



December Newsletter

Chill December brings the sleet,
Blazing fire, and Christmas treat.

~Sara Coleridge (1802–1852), "The Months"

Your Committee wishes you all a very happy Christmas and a prosperous and healthy
New Year

December is the darkest month with the shortest day of the winter solstice on the 21st when the days will be slowly getting longer, however; unfortunately the cold winter months of January and February are still to come. It is very much the time of renewal and starting rather than ending, it is said that the gardening year ends on 31st December and starts on 1st January. As the days get longer and the light levels increase we can look forward to spring that isn't too far away

I hope that we are all continuing to benefit from the fruits of our labours over the last year. Many brassicas, cabbages, cauliflowers and Brussel sprouts along with root crops; carrots, parsnips and beetroot, not to mention leeks may still be harvested from the garden or allotment. Along with others on my allotment we are harvesting Charlotte potatoes that we planted in October.

On the subject of potatoes it is worth visiting the Potato House web-site. A family owned business supplying heritage, unusual and different varieties of potatoes <https://www.potatohouse.co.uk/which-potato-should-i-grow/#family> The web-site provides advice on everything potatoes along with a 'Potato to Eat' service. Presently there is a 10% discount on orders over £15 by using the following promotion ALLOTGARDEN10 valid until March next year.

Whilst they do not beat the value of those sold by our Store they are good in providing a back-up.

Society News:

The Store closed on the 19th November for stock taking and a Christmas break for those Committee members who have given up their Saturday mornings for the past year to

provide a valued service to Society members. The Store reopens on the 21st January 2023 for collection of seed orders and the sale of composts etc. Please note that membership fees are due from the opening date of the Store.

The web-site continues to be a great asset to the Society. There have been a number of changes the most significant is the addition of the 'Articles' dropdown with some 15 articles on 'How to Grow' a number different types of vegetable. Also a Facebook button which leads direct to the Society's Facebook page.

The Society's Facebook Group started in October and has presently 39 members. It is a private group for Society members only and those wishing to join will need to be members of the Society and agree the standard Facebook rules. We intend that this should be a vehicle for Society news and discussion of allotment and gardening matters.

We have two very interesting talks planned for the new year:

- Following the AGM on 5th April Gavin Towers will give us a talk on everything to do with potatoes. Gavin has worked in the potato industry for many years and his experience is second to none. A talk not to be missed for those wishing to improve their knowledge of our most important crops.
- On 26th July Nick Smith who is the Show Director for the Harrogate Flower Shows will give a talk titled 'The Show go on.' This is a brilliant talk by an excellent presenter who outlines the origins of the Harrogate Flower shows and the Northern Horticultural Society. Providing a fascinating insight into the organisation of both the early and late flower shows. I have seen this most interesting and outstanding presentation, one I can guarantee you should not miss.

The Annual Flower and Produce Show will be held on 9th September 23 and includes extra dahlia classes and a new class in both the Floral Art and Children's sections calling for a flower palette comprising seven distinct varieties of bloom, no more than two blooms of any one cultivar, no foliage. Staged on a palette. Blooms to be grown by the exhibitor. The Children's class at our last show was a picture and we hope that this new class will encourage our younger members and not to mention our seasoned growers to plant and grow flowers for this class.

Dates for your diary are as follows:

28th January. Store Opens for collection of seed orders, general sales and membership renewal.

5th April. Society AGM followed by a talk on growing potatoes.

TBN Plant Sale - from the Store when plants are available

TBN Summer Solstice Evening.

26th July. Talk - "The Show must go on" by Nick Smith Harrogate Show Director.

Seasonal Jobs to be getting on with:

As I mentioned the gardening year starts on the 1st January and there continues to be jobs to be done both in the greenhouse/polytunnel and outside but needless to say if working outdoors ensure you are well wrapped up against the cold. My leeks are growing well and I shall be sowing some onions in the next couple of days. Traditionally shallots are planted on the shortest day and harvested on the longest I shall plant mine in pots during January. As soon as I receive my potatoes I shall plant a number of Arran Pilot in bags inside the polytunnel for any early crop.

I have attached the guide to seasonal jobs published in Issue 4 of the National

SCAN HERE TO VIEW A WHOLE YEAR OF MONTHLY JOBS!



seasonal jobs to do...

