

Allotment & LEISURE GARDENER

The membership magazine for the National Allotment Society

Issue 2 • 2023



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Allotment Society

National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Ltd



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National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Ltd



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- Include your contact details
- Up to 600 words in a word document
- Send images as separate jpegs of good resolution (300dpi)

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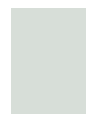


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Chairman's comments

We are very busy getting things organised for the shows that the regions have in their areas. A lot of hard work goes on in the regions, with the regional reps and the regional committees pulling together to make the shows memorable and successful to visitors and volunteers. Without these volunteers, the shows would never happen.

I am sure that we all have things growing and are looking forward to another good year for vegetables and fruits.

At the beginning of the year, we had our first regional meeting. We had a really good turnout, and this raised the spirits of the region. I would like to thank the members in the West Midlands for their support.

I would like to ask all the regions to remember their regional committees and all the work they do and ask you to support them by attending the meetings and have a chat with them; they would appreciate that.

Can I take this opportunity to wish you all a great year and a successful growing season.

We will all look forward to seeing you at the shows.

Best wishes,
Tom Terrence



David Allison joins the NAS as the new Horticultural Advisor

We are excited to welcome David Allison as the new Horticultural Advisor for the National Allotment Society!

Aaron Hickman, who stepped down at the end of 2022, brought so much to the NAS and we would like to thank Aaron for all the wisdom, time and energy that he gave to the Society and its members in this role.

Born a farmer's son in Wensleydale, David brings a wealth of experience to the position from his current roles as Vice-Chairman of the RHS Fruit, Veg and Herb Committee and accredited RHS Floral Judge. He is also Chairman of the Vegetable Trials Forum at the new RHS Gardens at Bridgewater.

In the past, David was National Chairman of the National Vegetable Society (NVS), Treasurer of the National Vegetable Society Northern Branch, member of the West Yorkshire District Association of the NVS, and a qualified NVS judge and lecturer – amongst other things!

The NAS is thrilled to have someone with such extensive knowledge on our team, and we look forward to working with him.

Members can pose their horticultural questions to David by emailing them to natsoc@nsalg.org.uk

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- **Gardening advice** – members can send in their queries to David Allison our Horticultural Advisor, and check out the monthly jobs on our website growing pages. Like us on **www.facebook.com/Nationalallotmentsociety** and link with other ploholders.

Check out **www.nsalg.org.uk** for further details.

Association secretaries are provided with log-in details for the members area – ask your association secretary for details today.



President's scribblings

I am writing this a couple of days after gale 'Otto'. I do hope you haven't had too much damage. It certainly sorted out the weaker structures and the polytunnels in need of new coverings on my site, and the cheap economy tunnels just collapse or fly off into the sunset like kites.

They do say time flies when you are having fun. I must always have fun on the allotment because I never complete all of what I intend to. Talking of which, it is that time of year when my diary is filling up rapidly. It looks like it is going to be an even busier year this year (which I didn't think was possible).

I headed up to the Scottish Borders to the Borders Organic Potato Day in the Borders Events Centre, Kelso, with a publicity stand on the 5th March to show a presence to our Scottish members. I also hope to attend another show later in the year a bit further north. Until such a time, however, it would be good if some of our members North of the border could submit a story about their site.

There is the AGM of the NAS which takes place in Leamington Spa on the 10th June. It would be lovely if you could attend. I am assured it is an easy venue to get to. In addition to the business side of things there will be some interesting workshops on offer on all aspects of allotment gardening.

In addition to the NAS AGM in June, we will be hosting the International Allotments Federation 'Study Session' in Cambridge in August with delegates from up to 15 different countries. It will be a three-day event and they will be



looking at means of promoting various positive aspects of allotment gardening within the wider allotment movement. They will also be visiting some local sites near Cambridge. Busy times ahead.

It is also nearly garden show time with regions up and down the country participating and creating allotment publicity stands. If your region is seeking volunteers to create and man these stands, don't be shy, step forward. It can be great fun, very interesting and educational. I will guarantee you would leave the show having learnt something new.

There is always the opportunity to put on an event and open your site up to the public in National Allotments Week (7th-13th August) for conducted



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At the risk of repeating myself, I shall mention yet again, to get your site registered as an 'asset of community value'”



tours around the site. It is an excellent opportunity for good public relations. Sales can be made to replenish your association funds. National Allotments Week is an ideal time to do this whilst interest in allotments is high.

Another opportunity is National Heritage Week from 12-20th August organised by the National Trust. They love to have allotments participate as we are part of our nation's heritage. My site puts on conducted tours and a few information boards displaying the site's historic events. We also sell tea, coffee, and cakes for the association coffers. The beauty is that the National Trust advertise the event both locally and nationally for you.

At the risk of repeating myself, I shall mention yet again, to get your site registered as an 'asset of community value'. Far too often sites approach the NAS in a panic if their site comes under threat. Having registered as an 'asset of community value' it offers a breathing space of six months of time to look at various strategies to challenge any threat and reduces that need to panic.

I had better stop here and give myself a chance to get on my allotment whilst it is still dry. I need to get those compost heaps emptied in preparation for the new growing season.

Happy allotment gardening!

Phil Gomersall,
your very busy President

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King Charles & gardening

To commemorate the Coronation of HRH King Charles in May, we look back on His Majesty's connection to the grow your own movement and organic food production, that led him to become the patron of The National Allotment Society.

King Charles has always had a passion for gardening and growing food. He began an organic venture on The Duchy of Cornwall's Home Farm in 1985, turning it into a "completely organic farming system". In the early 1990s, he founded Duchy Originals to sell organic foods.

"Since the beginning of the 1980s, when I first had responsibility for managing some land in my own right at Highgrove, I have wanted to focus on an approach to food production that avoids the impact of the predominant, conventional system of industrialised agriculture, which, it is increasingly clear to see, is having a disastrous effect on soil fertility, biodiversity and animal and human health." King Charles told Country Life magazine in 2021.

But the King's horticultural interests began long before, as a child. In 2018 he told Gardeners World, that he first became interested in gardening when he and sister Princess Anne had their



© Andrew Chittock - Dreamstime.com

own plot at Buckingham Palace "where we grew vegetables and things." The King also cited his grandmother, the Queen Mother's "wonderful garden" at Royal Lodge, in Windsor Great Park as childhood inspiration, saying: "I remember being absolutely riveted as a child wandering about...looking at all the plants." He described how, "the smell and everything had a profound effect on me," adding "I don't know why but I also grew to love trees, they always fascinated me."

Nowadays, King Charles enjoys food picked from the garden at the Highgrove Estate the most, and favours plums, according to former royal chef Darren McGrady, who once served as personal chef to the Queen herself. The King also revealed in an article in the Guardian, that he also enjoys a Brussels sprout.

"I don't know why but I also grew to love trees, they always fascinated me"

His Majesty's penchant for locally grown food led to the introduction of what he calls a climatarian diet which: "encourages people to choose foods that have a reduced environmental impact and includes recipes that are plant- and meat-based." Unlike other diets that prioritise personal health, a climatarian diet prioritises the environment by taking note of how foods are produced, processed, and shipped to their final destinations.

As part of his endeavours to better protect the planet, King Charles runs his vintage car on biofuels made from unusable wine, as well as whey (a by-product of the cheese-making process),



© Steve Kingsman - Dreamstime.com

prompting Lord Snowdon to joke: "How does [former] Prince Charles drive his Aston Martin? Caerphilly."

The King has become used to causing a stir during his time in the public eye, and his cultivation techniques became legendary when he revealed in 1986 that he talks to his plants. "I happily talk to the plants and trees and listen to them. I think it's absolutely crucial." The King said in 2010. When asked about this in 2013, he was unembarrassed, telling BBC's Countryfile: "No, now I instruct them instead."

King Charles became a patron of The National Allotment Society in 2011 and has continued to work with the organisation to promote and protect the UK's enduring traditions, such as allotment gardening, over the last 12

years. In 2022, the King agreed to allow the NAS to christen all new allotment sites created that year in honour of the late Queen's jubilee.

It is hoped that the King will continue to be the patron of the NAS post Coronation, but should the role be passed on to younger members of the Royal Family, the Society would welcome the input of the next generation.

Royal encounter

I was involved in a community growing project in East London for a few years and was lucky enough to be selected to go to Clarence House (the home of the then Prince Charles) for a garden tour. We were allowed to wander around parts of the garden, and I came across a mulberry tree, laden with mulberries. I had never tasted mulberries, and for some reason thought that 'foraging' for a taste in the future King's Garden was a good idea! The mulberry was delicious!

Little did I know that the future King would get his own back. We were deeply honoured to have King Charles and Queen Consort Camilla visit our little community garden - Rocky Park Community Garden - a couple of years later. When I was introduced to the future King, he confessed to me that he had 'foraged' a cherry tomato from my growing patch at the community garden and could confirm it was absolutely delicious. So, this was my ideal opportunity to confess to him that a couple of years before I had tried a Mulberry from a tree in his garden at Clarence House.

