

A.W.S.L.G. ALLOTMENT NEWS
ADDISCOMBE, WOODSIDE & SHIRLEY LEISURE GARDENS LTD
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**SPRING WATCH AT OUR
WILDLIFE FIELD**

Officially Spring begins on March 1st although in 2018 its visible arrival was delayed by several days by the Beast from the East. This year it arrived early and the last days of February saw several Hottest Day records being well and truly broken in London and across the UK.

Our frogs rose to the occasion and spawned with several lots appearing in the wildlife field pond on 20th February. A Grey Heron enjoyed a frog breakfast on consecutive days but the Mallard family have not yet arrived to dine off the abundant spawn.

February's sun and warmth coaxed all five species of hibernating butterflies to enjoy the heat and there was enough blossom, fat dandelions, pulmonaria and sloe, to enable them to refuel. Yellow male Brimstones patrolled the hedge line next to the hospital car park, Small Tortoiseshells went into courtship mode, Peacocks chased each other and single Red Admiral and Comma also came to the party. It's the first time in a lifetime of butterfly watching that I've observed all five hibernators before the end of February - a cause of joy at the time but of concern for what it might say about climate change.

Our Wednesday afternoon regular volunteers returned to action after a mid-winter break and newcomers are welcome to join in. We work between 1.30 and 3.00pm on a variety of gardening tasks and finish with tea/coffee and cake inside or out depending on the weather. Come along and see if it suits you - every Wednesday from now until early winter.

OBSERVING THE GENERAL NICEITIES

Wherever possible please try to keep to the main paths when walking to your allotment out of courtesy to your fellow plot-holders. There have been a few reported incidents where property has been damaged by people taking short cuts.

Dogs are not allowed on the site unless on a lead and under proper control. We have had several complaints lately about dogs running loose on plots, loud barking and generally being a nuisance.

The Trading Centre will open on every Wednesday afternoon starting 3th April at 2.30pm to 4pm until the end of September.

The canteen is open Saturday and Sunday mornings 9.30am - 11.30pm

Newsletter April 2019

POLYTUNNEL/GREENHOUSE

Our team of volunteers have been hard at work sowing seeds for eventual sale.

The first to be available, weather permitting of course, will be broad beans, cabbages and lettuce. The team are also growing: sweetcorn, brussels, tomatoes, squashes, cauliflowers, leeks, chilli peppers, and a variety of flowers to encourage wildlife. They will be specialising in the new varieties of blight resistant tomatoes e.g. Mountain Magic F1 tomato and Crimson Crush.

All plants will be sold at competitive prices and we would encourage you to come and purchase from outside the trading centre which is open every Saturday am & pm, Sunday am & Wednesday pm.

KEEP OUR STREAM CLEAR

This is a heartfelt plea from the volunteer who clears the stream of all blockages, a very important but necessary task because if the stream is blocked then the hospital car park can flood with dire consequences. So please take care to dispose of plastic sacks/bags properly as there have been recent problems with them ending up in the stream blocking the grille. Plastic bags are very difficult to remove from the grille which is there to stop small objects only. Unfortunately bags are not the only obstruction that has been found, over the last six months Mike has fished out beetroot, marrows, pumpkins and compost bin lids.

**EASTER MONDAY AFTERNOON TEA
2.30- 4PM**

Do come and join us in the hall for delicious home-made cakes, cream scones with jam and tea. Hopefully the weather will be kind to us as Easter is late this year so fingers crossed that we can all sit outside overlooking the wildlife garden. Plants will also be on sale.

BONFIRES

From the 31st March no bonfires are permitted before 4pm as BST begins. The usual summer-time ban will start from the end of April.

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APRIL GARDENING TIPS

From our resident author Jan MacDonald who has been a gardener for 60 years and has tended her allotment here for 25 years.

Stop putting out whole peanuts at the end of April as tits may feed them to their babies who could choke on them.

Companion planting

Even if you're not deliberately companion planting, consider the cultural needs of different types of plants before locating them close together. The needs of one may be contra-indicated for the other and your money and efforts will be wasted.

Don't grow onions close to beans.

Do grow celery next to beans for a bumper crop of beans.

Plant French marigolds (Tagetes) with cabbages to discourage whitefly.

Don't forget to plant a single petunia in the onion patch!

Plant pot marigolds (Calendula), nasturtiums, feverfew or borage close to anything that suffers from blackfly. The blackfly prefers these herbs and will leave the other plants alone.

Grow beans with your sweetcorn. Beans fix nitrogen from the air in their root nodules and sweetcorn loves nitrogen.

Digging

There really is no need for deep digging unless it is to remove deep-rooted weeds or prepare for root crops. All other crops survive just as well on shallowly dug soil. Double digging was done originally in the gardens of country houses where there were numerous houseguests, and it was done to dispose of the nightsoil from the guest's bedrooms.

Spread compost or rotted manure on the surface in late autumn instead of digging it in. The worms will take it into the soil over winter and save you the trouble.

Seeds

It is too early to sow or plant in the ground just now – the soil is too cold and things will either not grow at all, or have a bad start.

As a general principle, it is best to start all seeds except root crops indoors rather than straight into the ground. (This does not apply to beetroot, which can be transplanted). If you put seeds in the ground, you will have to thin them and weed them while they are still tiny.

Save your own seed from non-hybrid flowers and vegetables and reduce your gardening bill. Keep an eye on the seed-heads and tie a paper bag or old stocking over them when they are close to maturity, or you may find they've done their thing before you get there!

Use clear plastic egg-boxes as mini-greenhouses for seeds. Put compost and seeds in the egg compartments, water lightly and shut the lid. Stack the boxes on a sunny window-sill until the seedlings are well up, then open the lids and harden off to plant outside or pot on as appropriate.

To sow fine seed like lobelia in little clumps, make a template of paper. Fold it like a concertina, make holes with a hole-punch, iron the paper flat and put it on the compost before shaking the seeds over it. Tap the paper to make the seeds go through the holes, then shake some fine sand over the paper and tap that through the holes as well so that you can see where the seeds are as well as covering them.

Use old teabags as seed starters. Just pierce the centre, press a seed in and keep the bag moist until roots appear, then pot on into a 3" (8cm) pot.

HOURS OF OPENING

**Saturday 10.30am -12.15pm. 2.30pm - 4.15pm. Sunday 10.30am - 12.15pm.
Wednesday 2.30pm - 4.00pm April—September only**