



AWSLG JANUARY 2026

Welcome to January on your plot

Happy New Year, everyone! If you're reading this with a cup of tea whilst looking out the window at the rain or frost, you're in good company. January might seem quiet on the allotment, but don't be fooled – this is one of the most important months of the year.

Why? Because what you do now sets the pace for your entire growing season. Think of January as the planning and preparation month that separates a good year from a great one. The ground might be too cold and wet to work right now, and that's perfectly fine. Some of your best 'plot work' this month happens at the kitchen table with a notebook, not in your muddy boots.

COMMITTEE CORNER

At the AGM, a new committee was elected. We warmly welcome Les, Norma, Sarah and Sergei, who have joined the committee for the first time. We are confident that their contributions will be invaluable to the effective management of the site and in ensuring strong and balanced representation from all.

The Committee will meet on the second Wednesday of each month.

A reminder that a committee member is usually available in the office each Saturday from 10.30 am to 12 midday, should you wish to speak with someone.

THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 2025 – 2026

| Officers | Plot No | Committee Members | Plot No |
|---------------------------------|---------|-------------------|---------|
| Chairman - Tony O'Connor | 80 | Michelle Gosnell | 171 |
| Kin Tse - Vice Chair | 89 | Norma Allison | 305 |
| Peter Bashford - Ground Steward | 235B | Sarah Turner | 177 |
| Jill Seagroatt - Treasurer | 70 | Wenton Lespierre | 31 |
| Jen Tapping - Secretary | 300 | Sergei Berdnikov | 340 |
| | | Les Jones | 53 |

Visit our website: www.awslg.org.uk

Email Address: awslg.ltd@gmail.com

Members & Community News

Plot inspections take place from March to October. The Inspection Team looks not only for plots that need improvement, but also for those that deserve recognition and awards.

So here's a challenge for 2026: will yours be on the list at the next AGM?

THE FOLLOWING AWARDS WERE PRESENTED AT THE DECEMBER AGM:

President Trophy – The Best Kept Full Plot

Mr Richard & Mr Oliver Anstey Plot 282

Best Newcomer

Mrs Sarah Turner Plot 177

Volunteer Cup -William Johnson Memorial Cup

Mr David Guest Plot 191

Best Half Plot Cup

Ms Gail Spring Plot 281a

Best Leisure Garden

Mrs Sandra Miller Plot 120a

Wildlife Cup

Mr Michael Steward Plot 371

Life Time Membership for Exceptional Service to AWSLG.

Alan Perry, Penny Perry, Malcolm Bridge, Tommy Benson, Jen Tapping

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL.

MACMILLAN COFFEE MORNING

The September 2025 Macmillan Cancer Support Coffee Morning raised £561.27, a sum now officially confirmed by the Charity. Beth Holmes and Victoria Steward would like to thank everyone who generously supported the event, from bakers to buyers and beyond.

TRADING HUT (ALLOTMENT SHOP) UPDATE

Opening Hours:

- Saturday morning: 10.30 am-12.15 pm
- Sunday morning: 10.30 am-12.15 pm
- From March: Saturday afternoons 2.30 pm-4.15 pm

Also available this month:

- Compost and manure (stock up whilst you can!)
- Tool maintenance supplies: oil, sharpening stones
- Bird netting and plant protection fleece
- Seed trays and propagators for early sowing

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

We depend on our valued volunteers to run the shop. If you can spare time one weekend in three, or just occasionally at busy times, please get in touch. There are also opportunities to help with:

- Canteen (Saturday and Sunday mornings)
- Saturday Working Party (maintenance)
- Wildlife Field

All regular volunteers earn a 10% discount on purchases over £5 in the shop.

Email awslg.ltd@gmail.com if you're interested.

Latest News:

You may have read already that the new season's seeds have arrived! Vegetable, herb and flower seeds are now on sale at a discount on the pack price. Our annual delivery of seed potatoes from Scotland is due as soon as the weather permits transport. Buy as many or as few as you need – the quality and prices are brilliant, and there'll be free growing advice from our knowledgeable team! A great place for new plot holders to get advice and support.

NEW YEAR PLOT CHECK

Ensure your sheds are weatherproof, and any winter storm damage is addressed. If you notice any issues with communal areas, please report them to the committee so we can sort them before the busy season starts.