We laughed so much and agreed that we would call it a fair swap.

Elizabeth Adams



© Jamie Roach - Dreamstime.com



Issuing warnings on allotment sites

Recently the NAS has been contacted by a large number of sites that are facing tenants that are not cultivating their plot to an acceptable level and/or are breaching rules of the tenancy agreement. Associations in this position need to look at employing the use of a reasonable disciplinary procedure that provides tenants with a fair opportunity to remedy the breach of rules, whilst also putting the landowner/association in a strong legal position should the need to move towards a notice to quit arise.

For handling non-cultivation, it is recommended that the initial notice should clearly state that an inspection has taken place and the tenant's plot has been found to be in breach of the cultivation standards set out in the tenancy agreement. Some landowners and associations opt to first have an informal conversation with the tenant. This can be a great idea before the initial letter as it can potentially lead to quicker results and avoids the risk of souring relationships.

In the initial written warning, the landowner/association should specifically reference the cultivation rule by either stating the rule number, or even better, copy the exact wording of the rule into the notice itself. It is then suggested that the notice should be clear on exactly how the tenant is failing. For example, the plot may have too many weeds, too much of the plot may be being used for storage etc. The notice should then end by asking the tenant to respond within 14 days

with either an action plan as to how they intend to bring the plot back up to an acceptable level of cultivation, or an explanation of any extenuating circumstances. The action plan is an excellent idea as it lets the tenant and the managers of the land agree on a fair strategy moving forwards.

If the 14 days pass with no response, the action plan hasn't been followed or the mitigating circumstances have ended and the plot is still in a poor condition, the landowner/association can move to issue a final warning. The final warning should set out exactly what action is required of the tenant to avoid their tenancy being terminated. The warning should also set out a fair timeframe for these works to be completed by (the recommendation would be no less than 14 days from the date of the warning). Finally, the warning should be clear that should the works not be completed by the deadline, a notice to quit may be issued to the tenant.

For breaches of other rules of the tenancy agreement, a different procedure should be followed. The NAS recommend that following a breach of rules, the tenant should be issued a first warning that clearly sets out what rule has been breached and an explanation as to what action/s of the tenant has caused the breach. Similar to the non-cultivation procedure, it is recommended to include the exact wording of the rule that has been breached to provide absolute clarity in the notice. The landowner/association can then set out any actions (if any) for



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The final warning should set out exactly what action is required of the tenant to avoid their tenancy being terminated
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the tenant to undertake to remedy the rule breach as well as a fair deadline to do so. The notice must also be dated and have a clear address for the tenant to respond to. The NAS recommendation would then be for the notice to state that the first warning will be kept on file for six months and that any similar rule breaches in that time may lead to a final warning being issued.

If a tenant that received a first warning were to then breach a similar rule in their tenancy agreement, a final warning could then be issued. The final warning would follow the same contents of the first warning including a direct reference to the rule, a description of the behaviour that broke the rule and what actions can be taken to remedy the breach. The final warning would then state that it will be kept on file for 12 months and any similar breaches could lead to a notice to quit.

Each case is unique, but this is a good framework to begin with. Members can seek further assistance if needed by emailing natsoc@nsalg.org.uk.

Tyler Harris, Legal Advisor

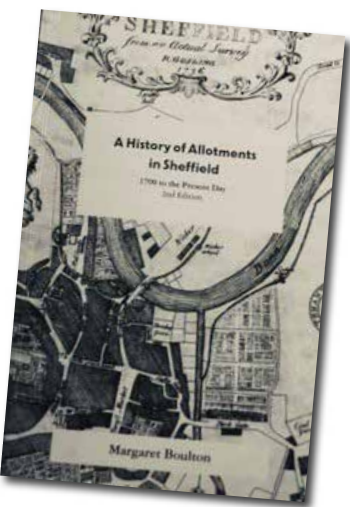
A History of Allotments in Sheffield: 1700 to the Present Day

2nd Edition
Margaret Boulton
ISBN 9781399934503

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A History of Allotments in Sheffield: 1700 to Present Day charts the development of allotments in Sheffield. It covers a period of intense industrialisation, two world wars, the intervening depression of the 1930s, and the growth of the suburbs. It encompasses the cultural, economic and social changes of the latter part of the 20th Century and looks at the environmental concerns of the 21st Century.



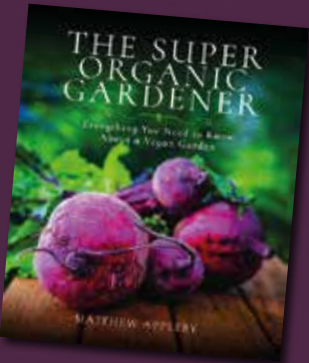
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International Compost Awareness Week – May 7-13 2023

This year's theme is 'For Healthier Soil, Healthier Food...Compost.'

The theme for ICAW was chosen based on one of the initiatives of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals - Zero Hunger. Hunger is a serious world-wide issue that every nation, unfortunately, experiences. Hunger is a universal feeling that we have all felt at some point- some more than others.

The chosen ICAW 2023 theme focuses on how compost can have a role in helping to feed the world, by making our soil healthier which produces healthier food.

How does compost help? By recycling organics into compost and using it on our allotments and farmlands, we create healthy soils that produce healthier food and higher yields. It also reduces the need for fertiliser and pesticides, improves water quality and conserves water, as well as storing carbon in soil, helping to reduce climate change. Compost can help the environment and decrease food shortages experienced around the world.

To celebrate, the NAS are running a composting photo competition judged by master composter Rod Weston and sponsored by Great Green Systems.

Photos can be submitted to three categories:

- Best allotment bin
- Best household bin
- Using compost

The winner from each category will receive one of the fantastic prizes provided by composting aficionados, Great Green Systems.

Winner 1. Great Green Systems MAZE 180LT TUMBLER

Winner 2. Great Green Systems GREEN JOHANNA 330 LITRE HOT COMPOSTER and Jacket

Winner 3. Great Green Systems BOKASHI BIN BY MAZE

Send entries with the category in the subject line to marketing@nsalg.org.uk.

Competition closes 10th May, winners will be announced 13th May.



Mick Merrill

Mick Merrill, retired chairman of Ward End Gardeners Association, has passed away.

Mr Merrill was an Honorary Life Vice President of the National Allotment Society and attended the AGM in June 2022.

Mick was a long-serving member of Ward End Gardeners Association and was remembered by secretary Hester Blewitt as 'active right to the end with us as well as the NAS and Birmingham District Allotments Confederation, and a wonderful gardener who always had time to pass on tips and words of encouragement to new people, and get involved in all our activities.' She added 'we'll miss him hugely.'

Our thoughts are with his family at this time.



2023 marks the 21st year of National Allotments Week

For the past two decades, National Allotments Week has been a chance to engage non-growers in the world of allotments and explore the benefit of allotment gardening for communities, individuals, and the planet.

This year, National Allotments Week will run from 7th-13th August with the theme of Soil Health.

Soil health is a hot topic in the horticultural world with the peat compost ban coming into force next year and the global focus on improving biodiversity, ending food shortages, and dealing with the climate emergency.

Good soil health is widely accepted as a way to improve yield when growing edibles but also contributes positively to biodiversity and the environment as the world faces more climate challenges. National Allotments Week will inform

and educate gardeners old and new about the benefit of caring for the soil and the ecosystems that inhabit it.

Allotment sites up and down the country are holding open days to show members of the local community what allotmenting is all about and a brand-new NAS leaflet on Soil Health will be available to pick up for any budding gardener at these open days.

With lots of exciting announcements to come, visit the NAS website for more information and to register your open day!



My rhubarb was covered with an upturned plastic dustbin with holes in to let the light in over winter. It's amazing what a surprise it is when it is uncovered and you end up with early, succulent, straight rhubarb stems just waiting for the crumble mix!

Paul Loveday

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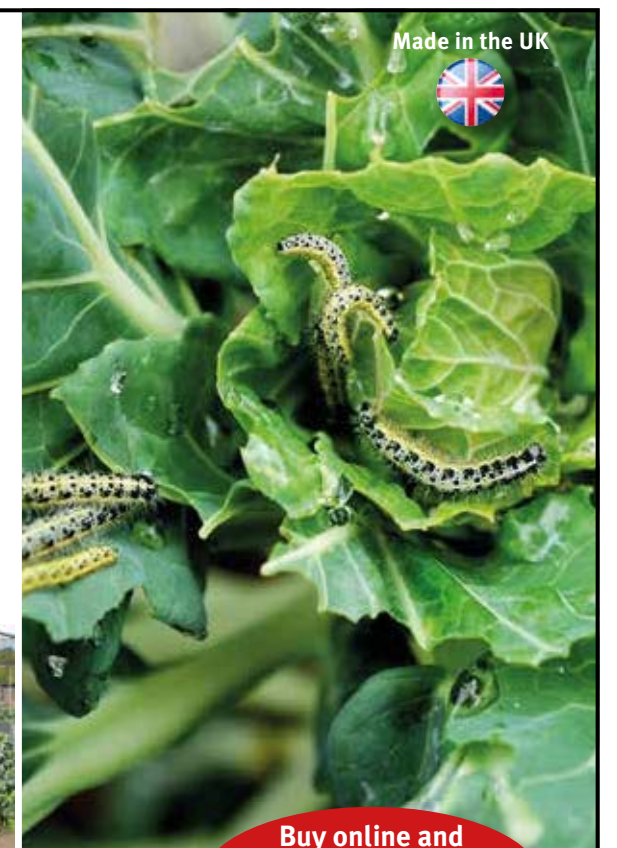
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The Green Infrastructure Framework (England)

The Green Infrastructure (GI) Framework was launched by Natural England in 2023. This article explains what Green Infrastructure is, why the GI Framework is important to allotment communities and how you can use the framework for the benefit of allotments in your area.

