

A.W.S.L.G. ALLOTMENT NEWS
ADDISCOMBE, WOODSIDE & SHIRLEY LEISURE GARDENS LTD
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**VIEWS FROM OUR
PLOT**

NEWSLETTER JULY 2021

As we approach our 100th year celebrations we wanted to show two different aspects of the allotments separated by a century. In August's newsletter there will be a snapshot of life for ploholders in 1921, which is based on our old records. But for now, here is the contemporary view from new ploholders, Malini and Kamani.

For years I would hear Mike Roche talk about his Allotment. I never really understood what the big deal was about growing vegetables, especially when you can easily buy it from the shops! A few times he took me and a couple of friends for trips to the allotment to view his flowers and his vegetables. It gave me a better idea of what having an allotment really meant. He also gave me some tomato plants to grow at home, to see if I would get along with it, teaching me how to pinch off leaves and low stems. I did ok, and really enjoyed it, especially the eating part of it!

With the first lockdown and my hobbies all at a standstill, I asked a friend if she would consider sharing an allotment with me, as I knew I would not be able to cope by myself. She agreed although both of us were hesitant. But with the guidance of our mentor Mike, we felt more secure and took the plunge.

We acquired our plot in November 2020. It was perfect for us, as our kind plot neighbour Wolf had looked after it very well. It was close to the trading hut, canteen, and toilets, all of which were a bonus to us, as we did not realise allotments had these things on site. When we went to buy our first vegetables to grow, we were just really excited to be planting something. Broad beans were our first venture. I do not think either of us had tasted them at the time, but as we were super eager to plant anything, broad beans were the only veg available! A lady asked us how we plan to grow them. I replied innocently, "I don't know, it's our first time and we don't know what we are doing", this was greeted with laughter from everyone in the hut. Everyone there immediately started to give us advice. It is this advice that we have gained from pretty much everyone at the allotment. This is what we treasure the most and honestly, if people were not so friendly and open to sharing their knowledge, I don't know what we would have done!

There is a great sense of community in the allotment which we did not expect. During covid,

I no longer felt isolated. The allotment immediately lifted our spirits. It is not just a place to grow fruit, veg and flowers, it's a place to build friendships, learn from different cultures, share and listen to stories of the old days, support one another and breathe in some fresh air. It is a place to leave your worries at the gate and enter a little haven of peace, where you can choose to chat to a passer-by or concentrate on nurturing your plot.

We could not have got better plot neighbours, in Wolf and Dave, for which we are incredibly grateful. We tap into their wisdom including Mike, as much as we can, because they have so much to give. We have David Lay who has helped us with various things without even being asked. Paul who advised us on our potatoes. Mike, Patrick, and Jerry who have shared their plants with us, I'm sure I've missed people out, sorry if I have. Our time at the allotment has been amazing thus far. Both me and my trusty plot partner feel that this allotment is quite a magical place. Time seems to resonate at a different speed, and before we know it, 5hrs have gone by, our mind has been quiet and still during that time, we have had some peace from the humdrum of daily life and leave feeling refreshed, like we have achieved something worthwhile. We do not think that we'll ever get used to feeling excited by seeing our vegetables grow or the blossom on the trees. We have not got to the point of tasting them yet, apart from a few sweet strawberries. That will be another chapter to tell on the life and times of the allotment.

n.b. This is slightly abridged, the full article will be available on our web site soon.

The Trading Hut is now open on Saturday afternoons from 2.30-4.15pm as well as Saturday and Sunday Mornings, it is usually quieter on-site during Saturday afternoons so more time to browse and make your purchases.

Ice lollies and cold driks are now on sale in the Trading Hut.

We will soon be ordering onions and garlic for Autumn Planting and seeds for next year suggestions of varieties are welcome so please email or drop a list of your wishes through the office door.

Volunteers to help us in the Trading Hut are still needed.

