



# West Wickham Allotments Ltd

[www.wwallotments.org.uk](http://www.wwallotments.org.uk)

**Newsletter – June 2024**



## Notes from the Trading Shed

The Trading Shed is well stocked with most things that you will need to manage your plot so come in and see us between 10.30 and 12.30 every Sunday. We take cash or card and our wonderful shop helpers, who work on a monthly Rota, are always happy to help if there's something you need. Most of them have had plots on the site for many years and are very knowledgeable.

Our seed carousel was re-stocked in May and has both Country Value and Johnsons seeds, both sold at a large discount. We have a good range of netting, ground cover and mesh to cover your crops and prevent the bugs from eating everything. However, as Paul advises elsewhere in the Newsletter - nothing will stop the badgers from eating your sweetcorn!

We'll be placing an order for next year's seed potatoes in the summer, so if you have a preference for a potato variety, let us know and we'll see if the supplier we use stocks them. We won't be able to get hold of onion sets for the coming year as we can't find a supplier who will sell us a sufficiently small amount - they all want to sell us 25kgs and there's no way we can sell that amount. So, if you want to grow autumn or spring onions or shallots, we suggest you buy them if you see them in your local garden centre - or even the Pound Shop.

One of our Committee members has been given seed from the Real Seed Company, based in Wales. Have a look at their website <https://www.realseeds.co.uk> for great ideas on some different vegetable varieties to try and guidance on what to grow in the different seasons.

Thank you, as ever, to all the women who work in the shop on a Sunday, week in - week out. If you can spare the time to be added to the Rota, do let us know. Thanks too to Ian who organises the delivery team - please help if you can when you see the message go out on the WhatsApp group. We only had 7 people last time, and that's a lot of lifting. Finally, thanks to everyone who helps out selling plants, weighing up produce for the shelves and lifting heavy bags into customers' cars.

For any new plot holders reading this, the shop is run by volunteers and the tiny surplus we make goes towards keeping the site rents low and helps to pay for social events.

Happy gardening.  
**Liz and Viv**

## Topical Tips for the next few weeks

### Attention to weeding and thinning will pay dividends

Thorough weeding now will remove annual weeds and make things easier later into the summer on your plot and those nearby. Take particular notice of mare's tail, a spikey weed with a rough feel. We need to slow down its spread across the site by weeding out its deep root structure or at least cutting down the spikes at ground level. Sadly, off-the-shelf weed killers do not provide effective control.



### Tomatoes

Often we hear stories of members having trouble with outdoor tomatoes - with blight descending almost overnight. You may already be growing blight resistant varieties, see <https://www.gardenersworld.com/how-to/solve-problems/tomato-blight/>

If not try these tips: (i) plant marigolds between tomatoes as they deter blackfly and may have a fungicidal effect, (ii) remove lower leaves as the plants grow, especially if there is any sign of blight (don't compost), (iii) water at the roots, trying not to splash soil on lower leaves and (iv) if you are not an organic gardener spray with Vitax Copper Mixture and/or Aspirin.

Info: <https://www.therustedgarden.com/blogs/vegetable-gardening-tips-blog/how-to-make-an-aspirin-spray-drench-for-tomatoes-activate-natural-defenses-use-less-chemicals>

### Epsom Salts

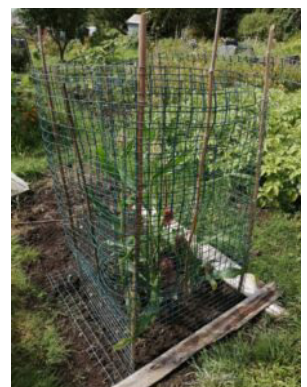
If leaves start to develop yellow tips/patches, you might find an application of Epsom salts helps. Available from the Trading Hut at a very reasonable price.

### Sweetcorn

It is arguable whether any home-grown vegetable tastes better than sweetcorn off the plant. It seldom cause problems but plants can blow over in strong wind and you might wish to support them. The biggest problem we have is with badgers, they will decimate a crop overnight if it is not protected, and we are talking about 'serious' protection being needed. Badgers are extremely strong and will easily tear down netting made of chicken wire unless the supports are very robust, and the wire netting is very securely attached to the supports. Badgers can burrow so you will also need to protect the land adjacent to your sweetcorn bed. Paving stones might work but they will probably need to be secured to the ground. Badgers can climb but they can't jump high - how about trying the sweetcorn in individual pots supported a metre above floor level - I've never tried that!! I wonder whether a motion sensor ultrasonic repeller would work. Might be easier to go to M&S!

