

The Bushy Times

Newsletter of the Bushy Park Allotment Association

Visit the website – www.bushyparkallotments.org.uk

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COVID 19 UPDATE

The following notification has been received from the Council.

PUBLIC NOTICE – COVID-19

Allotments Guidance during the COVID-19 outbreak

If you are feeling unwell please do not visit your plot or enter the allotment site.

Adjustments are being made to the annual inspection process to accommodate this unprecedented time.

You are advised to do the following when you visit your plot:

- Use hand sanitiser before opening and closing any gates and locks
- Observe “social distancing” with each other – keep 2-3 metres apart
- Minimise the contact with each other (e.g. no handshakes)
- Keep hand sanitizer with you and wash your hands with it regularly
- Do not share tools
- Do not wash your hands in the water tanks

All communal facilities should be closed and should not be used during this period.

Follow advice available by visiting [NHS.UK/coronavirus](https://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus) or [GOV.UK/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

They have also said: -

- the repairs to the water supply are 'in progress'
- the chipper visits are 'on hold'

The Council have a daily update on their website should you wish to check.

Social distancing carries the wrong connotation. What is needed is **physical distancing**. Social support is more important than ever, and there are so many ways to give and to receive without actually being in close physical proximity. I regularly converse with fellow tenants two or three plots away from mine. If you come as a family please confine yourselves to your plot.

Fortunately we have plenty of space at Bushy to get on with the critical jobs at this time of year in our own little ‘space bubbles’. I notice that tenants are being considerate in giving plenty of space to pass on the paths.

The garden centres may be closed and I am giving thought to how we will get on with seeds, plants, compost, etc this year.

I am germinating tomatoes, peppers, aubergines and chillis at home as usual. I will have spare plants that will go to the plant sale. If we cannot have our Open Day then I will find a way to distribute spare plants to our community. We do have time to sort this out and any ideas and initiatives are welcome.

MY APOLOGIES

In my haste to advise/warn tenants about the water being turned on I sent an open email to the whole email list. I apologise for this, I should have used the BCC facility, as I am doing with this newsletter.

I trust that as a community this information will be treated confidentially. Please don't **REPLY TO ALL** if you email me!!!!

TREES & SHADE & QUERIES

My error did create some community feedback and in particular the issue of fruit trees planted on boundaries that seriously shade neighbouring plots. The shade is not the only issue as tree roots will inevitably invade the neighbouring plot as well.

The Council rules are clear, fruit trees should only be planted in the middle of plots. If your plot is affected by adjacent plot's trees and your neighbour will not take action, you can raise it with the Council.

If you are planting a fruit tree please follow the rules!

I try and reply to any emails asking a question that I can readily answer. Please contact the council via their website for any matters relating to water leaks, your tenancy or the T&Cs.

THEFTS

A tenant has reported theft of bags of compost and planters from their plot. Please do report thefts to the Council, use the **Contact Us** button on the Council's allotment webpage. They are unlikely to be able to do anything but should be made aware, in case there are more incidents.

Please be vigilant for yourself and others' benefit. If you see a theft taking place, for your own safety do not intervene but please report the details to the Council.

Some practical advice to reduce the visibility and appeal of your possessions: -

- a stockpile of compost bags (or other items) can be covered it with a tarpaulin to make it less obvious. The thief probably works after dark and relies on spotting things easily.
- Another practical move is to open and use some compost immediately, an open part bag is not saleable! Keep old compost bags for instance to hold self-made compost from your bins, decanting bought compost into another bag is likely deter thievery! A faff but could save the expense of replacement.
- Lock your shed and do not keep expensive items such as strimmers at the allotment, again they can be sold.
- Do not leave the label on a fruit tree/bush when you plant it, it signals that it could be dug up and sold!
- Plots that are left unattended attract re-homing of items!
- Get to know your neighbours, 'community watch' can also work at the allotments.

Sadly, if the thief is another tenant then they can recce during the day and come back when no one is around, a depressing thought.

BUMBLEBEES

An article in the Garden Organic newsletter asked - ***Can bumblebees survive climate chaos?***

Worrying research reveals that bumblebees are in drastic decline across Europe and North America. This is because of hotter and more frequent extremes in temperatures, scientists say.

The study suggests the likelihood of a bumblebee population surviving in any given place has declined by 30% in the course of a single human generation. The researchers say this could be “consistent with a mass extinction”.

