

LEYTONSTONE ALLOTMENT HOLDERS ASSOCIATION AT RODING FARM - JUNE NEWSLETTER

“Light at the end of the tunnel....” At the time of writing this newsletter and after 10 weeks of unprecedented restrictions there appears to be some relief on the way as the Government feels able to relax some of the restrictions deemed necessary to contain the spread of Coronavirus in England.

As happens most years there was a May 'cold snap' resulting in some frost and 'blackening' of sensitive crops but most will recover and grow away once again now day and night temperatures are nicely into double figures. Hopefully we are now safe until autumn and many of us are planting out tomatoes, peppers, courgettes, squash and sweet corn. At this time of year everything seems to be in a headlong race to grow – especially my weeds – with not enough hours in the day to get everything planted. Nevertheless do take time to say 'hi' to your neighbours - from a safe distance of course - making the site such a great place to be as well to grow fruit and vegetables.

Committee Update

Since the last newsletter in March the Committee have continued to meet using the video conferencing app Zoom. Meetings have taken place in April and May with a focus on how the Association can safely manage through the Coronavirus restrictions.

- Cultivation - It's great to report that whilst some members have been forced to remain away from site and isolate themselves at home, many more have been able to make use of the extra time they have to cultivate and maintain their plots to a higher standard than in previous years. It is clear, if we are able to hold the Annual Flower and Vegetable Show there will be some excellent produce on display. 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.
- Water – so strange following the wettest February on record and more water than we know what to do with, we now find ourselves struggling to find sufficient water some days. Unfortunately when the original water supply was connected and 'dip tanks' installed the standard gauge of pipe was a half an inch in diameter. Dip tanks fill from the 'car park' end of the site and when all are in use the pipes cannot refill at the level to which they are being emptied. There are two possible permanent solutions – both of which are extremely challenging – the first is to replace the pipes ourselves which will require significant labour and skill on the part of members – and the second is to employ a professional contractor to do the work at market rates. In either case we would need someone with civil engineering knowledge and skills to project manage and oversee the work. Any member willing to offer their services to manage this project should contact the Committee without delay. In the meantime all we can do is to ask members to ensure water is used when necessary – to settle in newly transplanted flowers and crops, to water greenhouse plants, and to water fruit and vegetables as they start to swell come to harvest. Watering unnecessarily only leads to an invasion of slugs and snails which eat everything green except weeds.
- Rubbish – a number of members have asked about the Association hiring a skip to take away rubbish. 12 yard skips cost £280.00 a time. With funds at a premium we have continued with the previous policy to help new members who have 'inherited' large quantities of metal, glass, plastics and carpet to enable them to clear rubbish from their plot by hiring a skip. This seems to be a fair, as well as prudent, financial decision. For all other members we would ask you to only bring down material which is genuinely required and to take away everything else to the free local council refuse and re-cycling facilities.

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- Socially Distanced Plant sale – we had hoped to arrange a number of social events with coffee and cake this year. Unfortunately this has not been possible because of the restrictions. However we did decide a carefully managed and socially distanced plant sale was possible on Sunday 24th May. Thanks go to all those who kindly donated flowers and vegetables. There were some great plants, and some very happy purchasers, resulting in a £247 contribution to the Association's funds.



Dates for the diary (subject to ongoing Govt guidelines and medical advice)

- **Annual Flower and Vegetable Show – Sunday 23rd August** – slightly earlier than in previous years to maximise the summer harvest whilst avoiding the late summer bank holiday.
- **Wanstead Show** – date to be confirmed but likely to be the **second Sunday in September** assuming it is able to go ahead – please sow a few extra flowers and veg on your plot for harvest and sale at the Show to raise money for the Association. Last year we raised over £400.

Topical tips and Cultivation Advice

- 1) It is almost time for the first major harvest of the year although those of you with asparagus will have been enjoying a tasty crop for a few weeks now and it's time for the last pick already so plants can build their strength for next year.
- 2) The leaves of Autumn planted onions, garlic and shallots are just starting to turn brown – stop watering to avoid them rotting off - and over the next few weeks gently lift them out of the ground and leave to dry naturally for a week or so before cleaning and storing away.
- 3) Strawberries are starting to flower and those with particularly sunny and sheltered beds may even be also ready for the first harvest. Ensure all soft fruit is covered - strawberries, currents and other berries – with nets to prevent birds enjoying the fruit before you do.
- 4) Continue to 'earth up' potatoes. First earlies should be flowering and ready to harvest once the flowers fade.
- 5) Complete the outdoor planting of tomatoes, peppers, chilli, aubergines. Tie them into stakes as they grow
- 6) Sow summer salad crops – lettuce, rocket, spinach, radish, beetroot – every two to three weeks to provide succession.
- 7) Sow chard and perpetual spinach. The latter is less likely to run to seed than regular spinach, and can be picked as young leaves or left to harvest through the autumn.

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/>

Finally ...

If you have any suggestions, or concerns regarding the site please do not hesitate to contact a Committee member – please remember we are all volunteers, not paid employees – so offers of help - as well as suggestions for improvement are needed in order to action good ideas.

In the meantime please stay safe and alert out there.

LAHA Committee 2020