



West Wickham Allotments Ltd

www.wwallotments.org.uk

Newsletter – September 2020

From our Chairman

What a summer we have had! First it was dry and very hot then very wet and now it's turned unusually cold.

With so many people having time on their hands due to Covid restrictions I would have thought that the site would have looked in pristine condition but alas no; there are many plots that are not well kept.

Turning to other things I would like to pass on my personal thanks to Keith and Liz who started our outside shop and managed to keep it well stocked. They can only display a small amount of the goods for sale but everything else is made available by the helper diving into the shed and getting the required item.

Keep digging - everything will be back to normal soon.

Tony

Notes from the Trading Shed

Firstly, Liz and I would like to thank everyone for their patience, humour and goodwill during this very strange Trading Year. It hasn't been easy at times but we have managed remarkably well with your help.

We are planning to re-open the shop from **Sunday 11th October** using a one in, one out, system to begin with. Everyone entering will have to wear a mask and we will have hand gel available at the entrance.



There will be one server in the shop and another will be stationed elsewhere specifically to take any potato orders for next year. We will be using signage to help. If we can all exercise patience, we will adjust where needed as we all get used to the "New normal".

SEED POTATO RANGE FOR 2021 PLANTING

The following will be available to order from Sunday 11th October all at £1.20 per kilo.

FIRST EARLIES

Homeguard	Very early, good flavour, good scab resistance
Pentland Javelin	Suitable for all soils, good boiler, eelworm and scab resistant

SECOND EARLIES

Kestrel	Blue eyes, good disease resistance and good for roasting
Vivaldi	High yield, keep well

SALADS

Charlotte	Reliable, good flavour, high yielding, waxy long tubers
Nicola	Excellent flavour, yellow, waxy, good boiler



MAINS

Cara	Our bestseller, high yielding, good disease resistance, great flavour
Desiree	Red skin, high yielder, drought resistant
Maris Piper	Good yield and flavour, good chipper
Maxine	Bright red, waxy white flesh, heavy cropper, good disease resistance

We have kept the same price as last year £1.20 per kilo

AUTUMN PLANTING RANGE FOR PLANTING THIS YEAR

We have the following range to sell:

Aquadulce Broad Beans	75p per 100g
Thermidrome garlic	price to be confirmed
Senshyu yellow onion	65p per 100g



Phacelia green manure

SPRING FLOWERING BULBS

Thank you for your orders; we will have some packets for sale in the shop

If you missed ordering this year we do still a few catalogues to see if you might like to partake next year.



SEED CATALOGUE FOR NEXT YEAR

We will be having the Fothergills Catalogue later in the year.



Growing inspiration in your garden...

NEW STOCK ETC

If you have tried using Potassium bicarbonate after Paul recommended it, could you let us have feedback on it please?

A question for you to consider

SHOULD WE STOCK PEAT-FREE COMPOST?

We have tried this in the past but it was not very successful. Nowadays, everything you read or see about planting suggests we should all move towards peat-free and we have been asked about it. We reply, "We tried it but people didn't want it and we wrote it off to clear."
That was some time ago however and we would like your opinions.

ANOTHER PRODUCT TO CONSIDER

There is a company that produces products that dissuade pests from attacking and eating plants when applied to leaves and stems. It is calcium based and does not kill pests, merely makes them look elsewhere to feed. The company is Grazers and they will supply us if we have a demand. We would consider stocking G2 for slugs and snails, G3 for cabbage white butterflies, caterpillars and aphids.

Using these products would mean that hedgehogs, songbirds and other wildlife would not be under threat from chemicals.

We do have a few leaflets in the shop if you are interested

As always, if you have any ideas for new products then please come and talk to us.

Keith

Topical Tips from Paul

Sweetcorn

This year we have seen an almost complete wipe out of our sweetcorn crops across the site. No matter what protection has been used, plants seem to have been trampled down and then the cobs eaten or destroyed. Some say it was foxes, others say badgers. One thing for sure is that without adequate protection, the same is likely to happen next year. So, we shall look forward to your ideas next season. For me, protection around the bed did not work and I shall try staking plants and protecting with a chicken wire barrier staked to the ground. If the 'destroyer' gets through that they can have them!

Here's an article

<https://www.realmensow.co.uk/keeping-the-canny-burnham-badgers-off-the-sweetcorn/>

Composting It will soon be time to clear the plots ready for the winter. Making your own compost saves lots of money and can have a significant impact on soil condition. It's not a good idea to compost diseased materials as some strains can survive a mild winter, e.g. mildew, rust, potato/tomato blight. 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 if your bin gets hot - think twice about composting mares tail, bindweed or other pernicious weeds. 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.

Here's an article

<https://www.edenproject.com/learn/for-everyone/how-to-make-a-compost-heap-10-top-tips>

Green manure Once you have cleared the bed, 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*. *Phacelia* seeds are sold in the Trading Shed and they cost a lot less than online or from garden centres. Here's an article:

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?pid=373>

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

Pruning fruit bushes and trees

If you want to maximise your yields of fruit, then it's important to prune your bushes and trees at the right time and in the right way. There are a couple of articles about this below. Can I also gently remind members that trees are supposed to be kept to a height of 2.5 m so that they do not grow out of hand and cast shade on other people's plots.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/gardening/basics/techniques/pruning_prunefruittrees1.shtml

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?pid=90>

Seeds for next year

We have all had successes and failures this year. Can you recommend any varieties that have excelled? If so, just reply by email and we will share the information. Also, any clever ideas you have had to increase yields or keep pests and disease away.

Happy Plotting!

Paul

From the Secretary's desk



Photos of the pond and new planting taken in July by Sandie Wood
It's looking good and the wild life love it!





In the June Newsletter we had an item re the insect found on Brian Maclaren's plot. A keen Newsletter reader, Maggie Whiston, got in touch with the following revelations:

The bug is not a stag beetle - which is even bigger! It is a cockchafer (big beetle in Old English) and is also known as a Maybug or a doodlebug and that's why the V1 rockets were called doodlebugs as they made the same sort of noise!!

However! According to my Collins Field Guide to Insects "The largest and commonest of our chafers is the Cockchafer or Maybug which often comes crashing into lighted windows in early summer. Its large size - up to 35mm long - and buzzing flight make it a little frightening but it is quite harmless - harmless to us that is. These beetles do

untold damage to trees and crops by eating foliage and flowers. The fat, white larvae are even more destructive. They live underground for 3 or 4 years and consume a great amount of plant roots during that time - particularly cereals and other grasses. It is said that rooks are particularly fond of both adult and larval cockchafers and the larvae are often called rookworms."

Well done for spotting one!

Many thanks Maggie!

From Brian Maclaren



I found these photos on the Hayes Hall and West Wickham local news site.
Hawes Lane 1920 and in 2020 - quite a change!

According to our website the allotments had been there 8 years before.

