

It's that time of Year

Well, it certainly doesn't feel like the start of summer! We've had one of the wettest, coldest first half of a year and seeds are taking much longer than usual to germinate. And, to make things even more challenging there seem to be endless slugs out there to fight back anything that does start to grow.

Hopefully that's about to change and our crops will start to flourish. But that can be double-edged as conditions that suit our crops will also be perfect for any weeds. Thankfully the longer days provide more opportunity to work on our plots and keep weeds at bay. And maybe also to harvest the first fruit and vegetables of the year!



While we await a change in the weather that will require us to water our crops, we have an opportunity to consider ways in which we can reduce the quantity of water we use – e.g. through crop selection and mulches – and seek to recover as much rainwater as possible.

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 can be a good time to share. If you have excess seedlings or spare produce, then consider exchanging those with fellow plot-holders – particularly any new members who may not have had an opportunity to fully cultivate their plots.

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

Annual General Meeting – The association's 48th AGM was held on Wednesday, 24th April, at the Jack Lee Hall, Woodside House, WGC.

It has been another strong year for the Association, with plots being let almost immediately and ensuring full occupancy at both sites, with eleven new tenants at Digswell and four at Broadwater. The waiting time for new members to be allocated plots is approximately one year after application. Health and safety inspection found no major concerns with both sites in good condition.

Long-term investments include metal covers for the water troughs, the replacement of a bench at Digswell (which was co-funded through a generous member donation, tree clearance at Broadwater, a wildlife pond at Digswell, centralised rainwater collection at Digswell, and the replacement of garden furniture for the annual barbecue. Also, the mower shed at Digswell was replaced after being damaged during the storms and an additional mower.

Louise Humphries updated those present on developments at WHBC and spoke about rainwater harvesting and water resilience. This was well received and gave the committee the opportunity to thank Louise for the Borough's responsiveness in dealing with maintenance issues at both Association sites: repair to the boundary fence at Digswell following storms, repairs to the gate and fences at Broadwater, amongst others.

The shop enjoyed a record turnover this year and Andrew expressed thanks to Barbara Wilton for running seed scheme on behalf of the Association.

The Association held its annual barbecue, which was again a success. Andrew thanked Sue and Peter and Dave for their help in organising and providing catering on the day.

A number of community events have taken place over the year, including a cubs' visit to the Digswell site and a school visit at Broadwater. These have prompted the Association to apply for status as an Asset of Community Value (ACV) and both sites were designated ACVs by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council in March. These are the first allotment sites in the east of England to be awarded ACV status which provide additional protection against site development.

Finally, Andrew then expressed his thanks to Christine Smith (who resigned from the committee this year) for her work over the years as both Secretary and Membership Secretary.

The meeting ended with a raffle and a chance to chat with fellow gardeners.

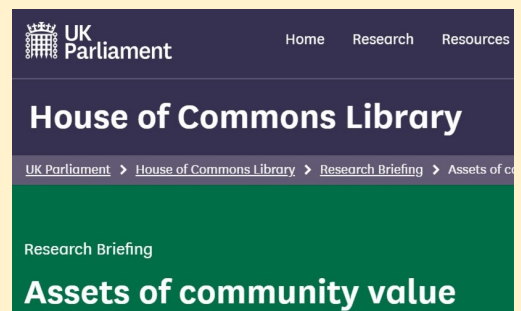
The minutes of the AGM are available from the members' area of the web-site:

<https://longcroftallotmentassociation.org.uk/m/login?r=%2Fagm>

Summer Barbecue – The 2024 Summer BBQ will take place On Sunday 8th September. Please make try and come along to enjoy the food and drink and meet fellow plot-holders. 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

Work Parties - The next work parties will take place from 09:30-12:00 on Saturday 29 June at both our Digswell and Broadwater sites.

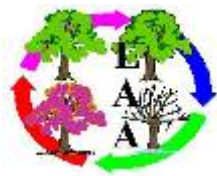
New Members – Since the last newsletter was issued we have been joined by Laura and Adam Cox (D108A). Welcome to the Association and let's hope you have many enjoyable and productive years with us.