WHAT IS GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE?

Green Infrastructure is a network of multi-functional green space and other green features, urban and rural, which can deliver quality of life and environmental benefits. Green Infrastructure is not simply an alternative description for conventional open space. It includes allotments, parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, street trees, private gardens, green roofs and walls, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and soils. This includes rivers, streams, canals, and other water bodies, sometimes called 'blue infrastructure'!

Allotments are a firm part of Green Infrastructure, multi-functional by virtue of the multiple benefits they provide to people, wider society, economies and of course the natural environment. Existing allotment sites already form an important component of Green Infrastructure, whilst new allotment sites help to make and shape new Green Infrastructure. However, it is important to understand that Green Infrastructure is about networks of connected green features in the landscape. So, in Green Infrastructure, allotments are not a single stand-

alone feature. Instead, allotments are one component in a bigger picture of multiple green and blue features. The consideration of Green Infrastructure within the planning system is now expected by government, as part of its 25 Year Environment Plan.

THE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE (GI) FRAMEWORK

The GI Framework aims to help local planning authorities (LPAs) and developers in England meet requirements in the National Planning Policy Framework to consider Green Infrastructure in local plans and in new developments. When applied, the GI Framework could help plan for good quality GI and target the creation/improvement of GI, particularly where existing provision is poorest. Allotments are included as a positive feature in the GI Framework.

The GI Framework provides structure for LPAs, developers and communities in England to understand where greenspace in urban environments is needed most. There is an aspiration in the framework to support equitable access to greenspace across England, with an overarching target for everyone being able to reach good quality greenspace in their local area. The framework supports the greening of towns and cities and connections with the surrounding landscape. Natural England, the government body for the natural environment, is responsible for The Green Infrastructure Framework.



The framework supports the greening of towns and cities and connections with the surrounding landscape



THE GI FRAMEWORK AND ALLOTMENTS

The GI Framework is not mandatory. However, when applied, it could be a useful tool for communities and local councils looking to promote, protect and preserve their existing allotment sites as well as for those looking to create new allotment sites. The framework could enable council officers and allotment associations to plan for the creation or improvement of Green Infrastructure. In particular, the GI Framework 'Design Guide' (below) provides some initial guidance on the inclusion of allotments in Green Infrastructure and, when read in conjunction with the NAS design guide "21st Century Allotments in New Developments", could be a useful tool for anyone lobbying for increased provision of allotments in their local area.

The Green Infrastructure Mapping Tool could also be of use for anyone looking to evidence the need for allotments in funding applications: the interactive mapping tool contains numerous free and easy-to-use socio-economic datasets which can help provide evidence of need for allotments at local scale.

Further Information: All of the Green Infrastructure Framework, along with the guides and tools mentioned in this article, are available at <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Home.aspx>

Dr Deborah Burn,
Research and Development Officer

1 Town & Country Planning Association
2 <https://www.nsalg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/21st-Century-Allotments-in-New-Developments.pdf>

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the young plotters club

Hi everyone! I am so happy it's spring! I have noticed that the days are starting to get longer, and the sun is shining a bit more. This really helps me get to the allotment and start to plan and prepare what we are going to grow this year.

I have decided to change the layout of the plot this year to help make it more manageable. Last year we had two big growing areas, but it was really hard to get in between everything to weed and it all got really crowded. So, this year I have made smaller beds to grow things in. We covered the soil over winter, and it was nice and soft underneath. I have dug over the soil and weeded out the potatoes that I missed last year and raked it all level. Behind the cow field there is an industrial estate and last year a company had lots of large lights delivered which came in wooden boxes. They are perfect for vegetable beds so my dad managed to get some, and I will use them this year to grow our favourite foods.

I have been watching on the news how supermarkets are running low on some vegetables, including tomatoes, which is really bad. We have been planning what crops we are going to grow and have decided on lots of things we eat all the time, so it saves us buying them in the shops. Things like carrots and kale grow really well and I want to have tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers growing in the greenhouse. I also want to build a herb garden out of an old wooden pallet which my family will be able to use to flavour our food!

If you've read my articles before you'll know I love nature and wildlife. I think it is really important that every allotment site has areas protected for wildlife to



enjoy. I put a pond in in my plot last year and made a wildlife area. I used some of my time in the cold weather to clear out some of the dead grasses and foliage so new shoots can grow through. I cleared out some of the dead reeds from the pond as well. I enjoy building habitats so after I tidied up, I decided to build a new bug hotel next to the pond. This is so easy to do, and you can make one too if you like! I started by collecting some old planks of wood laying around our plot. My dad used some bricks to hold down the winter sheeting, so I recycled them as well!

I used an old pallet as the base, stacked bricks on top of each other and then put three pieces of long wood across them. I did this two more times, making little sections like rooms in a house. I made a roof with some old tiles we had and covered it with moss. It only took





Allotments on a shoestring Seed storage

What is a recurring expense on allotments, that plotholders cannot avoid? Seeds!

When it comes to growing your own fruit and veg, it is frugal to make use of every part of the plant. Eat or preserve what you can, harvest and save the seeds and compost the rest.

Harvesting seeds from this year's crop and storing them effectively can be a great way to save money on a plot.

When collecting seeds for planting, seeds from hybrid plants, which have been intentionally cross-pollinated, can be collected and saved. However, the plants that will grow once they are replanted may not be true to type. To avoid this issue, choose open-pollinated varieties. These plants produce a seed that is very similar to its parent plant.

Most seeds will fully dry attached to the plant, but if not, let the remaining fruit or vegetable flesh covering it to

naturally rot away, then dry. Drying is the key factor for seed storage and it is important to let seeds fully dry naturally as part of the preservation method. Place seeds on a porous surface like coffee filter or kitchen towel and leave to dry.

Light and temperature are important for preserving seeds as light can break down the seed coating and cause damage, potentially impacting the germination prospects. Choose a cool, dark space to store dried seeds like a pantry or cupboard.

Air can also oxidise the seed coating and cause problems which will be exacerbated if there is moisture present. The dryer the air, the better seeds will store. It is vital to consider this when choosing where to store seeds ready for the next growing season. Cheap silica packets are a good way to remove damp; vacuum packing is also a good option to keep seeds dry but requires more costly equipment.

how to...

Make a swap shop

Ted Hipgrave from Green Lanes Allotments Hatfield made this Swap Shop for members to swap excess plants and produce. Ted had no plans – just his head! The idea came from something the site members originally saw in the USA, and the outcome is brilliant.

HOW TO MAKE A SWAP SHOP...

Cut a full-size pallet in half for the base, built around it with 2" x 1" timber for uprights and shelving supports, hammering into place with nails. Use 6" feather edged boards as cladding, leaving one side open. Scrap wood can be measured and cut to the appropriate size to make the shelving.



This is a new regular column, and we are looking for contributions from our resourceful members. Send your "How to..." articles to marketing@NSALG.org.uk

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Happy cultivating. Jackie Whiteley.



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seasonal jobs to do...

...June/July/August

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TO VIEW A
WHOLE YEAR
OF MONTHLY
JOBS!



June

June is often the first month when one sees rewards of early sowings and young carrots, beetroot, lettuce etc. can be harvested. However, you may need to keep protection handy in case of late frosts. Watch out for pests encouraged by the rising temperatures.

Mulching with compost, leaf mould, grass clippings, well-rotted manure etc. helps to cut down the need to water and suppresses weeds. Apply to damp soil, a good couple of inches thick to do the job properly. Keep the hoe on

- the go, not just to reduce weeds, but to keep the surface of the soil loose, as any water or soluble fertiliser that is applied will absorb much better.
- VEGETABLE**
- Allow autumn planted onions to fall over naturally as they ripen and dry. Once they are fully dry, lift and store somewhere dry and airy.
 - Sweetcorn can now be thoroughly hardened off and planted out.
 - Outdoor tomatoes can be planted in deep rich soil in as warm and sheltered position.
 - Finish harvesting asparagus mid-month, then feed and mulch the plants, water the crown during dry spells.

