

# WEST WICKHAM ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION



[www.wwallotments.org.uk](http://www.wwallotments.org.uk)

**Newsletter - December 2017**

From our Chairman

It seems remarkable that we are closing in on the end of another year. It's been a productive year at the allotment for many reasons; the weather meant most of us had a good cropping year.

The highlight, however, was our allotment winning the prestigious Spencer May Cup, awarded by BALGF to the site demonstrating the best overall quality and management. Twelve of our plot holders were also awarded certificates for their individual plots. Well done to everybody involved.

Looking forward, you will see we have now planted over 100 trees around the site, courtesy of The Woodland Trust, from which we will benefit over the coming years. Our recent AGM approved some exciting investment plans which will include the installation of two very smart compost loos on a site close to the existing toilets.

Our social events went very well again this year but we plan to refresh the Open Day starting by coinciding it with National Allotment Week in mid August 2018.

Our final event this year is **Christmas Drinks** and we look forward to seeing you in the Trading Shed on December 17th



It just remains for me to wish everyone a great Christmas and a prosperous New Year

**Barry**

## Notes from the Trading Shed

As you'd expect, this is the quietest time in our trading year. Sales of ground cover are good and we are all now anticipating next year's growing season.

We will shortly have our new range of seeds in stock. You will notice far fewer flower seeds on offer; this is a result of poor sales this year. We have tried to keep some trusted "companion planting" seeds.



Potato orders are building up well. This year, we are selling "Vivaldi" seed potatoes. This potato is sold by Sainsbury's as part of their "Taste the Difference" range. It is a pale yellow spud with a velvety texture, good for boiling and mashing. It is, apparently, lower in calories and carbohydrates than many other varieties and is known as "The Butter-less Spud" meaning that you don't have to slather it with butter when baked!! Because sales of Vivaldi have been better than expected we've ordered more so if you want to try it come in and order some at only £1.40 per kilo.



Our bird feed offerings continue to sell well. Remember to stock up for the 3 weeks we're closed.

Liz has been sourcing well priced work gloves and they are really selling well....a great Christmas present maybe?

**We will be closed on Sundays 17<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> December and Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018 but we will re-open for business on SUNDAY 7<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2018.**

We hope to see many of you in the sheds for the Christmas drinks on the 17<sup>th</sup> December.

Liz and I plus the whole Trading Shed Team wish you and yours a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year with great success in your growing activities.

**Keith**

## Topical Tips from Paul

At this time of year maybe not so much to do on the plot so perhaps some time for reflection and planning? Time to think back - what went well, which varieties gave the best yield and flavour, which flowers gave the best display, was the location correct for the plant variety? Then, of course, what were the abject failures? I have found that sharing information with other members is very helpful - for example, this year I was recommended St George runner beans, and these gave a big crop of very good flavour. We are planning to have a sharing info board in the Hut - if you have any good ideas to share please make a note on the board. By way of kicking this off I can recommend the following:



Basil - Sweet - Fothergills - massive leaves, excellent flavour, brilliant in containers.  
Cabbage - Cuor di Bue - Kings Seeds - easy to grow, outstanding flavour  
Carrot - Eskimo - can be sown as late as the end of June to get a winter hardy crop  
Courgette - Nero di Milano - well most people had a glut but this one seemed to go on longer for me  
Lettuce - Winter Density - very rapid growing cos lettuce and winter hardy  
Onion - Ailsa Craig and Arthur - grown from seed - have stored well  
Shallots - Zebrune - very big, seem to be more disease resistant than onions and great flavour  
Parsley - Giant of Italy - Fothergills - easy to grow, huge crop  
Parsnip - Duchess - Fothergills - not a sign of canker  
Swede - Invitation - Fothergills - disease resistant - lime the soil - thin early, plenty of sun  
Sweetcorn - Swift - very early and super reliable  
Tomato - Sungold (yellow cherry) and Piccolo Dattero (Franchi) - Italian plum - fabulous taste

Regarding planning, it's good time to work out now where you will be growing your crops and flowers. It is important to practice crop rotation to avoid a build-up of root problems, the main ones being club root on brassicas, onion white rot and potato eelworm. The RHS suggest a four-part rotation: (1) brassicas (this includes swedes) (2) potatoes and tomatoes (3) roots: onions, garlic, leeks, carrots and parsnips (4) peas and beans. Other crops can be filled into spaces, changing the place each year. Mark out the areas on your plot - remember to try to keep to recommended growing distances to maximise yield and minimise disease.