Researchers from the University of Ottawa collected data from a 115-year period, which covered 66 bumblebee species across North America and Europe. It was used to develop a model simulating “climate chaos” scenarios. They were able to see how bumblebee populations had changed over the years by comparing where the insects were now, to where they used to be.

Dr Tim Newbold, University College London, said: “We were surprised by how much climate change has already caused bumblebee declines. Our findings suggest that much larger declines are likely if climate change accelerates in the coming years, showing that we need substantial efforts to reduce climate change if we are to preserve bumblebee diversity.”

I note that the bumble bee population at Bushy last year looked numerous and healthy. I have seen a few large specimens prospecting for a nest site this year and hope we can look forward to another good year.

To help all bees on our plots: -

- Eliminate the use of pesticides.
- Fruit bushes supply plenty of flower for pollen and nectar over a long period.
- Pea and bean crops require their pollination work and also feed them.
- Most plots have some flowers, *sedum* for instance is a good late summer plant for insects.
- Letting umbellifers such as fennel or parsnip flower as biennials provides copious flowers for the insects.
- It is surprising what the insects find, the flowers on asparagus are minute but still attract bees.
- Provide shelter and nesting places such as ‘*insect hotels*’, leave your growing area more relaxed, wood piles, cracks and crevices, are all havens for insects.

RADISH – PLANT FOCUS.

Radish (*Raphanus sativus*) is an edible root vegetable of the Brassica family that was domesticated in Asia in pre-Roman times. Radishes are grown and consumed throughout the world, being mostly eaten raw as a crunchy salad vegetable with bite. There are numerous varieties, varying in size, flavor, color, and length of time they take to mature. Radishes owe their sharp flavor to the various chemical compounds produced by the plants, including *glucosinolate*, *myrosinase*, and *isothiocyanate*. They suffer from few pests and diseases, flea beetles will pepper the leaves with ‘shot holes’ but this doesn’t seem to affect the plants.



An article in the weekend paper reminded me just how useful this plant can be, provided you like eating them! It is easy to grow and produces decent size salad radishes in a modest space. It can be a catch crop sown between slow growing veg rows such as parsnips or a short row can be squeezed into a small space. Unless you are a real radish enthusiast, eg eating them for breakfast, a modest planting is recommended as they will mature over a short period and then rapidly bolt to flower and seed. Sowings can be repeated into summer to maintain supply.

The seed are remarkably large and tough for such a modest sized plant. That does make them easy to handle and sow. They are an ideal beginner seed for kids to grow. Fork over the patch were you are going to sow them to create a fine tilth and water well so that you don't risk disturbing the seed. Make a seed drill (V shaped depression) an inch deep and put in the seeds at one-inch centres. Cover them with fine soil and wait for them to germinate. At this time of year you can cover the soil with a board to maintain the soil temperature and humidity but do check regularly for germination. Thin out to 2 inch spacing as the plants grow, the young leaves can go into salads.

They germinate quickly and grow rapidly, common smaller salad varieties can be ready for consumption within a month, while the larger *daikon* varieties take several months and are an autumn/winter crop. Young leaves can be cooked like spinach. The young seed pods are also edible and can be eaten raw or sautéed.

HERB FLATBREADS

If you have made a store cupboard curry, try these easy flatbreads, we had them first time with a beetroot curry and they are now a staple with curries.

275 gm strong white bread flour

stalks of parsley/coriander chopped finely (if available – not essential)

1 tsp salt

1 ½ tsp baking powder

1 tsp ground cumin

2 tsp nigella seed

2 tbsp rape seed oil

150 ml warm water

Mix the dry ingredients, add oil and water and made into a dough ball. Leave to rest in the bowl covered with a tea towel for 30 minutes. Divided into 6 or 8 portions and roll out as thin as possible about a coin thick. Cook in a hot dry frying pan, about two to four minutes each side until coloured with scorch marks and puffed up. They will keep warm stacked under a tea towel.

Once you have mastered this you shouldn't need to buy a supermarket ready pack again – could be the 'new normal'.

There are also good and easy nan recipes on the internet.

Phil Iddison	Please contact the council via their website for any matters relating to water leaks, neighbour's trees creating shade problems, your tenancy or the T&Cs.
On behalf of Bushy Park Allotments Association	Contact me, Joe Ambaye (Chairman) or Robin Hewitt (Secretary) for local issues.