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- Sow maincrop carrots.
- Tip out broad beans, to lessen blackfly attacks.
- Keep sowing successional salad crops in a shady spot, which will reduce bolting.
- Plant out courgettes, marrows, squashes pumpkins etc.
- If not done so already, sow chicory for winter forcing.
- Ensure peas all have sufficient stakes, canes or netting for support.
- Sow swedes and turnips for autumn/early winter use.
- First croppings of early lettuces, radishes, spring onions, bunching shallots, and early carrots can be made, with successional sowings until mid-July at fortnightly intervals.

FLOWER

- Ensure all dahlias are planted out before the middle of the month, and stake well for the taller varieties. Keep them well-watered.
- Annual cut flowers should be well hardened off and planted out early in the month.
- Chrysanths that have been stopped earlier should be thinned to allow 2 stems for large flowered and three stems for medium flowered, removing all surplus stems, and each remaining stem tied to a cane. For the biggest blooms, start to remove side growths from the leaf axils allowing just the terminal bud to develop.



- First early potatoes, especially those grown in buckets or under protection will be just about ready towards the end of the month.
- Trench celery can have their first collars put on, stops the plant “rosetting”, and starts the blanching process. Plant out self-blanching types in blocks, not rows to allow them to blanch each other.
- Continue sowing dwarf French beans. They take about 8 to 10 weeks from sowing to maturity; keep picking to encourage further pods to set.

FRUIT

- Give strawberry beds a tidy over – ensure they are all well mulched down with straw or similar.
- Top fruit such as apples and pears

should start to shed a little excess fruit; this is perfectly natural and is referred to as ‘June Drop’.

- Keep a watchful eye over gooseberries for gooseberry sawfly attacks.

GREENHOUSE

- Ensure greenhouses, polytunnels and cold frames are well ventilated on warm days, as temperatures will soon rise and can damage young plants.
- Floors, staging etc. can be dampened down with the garden hose or watering can; this lessens the chance of red spider mite attacks, which thrive in hot dry conditions.
- Ensure that all greenhouse crops such as tomatoes, cucumbers and melons are kept well-watered, and new growth is tied in regularly.

July

July is generally a busy time on the allotment. Often one of the hottest months. Young crops should be kept well-watered in either morning or evening. As always, keep the hoe on the move through the plot as young weeds will soon wilt if hoed off in the sun.

Early potatoes can be lifted as required and a quick maturing crop can be planted straightaway in the vacant soil, but watch out for blight. This will show itself in the form of black blotches on the foliage, and, at the first signs, all of

- the top growth should be cut down. If caught in the early stages, this should not damage the crop. It is still wise to be vigilant to pests on the plot.
- VEGETABLE**
- Use a liquid feed on most crops in moist soil. This can be a proprietary feed from the garden centre or homemade from nettles, comfrey etc.
 - Shallots should be lifted as they mature; ensure the foliage has completely died down first.
 - A last sowing of dwarf French beans can be made early in the month for a September harvest.
 - Sow and plant brassicas for winter and spring harvests. These should be planted out into firm soil as soon as

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- they are ready.
- Keep sowing small batches of salad crops such as lettuce, radish, spring onions etc. preferably in a shady spot.
 - Beetroot, fennel and kohlrabi, sown earlier in pots, can be planted out.
 - Thin turnips and swedes sown last month.
 - Continue staking and tying tall growing crops, i.e., runner beans.
 - Attract beneficial pollinating insects by growing plants rich in nectar and pollen nearby. This will ensure that crops which need pollination to occur to set a crop, i.e., runner beans and most fruit crops etc. will have a better chance of producing a good crop.
 - Shallots should have ripened this month, harvest and lay on chicken

- wire to fully dry off before storing.
- Lift a few early onions for immediate use, leaving others to fully ripen before storing.

FRUIT

- Apples and pears that are trained as espaliers, step-overs, and cordons will need to be pruned this month. Reduce all this season’s growth by one third, pruning just above a leaf joint.
- Protect ripening cherries from birds.
- Finish harvesting rhubarb by the end of the month. Give crowns a heavy mulch of manure.
- Prune side shoots of mature gooseberries and red/white currants,

cutting them back to 4 or 5 leaves to encourage fruiting buds to form for the following year’s crop.

GREENHOUSE

- Keep greenhouses, polytunnels etc. well ventilated, and in the hottest weather keep damping down greenhouses wherever possible.
- Continue to tie in new growth on tomatoes, cucumbers and melons.
- Tomatoes should be well-watered to avoid blossom end rot and fed regularly with a high potash (potassium) fertiliser. Continue to remove side-shoots, and on



FLOWER

- Keep all cut flowers well-watered.
- Keep tying in sweet peas and cut off faded blooms.
- Keep dahlias well fed, they are greedy plants.
- Cut any annual cut flowers when they are ready.

warm days tap the plant to aid pollination.

- Melons may require pollinating. To do this, remove a ‘male’ flower (one without a small fruit behind it) and push it inside a ‘female’ flower (one with a small fruit)

August

August is the month when one can begin to really reap the rewards of all your previous hard work. It is still prudent to keep well ahead with all of the regular jobs such as hoeing, feeding and watering in dry spells.

Evenings will start to draw in and the cooler damper nights can bring rots and fungal infections to ripening fruits. Greenhouses will benefit from a little air ventilation overnight and full ventilation as soon as morning temperatures lift. Clear any spent crops as soon as the last harvest is made, composting all

- clean and disease-free material. Then lightly cultivate the vacant soil and either mulch with garden compost, leaf mould or well-rotted manure to prevent weed growth. Alternatively, sow a crop of green manure that will prevent weed growth, whilst giving something back to the soil. Begin to lift onions for winter storage. Keep harvesting all crops as they mature. Beetroot, kohlrabi and turnips can get woody and tasteless if allowed to get too large.
- VEGETABLE**
- Plant out remainder of spring brassicas, and draw up a little soil around the stem of sprouts and kale to prevent damage from winter winds. Alternatively, use a single stake or

FRUIT

- Finish all summer pruning on trained apples and pears.
- Prune blackcurrants by removing any branches that have carried fruit this year.
- Reduce side-shoots on red and white currants by two thirds.
- Remove straw from around strawberry plants that have finished fruiting; lightly prick the soil and add a general fertiliser. Prepare new strawberry beds.
- Prune summer fruiting raspberries and tie in new unfruited canes, then treat as for strawberries above.



- thick cane per stem and tie up.
- Feed asparagus beds then support the top growth.
 - Check over autumn planted onions in storage for early signs of rot; they never tend to store as well as maincrops.
 - Harvest second early potatoes as required.
 - If leeks for winter use have filled the hole they were planted in, consider either drawing up more soil round the barrel/stem or tying corrugated cardboard round each plant. Watch out for leek rust and remove any affected leaves before they spread.
 - Keep celery well-watered; As it is a bog plant, it will prevent it from going stringy or bolting.



- If runner beans have reached the top of their canes, pinch out the growing point to avoid them becoming top heavy and becoming a tangled mess.

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growing
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GREENHOUSE

- Continue as last month with watering, feeding and tying in, and harvest all tomatoes, cucumbers etc. as necessary.
- Ripening melons should be supported with nets so they cannot break away from the vine as they swell.

FLOWER

- Continue as last month.
- Ensure that any winter bedding seeds are sown no later than the beginning of the month. Winter pansies, violas, wallflowers and primulas can really brighten up plots in the duller months of the year.

Karen Stamper

I am an artist; I used to go sketching in the allotments pre-lockdown and one day I signed on to the waiting list for a plot. A couple of months later, I was offered one with the wonkiest shed, and couldn't resist it!

I love to draw on the allotments in the winter, when all the manmade structures and old stalks and stems are revealed. I use charcoal, crayons, collage papers and acrylics. We have straightened our wonky shed, and I can now shelter in there if needed.

You can see more here <https://karenstampercollage.com/gallery/drawings/>




Something Wicked This Way Grows

By Andy Millican

Every day she stands in the open doorway of her greenhouse, amazed at the spread and splay of limbs and huge leaves her butternut squash somehow achieves with regular watering and loving care. She shares her joy with fellow allotmenteer Fred who said it reminds him of a Triffid. She laughs.

Long after she's gone home, immersed herself in Dead Sea Bath Salts, a faint red glow rises and falls from below the giant leaves and a call far beyond human hearing echoes across space and time to others growing on allotment plots across the land.

Contact Andy for more info on andy.millican@hotmail.co.uk



Sometimes we need to stop and look around us to see what we have achieved, so the day I painted my picture was one of those days; something that reminds me of the lovely plot I had to give up.

Lesley Gridley, Rosemary Road Allotment Association



Looking for creative plotholders to share their allotment art!