This Month's Growing Guide

January is the quietest month on the plot, but it's absolutely crucial for setting yourself up for success. This is planning time, preparation time, and getting-ready time. The work you do now – both physical and on paper – determines how smoothly your growing year flows.

PRIORITY JOBS THIS MONTH

These are listed in order of importance. If you can only manage one or two jobs this month, start at the top:

PLAN YOUR CROP ROTATION

If the words '**crop rotation**' make your eyes glaze over, stay with me. This is simpler than you think, and it matters enormously. Draw a simple plan showing where different crop families will grow this year. Rotate brassicas, legumes, roots, and others around your plot. This prevents soil diseases and balances nutrient use.

Your action this month: Get a piece of paper and sketch your plot. Divide it into four roughly equal sections. Write down what you grew where last year, then plan where everything moves to this year. It takes 20 minutes and saves months of problems.

GET YOUR SEEDS FROM THE ALLOTMENT SHOP

This genuinely cannot wait. By mid-February, popular varieties may be sold out. The shop staff can offer advice on varieties that do well locally. Supporting the shop helps keep our costs down.

SERVICE YOUR TOOLS

There's something deeply satisfying about walking into an organised shed on a spring morning and finding exactly the tool you need. January is when you make that happen. Clean and oil spades, forks, and hoes. Sharpen secateurs and shears. Replace broken handles. Well-maintained tools make spring work much easier.

CHECK STORED CROPS

Inspect stored potatoes, onions, and squashes weekly. Remove any that show signs of rot before they affect others.

★ THE GOLDEN RULE FOR JANUARY:

Never work wet soil. If your boots are picking up clumps of mud, step away! Working on waterlogged soil destroys its structure, and you'll spend all year trying to recover it. Wait for drier weather – it will come.

PROTECT OVERWINTERING CROPS

Check fleece and cloches on winter salads and early sowings. Replace or secure any that have blown loose in winter storms.

WHAT TO SOW & PLANT NOW

💡 **January sowing reality check:** Don't rush! Most vegetables sown in January need heat and light. If you don't have a heated propagator or a very sunny windowsill, wait until February or March. Late, strong plants always outperform early, weak ones.

WHAT TO HARVEST NOW

January harvest in Croydon: Leeks (pull as needed), kale (pick leaves regularly), Brussels sprouts (from bottom up), parsnips (taste better after frost), winter cabbage, perpetual spinach, chard, winter salads under cover.

Top tip: Harvest parsnips and leeks when the ground isn't frozen – digging frozen ground damages soil structure and is backbreaking work!

WEATHER WATCH

January in Croydon typically brings frost, occasional snow, and plenty of rain. Avoid walking on beds when soil is frozen or waterlogged. Use this quiet time for jobs that don't disturb soil: planning, tool maintenance, cleaning polytunnels, and organising seeds. The ground will be workable again soon enough.

New to Your Plot

Welcome to your first January as an allotment holder! January feels quiet, but it's actually one of the most important months. The planning and preparation you do now shapes your entire year. Here's what you need to know:

UNDERSTANDING CROP ROTATION

Crop rotation means not growing the same plant family in the same spot two years running. Why? Different crops use different nutrients and are affected by different diseases. Moving them around keeps soil healthy and reduces pest problems. The basic groups are brassicas (cabbage, kale, sprouts), legumes (peas, beans), roots (carrots, parsnips, beetroot), and others (tomatoes, courgettes, squash). Rotate them around your plot each year.

YOUR FIRST JANUARY JOBS

Draw a simple plot plan: Sketch your plot showing beds and paths. Mark where things grew last year (if you know). Plan where each crop family will go this year.

Make a seed list: Write down what you want to grow. Start with easy wins: salad leaves, radishes, courgettes, beans, potatoes. Add a couple of challenges like tomatoes or squash.

Visit the Allotment Shop: Pop in to see what seeds and supplies are available. The staff can advise on varieties that do well in Croydon's heavy clay soil.



WHAT NOT TO DO IN JANUARY

Don't dig frozen or waterlogged soil: You'll damage the structure and create compacted clods. Wait until it's workable.

