shelter (log piles or insect hotels).



Avoiding pesticides (which can also kill beneficial predatory insects) will also help pollinators to thrive.

Summer Recipes

Broad Bean and Bacon Salad

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

- Butter or oil for frying
- 100g sreaky bacon, cut into small strips
- 200-300g (8-12 oz.) broad beans
- Seasoning (salt/ground black pepper)
- Olive oil/lemon dressing (or a dressing of your choice)
- Seasoning: salt/pepper/grated parmesan cheese
- Lemon juice (optional)

Fry the bacon in oil until crispy (5-10 minutes).

Boil the beans in salted water for about five minutes. The broad beans can be used in their skins if they are young, but the skins should be taken off after boiling if the beans are large/old.

Mix the beans with the dressing. Season with salt and pepper (I like a lot of coarsely ground pepper), sprinkle over the bacon and parmesan cheese and squeeze lemon juice over the salad (allow about a quarter of a lemon per person).

Serve while still (just) warm.





Summer Pudding

Use blackcurrants, redcurrants, strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries and an assortment of other summer fruits to make this summer favourite. Serve with fresh cream or crème fraiche.

- Medium slices of white bread (crust removed) – enough to line a 1 litre bowl and make a lid.
- 750g (1½lb) of currants and other soft fruits (raspberries, strawberries, gooseberries, blueberries, blackberries)
- 100g (4oz) white sugar



Line the base and sides of a 1 litre bowl with cling film.

Gently simmer the fruit with the sugar –until the sugar has completely dissolved and then a few further minutes so juice starts to run from the fruit mixture.

Reserve 1-2 table spoons of the juice. Poor the fruit and juice mixture into the lined bowl and make a lid out of the bread slices so that the pudding fills the bowl to just below its top. Cover with cling film, place a saucer on the top and put a weight on top so that the lid is slowly and gently squashed into the fruit mixture. Place in the fridge and leave overnight.

Turn the pudding out and pour the remaining juice over the top.

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.

Visit the Longcroft Allotment Association website: www.longcroftallotmentassociation.org.uk