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 - Or, maybe your plot doubles as your art studio

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on the... Kings plot

Late November 2022 to mid-February 2023

Every year in mid-November, I take a week's holiday, not to go away but to use the time digging my allotment. Over the years, as I have got older, I have found I can no longer dig all day, so by taking a week off I can pace myself. I usually try to dig for three to four hours per day, which I find is enough time to dig my pieces of ground that are divided up into sections of about 5m x 6m square.

I always put down a string line to divide the plot into two or three sections. I then dig out a trench first, putting that soil in 2 barrows. Then, I chip the already spread mushroom compost, and any annual weeds, into the bottom of the trench and gradually work backwards, turning the soil over into the trench, followed by chipping more compost and weeds into the next trench and so on. The last trench, once I have gone up and down the plot, is filled with the soil from the barrows of the first. Then the dug area is edged up from the path and the grass edges neatly clipped, before moving onto the next piece of ground.

Seeing a neatly dug piece of ground I always find very satisfying, and you know you will have a good clean start the following spring. Luckily the



weather was good that week and I dug all the spare ground, only leaving the areas where winter greens, leeks, parsnips, and late carrots were still in the ground for later harvesting.

From late November to early February, the weather was either wet or very cold; we even had a sprinkle of snow and some penetrating frosts every day for a couple of weeks with temperatures down to -6°C at night, and not above



Seeing a neatly dug piece of ground I always find very satisfying, and you know you will have a good clean start the following spring.



much and often hard as concrete. In my opinion digging early autumn really pays off.

The last pieces of ground, apart from where I have some Savoy cabbages and purple sprouting broccoli, were all dug in early February, so the plot has been completely dug now and still has time to absorb some rain ready for this year's crops.

The tunnel cages I made last year out of scaffold netting I have left in place as they are well supported, and I have dug inside each ready for this year's crops.

The purple sprouting broccoli is cropping well, and it always surprises me how much you can harvest from the six plants that I grow, and they will keep on producing into May, which I think is a crop worth growing and one we all love to eat.



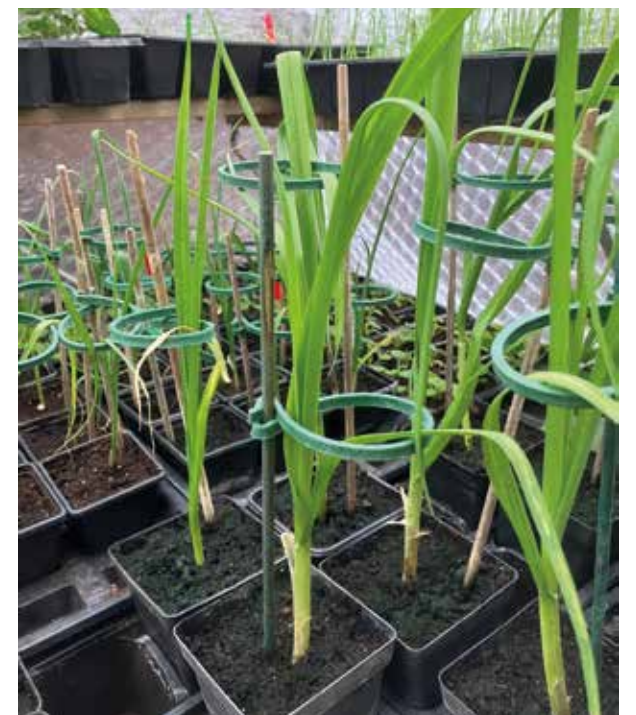
Potatoes, that are stored in the garage from the 2022 harvest, are still ok to eat. However, in February it was time to think about this year's crop, so my seed potatoes have been laid out in trays to chit. Then the trays are placed under my tall benches of the frost-free greenhouse to start chitting and produce some nice short green shoots in time for planting out later this year.

I have compiled my seed order and it is sitting in a box in my spare room, waiting to be sorted and stored in alphabetical order in an old biscuit tin, so they are easy to find when I want to sow them.

In December, I turned on the heated propagator and made a sowing of my mammoth exhibition onions on Christmas Eve. These soon came through nicely and have been pricked out into modular trays. A good friend of mine raised some leek pips (rooted mini leeks that have sprouted from a seed head), and these are growing on in my greenhouse in 10cm square pots; they are already 20-30cm tall, and should give some nice early show leeks.

In late January, I sowed some sweet and chilli peppers in the heated propagator. I like to sow these early as they can take a while to germinate and get moving, plus the earlier you sow the earlier you should have fruits to harvest this year.

As February comes to an end and March begins, I will then start thinking about sowing, under glass, my Brussels sprouts and summer brassicas, followed by a few spring onions in modula trays and my early tomatoes.



As February comes to an end and March begins, I will then start thinking about sowing, under glass, my Brussels sprouts and summer brassicas



Unless we get a very mild spell, I won't be sowing anything outside until late March or early April, once I know the soil has warmed up properly. Until then the soil can still be quite cold so I always advise gardeners to not get itchy fingers and start sowing too many crops too early in the soil as it will affect germination. We often find this is a common complaint and one we must all try to resist until the soil temperature is at a minimum of 7°C (45F), otherwise there is always a higher possibility of germination failure. In my opinion you may think you are getting ahead, but you are more likely wasting your time and you will have to sow again as rows will be patchy or fail altogether, so I think it is always best to wait until the soil conditions are just right and you are then sure to get the best results from your Kings Seeds.

Wishing you all a successful season and don't forget if any NAS member has a seed problem and needs some free advice, the team at Kings Seeds are always at the end of a phone to help.

Happy Gardening!

Andrew Tokely, Horticultural Director for Kings Seeds

cooking with Erin

Erin is a chef and teacher based in Stroud.
Each issue she shares delicious recipes
you can try using allotment produce.
www.naturalcookeryschool.com
Photographs: ©Michael Ruggier



Rhubarb Salsa

Rhubarb is most frequently used for desserts, but this fiesta for the taste buds showcases the savoury side of rhubarb in Rhubarb Salsa. Salsa is one of my all-time favourite condiments and as usual, homemade is always better. While my tomato plants grow and the taste of fresh tomatoes is in the near future, I will gladly embrace Rhubarb Salsa. I hope you do too.

500g rhubarb, chopped into 2cm/75-inch cubes
1 red pepper, roughly chopped
3 spring onions, roughly chopped
1 green chilli, seeds optional and chopped
1/4 tsp ground cumin
1/4 tsp ground coriander
juice of 1 lime, more if needed
dash of honey, maple syrup or sugar to taste
small handful fresh coriander
drizzle of olive oil
pinch of salt

Bring a pot of water to a boil. Add rhubarb and bring back to a boil. Blanch for 45 seconds. Remove from heat; drain and rinse with cold water to stop the cooking process. Be careful not to overcook as the salsa will be too mushy. You want a bit of crunch.

Place all ingredients in a food processor or blender and pulse until finely chopped. If you prefer you can also leave it chunky, but I prefer my salsa slightly blended. Taste and adjust seasoning. Serve with your favourite Mexican inspired dish or with a bowl of tortilla chips.

Harissa

GF VE

Harissa is a condiment made of roasted red peppers, spices and chilli. It's commonly served alongside meals to add a spicy element to dishes. It's also used as a rub in recipes and for flavouring couscous. It can be found in most supermarkets; however, making your own has multiple benefits. You can control the heat, what spices are added, and the taste is far better. It keeps in the fridge for 3-4 days and also freezes well. I always make a double or triple batch and freeze some for quick, tasty meals when I'm pushed for time.

2 fresh red chillies, seeded and chopped (depending on hotness!) or 3 dried
1 small red pepper
1/2 tsp each coriander seeds, cumin seeds and caraway seeds
1 tbsp olive oil
1 red onion, peeled and chopped
3 garlic cloves, peeled and chopped
2 tbsp tomato puree
2 tbsp lemon juice
1/2 tsp coarse sea salt
chilli powder to taste, optional

If using dried chillies, de-seed and soak in 150ml of hot water for 10 minutes then drain and discard the water.

Place the red pepper under a very hot grill for 15-20 minutes or until the skin is blackened, or place directly on a gas burner. Transfer to a bowl, cover with a plate or clingfilm and set aside. Once the pepper is cool, peel off and discard the skin.

Place a dry frying pan on a medium heat and toast the coriander, cumin and caraway seeds for two minutes or until fragrant. Transfer to a mortar and pestle or spice grinder and grind to a powder.

Heat the oil in a frying pan and fry the onion and garlic over a medium heat until dark and smoky - around 6-8 minutes. Blend with a hand blender or in a food processor with the rest of the ingredients, including the now peeled pepper and fresh or soaked chillies. This can also be done with a mortar and pestle.

Taste and adjust the seasoning. Add chilli powder to taste.



Chickpeas and spinach with chermoula

GF VE
Serves 4

This recipe makes use of early summer ingredients including fresh herbs and spinach or chard. Chickpeas and spinach are two of the most universally liked ingredients. Paired together with chermoula, a marinade is made from garlic, herbs and lemon, then finished with creamy yoghurt; this dish delivers. To ensure the yoghurt does not curdle, before stirring it in, remove the dish from the heat and leave to cool for a minute. If the yoghurt does curdle, don't worry, it's fine to eat.