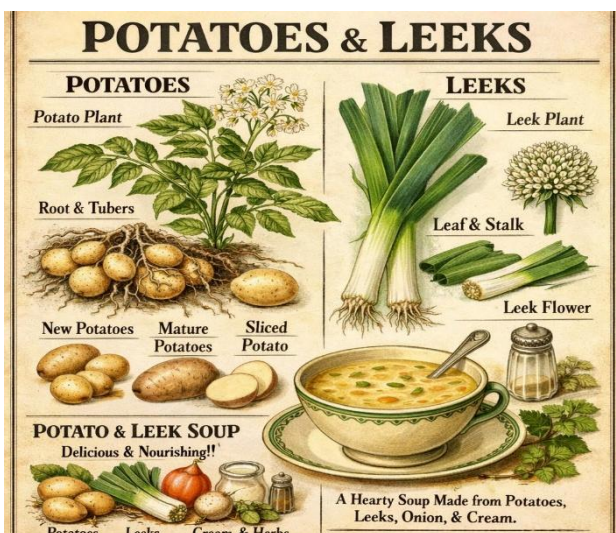
Don't rush to sow seeds: Seeds sown too early without heat and light become weak and leggy. Most crops can wait until March.

Don't clear everything: Leave some seed heads and stems for overwintering insects and birds. Nature needs winter shelter, too.

YOUR FIRST SUCCESS THIS MONTH

Grow microgreens on your windowsill. Seriously! Buy pea or radish seeds from the Allotment Shop, scatter them thickly in a seed tray with compost, water, and place it on a sunny windowsill. In 10-14 days, you'll have delicious, nutritious greens to cut with scissors. This gives you fresh produce whilst your plot is resting and builds confidence that you can actually grow things!

From Plot to Plate



WARMING WINTER LEEK & POTATO SOUP

Perfect for using up your winter leeks and stored potatoes! Slice 3 large leeks (white and pale green parts), dice 3 medium potatoes. Gently cook the leeks in butter until soft (10 minutes), then add the potatoes and 1 litre of vegetable stock. Simmer until potatoes are tender (20 minutes), then blend until smooth. Season well, add a swirl of cream if you fancy, and serve with crusty bread. This freezes brilliantly, so make a big batch when you harvest leeks. The sweet, gentle flavour of winter leeks makes this infinitely better than shop-bought versions!

Grower's Tips

ADVANCED CROP PLANNING

Rather than just planning what to grow, plan when to harvest. Work backwards from when you want crops ready. For example, if you want new potatoes for June, plant earlies in mid-March. Want courgettes from July? Sow indoors in April. This 'harvest planning' prevents gluts and gaps brilliantly.

POLYTUNNEL SOIL PREPARATION

January is perfect for refreshing polytunnel soil. Remove the top 5-10cm of soil (it's often depleted and harbours pests), add 10cm of fresh compost mixed with well-rotted manure, and let it settle for 6-8 weeks. This creates perfect conditions for early tomatoes and peppers. Polytunnel soil needs more feeding than outdoor beds because there's no rain to wash in nutrients.

SEED STARTING STRATEGY

Instead of buying a heated propagator, create a 'warm spot' by placing seed trays on top of a fridge or freezer (the motor generates warmth), or in an airing cupboard with a grow light. Once seeds germinate, move them to a very sunny windowsill. This gives you the heat for germination without expensive equipment. Start with crops that need long growing seasons: chillies, peppers, aubergines, and celery.

WINTER WEEDING ADVANTAGE

Weed on dry January days when you can. Winter weeds are shallow-rooted and easy to hoe off. More importantly, you're stopping them from setting seed. One hour of winter weeding saves ten hours in spring. Use a sharp hoe and work backwards so you don't walk on freshly cultivated soil. This is genuinely one of the highest-return jobs you can do in January.

Nature & Wildlife Garden Watch

January is perfect for observing the Wildlife garden and nature because the bare branches reveal the space's structure and bones. Whilst your vegetable plots rest, the wildlife nature garden area is alive with winter wildlife. Take a few minutes during your plot visits to see what's happening.

WILDLIFE TO WATCH FOR

Robins: Our boldest winter visitor, often following gardeners hoping for disturbed insects. Listen for their sweet, melancholic winter song.

Wrens: Tiny but loud! Look for them hunting insects in log piles and under brambles. Their song is surprisingly powerful for such a small bird.

Blackbirds: Watch them turning over leaves looking for insects and worms. Males are all black with orange beaks; females are brown.