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							



The LAA Shop

The LAA shop at Digswell will open once a month from 09.30 to 12.00 on the following Saturdays:

Jun 22nd, Jul 20th, Aug 24th, Sep 21st, Oct 26th

Members should have received a price list by email - if you haven't received one, or have suggestions regarding what else the shop might also stock, please let us know.

Lawnmower Etiquette

1. ONLY use the mowers for mowing paths and communal grass areas, NOT for rough or cultivated ground where there are likely to be stones lurking
2. DO NOT attempt to change the cut height - the LAA mowers are all restricted to a single (safe-ish) cut height
3. DO NOT use the mower when the fuel in the tank is low. This isn't good for the engine, as there can be bits of grass etc in the tank that can gum up the works. If the tank is low, please take a minute to fill it up.
4. If you find there is a problem with a mower, e.g. difficulty starting, please report it to a Committee member or send an email. That way we can get it sorted and back in service asap. (N.B. we will shortly number each of the mowers to help identification). Similarly, if we are running low on petrol.
5. When returning the mower, please ensure that you have emptied the grass-box



Slow Worms at Broadwater

This photograph was taken at our Broadwater when a wheel barrow was lifted on a warm April day.

Although they look like snakes, slow worms are a type of lizard that has lost its legs as it has evolved. They are beneficial to gardeners as they feed on slugs and other pests.

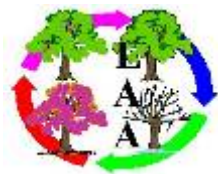
Slow worms are reptiles but, uniquely, their eggs hatch in the female's body and the youngsters emerge as miniature versions of the adults.

All reptiles in the UK have protected status, requiring any planning application must consider how any development might cause harm or disturbance to the species.

For more information about slow worms visit the Wildlife Trusts website:

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/wildlife-explorer/reptiles/slow-worm>





Water Resilience – Save More, Use Less

Water conservation is encouraged by the Association and this was a focus at the AGM. Here a few of the key points from the meeting:

The Kings catalogue now identifies crops/varieties which can be grown with less water.

In the long-term, less frequent intense watering is more efficient than more frequent light watering.

Green manures inhibit weed growth and, when dug into the soil, increase the water retention properties of soil. The use of mulches - such as grass cuttings and woodchip – also suppresses weeds and reduce water loss (and woodchip does not reduce soil nutrient levels unless it has been dug in) and grass cuttings.

The National Allotment Society has further advice about water use on allotments and sustainable water collection – see:

<https://www.nsalg.org.uk/growing-advice/gardening-advice/water-use-on-allotments/>



Summer Recipe

Fruit and Date Slice

This is a good way to use any excess fruit and makes enough for a homely dessert served warmed with custard/cream and the cold leftovers are a perfect teatime snack or lunchbox supplement. The following will make approximately 12 servings.

- 300g (12oz.) dried dates
- 100-200g (4-8 oz.) seasonal fruit – e.g. rhubarb, plums, apples
- One lemon - juice plus grated rind
- 6 tablespoons of water
- 200g (8oz.) plain flour
- 100g (4oz.) porridge oats
- 75g (3oz.) brown sugar
- 150g (5oz.) melted butter

Gently cook the fruit with and dates in the water, lemon juice and zest until the mixture is soft, then put aside.

Melt the butter, add the remaining ingredients, reserving a large table spoon of the flour and stir thoroughly. Spread half the mixture evenly across a greased cake tin and press gently (the cake tin should have an area equivalent to a 250mm (10") diameter round tin).

Spread the date mixture evenly across this mixture and loosely top with the other half of the mixture.

Add the remaining flour to the mixture and stir so that the mixture resembles a loose crumble mixture.

Bake at 200°C for 20-30 minutes until the topping is golden brown. Allow to cool before serving.





Comments and Feedback



With thanks to Rachel for the slug picture, Sam for the image of slow worms at Broadwater, and Matthew for the picture of Hugo's rainwater collections set-up.

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.