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JOBS TO DO IN JULY

FRUIT CARE:

When summer-fruiting raspberries have finished cropping promptly cut out the old canes.

If possible water tree, bush and cane fruit thoroughly once every 7 to 10 days during dry spells. Mulching will help them retain water. Keep large-fruited apples, such as 'Bramley's Seedling' particularly well watered to help to avoid problems with bitter pit.

Side-shoots that form on pinched-out grape laterals can be stopped at one leaf. Leaves that are shading grape bunches can be removed, to speed ripening of the clusters.

Thin apples after the June drop if still overcrowded. Remove blemished and central fruits from the clusters first. Branches that are still heavily laden can be supported with a V-shaped stake.

Watch out for apple and pear scab, this shows up as large blackish spots on both the leaves and fruit.

Check **Codling & plum moth traps** and replace if need be. Codling moth damage shows up on apples as a single brown hole in the skin.

Coarse leaves, slightly enlarged buds, and reduced yield on blackcurrant bushes can be a sign of big bud mite or reversion virus. Unfortunately, the only cure is to dig them up and replace. There is a mite-resistant cultivar available, "Ben Hope".

Propagate blackberries and cane fruits with long, lax stems with tip layering.

FLOWER/LAWN CARE:

Deadhead roses and apply a small handful of **Rose Fertiliser as** this encourages further flowering. We sell economy 3kg bags. Alternately feed every fortnight with a high-potassium liquid fertiliser, such as tomato feed.

Apply summer lawn fertiliser. If the weather is hot, set the mower at a slightly higher level than normal for early summer.

SOW NOW OUTDOORS : Chicory, Carrot, Endive, Lettuce, Turnips Spinach, Parsley, Radish, Fennel, Oriental vegetables, Spring Cabbage at the end of the month. **PLANT:** Winter Cabbage, Cauliflower, Savoys, Purple Sprouting Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts.

VEGETABLE CARE:

Carrots can still be sown, but beware carrot fly when thinning existing seedlings. Use **enviromesh** to cover, only removing when weeding.

Last chance to plant out your leeks, dibbing them separately into a hole, an old broken spade handle is ideal for this job.

Beware of potato blight, it helps to keep your crop earthed as much as possible. Quick preventive action is the best method, if you are unfortunate enough to get blight, first cut off all growth above soil level and remove it from your plot, sealing any debris in a plastic bag. If the above ground growth has been removed early enough it is likely that the potatoes below ground will not have been affected by the potato blight, especially if you have previously earthed up your potato plants. Test the potato tubers by removing one from the ground. and cut it in half. If it is infected with potato blight the flesh will be stained brown and it will have started to rot.

Research from America claims that 250 to 500mg of Salicylic acid (aspirin) in 4.5 litres of water gives some protection against microbial or insect attack for plants in the nightshade family, including potatoes and tomatoes. Spray 2 to 3 times a month especially when periods of high humidity are forecast. It may well be worth a try, after all, aspirin are very cheap.

Don't forget to stop cordon tomatoes by removing the main shoot. Look for the leaf that's above the fourth truss and cut it off there. This should ensure that the fruits ripen by the end of the season. Leave bush varieties to their own devices. Keep an eye out for sunken brown patches of blossom end rot, this is caused by irregular watering.

Climbing beans may also need stopping to maximize cropping on the existing side-shoots. Stop them at the top of their supports. Try and pick beans and peas, small and tender as this prolongs cropping and stops them becoming tough and stringy later in the summer. Beans also need sufficient water to help the pod set. Mulching is essential to retain moisture.

******* REMINDER OF THE ANNUAL SHOW DATE SUNDAY 29TH AUGUST 2021 *******

HOURS OF OPENING

**TRADING CENTRE OPENING TIMES SATURDAY 10.30AM TO 12.15PM & 2.30 TO 4.15pm
SUNDAY 10.30AM TO 12.15PM. CANTEEN OPEN FROM 10AM TO 11.30AM**