To make the chermoula

2-3 garlic cloves
1/2 tsp paprika
1/2 tsp ground cumin

1 tbsp harissa, shop bought or homemade
3 tbsp fresh flat leaf parsley, roughly chopped
3 tbsp fresh coriander, roughly chopped
2 tbsp lemon juice
3 tbsp olive oil
1/2 preserved lemon, roughly chopped
1/4 tsp salt

1 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp butter
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
2 x 400g tin chickpeas, drained and rinsed
100ml water
200g baby spinach or roughly chopped larger spinach or chard
4 tbsp Greek yoghurt

This recipe makes use of early summer ingredients including fresh herbs and spinach or chard

To make the chermoula, place all the chermoula ingredients into a blender and blend until smooth. Set aside.

Heat a large frying pan or saucepan with a lid over a medium heat. Add the oil and butter and sauté the garlic for about 30 seconds, being careful not to burn. Add the chermoula, chickpeas and 100 ml of water, simmer for 5 minutes.

Stir in the spinach and cover with a lid. Cook until the spinach has just wilted. Remove from the heat, leave to cool for a minute then stir in the yoghurt and season with salt and pepper to taste.

Vegan version
Swap good quality vegan margarine or extra olive oil for butter.



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chickens

Caring for chickens in ‘flockdown’

Great Britain is in an avian influenza prevention zone. By law, anyone who keeps birds must follow the hygiene and disease prevention rules, including allotmenters.

Housing birds has been the requirement in England and Wales since November 2022. This compulsory housing during the disease outbreak may impact the welfare of chickens, especially if they're not used to being housed for long periods.

However, there are several ways in which plotholders can keep their fowl happy and healthy whilst in ‘flockdown’.

To ensure the wellbeing of chickens, there are some minimum considerations that should already be in place for housed birds:

- Make sure chickens are not overcrowded.
- Natural light where possible – do not keep them permanently in the dark. During the day a person should be able to see their birds clearly and artificial light should follow typical day and night patterns.
- Consider installing a thermometer at bird level and do not allow temperatures to go significantly above 21°C.
- Make sure there is enough ventilation.
- Provide food and fresh, clean water.
- Clean water-drinkers frequently and do not use standing water as it may have been contaminated by wild birds.



- Use good quality litter that crumbles easily – you can use damp-proof membranes for earth floors to help keep litter dry.
- Check them more than once a day.
- Check for skin parasites like red mite.
- Consider providing aerial perches for your birds. This helps prevent overcrowding and gives them more vertical space and room to move away from pecking by other birds.

PROVIDING ENRICHMENT
Providing enrichment items to prevent boredom goes a long way towards a positive living environment while birds are housed. The market for ready-made



“Providing enrichment items to prevent boredom goes a long way towards a positive living environment while birds are housed”

toys for poultry is huge, and owners can buy anything from mirrors, dust baths and pecking blocks, to xylophones, perches, and footballs. All of these are valid and useful in their own right but, in order to keep birds busy in the long term, there are cheap DIY options available to chicken keepers that offer more sustainable solutions.

Adding extra levels and textures to their living area like straw bales, shaving bales, low barriers and ropes can be very mentally stimulating for birds. Chickens like to explore new things and are very curious. Straw and shaving bales can be used as bedding once the occupants lose interest.

Introduce new snacks that have challenging consistencies and will entice an inquisitive bird. Cooked spaghetti hanging off the roof or sides of the coop provides fun and sustenance. Frozen peas for pecking, or a ring of watermelon suspended from above by a rope, will provide hours of physical and mental activity.

Left over brassicas like cabbages from an allotment plot also make great enrichment, along with pumpkins and their seeds. During the early part of the year, surplus crops may be few and far between, but it is worth remembering for late summer and autumn when there is an abundance of growth. Be sure to mention to fellow plotholders that might have spare.

Hens love shiny things, so hanging up some CDs around the run provides visual enrichment for chickens, which can be lots of fun.

Unlike some of the covid lockdown restrictions, chickens are allowed visitors and human interaction is a safe and enjoyable way to engage both fowl and owner if biosecurity rules are followed – these can be found on the DEFRA website. Visit birds regularly and sit with them where possible. Gentle stroking and the odd conversation (chickens love a chat!) can be very therapeutic. For livelier chickens and their owners, throwing treats for the birds to catch can be very entertaining!

If none of these options are available and there is concern for the wellbeing of a bored flock, mashed food will increase eating time and keep birds occupied for a while.

Find out more about avian flu and tips for healthy hens via The British Hen Welfare Trust at <https://www.bhwt.org.uk/>





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☐ 10-20 hours
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2. Is organic growing and using biofriendly products important to you?
☐ Yes ☐ No

3. How do you use your allotment/garden? (Tick all that apply)
☐ Fruit ☐ Veg
☐ Flowers ☐ Herbs
☐ Bees ☐ Hens
☐ Composting ☐ Pond or wildlife

4. Do you enjoy the following? (Tick all that apply)
☐ Gardening shows
☐ Gardening breaks in the UK
☐ Gardening breaks abroad
☐ Visiting gardens
☐ Attending gardening workshops/courses
☐ Other

5. How do you prefer to shop for garden products?
☐ In-store ☐ Online
☐ Allotment site or allotment association shop

6. Next year, what do you anticipate your approximate allotment/garden spend to be?
☐ £100-250
☐ £250-500
☐ £500+
Next year, what do you see your individual / your Association's (circle as applicable) biggest purchase being?

7. Do you pay for any of the following on the allotment?
☐ Gas
☐ Water
☐ Electric

8. Do you take advantage of the member offers and discounts in the members area?
☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ I didn't know there were member offers
If no, why?

9. Have you ever been influenced to purchase products from an advert that you have seen in the magazine?
☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, what kind of product was it, and why were you drawn to it?

10. How do you receive your magazine? (If relevant, please also let us know if you would like details about receiving your own personal copy)
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☐ Shared with others
☐ View online
☐ Tell me more

11. Are there any regular topics or one off features that you would like to see covered in the magazine?

12. Is there anything about the magazine that you think could be improved?
13. What other gardening magazines do you read?
14. Do you have children / grandchildren under 12 years of age?
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Types of bees in the UK: how to tell the difference

Spring has never truly arrived until you catch sight of your first bee, but do you know what species it is?

You might be surprised to learn there are more than 250 species of bee in the UK. Bumblebees, Mason Bees, Mining Bees – these are just one small part of a big, beautiful family. Take a look at how to identify some of the most common types of bees in the UK.

BUMBLEBEES

There are 24 species of Bumblebee in the UK, and personally, I don't think there is a better sight than these clumsy balls of fluff zooming from flower to flower on a sunny day. They are a social species, nesting in colonies ranging from a few dozen to several hundred bees. Here are four of our most common:

TREE BUMBLEBEE (BOMBUS HYPNORUM)

Easily identified by their ginger thorax, black abdomen and white tail, Tree Bumblebees are one of our most common species. They are also the species most likely to colonise nest boxes and are found in habitats ranging from woodland to gardens. Some of their favourite flowers include rhododendrons, brambles, and comfrey.



Tree Bumblebee

RED-TAILED BUMBLEBEE

Female Red-tailed Bumblebees are jet black with a bright red or red-orange tail, while males have a yellow-haired head and collar, and a weak yellow midriff-band. These bees do well in a variety of habits including woodland, urban sites, gardens, and wildflower-rich grassland – anywhere they can find thistles, bird's-foot trefoil, buddleia, and the rest of their favourite flowers.

WHITE-TAILED BUMBLEBEE

White-tailed Bumblebees have a bright yellow collar, a yellow abdomen band and a bright white tail. They look very similar to Buff-tailed Bumblebees (which have a browner collar and an orange-tinted tail), and early Bumblebees (much smaller, with a bright orange or yellow-orange tail).

White-tailed Bumblebees can be found almost anywhere, feeding on flowers ranging from thistles and buddleia to brambles and scabious.

COMMON CARDER BEE

These beautiful little bees are the only UK species with all-brown colouring and no white tail. They range from ginger to a pale, sandy brown, depending on how sun-bleached they are.



Tawny Mining Bee

“Spotted a hole in your lawn surrounded by a volcano of excavated earth?”

Common Carder Bees are found everywhere from arable land to urban gardens. Gorse is a favourite food plant alongside things like dandelions, bluebells, dead-nettles, comfrey, selfheal and foxgloves.

MASON BEES

If you have ever noticed clouds of bees buzzing about in front of brick walls, they were likely Mason Bees. This solitary species nests in cavities in wood, hollow stems, and walls. Mason Bees look a little similar to some Mining Bee species, but you can tell them apart by their boxy heads and large powerful jaws.

