

LEYTONSTONE ALLOTMENT HOLDERS ASSOCIATION AT RODING FARM

MAY 2021 NEWSLETTER

Ne'er cast a clout till May is out

After what has been confirmed at the coldest April on record I'm feeling the need of a little inspiration as we continue to experience this cold Spring weather so here is a literal 'gem' to get you started.

'Horticulturally, the month of May is opening night, homecoming and graduation day all rolled into one' – Tam Mossman

Committee Update

Since the last newsletter the Committee has met twice and worked very hard to clear some of the wilder areas of the site of rubbish. Three skips have been necessary costing £750.00 plus a considerable amount of effort by various Committee members to remove this material. Please can members respect these areas which will be retained as wildlife havens to encourage greater bio diversity. If you have rubbish it must be taken to the council recycling centres in Redbridge and Waltham Forest which are free for local residents.

Plot inspections have commenced to check plots are being used in accordance with our Site Rules and Code of Conduct and, most importantly, to ensure plots are cultivated in a way which is respectful to everyone and does not cause a nuisance to other members. Should anyone anticipate difficulty cultivating their plot this year, for whatever reason, they should contact the Secretary via email LAHArodingfarm@gmail.com or through the website at <https://www.laha.org.uk>. We now have a very long waiting list of people wishing to take on a plot so it is important we make best use of the precious land we have.

We remain hopeful a 'normal and face to face' AGM can be held once Coronavirus restrictions are relaxed after 21st June. We will notify everyone of a date once arrangements can be confirmed. In the meantime the date of Sunday 22nd August has been set for the Annual Flower and Vegetable Show. Please make a note in your diary, it's a very friendly and relaxed event and we would love to see even more people there this year as we return to a better 'normal'

In the meantime should 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 if we are to be able to action some great ideas.

Spring Plant Sale

The Spring plant sale took place on Sunday 16th May. Around 50 people attended during the morning and £249.00 was raised for the Association. Thanks to everyone who helped to make the event a success and a special thanks to Angela and Pat for a constant supply of teas, coffee, cake and cookies. My they were good.



Manure

In common with many local allotments we are 'on the rota' for free manure deliveries. Unfortunately, demand for the 'black gold' always far exceeds supply and we cannot influence or arrange any more frequent deliveries than we currently enjoy. Three alternatives exist :-

- 1) By far the most sustainable and environmentally friendly is the recycling and composting of plot based green waste – mixed with an equal quantity of 'brown matter' such as wood chip or cardboard and turned every three months it should rot down well over the summer – producing quality compost to spread over your beds in the Autumn. A large bin made from three wooden pallets works really well.
- 2) Free horse manure is available for those who can collect it themselves from the Aldersbrook Riding School, Empress Avenue, London, E12 5HW
- 3) Alternatively for the more affluent, Thompsons of Crews Hill - <https://www.thompsonsofcrews Hill.com> - will deliver dumpy bags of manure and compost to the site – prices are reasonable – but become significantly cheaper the more you purchase as a major element of the cost is the 'one off' delivery charge. Consider getting together with nearby plot holders and you can reduce costs considerably.

And to the merry mowers and secret trimmers.....

.... a big 'thank you' for grass cutting and tidying the communal picnic area and major public paths – it makes a huge difference to the look of the site and it significantly reduces the slug and snail population – so thanks - you know who you are – and to other members when have you mower out please give a little trim to the communal paths in your immediate area. Many hands make light work they say.

Topical tips and Cultivation Advice

- 1) As mentioned earlier it remains unseasonably cold – and whilst temperatures have started to rise the soil still remains cold and unwelcoming to little seeds so patience remains the watchword. Everything will catch up – it always does.
- 2) Continue to prepare the soil by lightly turning over the top few inches or so – removing any weeds as you go – this allows air in and enables the sun to gently warm the soil ready for sowing and planting.
- 3) Indoors at home on the window sill or your greenhouse early sowings of tomatoes, chillies, aubergines, leeks, onions should be growing nicely, especially if they are given a weekly liquid feed. On warmer days they should be taken outside to 'harden off' but check night time temperatures before planting out, and if in doubt leave it an extra week or so until June when they will grow away much more quickly.
- 4) Again inside courgettes, cucumbers, winter squashes can be sown, as well as beans, French and runner if you want to give them an early start. Otherwise wait until June to sow them outside. Seeds of salad crops - lettuce, beetroot, spring onion can also be sown in modules ready for planting out once they have three to four true leaves.
- 5) Sweet corn needs a bit of warmth to germinate so sow under glass from late May to early June with a few extra sowings at the end of June/early July. They have deep roots so sow in 'root trainers' or pots which are 4 ins deep or more. And remember they are wind pollinated so plant out in blocks, not rows, of around nine to twelve in number.
- 6) Outside, direct sowings of root veg – parsnips, turnips, carrots can all be made – and it is not too late to slip in some extra potatoes. Direct sow beans, peas and a second sowing of salad crops towards the middle of June to provide succession.
- 7) Soft fruit – strawberries, currants and other berries – should be starting to set fruit and grow away. If its dry don't forget to give the plants a good weekly water – a good soaking once a week will do them the 'power of good' and help the fruits to swell. And once they start to colour up you may need to net the plants to protect them from the masked raiders from the sky.

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- 8) Flowers provide a surprisingly profitable harvest – check out the price of a bunch when next at your local supermarket – and if you choose not to pick them provide you with a warm welcome on every plot visit as well as encouraging all sorts of useful pollinating insects. So consider sowing a few annuals - sunflowers, nigella, stocks, cornflowers, cosmos all make a 'nice show' and are easy to grow. Alternatively how about some dahlias or chrysanthemums for later in the season and to exhibit at the annual show.
- 9) And finally don't forget the brassicas – cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli and kale – are wonderful crops if you have the space and want something for autumn and winter harvesting – just make sure you cover them over to stop the pesky pigeons stealing your crop from under you.

Further information

Further useful Association information, including copies of the monthly Committee minutes, are available on the LAHA web site at <https://www.laha.org.uk/> and for those who like a bit of social media you can find us :-



LAHA Committee