

LEYTONSTONE ALLOTMENT HOLDERS ASSOCIATION AT RODING FARM - OCTOBER 2021 NEWSLETTER

“ Autumn is a second Spring when every leaf is a flower ” said Albert Camus and what a wonderful way to look at the world after such a challenging allotment year. So as we start to put our allotments to ‘bed’ for winter it’s good to remember each season has its merits and purpose.

Autumn is the best time of year for preparing for next year (yes I know there is still plenty still growing and ready for harvest) However, the recent rains mean the ground is soft and much easier to work. Any ground cleared of spent crops and annual weeds is so much easier to do now, rather than later in the winter, and will pay dividends in the Spring. Once dug over think seriously about covering the soil with ground cover to prevent weed seeds germinating and nutrients leaching through the soil in the winter rains. Then what has been cleared, stays cleared.

Committee Update

On Wednesday 4th August the Committee met for the first ‘face to face’ since February 2020. It was so good not to have a ‘video conference’ meeting and we celebrated with a small beer and a glass of wine – once official business had been concluded of course. We spent time reviewing cultivation levels. Generally the improvements seen in 2020 have continued into this year a fact which was recognised in the large number of plots awarded a ‘commended’ and ‘highly commended’ as part of this years ‘best plot’ competition. Well done to everyone.

The Committee also spent time discussing possible dates and preliminary arrangements for the combined 2020/2021 AGM. A number of members had made suggestions on timings following this year’s decision to postpone the meeting. For lots of good reasons we have decided to retain a January meeting as we believe by doing so we will give the largest number of members the opportunity to attend. It provides the Committee officers with the time they need to produce and send out comprehensive written reports for members to read before the meeting. Lastly and by no means least, an early January meeting provides an ideal opportunity to meet up with friends over a glass of something somewhere warm and dry in those bleak winter nights.

We didn’t see many these on the site this year !



Like most of the UK we often suffer ‘late blight’ on tomatoes but this year the hot and humid conditions in June brought with them a severe instance of ‘early blight’ which decimated tomatoes and potato crops across our allotment. This also occurred across the whole of the UK and there is nothing effectively that can be done to prevent this fungal attack. The only solution is to sow ‘blight resistant’ tomatoes and seed potatoes. The seeds are more expensive but it is the only solution, and one which is highly recommended therefore.

Seed Orders

Once again we will be offering two opportunities to obtain excellent quality flower and vegetable seeds at discounted prices :-

- Kings Seeds - Catalogues have just arrived in the Trading Hut for the annual Autumn seed order from Kings – apologies to everyone they arrived later this year, due to an error on the part of the National Allotment Society so orders will need to be completed quickly and returned to the Trading Hut no later than the end of October.

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- Dobies Seeds – for those members wishing more flexibility with their order times go 'on line' to <https://www.dobies.co.uk/> - use the code SUGD1204Z to enjoy the LAHA discount. Orders can be made at any point

Annual Flower and Vegetable Show

The Annual Flower and Vegetable took place on Sunday 22nd August. Despite the very difficult growing conditions throughout the season with 'mother nature' throwing everything she had there were a number of very high quality entries as you can see.



We were one of the very few local allotment societies who managed to organise a 'show' so thanks go to the organising team of Linda and Sharron and our judge Anne Tennant. It was a great day despite some pretty 'average' summer weather. Still the rain held off. Congratulations to the large number of members who produced some excellent entries. It was very good to see so many members entering for the first time. It bodes well for future shows.



Topical tips and Cultivation Advice

- 1) As mentioned earlier its 'tidy up time' for the allotment. Clearing of spent crops and weeds is so much easier now – the soil is soft and any cleared ground should stay weed free until early Spring making it such a satisfying exercise.
- 2) It is also the ideal time to carry out Autumn digging – this allows air into the soil and the winter rain and frost will break down the 'clods' into a fine tilth by March. Leave it later into the Winter and there is a high risk the heavy clay soil will be too wet to work.
- 3) There are not many seeds that can be sown at this time of year but a sowing of hardy broad beans 'Aquadeluce' will grow well through the winter especially if you can provide them with a free draining raised bed. Garlic needs a long growing season plus some winter cold and frosty conditions in order to split the cloves and should be sown just below the surface any time from now to December.
- 4) You can also try lettuce, spinach or swiss chard which provide excellent winter greens but need to be sown quickly under glass or with a bit of protection from a poly tunnel.
- 5) Alternatively sow a crop of 'green manure' – seeds are available for most seed suppliers including Kings and Dobies – sow immediately and 'dig in' later in the Spring they will add lots of healthy nutrients to your soil.
- 6) Winter brassicas – cabbage, broccoli, and kale will grow well through the winter and provide some lovely fresh greens – but they need to be covered or they will be completely stripped bare by the local pigeons.
- 7) Consider creating new wood chip paths on your plot to aid access – if the paths are dug out to a spades depth, the surplus soil can be used to create raised beds - this is really good for improving the drainage on waterlogged plots as the wood chip path acts as a drainage channel in winter.
- 8) And when you have a moment please ensure you have a nice Plot number carefully displayed somewhere on your plot so it's easier to identify plots.

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/>

LAHA Committee