RED MASON BEE

The Mason Bee you are most likely to see is the red Mason Bee. Look out for a black head, brown thorax, and orange abdomen, and in females, a lot of fluff! You are likely to see red Mason Bees in built-up environments with plenty of gardens, churchyards, and urban green space, and they are the bee most likely to be tucked up in your bee hotel. Their food plants include salallows, fruit trees and oilseed rape.

MINING BEES

Spotted a hole in your lawn surrounded by a volcano of excavated earth? It is the work of a Mining Bee. This solitary species nests in the ground and is part of the Andrena genus which is a 67-strong group of diverse bees ranging from 5-7mm long. There are two species you are most likely to see.

TAWNY MINING BEE

There is no mistaking the Tawny Mining Bee: a Honeybee-sized ginger species with a thick orange coat and a black face. They feast on shrubs ranging from willow, hawthorn and blackthorn to fruit trees and maples, and love gorging on dandelions.

Tawny Mining Bees are found in a wide variety of habitats from gardens to parks. If there is an area of light soil or a bare bank, you are likely to spot one.

ASHY MINING BEE

A stunning bee (and my personal favourite), the Ashy Mining Bee is a distinctive little species with monochrome colouring. Its ability to adapt to different habitats is impressive; the Ashy Mining Bee can be found in heathland, moorland edges, open woodland, coastal grassland, cliffs, and quarries.

Some of the Ashy Mining Bees favourite food plants include willow, blackthorn, gorse, buttercups and fruit trees.

HONEYBEES

We have just one species of Honeybee in the UK, identified by its slim, sandy thorax and black abdomen with golden-amber bands. Honeybees have been domesticated for centuries and it is rare to find a truly wild colony. Our Honeybees now mostly live in hives of up to 20,000 individuals and are commonly found feeding on open flowers they can easily reach with their short tongues. Keep your eyes peeled around willows, orchard trees, oilseed rape, raspberry flowers and other trees, herbs and shrubs.

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Apples



The book 'Two Hundred and Nine Ways of Preparing the Apple' was written in 1913 by Mackay, L. Gertrude, and unsurprisingly contains several recipes for apples – 209 to be exact! The excerpt below provides an introduction to this book from over 100 years ago, with recipes ranging from the classics to the unexpected. If you have ever wondered what to do with a glut of apples, this could be just the thing...

The apple is without question the King of Fruits. While it is more easily digested when cooked, it is not difficult of digestion and is most delicious raw. Whether fresh, dried, evaporated or canned, the apple is a wholesome food, easily pre- pared, attractive and palatable at all times.

Because of its rare keeping qualities people in the most remote parts are able to take advantage of its great food value.

Apples vary in flavour and texture. They are often marketed before they are mature and the cooking and keeping qualities are thus injured. None of the soft, insipid apples are suitable for preserving; the sound, tart apples are the best for this purpose.

Fine grained apples are best for sauce and butter, while the coarse-grained varieties are best for marmalade.

In the fall and early winter, apples are at their best, and spices need not be added, because their flavour cannot be improved, but towards spring the flavour becomes somewhat flat and

is improved by the addition of spices or other flavourings.

Always cook apples in earthen or granite ware utensils, and use silver, granite, or wooden spoons for stirring.

The use of the apple as a basis for practically all manufactured jellies and jams is well known. This is due to the large amount of pectose which it contains.

There is no waste to a good apple. Even the paring and core may be utilized for jelly.

Fruits are classified as flavour fruits and nutritive fruits. The apple comes under both of these heads.

APPLE GOODIE

Cut apples in balls with a vegetable scoop and cook until tender in a little syrup, to which a little lemon juice has been added. Toast slices of bread or stale cake; dip in milk, to which a little salt and butter has been added. Pile apple balls on slices of bread or cake, with five or six blanched almonds; add bits of any kind of jelly or marmalade. Serve with plain cream.

GLAZED APPLES WITH PRESERVED GINGER

Core and pare half a dozen apples. Make a syrup with a cup of sugar and a cup of water. Cook the apples in the syrup,

cook until tender, turn while cooking, but do not cover, as the steam will cause them to break in pieces. Have circular pieces of stale sponge cake ready, take the apples up onto the cake, sprinkle apples and cake generously with granulated sugar and set in the oven to glaze. Add half a cup of syrup from preserved ginger to the apple syrup and let boil up once. When the apples are a delicate brown, pour the syrup onto a serving dish, set the apples into the syrup, and fill the open spaces with pieces of preserved ginger. Serve hot with cream.

GLAZED APPLES WITH SPICED PRUNES

Choose large apples of uniform size; pare, core, and cook until tender in syrup. Remove to a platter. Boil the syrup down to a jelly and pour over the apples. Fill the centres with spiced prunes and dust the top of each apple with powdered sugar and serve hot.

GREEN APPLE HONEY

Place cider made from half-grown apples, windfalls, on the back of the stove and let simmer gently until it is reduced to one-quarter the original bulk. Strain and add an equal bulk of sugar; heat until the sugar is dissolved. It will keep indefinitely in a cool place and is very useful, either as a sauce for puddings or to add flavour to otherwise insipid tasting fruits.

APPLE ICING

One cup of sugar, one-third cup of water, one salt spoon of cream of tartar; heat gradually and boil without stirring until the syrup will thread when dropped from a fork. Pour slowly over the well beaten white of one egg, beating constantly, and continue until thick enough to spread. Add two tablespoons of grated apple, beat and spread on the cake.



Fruits are classified as flavour fruits and nutritive fruits. The apple comes under both of these heads.

APPLE JAM

Pare and cut apples into quarters, core and cut into rather thick slices; to every pound of apples allow one pound of brown sugar, and to every five pounds of apples allow the thinly cut rinds and juice of four lemons and one-half pound of ginger root and one ounce of cloves. Let stand in a bowl until the following day; boil until the apples are a rich amber colour and perfectly clear.

APPLE JONATHAN

Peel and slice very thin four large or five small Greening Apples; place in deep pudding dish or baking dish with two tablespoonfuls cold water. Make batter of one-third cupful of butter, one large cupful of granulated sugar, two eggs beaten thoroughly, two large cupfuls flour, with four teaspoonfuls good baking powder and one teaspoonful salt sifted together, stirring well; then add flour. Blend the whole for five minutes, then pour over the apples; let stand five minutes before placing in oven; bake thirty minutes.

SAUCE FOR APPLE JONATHAN

One and one-half cupfuls sweet milk, one tablespoonful butter, one-half cupful sugar, two tablespoonfuls cornstarch, three heaping tablespoonfuls raspberry jam. Place milk in porcelain dish over fire, let boil slowly; mix butter, sugar and cornstarch together; add one-third cupful cold milk; mix until smooth, then stir slowly into the boiling milk; let boil five minutes, then remove from fire and add raspberry jam. To be served hot. —

—J. W. W., New York City.

JELLIED APPLES

Peel, core and quarter two quarts of tart apples. Make a syrup of one and one-half pints of water and two cups of sugar; boil rapidly for ten minutes. Cook the apples gently, a few at a time, until they are tender and clear. Remove them with a skimmer and spread on a platter. When the last of the fruit has been cooked, add one-half package of gelatin which has been soaked in one-half cup

If you are keen to have a go at the other 198 recipes, you can find the whole book online for free.

of cold water for two hours, the juice of one lemon and stir until the gelatin is dissolved. Set the saucepan in cold water and stir until the mixture begins to thicken; drop the apples in and mix gently, turn into a mould and let harden. Serve with whipped cream.

JELLIED APPLES WITH ALMONDS

Pare, core and quarter Golden Pippins; stew until soft and beat smooth. Make syrup by boiling a pound and a half of sugar and a pint of water for every two pounds of apples. Put the apple pulp and the juice of three lemons into the syrup and boil gently until stiff enough to drop heavily from the spoon. Pour into a wet mould and when cold turn onto a serving dish. Stick blanched almonds into the jelly and surround with whipped cream.

If you are keen to have a go at the other 198 recipes, you can find the whole book online for free.

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Veg at a glance...

Ridge Cucumbers

Ridge or outdoor cucumbers are sometimes seen as a poor relation to our more refined hot house types, but what they lack in good looks, they make up for in flavour says Kitchen Garden editor, Steve Ott.

Unfussy, prolific and full of flavour, outdoor cucumbers are a must for any plot. Once established they don't need a greenhouse to thrive and given the right conditions and a decent amount of sunshine, they will go on fruiting for much of the summer.

SOWING

Outdoor cucumbers are tender and should not be planted out until the frosts are over in your area. Sowing, therefore, should be timed to take account of this and plants generally take four to six weeks from sowing to planting.

To avoid root disturbance and damage to the fragile stems, sow into large-celled trays or small pots, one seed in each (germination is usually reliable). Conventional wisdom says that the seeds should be sown on their sides to help drain water from around them but don't worry too much about this. Sow 13mm (1/2in) deep into any good multipurpose or sowing compost, label and water well.

