



WEST WICKHAM ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION

www.wwallotments.org.uk

Newsletter - September 2016

From our Chairman

Hi all

It has been a busy summer for our allotments with our fantastic BBQ and then our very successful Open Day, many thanks to everyone who helped at these events.

Our site is looking particularly good at the moment. You may have noticed when leaving the site by the main gate that the plot next to the Orchard, B1, has now been cleared ready for levelling before putting down grass seed. If you have a spare 15 minutes there is a spade left there and any help with levelling would be very much appreciated.



Enjoy the rest of the summer weather!

Matt

Notes from the Trading Shed

Despite summer seeming to hang on here in the South East, Autumn is encroaching and the nights are drawing in. The kids return to school and the weather will soon change. We've had a busy few months in the Shed and have increased our range and our sales over the last year. Bird seed continues to sell well and we are still considering what to add to our seed offering, fat balls anyone? Do we go for netted or un-netted?



Our Johnson's seeds are now off sale and are being returned for credit. We will reduce the Country Value range to clear before new stock for next year arrives. If you feel that there's something missing in our seed offering, please come and tell us.

We now have on sale Autumn planting onion sets and garlic. We have cut the range from last year and are stocking Onion Yellow Senshyu and Thermidore white garlic.

We also have Aquadulce broad bean seeds for over-wintering.

It's Potato ordering time again and our range is as follows. Stock is due January/February.

First Early:

Pentland Javelin and Red Duke of York

Second Early:

Kestrel

Salads:

Charlotte, Nicola and International Kidney

Main Crop:

Cara, Desiree, Maris Piper and Pentland Crown.

To order your potatoes, come and see us in the Shed and we'll take your order and your payment for them. If needed, we have a copy of last year's orders for reference.

When you clear your plot for the winter we have a range of black plastic for covering.

As always, if you have any ideas of stuff we could stock, let us know.

Keith & Liz

Topical Tips from Paul

Some tips for the next few weeks



Composting Our plants have almost done their bit and we have enjoyed flowers, fruit and veg in abundance. There have been a few failures, no doubt, and some problems will have been with diseases. It's not a good idea to compost diseased materials as some strains can survive a mild winter - better to burn the waste or take it to the dump. Watch out too for onions affected by white rot (white mould at the base of the bulb). Composting weeds is fine as long as your bin gets really hot - think twice about composting horsetail, bindweed or other pernicious weeds. Chop the thick stems from Brussels sprouts and sweet corn into very small pieces. I would recommend the compost accelerator which is sold in the

Trading Shed - it definitely has worked for me and it costs far less than in garden centres.

Tips for keeping your tomatoes free from blight It's a real challenge, isn't it? If you are OK with spraying, then VITAX copper mixture seems to be an excellent alternative to Bordeaux mixture. I have used this every three weeks and sprayed in between with aspirin (three tablets per watering can - see

<http://www.jameswong.co.uk/tomatoes/4588088979>

Remove lower leaves and cut off any diseased leaves on a regular basis to slow down the spread of the disease. Thinking ahead, there are a growing variety of blight resistant tomato seeds on the market.



Onions & garlic Thermidrome garlic bulbs and Sengshyu onion sets are now available from the Trading Shed. I particularly like the look of the garlic which has large chunky cloves easy to peel and use. These are best planted over the next few weeks so that the plants are well established before the cold weather arrives. Remember that the allium leaf miner is around from September/November and March/June. Damage from the maggots can be extensive. For the last two years, I have covered the crop with insect mesh (available from the Trading Shed at a very low price!) and have had no problems. The mesh also provides some protection in the initial stages of growth and during prolonged snow and frost.

What might you sow now for a late crop? There is time to sow winter hardy spring onions, spring cabbages, mixed lettuce leaves, rocket, spinach and radishes, peas (need protection), broad beans.

Green manure As your plants die back and are removed, you might consider planting green manure. These are fast growing plants which will cover the soil and keep weeds down. Then in the spring the growth can be dug into the ground to improve soil texture and replace essential nutrients. In my experience the most effective of these has been Phacelia and Crimson Clover. Here is some info from the RHS: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?pid=373>

How did you get on this year? Wouldn't it be great to know what has worked and not worked for fellow plot-holders this year! My runner beans have not done so well this year but I have seen others on site flourishing - what varieties were these, I wonder? On the plus side, I have been absolutely delighted by a second early potato variety called Nadine. I am happy to pass on other peoples' tips via an occasional email if you send me a few words which I can forward without editing - my e-mail address is wwallotmentlet@hotmail.com Thank you.

Happy plotting!

Paul



From the Secretary's Desk

What a sunny summer! When I first moved to this location a neighbour said that it hardly ever rains in West Wickham and we have had a very dry summer this year.

Dates for your diaries:

Working Party Saturday 1st October - There was a good response to the last working party on a Sunday so we hope that you can help with this week-end date. We need to keep the edges and hedges in good order.

Plot Inspections Monday 3rd October - Please prepare your plots for winter and cover any unused areas.

AGM 24th November - More information nearer the time.

Thank you to everyone who donated their time and/or produce to make the WWAA Open Day such a success. Many people have said what an enjoyable day they had.

The "Guess the Weight of the Cake" was won by Mrs Elizabeth Dack, spot on with the correct weight of 9lb 1oz!

Regards

Viv

Note from Editor: Apologies for the Newsletter being so late - I was away in sunny Madeira!