



Bath & North East Somerset ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION

Independent association supporting allotment tenants
www.banes-allotments.org.uk

Welcome To Our Spring Newsletter 2020

COVID 19

In light of the recent measures announced by the government I wanted to reassure you all that you are still permitted to visit your plot as long as you stick to the current government guidelines on hygiene and social distancing. You should take the following precautionary measures:

- Keep hand sanitiser in your shed and wash your hands regularly
- Use hand sanitiser before opening and closing any gate locks
- DO NOT gather together for a chat even if you are 2 meters apart
- Observe "Social Distancing" with each other 2-3 meters
- If you take your children to the plot, ensure that they stay within its confines and do not run around on communal paths and spaces.
- Do not share tools
- Minimize the contact with each other for example no handshakes
- Do not wash your hands in water troughs
- Any plot-holder who is **self isolating** because a household member is ill with corona-virus should not be visiting the site.
- Please keep dogs on leads.



Learn how to make paper plant pots by visiting

<https://www.gardenersworld.com/how-to/diy/how-to-make-paper-pots/>



Jobs To Be Getting Underway With Now



Spring is on its way and this is the time we all get busy with our plots and gardens.

Some of the jobs to do in the following include:

March

- Plant first early potatoes as soon as frosts have passed or plant and protect
- Sow broad beans, perhaps under cloches if you expect continuing cold spells
- Sow onions and leeks if not done already
- Sow spinach and carrots under cloches
- Sow hardy annual and sweet peas (in pots with protection from frost)

April

- Break down any large lumps in the soil and get beds ready for sowing/planting out
- Prepare trenches for beans and celery
- Start succession sowing of lettuce, radishes and spring onions
- Plant second early potatoes towards the end of the month and draw up soil around any first early potatoes that are showing above ground
- Pot up and start dahlias if you haven't already done so
- Keep an eye out for pests

May

- This is the busiest time of year when most seeds can be sown and young plants can be put out but this is also the time when the weeds get going so you may need to start hoeing. We all know how much slugs and snails love tender new plants and we would love to hear your suggestions for minimising the damage!
- Mulch strawberry beds with straw and put some well-rotted manure or compost around fruit trees to lock moisture in.
 - Keep plants well-watered.



Taking On A New Allotment by David Pole



If you've waited six months to take on your new plot, you'll have had plenty of time to plan and to dream - and that's great. Planning and dreaming are absolutely essential to allotmenting. But then the grim moment of truth comes along as you hunt along the footpaths and yomp through the Rosebay Willowherb to find that your new corner of paradise has become a bit overgrown with Cocksfoot, Couch Grass and Bindweed, not to mention twenty other odd looking weeds whose names you don't know. Welcome to the paradoxical world of allotmenting.

There are lots of people who will suggest dosing it with Glyphosate and there are hopefully many more who, on principle, wouldn't dream of spraying. I'm opposed to the stuff too, it's carcinogenic, persistent way beyond the manufacturer's claims - in fact it's horrible whichever way you look at it but the best reason of all for not using it is that it doesn't work. The weeds that will break your heart seem to enjoy a dose of glyphosate. It kills all their feeble competitors and gives them a monopoly of sunlight.

Breaking an untended allotment takes time and effort. You'll have been saving cardboard sheets as if they're going out of fashion because you'll have read that cardboard kills weeds. Well - it certainly discourages them, but again it doesn't kill them.

The worst offenders, Couch and Bindweed, will survive a year under cardboard. They need digging out and burning or taking to the tip. So my number one tip for new allotmenters is to borrow a strimmer and take the tops off and then buy the best spade you can afford

Lash out on a Cornish style pointed end spade and dig the plot taking out every speck of root that you find and *then* cover it with cardboard, a thick layer of manure and then some builders grade polythene or weed control mat weighted down with stones. Whatever you do, don't be tempted by carpets. Unless they're pure wool straight out of a stately home, they'll just leach horrible chemicals and leave a mess.

Then talk to your allotment neighbours about what works best, and go home and plan what to grow. Measure your plot and do some drawings and while you wait for the ground to improve you can build compost bins, a shed, decide how to store water and make the paths and beds. You won't be sitting idle I promise.

It takes about three years before a plot is ready for you to give up digging, but when you do, remember to keep the ground covered with crops, mulch, compost or green manure to discourage weeds. You'll still always need to hand weed or hoe but the battle is all but won.

And good luck. You'll love it.



A Message of thanks to all those who have welcomed us to Plot 100 at Lower Common East.

My brother, Terry Quinnell, had a plot on this site for some 30 years, giving up only a week or so before he passed away in the spring of 2019. He loved the site, his plot, and the fact he could walk to it from his home. Most of all he loved the people! They were his friends and he enjoyed the banter with all the 'old scroats' as he called them. Might not sound like it but that is very much a term of endearment coming from him.

