

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

March 2020

The committee have purchased a Skarper T90 wood chipper, this model is a professional gravity - drum, petrol engine with a ball hitch for easy towing. This decision was made after having considered the environmental impact of burning wood, the call for global sustainability and the expected amount of use which is considerable. Other concerns have also been raised as more and more plot-holders have polytunnels on their plots; it would only take a gusty, windy day whilst having a bonfire for sparks to damage a nearby polytunnel. We hope this will help reduce the volume of wood that is burnt across the site. We also do have to consider the neighbouring houses. So if you are considering pruning or cutting down a tree do let Peter know and the wood can be collected. The chippings will be made available for plot holders and also used for the Polytunnel and the wildlife field.

The committee are giving serious consideration to address the issue of disabled access with regards to our toilet facilities. We know at present we have some of the best allotment amenities in Croydon, however we would very much like to hear your views on whether or not our present toilets should be improved.

You will all be pleased to know that the gardening reference books have been returned to the canteen. We wish to thank Bob Taylor in helping to reinstate the book library, this is a valuable resource that he has helped to build up over a number of years; Bob has willingly agreed to be the Library Curator. These books can be either perused over your cup of tea and bacon sandwich or borrowed as long as they are returned for the benefit for others.

Work in progress: we wish to create more car parking spaces in the main car park. Over the next few weeks Peter and his team will begin work on setting up new storage facilities for the wood chippings, manure and deliveries of Croydon's own compost made from their garden waste collection known as "Croypost". These are presently in heaps in the car park taking up space. These storage facilities will still be available to plot holders.

**PROS AND CONS OF USING A PEAT
FREE COMPOST**

Using peat in gardens releases a million tonnes of CO2 every year. Removing it from composts and grow-bags would cut those emissions at a stroke and would be the same as taking about 350,000 cars off the road. It would also help end the destruction of our precious peat bogs and the loss of birds, plants and insects that rely on them.

With a peat-free or peat-reduced product, you tend to find that they retain water better than a peat product. That can be great during the summer months but, of course, in the winter that can cause a lot of plants serious problems and they become very sensitive to the excess moisture. You have to reduce the amount of water that you use and you may have to mix grit and sharp sand with the peat-free and peat-reduced product, to create ideal drainage and water retention properties in the product.

In the summer, when you're watering pots of bedding plants and pots of tomatoes and aubergines, try watering little and often. Apply the same total quantity of water you would normally use but water over a longer period, just use a trickle supply with a peat-free product which does the job just as well.

The same is true of nutrients. The peat-free product tends not to hold onto nutrients very well. So what you need to do is apply the same type and quantity of nutrient but over a longer period. Instead of feeding once a week, feed twice a week with 50 per cent of the quantity.

The trading centre sells Durston's peat-free multi-purpose compost in 40lt bags.

Volunteers Lunch
Sunday March 15th in the hall at
12.30pm.

Without our band of willing volunteers we would not be able to offer many of the services and events that we do. The committee want to show our thanks and appreciation and warmly invite all volunteers to the above event. If you cannot make it please do let us know so that we cater for the right number.

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

JOBS TO DO IN MARCH

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 May or June 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.

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 and the weather has warmed up, 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 still very cold and wet with our heavy clay soil, it is best to wait until mid March. Seeds can always be sown in pots or modules, under cover, if you are eager to get started.

Prepare new asparagus beds by weeding, digging over thoroughly, incorporating lots of organic matter.

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

Slugs can still pose a threat so continue to use **slug controls** but only in moderation.

Plant out onion sets if the soil is not too wet and in light soils only; heavy clay soils need longer to warm up. Plant 5-10cm (2-4in) apart in rows 25-30cm (10-12in) apart from mid-March to mid-April. Gently push the **sets** into soft, well-worked soil so that the tip is barely showing, and firm the soil around them.

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

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 grown quite tall.

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.

Net fruit bushes against birds. Protect the blossom of early-flowering apricots, peaches and nectarines from frost damage by covering with **fleece**. As we are not longer allowed to sell the fungal treatments for peach leaf curl, prompt removal of infected leaves before the bloom of white spores appears will help reduce the amount of fungus carried over to the following year. Alternatively keep the emerging shoots dry with a rain shelter of plastic sheeting as this helps to prevent infection.

PLANTS FROM THE POLYTUNNEL

Preparation has begun, seeds have been sown, plug plants bought and planted on. We expect to have some plants for sale by the end of March, weather permitting of course. Again this year we are lucky to have an enthusiastic team of volunteers, many thanks to them all.

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	