

LEYTONSTONE ALLOTMENT HOLDERS ASSOCIATION AT RODING FARM - OCTOBER NEWSLETTER

Committee Update

The Committee have continued to meet using the video conferencing app Zoom. Two meetings have taken place in August and September

- Cultivation – the Committee have continued to sensitively monitor cultivation levels. Although Autumn is upon us and the major planting opportunities almost over there is still winter veg to be grown and plots to be cleared for winter. Should anyone be experiencing any concerns about their ability to cultivate their plot, particularly in the light of the ongoing Coronavirus crisis, they should contact a Committee Member for advice and guidance.
- Annual General Meeting – at the time of writing it is looking increasingly unlikely we will be able to hold our usual AGM in January. The 'rule of six' rather precludes any normal meeting. The Committee, together with the independent trustees are currently exploring all possibilities. The option most likely to be followed at the present time is to follow the guidance and practice set by the National Allotment Society; to postpone the meeting until later in the year. Obviously a full set of written reports from the officers, and 2020 financial accounts will be prepared and sent to members at the usual time in December. In normal circumstances the existing Committee are required to 'stand down' having completed their year of office. The Committee, and independent trustees are looking at all practical ways to ensure the continued management of the site and the Association in these difficult and unprecedented circumstances.

Memories of the 'socially distanced' Flower and Vegetable Show 2020

The much reduced annual show still produced some marvellous exhibits in the three classes – congratulations to everyone who entered, we had around 30 high class entries and lots of 'socially distanced' conversations throughout the event.

Clockwise from top left:

Best small tray of fruit and vegetables.

Best large tray of fruit and vegetables

Best tray of flowers



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Thanks to our two independent Judges, Anne Tennant and John Spears (pictured above) for undertaking the judging duties. A great day was had by all.



Companion Planting Guide

On my travels this year I came across an excellent companion planting guide at The National Trust's garden, Sissinghurst. Reproduced below and useful for anyone seeking to manage their plot in a more organic and environmentally sustainable manner :-

Basil	Attracts whitefly away from crops and beneficial insects and butterflies
Calendula	Attracts ladybirds, lacewings and hoverflies which eat aphids
Chamomile	Improves the growth and flavour of leeks and onions, attracts hoverflies
Chives	Repels carrot fly, cabbage worms and aphids
Cosmos	Attracts pollinators
Dill	Repels aphids and squash bugs, attracts hoverflies
Hyssop	Repels slugs , cabbage white butterflies and flea beetle
Mint	Deters cabbage fly and ants
Nasturtium	Attracts aphids away from beans, repels whitefly, attracts predatory insects
Nicotiana	Deters cabbage whitefly
Oregano	Repels whitefly
Sage	Repels bean beetle, carrot fly and slugs, attracts honey bees
Summer Savory	Repels blackfly from broad beans. Improves the growth and flavour of onions
Sunflowers	Attracts pollinators and increases sweet corn production
Tagetes	Attracts pollinators
Thyme	Attracts pollinators

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Topical tips and Cultivation Advice

- 1) Harvest – any remaining tomatoes, peppers, chilli, or sweet corn before it 'rots off'. Squashes are also ready to harvest – ensure you leave around one inch of stalk on the squash as this helps it to 'cure' and keep better through the autumn and winter months.
- 2) Undertake the autumn 'clean up' – cut grass paths and edges, carry out Autumn digging, clear and cover any ground which you are not planning to cultivate next year. Good practices such as these significantly reduce the slug population on the plot making for much less damage to newly planted crops and young seedlings in the Spring, which has got to be good. The other great advantage of any Autumn/Winter clearing or weeding is it stays 'done' for many weeks and if you are lucky through until the Spring.
- 3) Prune out all old blackberry canes (black or brown in colour) - if in doubt cut everything down to ground level – it will regrow next year and you will have a better crop of larger, succulent blackberries that are much easier to harvest.
- 4) Prepare your 2021 seed order – remember there are discounts available from both Kings Seeds and Dobies – consider buying 'blight resistant- tomato seeds – they are more expensive but you will avoid the dreaded tomato blight ruining your hard won harvest. Please note the deadline for the Kings order is 1st November. There is no such deadline for Dobies, orders can be made at any time of year, but do remember to use the offer code (GD1341G) if you want to enjoy the discount we have negotiated on member's behalf.
- 5) Order and sow 'green manure' for digging in next Spring and Summer – both Kings and Dobies carry a good range and it will 'keep down the weeds' as well as adding fertility to the soil. What's not to like ? You save money and do good at the same time.
- 6) Top dress fruit trees and soft fruit bushes and plants with well rotted manure and compost.
- 7) Order and plant 'bare rooted' fruit trees and bushes – they are much cheaper than 'container grown' stock and will grow away much better, especially if you dust the roots with mycorrhizal powder.
- 8) Plant garlic and onion sets as soon as possible to get them growing before the winter cold sets in. It is particularly important to get the garlic in as it has a long growing season, and needs a period of cold, and ideally some freezing temperatures, to get the cloves to split, and produce a wonderful plump bulbs for you to harvest next year.
- 9) Sow broad beans – personally I have given up on them as they get smothered in blackfly just as I am about to pick them but I might try an interplanting of Summer Savory as suggested in the companion planting section and see if that keeps the little blighters away.

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/>