

Countesthorpe Gardens & Allotments Society

Newsletter: Summer Edition

What a start to the season

Well, what a start to the season. In some form of lockdown and restrictions on movements up until the end of March and then gradually easing over the ensuing month from there. The late arrival of the seed orders, due to COVID restrictions, making some of you a little delayed in getting early crops started; and with some receiving partial orders at that. I know that onion seeds need that extra early start to get going to produce a reasonable sized bulbs. But all seemed to have turned out OK in the long run.

A risk assessment review was carried out against an updated risk assessment form, by some members of the committee, with some changes already being put in place. This was needed, as the last review was carried out August 2010 and was well over due. Amongst those changes is the replacement of the tap surrounds and the renewal of the barbed wire notices, as well new signage warning of the bees in the orchard area. The society insurance has also been upgraded to take into account

the rental of the society machinery. So now we have Members liability included as well.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General meeting will be held at the Countesthorpe Cricket Club on 6 October 2021 at 19:00, all being well. During the evening you, as society members, will be able to decide on either the re-election of the current committee members, as they are only in position for a year, or choose who you wish to represent the society on the committee. There were two places available as general committee members. There were only a few interested parties and Tony Postlethwaite and Chris Davidson have been voted on to the committee the these positions.

Also during the evening there will be the chairman's address, financial statement of the society from the treasurer, as well as a round-up of what has occurred during the year. So please, come along, hear what has been going on, have your say and socialise with other society members.

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Treasurer—Maggie Mason

Seeds Officer—Fiona Richmond

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Hopefully the bar will be open by then for some light refreshments.

Orchard trees

The trees in the orchard, at the community area, are there for everyone. There is a selection of different trees, apples, eaters and cookers, and a pear tree. Please feel free to help yourself to these fruits when they are ripe during the early autumn months, as most of the fruit is going to waste and falling on the floor. Care should be taken when moving round the trees near the hives, but otherwise please take the fruit. After all, you really are getting something for nothing.

Rental Items

Again as a reminder for new tenants, the society has a number of items to rent. These are 2 rotavators and 2 x 240v power generators for plot holders to use. The fee for renting any of the rotavators is £20 per half day, and £10 for the generators.

The generators are particularly useful for those plot holders with electrical tools. Should you wish to borrow any of these

items please contact Gill Postlethwaite the Allotments Officer at gillposs27@gmail.com or via the website email link or see her at plot 32.

As another reminder, we have a First Aid kit positioned near the Houghton's business and plot 32. If anyone injures themselves please use the kit which contains such basic items as different sized bandages, dressings, sterilised wipes and saline solution for washing dirt from cut and abrasions and eyes.

To dig or not to dig?

Each year the chore of having to turn the ground over and prepare it for the next season looms and I'm sure that some look at this chore more excitedly than others. Whatever your thoughts are, it is still something that needs to be done. Or is it?

A number of people have chosen to follow the 'No dig' method as opposed to digging their plot each year, citing that it is more beneficial to the ground, as well as the obvious avoidance of the back breaking work. Though if 'No dig' growing is such a

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good thing why does anyone still dig their plots over?

There are varying benefits to both and I am going to look at some here.

The digging method.

We have all tried, is labour intensive and can be back breaking work. The soil is dug over, exposing the sub-soil. Frosts tend to then break down this turned over sub-soil and with the introduction of organic matter, increases the depth of the top soil encouraging worms to work deeper in the soil as a whole by turning the sub-soil into top soil. It also allows easier absorption of moisture, improving drainage. This, now, looser soil allows for higher levels of oxygen, required for plant to grow and also the nutrients that have been washed down to the lower levels are now redistributed in the top soil. However, the structure of the soil is damaged each time it is dug and takes longer to recover.



The Victorian practice of 'double digging' has been shown to do more harm than good. Though where the soil has been compacted over time digging it once using this method is seen as acceptable.

No dig method.

The 'new' way of cultivating the soil. But not quite. The no dig method has been around, and used, for quite a while. Market gardeners in France used this method in the 19 century, using huge amounts of horse manure to grow the produce in.