Here's some information:

<https://www.horfieldanddistrictallotments.co.uk/news/sweetcorn-human-versus-badger/>



### Swedes

Not everyone's cup of tea. But if you are growing them, thin early so that strong roots are developed in the maturing plants. Look out for whitefly infestations - control by spraying with a mild soap solution. Reddish yellow patches on leaves (and other brassicas) could be due to boron deficiency. Swedes can be badly affected with grey/brown concentric rings. Rose fertiliser contains boron and might be worth sprinkling around swedes at soil level.

### Earthing up potatoes

Earthing up potato rows look very attractive but what's the purpose of earthing up the plants? There are two main reasons, it seems. It prevents early plants being affected by frost but does this shorten the growing period compared to tubers which have been held back until the soil is warmer, plus plants affected by frost will recover. The second reason is to prevent tubers being exposed to sunlight and turning green - this seems a sensible action. Some gardeners plant potatoes under thick black polythene sheets - here's some information: <https://www.allotment-garden.org/vegetable/potatoes/growing-potatoes-under-black-plastic/> Worth an experiment maybe but slugs might be a problem? My major concern with earthing up is run off when watering in dry conditions which could significantly diminish yields.



Info: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/impact-dry-conditions-potato-yield> Drench watering between rows will enable water to reach the roots but that's many watering cans, inefficient and had work. Last year I earthed but not to a sharp point, instead leaving a channel at the top of the mound into which I could water directly - those plants gave me the best maincrop yields for many years.

### Eskimo carrots

These are an absolute must if you like growing carrots. Sow them right now in a 5m row and you will have fresh, tasty carrots right through the winter. I know many of you have tried these, they are frost resistant and have strong stems so they can be pulled even when the ground is hard. You can find Eskimo seeds in the Shop but you must protect carrots from the carrot root fly - try using Enviromesh also available from the Shop.

Info: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/science/science-blogs/science/may-2018/carrot-fly-how-to-protect-your-crop>

Happy plotting!

**Paul**

## Lettings

We have had a great demand for plots this year and now have just two left. This means we have many new people around the site and quite a few of these are people who have never had allotments before so please make them welcome.

The general plot inspection in May went well and it was good to see how many people had worked their plots despite the appalling weather we have had. There were a few plots that had not been touched for various reasons and we have made allowances for that. Going forward, if we continue to have a high demand for plots we may have to ask people who are not working their plots what their longer term intentions are. On a similar subject we have a few people who are keen to plot share, please let us know if that's something you would consider.

## Peter



From our Treasurer

It's fantastic to see so many people enjoying the allotments despite the weather still remaining stubbornly changeable. As a Committee we were reflecting on how lucky we are to have the open space and ability to enjoy pottering in the peaceful surroundings but it's worth remembering a few pointers as we head into the busy summer season please. So . . . .

1. Always lock the gates when entering and leaving. Often plot holders are on the site alone or children are playing and maintaining safety and security of the plots is important and we all share responsibility for this. We have had issues with fly tipping and theft so keeping the area secure is important for all of us.
2. Those of you bringing children to the site need to be mindful of ensuring their safety. It's great that they are free to roam but be aware of cars and the toilets are not a play zone. Happy noise is lovely to hear but please ensure that you know where your children are and that they are not disturbing other plot holders.
3. Maintaining the edges of your plot is your responsibility. The mowing volunteers will mow the pathways and keeping them clear is important for this to happen effectively. When you cut the edges of your plot please ensure you don't leave excess cuttings to blow onto neighbouring plots.
4. Water - we are heading into the heavy watering season. Our water bill is hefty! Please ensure taps are turned off fully after use. Please report any leaking or broken taps so they can be fixed.
5. Take your rubbish home! The maintenance boys have had to clear several areas of rubbish on the boundaries. Removal is expensive so please remember to take it home with you.

Most of all enjoy the allotments!

Please support the social Sundays and pop **August 18th** in your diaries for the **annual BBQ**. All of these additional activities help keep the rental fees low and also give everyone the opportunity to create the community we all enjoy.

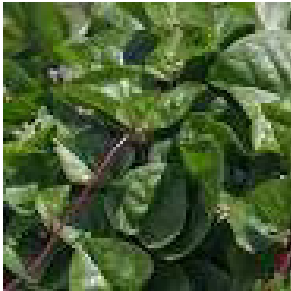
## Jude



From the Secretary's desk

Finally, the weather has started to improve and we can get to grips with planting all the seedlings that have been scattered around our houses! I must admit I'm not on top of the weeds in my plot yet.

We are having school visits again for children to learn about how things grow on the Allotments and the first one will be the 4th of July. If anyone feels like lending me a hand to do guided tours please contact me - [wwalsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:wwalsecretary@gmail.com)



I am trying to grow something new to me this year to make the most of space on my plot. This is Malabar climbing spinach. I've seen it growing in the RHS gardens I visit. It says it's heat tolerant and great tasting so I'll see how that goes this year. We do have some seeds in the trading shed.

**Viv**