

A.W.S.L.G. ALLOTMENT NEWS
ADDISCOMBE, WOODSIDE & SHIRLEY LEISURE GARDENS LTD
GLENTHORNE AVENUE, CROYDON. CR0 7EZ.
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**NOTES FROM THE
COMMITTEE**

Newsletter

February 2020

The minutes from the recent committee meetings are on display in the canteen and the trading centre but not everyone reads them. We thought it would be a good idea to have a precis of pertinent subjects as a regular slot in the newsletter.

Thanks to all those who have helped with the canteen refurbishment, especially Mark Olive (carpentry and design), John Rose et al (transport, plumbing, electrical work) and the Saturday working group (painting) plus everyone who has been busily cleaning so that the canteen is ready to open on time. A task very well done.

During his plot inspections Peter, our Ground Steward has noted that many plots have a lot of rubbish over them particularly at the rear of plots, the worst offenders are plastic bags - in heavy winds which we have had a lot of lately, empty plastic bags blow around the site and sometimes block the grille in the brook. If the stream cannot run freely because of blockages there is a danger of flooding in areas such as the car park in Shirley Oaks Hospital and nobody wants that to happen. This is not the first time a plea has gone out in the newsletter to all plot holders to be tidy and clear up their rubbish. It is a most unpleasant job to have to get into the stream and clear the debris, please consider how harmful plastic is to our local environment. The skip is manned and open on the 1st weekend of every month so do use this facility.

The committee is in the process of planning for this present year's expenditure, suggestions made by plot holders will be considered. So get thinking and pop your ideas into the office, open 10.30-12noon. When closed please use the letter box.

**CALLING ALL NEW PLOT-HOLDERS FOR
AFTERNOON TEA AND CAKE.**

Saturday 22nd February at 2pm in the hall.

We warmly welcome all new plot-holders to come along and meet some of the Committee members and other plot holders, helpful advice will be given and all your questions answered. It is so nice to see a recent influx of families joining, please bring your children along as well.

**VOLUNTEERS LUNCH - Sunday 15th
MARCH 12.30pm in the hall.**

Once again the committee have organised a lunch in the hall to thank each and everyone for all their hard work throughout the year. This is a great opportunity for the regular volunteers to meet new people and to catch up with old friends.

Volunteers are the life-blood of our allotment society, without their dedication we would not be the thriving organisation we are today. However as with all communities nothing remains static and we constantly need new volunteers to take the place of those who have retired. You can enquire at the office, ask any member of the polytunnel team or the volunteers in the trading centre and the canteen. If you cannot manage to give your time at weekends but are available during the week just talk to Peter our ground steward as there are many varied jobs waiting to be tackled around the site. You would be helped and supported at all times.

Many people who volunteer for the first time are really surprised to find out how rewarding it is. Join us today and you could be looking forward to the next volunteers lunch in 2021.

SPRING PLANTING - SHALLOTS, ONION SETS & GARLIC

Now in stock, all the old favorites, **Shallots:** Golden Gourmet, Red Sun, **Onion Sets:** Sturon globe, Red Karmen, **Garlic:** Solent Wight & Picardy Wight.

Back by popular demand, Mountain Magic F1, blight resistant tomato seeds. A top-performing cordon-trained variety with the rich flavour of heritage varieties with modern F1 hybrid disease resistance. Not only does it have good resistance to early blight, it carries the late blight-busting Ph-2 and Ph-3 genes, giving it full protection against all current British strains. (I grew these last year, absolutely delicious).

Seed potatoes should arrive within the next few weeks, no definite date yet as it does depend on the prevailing weather conditions.

The canteen is open Saturday and Sunday mornings 9.30am - 11.30pm
The Trading Centre is now open on Saturday afternoon 2.30pm - 4.15pm.

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JOBS TO DO IN FEBRUARY

VEGETABLE CARE:

Lime your plot this month if you have acid soil, or have had previous problems with club root and wish to grow brassicas - **do not plant** anything in the ground until April or May as an interval of two months is needed between liming and planting.

Make a crop rotation plan for your plot to ensure that the same crops are not grown in the same beds year after year. This helps to prevent disease build up.

Try to avoid too much digging in wet weather, but if gardening on top of wet soil, work from a plank of wood to avoid treading on the bed and compacting the soil.

Prepare new asparagus beds by weeding, digging over thoroughly, incorporating lots of organic matter. One of our best selling products is the bags of **composted stable manure**. Alternatively contact the Ground Steward for an order of fresh stable manure, delivered to your plot.

Cultivate and prepare seedbeds, covering them with clear polythene, **cloches** or **fleece** to warm the soil before sowing.

If you have lightened your soil over the years with plenty of organic matter and the weather turns mild, you can sow broad beans, carrots, parsnips, early beetroot, bulb onions (not sets), lettuces, radish, peas, spinach and summer cabbage outside under cloches. If the weather is very cold, then wait until late February. If you still have heavy clay soil, it is best to wait until early March. Seeds can always be sown in pots or modules, under cover, if you are eager to get started. Likewise leave planting out garlic or shallots until the weather improves as they do not thrive in wet conditions.

Don't be in a rush to plant your potatoes whilst the soil is waterlogged and cold. Low soil temperatures and wet conditions can cause a bacterial disease of potato blackleg and an anamorphic fungus infection, rhizoctonia which stays in the soil. This is particularly important as the control of fungal conditions is severely restricted these days.

From mid-month onwards sow greenhouse-grown tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers. Use a heated propagator to encourage germination and then keep them potted on at a lower temperature.

Plant Jerusalem artichoke tubers, they can act as a screen for the compost bin or the shed as they grow quite tall.

Feed any spring cabbages that have been standing all winter. Use high nitrogen feeds such as **Growmore**.

Slugs can still pose a threat so continue to use **slug controls (please use in moderation and remove any dead slugs)**. Try an alternative approach by baking used egg shells in the oven so they are very crisp, crush and scatter, slugs don't like sharp bits.

Check and oil lawn mowers, shears and rotavators ready for spring.

FRUIT CARE:

This is the last month to prune apple and pear trees and also the last opportunity to apply **winter washes** to dormant fruit trees. This helps to control overwintering eggs of aphids, apple suckers and scale insects.

When pruning fruit trees make sure you remove any dead or diseased wood, including spurs with mummified fruits which are the result of brown rot earlier in the season, check for cankers on the branches.

Prune established autumn fruiting raspberries, cutting all canes down to the ground before mulching and top dressing with **fertiliser** over the roots.

Apply a **general-purpose fertiliser** to all tree, bush and cane fruit, at the manufacturer's specified rates. Fertiliser is best applied over the whole root area of the plant (roughly equivalent to the spread of the branches, but on the ground). Extra potassium can be beneficial in addition to the balanced feed.

Cover strawberries with cloches for an early crop.

Net fruit bushes against birds. Protect the blossom of early-flowering apricots, peaches and nectarines from frost damage by covering with **fleece**. Alternatively keep the emerging shoots dry with a rain shelter of plastic sheeting as this helps prevent infection.

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