Cold short days and long cold nights can make finding time to get to the plot more difficult. However, it is a good idea to try and keep ahead of winter jobs, especially the winter digging. If the soil is neither frozen nor wet enough to stick to the boots, digging can continue.

Small, regular bursts of activity at the allotment are much better than prolonged irregular sessions. Keep an eye out for slightly tender crops such as celery. If they are still in the ground, they might benefit from protection, such as a covering of straw to prevent too much damage.

Alternatively, crops such as swedes and

...December/January/February

GREENHOUSE

- Keep an eye on plants that are being overwintered in greenhouses, vent the house carefully on days where the sun shines, never too much that the temperature drops drastically, but just to allow for the air to circulate and rid the inside atmosphere of excess moisture.
- Check overwintering plants often, removing dead material to prevent fungal problems.
- This is a great time to thoroughly clean greenhouses, polytunnels, cold frames with warm soapy water and a little disinfectant.
- If grapes are grown, they can now be pruned, reducing all fruiting laterals to two or three buds from the main rod.

FLOWERS

- Check over stored dahlias tubers, gladiolus corms etc. for rot or rodent damage. Remove any that are damaged.
- Dead-head winter bedding to prolong the display.
- Where young shoots for spring bulbs are already showing through, keep well weeded.

FRUIT

- Clear any debris from rhubarb beds, and source some fresh manure for forcing early next month. Keep turning the fresh manure for a few weeks.
- Continue to prune fruit trees, especially apples and pears.

January

The start of another successful year of growing, fingers crossed!

This month can be one of the most frustrating times for gardeners, so keen to be out and starting but often kept indoors by inclement weather.

Use this time to start to look over tools and equipment. Any cutting implements should be sharpened, cleaned and oiled, and any spades, forks, hoes etc. should be given a similar treatment.

Wooden shafted tools will also benefit

December

parsnips benefit from a few hard frosts to convert starches into sugars, thus sweetening them. It is generally good practice to have a few filled and dry stored in case the ground becomes too frozen to be able to lift as required.

Use the time to get on with jobs that we generally don't get time for through the rest of the year to turn compost heaps, move manure into heaps about the plot ready for digging in, clean out water barrels or collect pee-sticks and such.

VEGETABLE

- Regularly check all stored crops and remove any that show signs of decay.
- If sea-kale is grown, clear around the crowns of debris and lightly prick

over the soil in readiness for forcing. If chionodoxa is grown, lift some roots and take into a warm dark place for forcing.

- Check over tall growing brassicas, such as Brussels sprouts, kale and sprouting broccoli: they may require staking if you have not already done so.
- Whenever the soil is dry enough, carefully hoe through rows of overwintering vegetables like onions, garlic, and spring cabbage.

February

For many, this month can be one of the coldest of the year, but any remaining sorting and organising jobs not completed last month can be finished. Where a heated greenhouse, polytunnel, conservatory or even a good sunny sunroom is available, some of the earliest sowings can be made, although generally slightly later sowings will soon catch up. Light levels are still low, and young seedlings can easily get drawn and leggy.

Where cloches are available, these can be put onto vacant prepared ground

January

from a clean, light sand and thorough rub over with linseed oil to give them many more years' service. A general tidy through of sheds and stores is always a good idea, and often a good way of finding otherwise 'lost' items!

Check over supplies of canes, nets and so on, and repair or replace as necessary.

Greenhouses, polytunnels, cold frames and cloches should be checked and cleaned if you have not done so already. Clean glass allows much better light

GREENHOUSE

- Only the hardest seeds should be sown in an unheated house. Many seeds will do better by waiting a month to six weeks before sowing. However, seeds of some hardy annuals for cut flowers can be sown.
- The remarks on venting etc. from last month remain the same.

FRUIT

- Complete planting of new trees, bushes, canes etc.
- This is the last window for pruning autumn fruiting raspberries - all canes that fruited last year should be cut down to ground level. They can then be weeded, given a general purpose fertiliser then mulched.
- Where early fruiting strawberries are grown, some can now be covered with cloches to produce an earlier crop.

Allotment Society's ALG magazine. Should you wish to read the full magazine please use the following link. <https://online.flipbuilder.com/cwao/sjkh/>