Some exponents of no dig will argue that it benefits the soil more through retaining it's structure, as well as keeping the natural action of earth worms who aerate the soil, which digging destroys. Weed seeds are not brought to the surface, so are unlikely to germinate making them less of a problem. The benefits of microbes to soil fertility can also be destroyed by exposing them to

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sunlight through the digging process. Marry this with the labour intensive and can be back breaking work of turning the ground over and the no dig method looks more attractive.



However, no dig does require some work. For a start the ground needs to be covered with cardboard or paper as a weed block to stop the more persistent weeds coming through. Then there needs to be a large amount of compost covering to a depth of at least 4 inches (10 cm) in which to grow your produce.

This would then need 'topping up' annually as the nutrients disappear. This can be quite expensive year on year. However, a study conducted by Mr Jocelyn L H Chase, in 1947, showed that some vegetables benefitted more from this method than the dig method while others didn't, such as legumes and roots.

For further information on the comparison

www.allotment-garden.org

Trevor Houghton remembered

It was a year ago, on 4 February 2020, that Trevor Houghton passed away. Shortly after, an area near his plot was turned into a small memorial to him with a bench, box hedge and paved area. And so it was, that this year a number of people joined his wife, Eileen, and her family at the bench to remember Trevor and lay some flowers.



Glebe Drive access

As most of you will have noticed, Glebe Drive closely resembles an army tank suspension test track. I know it is frustrating for all of us, who at some time, will need to bring a vehicle to the allotment to drop such things off as compost and veg plants as well as machinery for working on the plots, amongst other things.

Some have voiced their concerns as what can be done. Some of the residents have

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also voiced their concerns and have directed their frustrations towards the society, intimating our responsible for the state of the Drive. Having taken on the plot holders concerns we can inform all members that Glebe Drive is not our responsibility, having been advised by a representative of Blaby District Council who further stated that as tenants ourselves we are not obliged, either morally or ethically, to contribute to its maintenance and upkeep. He further added that to do so would put the society in a litigious situation should any form of incident or accident occur.

The maintenance and upkeep wholly lies with the residents whom have access to Glebe Drive either directly or as a second access. The church, to whom we pay rent, is also liable for the maintenance and upkeep of the Drive. However, as our landlords we have had no communication from that quarter on the matter.

Spring Plant Sale

A plant sale was held on a rather wet and miserable 8 May. But despite the weather quite a number of plot holders and their families attended. Wet weather routine was in force, as gazebos were in place to try

and keep the rain at bay and give some reasonable protect from the wind as well. Tea, coffee, cake, cheese straws and rocky road helped to alleviate the misery of the poor weather. Despite the poor weather, though, the sale made £123.25, with another £35 up to the end of May. This was up from last years £94.55.

As with last year, the proceeds will go towards the society's funds. Thanks to all who helped organise the event and those who attended to make it go so swimmingly. Almost quite literally.



Should anyone wish to purchase any of Rockyroadmans produce, below, then they can contact Tom Phipps either at Plot 13B, tomhipps45@hotmail.com or Facebook @Rockyroadman.



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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 with your other allotmenters.

Tips & techniques

1. When picking some veg, particularly lettuce, pull the plant with as much root as possible, and a little soil. Then place it in a bowl/jug of water. This will keep the veg fresh for longer, as it will continue to grow and won't wilt as quick as home grown veg tends to do.
2. Christmas potatoes can be grown from mid-summer. These will grow and form tubers before the first frosts occur. Earth up as normal and cover if necessary to protect from frost. Don't be too worried if they get a frost attack, as I have found that the tubers still form and grow despite the lack of foliage.
3. Mulching round plants can help reduce water loss during dry periods. However, another method to reduce water loss is to hoe. This kills off surface weeds and also breaks up the soil to prevent moisture from being drawn up.
4. Follow potatoes with green manure, particularly mustard. It is fast growing and is supposed to confuse the potato eel worm into breeding at the wrong time. However, it is a brassica and should not be used if club root is a problem. Another fast growing green manure is French beans. You don't need to grow them for beans, but the nodules on the roots fix nitrogen from the air into the soil, as all legumes do.
5. Some crops, such as beetroot, chard and spring onions, can be used as 'mini' veg when thinning rather than discarding.
6. If growing cucumbers in the greenhouse, they like high humidity. So when watering them also water the floor of the greenhouse. The evaporation will supply the necessary humidity.

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice>

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