

LEYTONSTONE ALLOTMENT HOLDERS ASSOCIATION AT RODING FARM - AUGUST NEWSLETTER

Committee Update

Since the last newsletter in June the Committee have continued to meet using the video conferencing app Zoom. Meetings have taken place in June and July

- Cultivation – the Committee have continued to sensitively monitor cultivation levels. There are some very well cultivated plots and produce being grown across the site, although some members have had to remain away from site and isolate themselves at home. Anyone experiencing any concerns about their ability to cultivate their plot, particularly in the light of the Coronavirus, should contact a Committee Member for advice.
- Manure deliveries – we were delighted to receive recently, not one, but two deliveries of the lovely brown stuff. Some members have questioned why the Committee does not arrange more deliveries. Simple answer – we would love too but unfortunately so does every other allotment society – and we have to accept what we are given and how often it arrives. The problem is delivery. If members are aware of any free suppliers that are prepared to deliver to site please advise the Committee. We are aware the riding stables adjacent to Wanstead Park have free manure available for those people who are prepared to collect it for themselves. So you can ‘fill your boots’ as they say
- Annual Flower and Vegetable Show – after much debate and research on what other allotment societies are doing we have decided to go ahead with the Annual Flower and Vegetable Show on Sunday 23rd August. In order to adhere to latest Government advice it will be a very different show, but hopefully it can be safe and fun for everyone. We have decided that we cannot safely manage the full range of 17 different classes there will be 2 classes – a large tray of vegetables (a minimum of seven different fruits or vegetables) and a small tray of vegetables (a minimum of four and no more than six different fruit or vegetables). Full details will be published presently. It would be great to see a large entry for both classes, especially from new members. Previous years have proved to be an excellent social event with friends and family also invited to have a look around and enjoy the day. This year we have decided we cannot offer a BBQ or ‘beer tent’ but members are encouraged to bring their own picnics and perhaps a glass of refreshment or two. The Show competition will take place in the morning, with members, family and friends very welcome to stay around to chat, eat, drink and make merry into the afternoon. Any help with the ‘preparation and set up’ around 9.30 am and ‘take down and clear up’ around 3.30pm would be gratefully received. Please advise the LAHA Secretary if you are able to help

Routine Site Maintenance – volunteers required

Every year we need to carry out some routine maintenance tasks. The Government restrictions have made this impossible in the year so far, however with restrictions easing we have a backlog of tasks which we need members help to deliver :-

- 1) The hedge either side of the main entrance between the gate and the car park urgently needs cutting back as branches are now causing damage to vehicles entering site. This is a simple job requiring no supervision or direction – so if some members with secateurs and shears spend an hour or so trimming back the hedge that would be very helpful.
- 2) Some of the site drainage ditches have ‘silted up’ and become blocked. This caused some flooding earlier this year. They need to be cleared before the autumn rains arrive. We plan to arrange a couple of working parties over the next month or so to work on this and we need as many volunteers as possible to help. Please can

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members volunteer to help emailing the Secretary on LAHArodingfarm@gmail.com so we can arrange things. As this work is more precise it will be coordinated and supervised, taking place on weekdays and weekends subject to member's availability.

These tasks are essential. If there are insufficient volunteers to carry out this work, the Committee will seek to engage a contractor to get this work completed.

There are some fabulous plots out there

Despite the obvious problems '*there are some fabulous plots out there*' commented our independent trustee John Spears when looking around the site recently and helping to judge this year's best plot competition.



Hedgehogs

We are certain we have hedgehogs resident on site. They are keen fans of a slug or snail lunch so are friends to all allotmenters. Try to avoid using slug pellets. There are many safe and natural deterrents for slugs and snails which can be used. Some are more successful than others. Google 'how to manage slugs' and you'll see what I mean. If you do use slug pellets use organic pellets containing ferric phosphate or iron III phosphate as an active ingredient and sometimes called Ferramol. Only the very smallest amount is required – one tiny pellet every 2 to 3 inches apart is more than enough.

Topical tips and Cultivation Advice

- 1) Harvest, harvest, harvest. It's the time of year when lots of hard work comes to fruition. With one or two exceptions my advice would be pick crops early and often – courgettes, cucumbers, French beans, peas, strawberries to name but a few taste better young – and encourage the plant to produce more.
- 2) Potatoes are ready to harvest as soon as the plants are flowering – early and second earlies should be definitely ready now and main crop will not be far behind – if in doubt you can wait a while until the plants start to turn yellow and start to die back – the potatoes are definitely ready now. Some allotmenters leave them in the ground until Autumn, however with our heavy clay soil this can often lead to major slug damage to the crop. They can also be more difficult to find in the soil if the tops have disappeared. Better to harvest and store them in a cool, dark, frost free place in cardboard boxes, sacks or strong paper bags (not plastic as it does not allow them to breathe and they rot).

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- 3) Sweet corn should also be not far off being ready to harvest. Cobs are ready to pick when the 'hair' protruding from cob turns from yellow to brown and starts to die away. If in doubt pick one as a test. And the quicker you can cook it the taster it is – shop bought sweet corn will never taste the same again.
- 4) Brassicas – Cabbage, kale, broccoli, cauliflower – need to be 'netted over' to protect them from the pigeons who will eat all the young growth as summer passes and there is less around for them.
- 5) Sowing - salad crops – lettuce, rocket, spinach, radish, can still be sown and will germinate quickly as will chard and perpetual spinach for a harvest through the autumn.
- 6) Pak choi can also be sown now and the cooler temperatures of autumn stop it from 'bolting' and running to seed. However the young seedlings are a 'dish of choice' for the crows and pigeons so need to be covered with protective netting if you are to ever see a crop.
- 7) Watering - at this time of year is necessary for crops which are fruiting – try to do so first thing in the morning if you can – evening watering will encourage slugs who come out under the cover of darkness.

Further information

Further useful Association information, including copies of the monthly Committee minutes, are available on the LAHA web site :- <http://www.laha.org.uk/>

And finally.....

Mark **Sunday 23rd August** in your diary as Show and picnic day – it would be great to see lots of entries and members all together (but not too close) to make it an enjoyable celebration of the allotment year to date.

LAHA Committee 2020