

LEYTONSTONE ALLOTMENT HOLDERS ASSOCIATION AT RODING FARM - AUGUST 2023 NEWSLETTER

Cool Conditions Continue

Whilst the rest of Europe has fried, with temperatures continuing to hit records in June and July, the Wanstead climate been on the cool side with below average temperatures and lots of wind. In the last Newsletter I said plants always 'catch up' but I have to say not on my plot. This will be the first year in a long time we've reached August without harvesting any outdoor tomatoes or French beans. Despite my assurances things have not yet 'caught up'. However, there is still plenty of summertime left and with a bit of sunshine and warmer weather we should still get a good harvest.

Committee Update

Since the last Newsletter, the Committee has met on two separate occasions.

Unfortunately, the gate padlock was stolen in July. The matter has been reported to the police and a replacement installed. Please take extra care to ensure the gate is locked when entering and leaving the site, except on Sunday mornings when, as there are many members around, the gate is left open until 12.00pm

If you see anything you think is suspicious around the site please report it to the Committee, noting the time, location and if possible take a photograph.

Plot inspections

Recently a couple of members have asked why we carry out plot inspections and what are the rules and standards surrounding them. It was felt useful to share this information more widely with everyone through this Newsletter.

Three members of the Committee undertake monthly plot inspections during the main growing season from April through to October, depending upon the weather. Their findings are discussed by the full Committee before any action is taken. We inspect for two main reasons :-

- 1) To ensure plots are being cultivated and well looked after with weeds and rubbish kept to a minimum so all members can enjoy their plots without interference from their neighbours.
- 2) To ensure we comply with the terms of the LB Waltham Forest lease which require us to ensure the site is well maintained and managed as an allotment site. Failure to do so could result in cancellation of the lease and the possibility of all plot holders being evicted.

Although we are a privately managed site we follow many of the rules and 'good practice' used by London Boroughs to manage their own sites. We also follow some of the guidance provided by the National Allotment Society.

So, what are the inspection rules? There is no single rule. We look at a combination of the following factors in assessing whether a plot is well tended and not causing nuisance or inconvenience to its neighbours.

- Is at least 50% of the plot under active cultivation with fruit, vegetables or flowers growing on it ?
- Is the soil cultivated and free from significant weeds and grasses ?
- Is the plot kept tidy and clear of rubbish and non organic waste ?
- Are any fruit or nut trees adequately pruned and maintained to avoid excessive shade to neighbouring plots ?
- Are there any other trees growing on the plot except for fruit or nut trees ?
- Are the grass paths bordering the plot neatly cut and trimmed ?

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Where a combination of these conditions are not met, the member will be contacted and asked to rectify the situation. Usually this resolves the matter. If we receive no response and no improvement occurs they will be written to and warned if they do not rectify the situation and maintain their plot to a suitable standard their tenancy will be cancelled and the plot re-let. We try to avoid this situation if possible. Members are contacted formally on a minimum of three separate occasions before a tenancy is terminated. We ask members to contact us if they are anticipating problems or experiencing difficulties so we can work with them to resolve the situation before it is 'flagged up' through the inspection process.

If you have any concerns or worries about your own plot, or any in your immediate vicinity, please contact the Committee via the Secretary's email on laharodingfarm@gmail.com. We will be pleased to offer advice and guidance. Obviously, we cannot 'look after' the plot for members. Cultivating an allotment and 'growing your own' fruit and vegetables is a wonderful experience, but it takes a significant amount of time and physical effort so it's not for everyone. We make these points clearly to new joiners to the site. They have a three month 'grace' period before their plot is assessed for the first time.

Annual Flower and Vegetable Show



The annual show will take place on site on Sunday 3rd September. It's always a happy occasion and all members, particularly those new to the site are encouraged to attend and enter something. There will be a bar serving beers, wines, and soft drinks at modest prices. So do come along, maybe bring a picnic and make a day of it. Full details of classes, entry rules and start times will be emailed to everyone in the next week or so.

Dates for the Diary

- **Apple Pressing Day - Sunday 15th October** - bring along your apples and we will juice them for you
- **Mince Pies - Sunday 17th December** - we shall be serving coffee, mince pies and perhaps a glass of mulled wine - stop by and reminisce on the successes and near misses of the growing year.

Topical tips and Cultivation Advice

- 1) Its not too late to sow seeds – salad crops grow quickly and well from seed – lettuce, radish, beetroot, spring onions can be sown and will be ready to eat within 5 to 6 weeks.

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- 2) Spinach and pak choi germinate quickly and have the advantage of not bolting and running to seed in the cooler weather.
- 3) Spring cabbage can also be sown and, with a little protection, will stand through the winter to provide an early harvest next March/April time.
- 4) Harvest time is upon us with more than just courgettes available to pick. Don't delay harvesting your potatoes. Second early, salad, and main crop potatoes should have flowered and be ready. They might continue to grow but our heavy clay soil is a haven to slugs, who will ruin your crop if they can.



- 5) Outdoor tomatoes are growing strongly – take out side shoots, cut back some lower leaves to increase the air flow and aid ripening – also ensure the plants are staked firmly – unless you have a bush variety which can be left to scramble about.
- 6) Where crops have been harvested August is a good time to plant a 'nitrogen fixing' silage crop such as clover. This will add nitrogen to the soil and prevent other nutrients from leaching out in the Autumn rains.
- 7) Alternatively use 'ground cover' to protect the soil and prevent weed seeds from germinating in the vacant area. The Trading Hut has some good quality product if you don't have any.

Finally ...

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

LAHA Committee