His end came very quickly and about a week before he died he was due to meet us at the allotment. He didn't make it so we visited him at home. It was clear he hadn't felt well enough to go alone and so I offered to give him a lift there and back. He was adamant I leave him at the gate and said he'd be fine to get home again. I was reluctant to do this so insisted he 'phoned me to let me know he was home. He told me that someone had walked him to his plot, where no doubt he held court, and someone else had given him a lift home. Says it all really!

Many of the plot owners have made it known to me and other members of my family how much they enjoyed knowing Terry and miss having him around. The chats, the tea and the advice, wanted or otherwise, priceless!

It was his lifeline, and we, as a family, will always be grateful to all the lovely allotmenters who came into contact with him and gave him so much pleasure.

Thank you!

Jenny Smith (nee Quinnell) and Jeff Quinnell

NEWS FROM THE ALLOTMENT SITES

MENDIP GARDENS

Mendip Gardens there is nothing to report except that all plots are occupied and there is very little activity going on however being higher up here in Odd Down we are probably slower off the starting blocks than elsewhere in Bath!

CANAL GARDENS

All the plots at Canal Gardens have now been let. It has been a calm sunny oasis over the last few weeks. Tenants are beginning to dig over their plots ready for the early potatoes and broad beans. There are lots of big clumps of Rhubarb and the gooseberry and currant bushes are beginning to leaf. I hope to set up a couple of pallets for a "seed and plant" swop in the next few weeks."

LGW

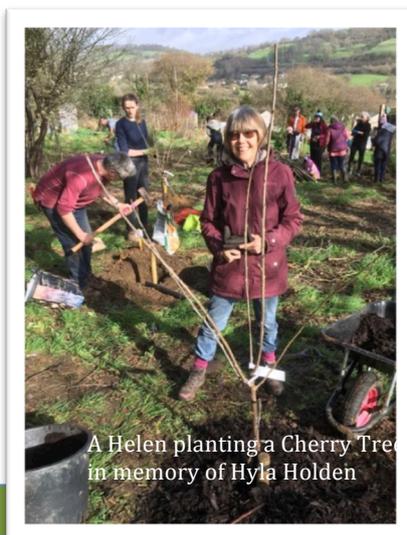
Great to see people use their exercise time to work on the allotment at LGW. Everyone is being careful to keep a good distance and be respectful to each other. Working on your allotment

LARKHALL ALLOTMENTS

Earlier this year in Feb and March we held two workdays where over 30 volunteers turned up to help prepare and plant 22 fruit trees and bushes into the new community Orchard. Carol Stone from Alice Park Community gardens helped to select and buys the trees.



The costs for setting up the orchard were part funded from The BANES Empowerment Fund £300 and also from a £205 donation from from Transition Larkhall. This was collected at a memorial service for The founder Hyla Holden who passed away in



A Helen planting a Cherry Tree in memory of Hyla Holden



FUNDING FOR SMALL PROJECTS

Did you know that there are small amounts of funding available for community based projects within your site.

Please see:
<http://banes-allotments.org.uk/about/funding-for-small-projects/>

News from the sites continued.....

FAIRFIELD VALLEY UPDATE

In the beginning..... September 2019



2019 saw Fairfield Valley transformed into 21 allotment plots. Plot holders, all novices, dug and planted and hoped for the best. Some used no-dig methods with equal success and very different plot designs emerged. We were delighted when plants grew and thrived. Experimental companion planting and patches of wild flowers added colour and the sunflowers were magnificent.

New friendships are developing and there is a real sense of community, which has been strengthened by the formation of a WhatsApp group, for the sharing of information, advice and photos.

2020 sees the remaining plots under cultivation. On established plots, more netted structures are appearing to give added bird, deer and badger protection and crop rotation is the new challenge.

In January the council visited the site and agreed to create a new footpath to supplement the steep tarmacked road and make site access easier and safer, the work was scheduled for April but may now be on hold. Permission has also been given to have a composting toilet on site. With its sunny aspect, peaceful location, friendly allotmenters, open views over Solsbury Hill and birdsong all day long, Fairfield Valley is a very happy place to be.



Carol avec chat noir-
(Aka Goblin)



John's Monet Sunflowers
a feast for the birds



Louise
Site Link Person

Spent hops and Bath Allotment Association a win, win venture for all

Ronald Heath from the Bristol Allotment Association offers a wonderful service of delivering 10 x 40L trugs full of hops to your plot for just £10. He collects these from Bath Ales who are delighted that the hops can be used. After deducting his petrol costs Ronald sends the profit to Dorothy House. He has been very pleased by the response from Bath Allotment holders who have frequently ordered hops. So far Ronald has been able to donate £50 to Dorothy House and there is a steady donation stream to come.



At the Trading Hut Charlie and I have tried to promote this excellent service and consequently we were invited by Ronald to enjoy an early morning pint at Bath Ales, with Ronald Heath centre.

