

LEYTONSTONE ALLOTMENT HOLDERS ASSOCIATION
RESIDENT AT RODING FARM SINCE 1934
MAY 2024 NEWSLETTER

Spring ?

To say the least, the weather so far this Spring has been very cool. After the heavy rains and some very wet conditions the site has dried out well. These are ideal conditions for preparing the soil. The heavy winter rains will have compacted the earth, so it is advisable to loosely 'fork over' the ground to bring in some air and help warm the soil. If you don't have the time to do this soon it is highly recommended to cover any uncultivated areas to retain the moisture and prevent weeds growing. It is still too cold to sow or plant out anything but the hardiest vegetables and flowers. The site is never reliably 'frost free' until the middle of May and even then, it is recommended you check the 10 day weather forecast before planting out too much. Anything you do plant will need to be well hardened off. Never fear, you are not behind, you are just being cautious !

Committee Update

Since the last Newsletter the Committee has met on three separate occasions. Our focus has been on three priorities :-

- 1) Legal Status of the Association – the current legal status of the association is a cause for concern. Despite our best efforts we have been unable to find anyone willing to stand as independent trustees as required under our current constitution. We have sought advice on this problem from the National Allotment Society as our situation is not uncommon to other 'self managed' sites. They have recommended we adopt a Co-operative and Community Benefit Society model which does not require trustees. Their legal team will work with us and help us to register this solution utilizing their already accepted 'model rules' which will replace our existing Constitution. We will also need to amend our current Tenancy Agreement and update our Site Rules. Our plan is to have these three documents drafted and checked by the National Allotment Society over the next couple of months. After which we will send out the documents to all members for consultation and comment, prior to holding a Special General Meeting to discuss and decide on the future legal status of the Association. Then, if all this is agreed members will need to sign the new Tenancy Agreement. We believe it is critical we take these steps to ensure the long-term future of our allotment site. This is a huge amount of work, and as I have said already vital to our continuing existence, although on a practical 'day to day' basis little or nothing will change on site and coming to the allotment site should continue as before. If anyone has any immediate concerns or questions about these proposed legal changes please come and talk to any of the Committee if you see us on site or send an email to the Secretary with your question.
- 2) Plot Inspections – a couple of initial plot inspections have taken place with gentle reminders sent to members where plots are in a poor state of cultivation, covered in weeds, or with no sign of activity since Autumn of last year. Should any members have a temporary problem cultivating their plot due to illness or working away from the area for a period, it is really important to advise the Secretary so these issues can be taken into consideration.
- 3) Forthcoming events – we plan to hold the annual Spring Plant sale on Sunday 19th May – please donate any surplus seedlings you have, and should you be splitting any perennial plants or have surplus rooted cuttings these would also be most welcome. All proceeds go to the Association. Our 90th Anniversary at Roding Farm will be celebrated on Sunday 2nd June. Preparations are well advanced for a very informal gathering, tea, coffee, buns and a chat with fellow members. If you have

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any historical photos of the site and past members please bring them along to share and inspire the next generation.

Three full plots returned to cultivation

There has been a huge amount of effort put into return three full plots to cultivation :-

- Plot 20 has been cleared of trees, bushes and brambles and a natural hedge built to shield the site of boundary and encourage wildlife. A huge amount of accumulated rubbish was also removed and taken away. Thanks to all the working party volunteers who helped achieve this.
- Plot 76 has had the willows cut down and removed and is already showing remarkable progress with the creation of some well cultivated planting pockets.
- Plot 159 (adjacent to the car park) has had some of the overgrown bushes removed from around the perimeter and is currently 'marked out' and ready to let for the first time in many, many years.



Wildlife

In addition to our resident beehives, we have quite a lot of other wildlife. Foxes, a deer, hedgehogs, and a rare sighting of a badger. They all seem to be able to look out for themselves but if you could take particular care when clearing old compost heaps or strimming long grass not to injure any hedgehogs. They are the allotments best friend munching their way through a diet of slugs and snails and are very much to be encouraged. If you put down slug pellets, do so very sparingly as they can be toxic to hedgehogs.

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Dates for the Diary

- **Spring Plant Sale - Sunday 19th May** – timed to avoid the last frost of the year (hopefully) and a chance to pick up some bargains from other members with surplus stock.
- **90th Anniversary - Sunday 2nd June** – come along and celebrate 90 years of growing at Roding Farm.
- **Annual Flower and Vegetable Show - Sunday 1st September** – a similar date to last year to maximise the bountiful harvest whilst avoiding the late summer bank holiday - everyone is free to enter, no expertise required. It's very much about the taking part and having a bit of fun.
- **Wanstead Festival - date TBC but likely to be Sunday 15th September** – again if you can cultivate a few extra flowers or vegetables for donation, they would be greatly appreciated. Volunteers are needed to run this event so please let the Secretary know if you can help.
- **Apple Pressing Day – Sunday 6th October** - bring along your apples and we will juice them
- **Mince Pies – Sunday 15th 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) The next month or so is the super busy time when sowing and planting out really gets going.
- 2) Outside, early potatoes should have been planted in the past few weeks. Hopefully they are starting to show through but do 'earth them up' as this protects the growth from any late frost and protects the developing new potatoes from going green and poisonous in the light. Don't worry if you still have them to plant, they will be fine. Main crop and salad varieties can also be planted.
- 3) Broad beans, early peas, parsnips, carrots, leeks, cabbage, cauliflower can be sown successionaly.
- 4) Squash are also fabulous growers through the summer and early autumn and are very forgiving if your plot is a little weedy – sow one seed per pot of 'Butternut' or 'Crown Prince' – once they have 3 or 4 'proper' leaves plant them out, ideally in large bed in some enriched compost.
- 5) Runner beans and French beans need more heat to germinate, so check the weather and wait until it turns warmer - mid/late May hopefully - before making an outdoor sowing. Alternatively sow under a cold frame or indoors. Just remember to harden off indoor sowings before planting out.
- 6) Salad crops – lettuce, spring onion, beetroot – can all be sown outside in short rows every two or three weeks to give a successional harvest rather than a glut.
- 7) Seeds sown earlier in the greenhouse, or on a windowsill such as tomatoes, chillies, aubergines, and sweet corn should be growing well and probably need potting on before planting out later in May.
- 8) Cut flowers are probably the most economically valuable crop you can grow – just check out the High St prices – and are extremely valuable for attracting pollinators and other beneficial insects. They also brighten the place up and look 'mighty fine' so sow a few flowers if you can.
- 9) And if your seed germination has been disappointing, or you just haven't had time to get around to sowing anything get yourself off to the garden centre or a larger supermarket where you should find an array of 'plug plants' to purchase and plant out. Dobies also still have some vegetables available for mail order – but be quick !

Finally ...

If you have any suggestions, or concerns regarding the site please contact a Committee member.

LAHA Committee