Goldfinches: These stunning birds love teasel and thistle seed heads. Their tinkling calls and red faces make them easy to identify.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN JANUARY

Log piles and leaf litter: Essential habitat for overwintering insects, beetles, and hedgehogs. Don't tidy these areas – they're providing crucial shelter.

Seed heads: Teasels, thistles, and ornamental grasses aren't just beautiful against winter frost – they're vital food sources for finches and other seed-eating birds.

Bare branches: Notice the beautiful silhouettes and structure of trees and shrubs. Look for bird nests from last year – now visible without leaves.

Early bulbs: Keep an eye out for the very first snowdrops and winter aconites pushing through. These are the first food sources for emerging bees.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Keep bird baths ice-free: Birds need water in winter just as much as in summer. Break the ice daily or add a tennis ball to slow freezing.

Leave some 'mess': Resist the urge to over-tidy. Piles of pruning, seed heads, and leaf litter are winter hotels for beneficial insects.

Report sightings: Seen something special? Let us know! We'd love to build a record of what wildlife calls our nature garden home.

♥ NATURE NOTE:

Remember, your allotment and the wildlife nature garden are connected. The birds, bees, and beneficial insects you support in the nature area will help pollinate your crops and control pests on your plot. It's all one ecosystem!

Reminder of some points Related to the Regulations

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS AN AWSLG MEMBER

⚠ Important: These guidelines ensure AWSLG remains thriving and productive for all. Regular plot inspections are conducted. If you're struggling, ill, or away, contact the committee immediately:

awslg.ltd@gmail.com

PLOT MAINTENANCE

- ✓ **Keep your plot cultivated** – Neglected plots affect neighbours and may result in termination
- ✓ **Control weeds** – Prevent seeding and spreading. Your weeds become everyone's problem
- ✓ **Maintain paths** – Keep clear (minimum 45cm/18 inches wide) and trim encroaching vegetation
- ✓ **Structures** – Keep sheds and polytunnels in good repair within your plot boundaries

WATER USAGE

- ✓ **Use responsibly** – Water costs are our biggest expense. Fix leaks immediately
- ✓ **Conservation** – Use watering cans where possible and store rainwater in water butts
- ✓ **Timing** – Water before 9 am or after 6 pm to reduce evaporation
- ✓ **Report problems** – Inform the Ground Steward of any leaks

YOUR MEMBERSHIP OBLIGATIONS

When you joined, you agreed to:

- ✓ Volunteer and participate in governance
- ✓ Maintain your plot to satisfactory standards
- ✓ Treat fellow members with courtesy and respect
- ✓ Follow all Society rules and regulations

ALLOTMENT SHOP & COMMUNAL AREAS

- ✓ **Respect opening hours:** Saturdays & Sundays 10.30 am-12.15 pm, plus Saturday afternoons 2.30 pm-4.15 pm (from March)
- ✓ **Leave facilities clean** – Return equipment promptly



Remember: We're a community. Your plot maintenance affects everyone around you. Small problems become big problems if ignored. Committee members are volunteers – please treat them with respect.

SITE RULES

- ✓ **Security** – Lock gates on entry and exit
- ✓ **Dogs** – Must be on leads at all times. Clean up immediately
- ✓ **Children** – Welcome but must be supervised and stay on your plot
- ✓ **Waste** – No household rubbish. Use skip only for non-burnable, non-recyclable site waste
- ✓ **Noise** – Keep to reasonable levels. Respect shift workers and neighbours

PEST & DISEASE MANAGEMENT

- ✓ **Net your crops** – Protect brassicas and soft fruit from parakeets and pigeons
- ✓ **Report outbreaks** – Alert the committee so others can take preventative action
- ✓ **Bonfires** – Only dry, woody material. Check wind direction. Never during dry or windy weather

COMMON ISSUES CAUSING PROBLEMS

- ✗ Neglected plots and overgrown paths
- ✗ Water waste and leaking hoses
- ✗ Unlocked gates and inappropriate waste disposal
- ✗ Dogs off leads and unsupervised children
- ✗ Noise during restricted hours



TOGETHER WE KEEP OUR ALLOTMENTS THRIVING!

QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

Contact the Secretary or any Committee member **Email:** awslg.ltd@gmail.com