Some people prepare a trench for runner beans: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?PID=667>

It's worth going through your seed packets. Shelf life of seeds should be taken seriously as the failure of them to germinate or to go on to produce weak plants can drastically affect your yields and test your patience! Here is some guidance <http://www.realseeds.co.uk/seedlife.html>  
Different people have different stories to tell but one key point is not to use parsnip seed beyond two years.



### Get sowing soon

We shall soon be starting off the sowing year again! I have been much more successful growing onions and shallots from seeds finely sown indoors in late January, then hardened off and transplanted into the plot when they are about 10-12 cm high. I am also saving toilet tube centres into which I shall sow carrot seeds indoors in early March - these need to be planted out about 4-6 weeks later without damaging the tap root. You will need about 24 tubes for a 2.4 m row. I have some cut and come again salad leaves growing in my unheated greenhouse and under netting on the plot. You could try sowing some lettuce leaves, mizuna, curly kale, rocket in large pots and moving to a sheltered spot outside when the plants are established - you can make savings by not buying bags of salad leaves. I have never had any luck sowing early peas straight outside in early Spring - better to sow into gutters <https://www.growveg.co.uk/guides/an-easy-way-to-start-peas-using-guttering/>

Regarding flowers, I was very impressed with the dwarf sunflowers (Irish Eyes - T&M) I grew last summer. They were beautiful to look at, attracted lots of bees and made for excellent cut flowers.

I can't recommend strongly enough the use of dwarf marigolds as companion plants for tomatoes and they also went well this time with brassicas and courgettes. Here's some info on companion plants <http://www.vegetablegardeninglife.com/companion-planting-charts.html>

Happy plotting!

**Paul**

From plot holder Bruce Duffy

Received 3<sup>rd</sup> September (and still elated after our Open Day!)

Firstly, as the winner of today's Chocolate Cake weight competition, I should like to thank you for the opportunity to Guess the Weight of the Cake; my estimate of 1.9 kg won me the cake which all my family is just itching to enjoy.

Secondly, on my return home I got busy digging up my first ever crop of potatoes, the seed potatoes were purchased from you last winter. I had planted four rows of three plants and today I dug up the first row.

The three plants yielded 4.8 kg and one huge potato weighed in at 692 grams. Here is my first potato - you will note the length by my hand spread. I simply cannot believe what I have achieved,



Once again thank you for an enjoyable afternoon.

Regards  
Bruce Duffy

**Any amusing/interesting photos, tales from the site etc would be very welcome for the Newsletter. Please send them to: [editor@wwallotments.org](mailto:editor@wwallotments.org).**

From the Secretary's desk



We had a great *AGM* on the 23rd November; there were lively discussions, debates and reports from various *Committee Officers*. The budget, which included the cost for the new toilets, was voted through unanimously as was the re-election of the *Committee*. It was well attended with the bar in the *Bowls Club* being well used and appreciated.

THE first ever *NATIONAL ALLOTMENT SOCIETY HOLIDAY* is planned for Sri Lanka in November 2018. The *NAS* have organised a gentle pace holiday to allow everyone to fully appreciate all aspects of the vibrant culture and landscape of this tropical island. Visits include a tea plantation, the *Coconut Research Institute*, the magnificent *Botanical Gardens* in Kandy, *Yala National Park* & some time on a tropical beach. For more information a full itinerary is available via [natsoc@nsalg.org.uk](mailto:natsoc@nsalg.org.uk)

As requested at the *AGM*, a plot holders' notice board has been arranged in the *Trading Shed* with cards available for individuals to display items for sale/swop/free between plot holders. *WWAA* takes no responsibility for the condition of the items.

Please would all plot holders keep me updated if they change their email addresses.

Regards

Viv