Despite the free beer it really was a little too early to contemplate drinking it.

The Tomato

Tomatoes originated in South and Central America and it is thought that the Aztec word 'tomatl' gave rise to the Spanish word 'tomate' from which the English word tomato is derived. The Spanish brought the plants to Europe and they arrived in Britain in the 16th century. At first their culinary potential was not recognised and it wasn't until the second half of the 18th century that they become a common food in Britain

In recent years there has been a significant rise in interest in growing tomatoes on allotments and home, in part because of a growing awareness that flavour and freshness that can sometimes be lost in commercial cultivation. Heritage, non-red and striped tomatoes have also become popular not just for the taste but also for their colourful appearance. There is now a plethora of varieties available.

MoneyMaker- medium sized with good flavour

Sungold- one of the sweetest varieties of cherry

Gardeners Delight – A large cherry with a tangy flavour

Shirley – An early maturing salad variety

Galina- A supersweet early yellow cherry

Marmande- beefsteak

Our members top tips for growing tomatoes are:

Sowing from seed: Best done under cover in seed trays from late January to late March but given that we may not be able to get our hands on seedlings, it isn't too late to give it a go.

Planting: Transfer to pots when the first true leaves appear – that is to say the leaves that come after the initial pair of 'seed leaves'. Tomatoes prefer a sunny, sheltered spot and can usually be hardened off in the first half of June. Plant out when about 8"/20 cm

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Feeding: Water regularly and feed fortnightly with liquid tomato feed

Care: Companion plant with garlic or nasturtiums to repel aphids with their smell. Pinch out side shoots regularly.

Harvesting: Depending on the variety harvest July-mid October.

If you have some of your own tips on growing tomatoes, please let us know.

Combe Down Allotments – Spring Newsletter Article

The Combe Down Allotments Users' Group (CDA UG) is now nearly a year old with its first recorded meeting being held on 13 May 2019. With the support and expertise of B&NES Allotments Association our aim is to discuss issues unique to Combe Down allotments and find solutions that we hope will be positive for all Combe Down allotment holders.

There have been allotment sites in Combe Down since 1852 when they were first established by Revd. Newnham 'for the benefit of labourers on Combe Down'. The current allotments at the far end of Church Road were established by Monkton Combe Parish Council in the late 1800s and are amongst the oldest in continual use in the Bath area.

However the land on which these allotments are situated has always been privately owned and leased for use as allotments. Some 50 years ago, Combe Down was transferred from Monkton Combe Parish into the remit of Bath City Council, now B&NES. The Council's understanding is that the Combe Down allotments can't be assigned as statutory allotments because of their private ownership status. In addition, there is a long-standing mineral extraction designation affecting part of the site.

After 130 years, the Combe Down allotments are now at risk of loss to the local community. A new lease, negotiated between the owner and B&NES in 2019, is for a period of five years only, expiring 2024, but with a three-month termination clause that can be invoked at any time. This lease was negotiated on the understanding that an Allotment Users' Group would be created to help address safeguarding issues raised with the landowner by the adjacent private school. The school has concerns about the proximity of an ancient public footpath which runs alongside the allotments from Church Road to Mount Pleasant. This path is believed to be part of an historic route, which can still be

Combe Down Allotments – Spring Newsletter Article

traced, between Bath Abbey and the ancient Carthusian priory at Hinton Charterhouse. The Users' Group agreed to work with the school, the allotment holders and the Council to try and find solutions to the school's concerns. The school's solution is to propose moving the public footpath so that it falls within the allotment perimeter and on to the existing allotment access track.

These complex discussions are ongoing, but the UG also enables CD allotment holders to discuss concerns about their allotments as well as hopes and ideas for the future. We are even dreaming of improving the site for wheelchair access and perhaps for wider community use if we can develop part of the site as a community garden and orchard.

Difficulties between the school and the allotment holders are nothing new. In 1907 the Bath Chronicle reported the conclusion of a conflict that developed during the building of the new Monkton Combe Junior School. For two years, stone and building materials had been hauled out of Hancock's Upper Lawn Quarry and dragged straight across the allotments to the school's building site. Much damage was done to precious crops by carts, men and horses. Village allotment holders eventually had enough and complained vigorously to their landlord, Monkton Combe parish council. Arbitrators were appointed and the school offered to settle the claims 'without prejudice', but stated brusquely that if the offers were not accepted 'they would be withdrawn and left in the hands of a land-surveyor who would most probably allow less'. The independence of the arbitrators, Powell & Powell, is unclear - the school's Bursar at the time was a Mr Powell!

There's nothing new under the sun!



Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette 28 March 1907

The aims of the group are: -

- To secure the long-term future of the Combe Down Allotments site
- To be a forum for issues and liaison with the Council
- To 'engage' with the school as required.
- To bring the wider community together

We are all hoping that 2020 will a very productive year, both on and off the allotments!