

Countesthorpe Gardens & Allotments Society

Newsletter: Spring Edition

Welcome

Welcome to the resurrection of the society newsletter. This publication will be provided three times a year, Spring, Summer and Autumn. It is hoped to give you some information into what is going on in the society with regards to allotment work and up and coming events whether social or otherwise. This is your society, so please talk to any of the committee members about what you would like to see happening and how best to move the society forward.

Water usage

As was stated by the previous committee, the water situation wasn't as bad as first thought, which means that the water will continue to be available as before.

A reminder that direct use of hose pipes to water the plot is not allowed. Hose pipes can be used, but only for the topping up of water butts.

Winter access

For those of us with plots down the grass track side, this winter has been a boggy affair. Therefore, it was unbelievable that some still tried to get vehicles down there, and in one case failed to get out without assistance. Even though some vehicles have the capability there is a degree of common sense that needs to prevail here in these circumstances. It isn't a case of whether vehicles have capability or not, it is the damage done to the land that is in question.

A rope barrier had to be put in place to physically show plot holders that access wasn't permitted. Please can we all in future think about consequences to the allotment of our actions.

Allotment work

So far on the allotment some work has been carried out. As you may have noticed the 'Private Land' sign has been moved to the side of the gate from inside. There are two notice boards, one in the usual place

Your Committee Members

Chairman—Chris Davidson

Treasurer—Maggie Mason

Seeds Officer—Fiona Richmond

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where the swap trolley is, and the other at the community area. The notice boards have been refurbished by Gills husband, Tony, as well as providing a new allotment sign in green and gold just inside the gate.



There is also a plot holders plan for those interested in knowing what your plot number is or just interested in what the allotment numbering system is. Good luck with understanding that!!

A number of covers have been acquired, again from Tony, to help with keeping weeds down on those plots yet to be rented.



This was a decision taken to be more proactive and give a little help to potential plot holders. The last thing anyone wants to see on a plot is a jungle before they've even

started.

Janet Walker has kindly pruned the orchard trees, and Chris Davidson continues to look after the allotment bees.



Sale items

Should anyone have anything they wish to sell, whether tools, machinery, skills or time etc, please contact the Gill, the allotments officer, who will advertise it on the notice boards as well as putting a notice in the newsletter and possibly on the website. If you haven't looked at the website recently, or didn't even know we had one, there is a link at the bottom right hand corner for you to follow.

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Attention

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Equipment for rent

The society is hoping to purchase a rotavator for your use. It will be a 4hp, four stroke machine and can be rented for a fee of £10 for half a day. It will be used on a self fuelling basis. That is, you provide the fuel, and the rental fee will go towards the regular maintenance.

If you are unsure as to how long it takes to rotovate a plot, when I have used a rotovator on my plot, which is only half a plot, it only usually takes a couple of hours to turn the ground over once, from bare undug soil, scatter some chicken pellets and rotavate those in.

There are also a couple of power generators available for those who do not have petrol equipment and wish to bring their electrical strimmers, hedge trimmers, lawn mowers etc. Again these can be rented for £10 per half day.

We endeavour to keep an eye out for any useful equipment that we feel would benefit the society and help those who look at their plot each autumn and think 'I've got to dig this all again.'



Environmental

One thing that has come to light at the allotment is the degradation of plastic over time. We all recycle compost bags to collect and take away rubbish from our plots. But over a period of time these bags, when left for long periods start to degrade and disintegrate. This also goes for any other form of plastic such as plant pot. The terracotta coloured ones are able to be recycled, but the black ones are accepted by Blaby District Council for recycling.

'Plastic pots, tubs, trays, and punnets (any colour except black)'

Could we all be a little more mindful about the impact these bags, pots and other plastic items are having on the environment.

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Allotment Tips & Techniques

If you have any tips and time savers that you employ on your plot either, for growing any particular veg or plants or ways and techniques for managing your plot why not share this information. It doesn't matter what it is, whether early digging and covering, to using toilet rolls to start carrots and parsnips, or therapeutically painting a few perennial weed leaves with neat Roundup (other weed killers are available) these tip and techniques would be valuable to someone.

Tips & techniques

1. As mentioned above one tip on how to grow carrots if you don't want to sprinkle the seeds in a line then thin out later is to use toilet roll tubes. Just cut them in half, width ways, and fill each half with compost. This needs to be pushed in reasonably firmly. Then add one or two seeds to each little 'pot'. This can also be done if growing parsnips as well.
2. When deciding what veg to grow it is quite easy, as probably most of us have done at some point, is to plant a whole row of things such as lettuce, beetroot etc, only find that you have a glut at harvest time. Growing small batches regularly over a period of time is a better plan. Sow 4-5 seeds and then a week or two later sow another 4-5 seeds, repeating for as long as you want.
3. When planning a layout for you plot you should try and create at least three separate areas to allow for crop rotation.

This is essential for maintaining healthy veg. Growing the same veg in the same place will take all the nutrients from the soil that those particular veg require. Also pests and disease's will become use to that veg being grown there, giving you all sorts of problems.

As a general rule of thumb this layout would work:

- **Bed 1** should be treated with lime and used to grow brassicas such as cabbage, sprouts, cauliflowers and broccoli.
- **Bed 2** should be treated with a general fertiliser and used for root crops such as potatoes, carrots, turnips, beetroot and swede.
- **Bed 3** should be treated with manure or compost, and should be used to grow the crops that require the richest ground to thrive, such as peas, beans, onions, leeks, tomatoes, celery and courgettes.

Each year the crops should be rotated to the next bed, giving a three year replenishment of nutrients on each bed.

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