Place in a heated propagator set to 21C (70F) and cover with a lid or polythene



until the seeds have germinated. Check each day for signs of drying out and to remove condensation that might cause rotting.

Once the seedlings have emerged, uncover them and maintain the temperature until the seed leaves have unfolded on most of the plants at which stage the heat can be reduced to 15C



STEVE'S TOP TIP

If growing along the ground, plant through a soil covering fabric or black polythene and trail the plants over this to keep the foliage and fruit free of rain splash.



(60F). If they become pot bound before they require planting out, pot on into larger pots and allow to grow on.

Alternatively, you can sow direct outside at the end of May/beginning of June into ridges or mounds, two seeds per station and cover with a bottle or bell cloche. Protect the young plants from slugs.

GROWING ON

Plants raised inside are grown on until around 10-15cm (4-6in) tall. At this stage they need to be hardened off for a week to 10 days prior to planting out.



SOIL PREPARATION

Cucumbers should be planted in a sunny, fertile, but sheltered spot out of cold, damaging winds. On exposed sites it might be better to plant on traditional ridges, covering with a cloche at first and then training the growth into the protection of the furrow. Plant about 60cm (2ft) apart either way.

About a week before planting, dress the soil with a balanced fertiliser and rake this in. If planting on mounds or ridges these should be made now; for mounds, simply dig out the soil required for planting the rootball and enrich with plenty of well-rotted compost or manure and a little general fertiliser. Plant with the top of the compost level with the soil in the new spot and firm gently before watering in thoroughly.

If you intend to keep your plants trained upright, plant next to a suitable support such as a fence or trellis or provide an alternative such as some canes, netting or a small obelisk.

CARE AFTER PLANTING

Continue to water well during dry spells to maintain growth and discourage

powdery mildew. Watch out for pests and treat accordingly. Maintain your defences against slugs and snails, especially during wet weather.

Tie in plants regularly and pinch out the growing tip of the plant once it develops six or seven leaves to encourage more branches on which more fruit will form. Feed every week with a high potash tomato food once the first fruit sets. Unproductive sideshoots can also be pinched.

Outdoor cucumbers produce male and female flowers (often the females, with embryo fruits behind the petals, are slow to appear at first) and it is important to leave the male flowers in place to aid pollination. In cold, wet weather you may also decide to assist by transferring pollen on a soft brush. However, as the season progresses and temperatures rise, there is not usually any need to do this.

HARVESTING

Cut the fruits regularly, taking care not to damage the thin stems. The more are cut the more will be produced, but



Feed every week with a high potash tomato food once the first fruit sets.

if allowed to set seed, fruiting will be poor. Although modern varieties are smoother and thinner skinned than the heritage types, you may prefer to peel or partially peel the fruit prior to eating. Fruit will store for up to a week in the fridge if wrapped in cling film or placed in a food bag.

TOP VARIETIES

'Marketmore 76': An old tried and trusted variety producing good numbers of tasty fruit. Good resistance to disease. (Kings Seeds)

biodiversity

Increasing Biodiversity on the Allotment

There are three aspects to biodiversity; a well-tended allotment can improve and conserve all three without compromising on crop yields or quality.

The first factor that contributes to biodiversity is genetic diversity – the variation in the gene pool. We can increase and maintain genetic diversity by growing a wide range of varieties rather than sticking to just one. This is particularly important for those plants that reproduce asexually (cloning), for example potatoes and garlic. The vulnerability of relying on one cultivar (monoculture) was clear in the awful famine in the 1840s when potato blight struck Ireland. One third of the population starved, and another third emigrated. Fortunately for us, seed catalogues list many varieties of plants, so keeping a high genetic diversity on our plots is very straightforward.

The next factor is species diversity. Again, this comes naturally to allotments as we grow a wide range of species of plants on our plots. Most pests and diseases attack a single species or a few closely related ones (the exceptions are pigeons and slugs, generalists that can eat a wide range of species). By growing a wide range of different species, we limit pest damage and ensure that even if one crop fails, others will still produce. Traditional crop rotations help to reduce pests and diseases, especially in soil. Pathogens

can build up in soil if the same species is grown there year after year; so again, more diversity gives more health and resilience. Wildlife will also benefit from a wide range of species. Having a bed of flowers, especially those that attract bees and other pollinators, such as borage, will enhance your plot. Soft fruit also attracts pollinating insects and inevitably some gets 'shared' with songbirds.

Thirdly, habitat diversity is a major contributor to biodiversity. Increasing the range of habitats on our sites may need coordination with your society or council. Creating a pond, for example, might need permission and risk assessments, and maintaining a diverse boundary hedge is not something an individual plotholder can often take responsibility for.

Well-managed boundary hedges are great for biodiversity. They may also improve site security. A diverse



hedge will contain many species of trees, shrubs, and wildflowers, so that different types of birds and insects can find food, shelter, and nest sites. Blossom in the spring, camouflage from predators, berries in the autumn and shelter from winter weather are all usefully provided by a hedge. Hedge maintenance will improve diversity; hedge-laying looks very destructive but studies have shown an increase in bird populations two years after the most drastic treatment as the hedge thickens out.

Things we can all do include having a compost heap, a small pile of rotting logs and nest boxes for birds, allowing a patch of longer grass to grow (as in the no-mow May campaign).

Biodiversity isn't a bed of roses! Sometimes the wildlife can frustrate our efforts. One example on my own plot are the moles who excavate in inconvenient places. I take this as a sign of good soil health; the moles are after the worms which are very plentiful on my plot because I add mulch and practise no-dig. Predators are a good indicator species that there is a diverse and healthy food web to sustain them.

Soil is a huge part of biodiversity. Healthy soil is teeming with life. Worms are the obvious example, and it has been estimated that there is more worm protein under a pasture than livestock above it. There are many different worm species, but worms are just one of the more visible creatures under our feet. It



is estimated that a teaspoon of soil contains 50 billion organisms: far more than the number of people in the world. Something we can all do is be kind to our soil and feed these microbes with compost and mulch. According to soil scientists, the top metre of the world's soil contains three times more carbon than the entire atmosphere. Every time we add mulch or compost, we are maintaining this. On the other hand, rotavating can damage this delicate ecosystem just as much as a fire damages a forest. We don't have to go to the amazon rainforest to do our bit to protect the planet.

Russell Attwood,
NAS East Midlands Deputy Rep



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Struggling to find insurance to protect the tools left at your plot? Our partner Chris Knott Insurance has come up with a solution...

It takes dedication and hard work to make the most out of an allotment. To keep it in tip-top shape, you've no doubt invested in some great tools. But how do you protect this equipment from damage, theft, or loss?

Sadly, it can be tricky to find cover that protects all of your gear if you keep it on your plot – even if you lock it away securely. For this reason, Chris Knott Insurance has been working hard with the NAS behind the scenes to come up with a solution.

INTRODUCING HOME & ALLOTMENT INSURANCE

To solve this problem, they have created a new Home & Allotment policy, which is exclusive to NAS members like you. This innovative idea covers both your property and any items left on your plot, protecting them against a range of risks, including fire, theft and storm damage.

Two tiers of cover give you added flexibility.

The Premium product combines your Buildings and Contents Insurance for your home with added Allotment Insurance. The Premier product gives you all of this plus Home Emergency and Accidental Damage cover.



No matter which product you pick, you'll only need to pay a £25 excess for any gardening equipment claims. You'll also get ongoing support and claims assistance from Chris Knott Insurance's friendly and experienced team.

WHAT EQUIPMENT IS COVERED?

The new Home & Allotment Insurance covers a whole range of gardening equipment. Provided they are kept in a secure and locked place on your plot, this means you can keep the following safe from theft, damage and loss:

- Wheelbarrows
- Hoses

Well-managed boundary hedges are great for biodiversity



- Watering cans
- Secateurs or scissors
- Hoes or hand cultivators
- Rakes
- Garden forks
- Garden spades
- Trowels
- Lawnmowers
- Strimmers
- Hedge trimmers
- Chainsaws
- Leaf blowers
- Garden vacuums

HOME COVER

This new policy includes both Buildings and Contents Insurance. This means that both the structure of your property and the things inside it are protected.

But if you don't need Buildings Insurance (because you are renting, for instance), this isn't a problem! This policy can be tailored so that you have Contents only cover.

The only combination that isn't provided is Buildings only cover.

GET A HOME & ALLOTMENT INSURANCE QUOTE TODAY

If you'd like to protect both your property and your allotment in one smart policy, you can talk to Chris Knott Insurance to get a quote.

You can visit their dedicated webpage at www.ChrisKnott.co.uk/hai or call 0800 917 2274 to find out more.



Greenhouse Creation

When I began to take an interest in growing vegetables, I grew them in containers or grow bags in the small backyard behind my house – there was no garden. Before long, like so many others, I realised that I needed an allotment. There's an allotment site nearby and (a big advantage) no waiting list! I had two allotments very soon, one bigger than average, the other much smaller. The site is on the north-facing slope of a river valley, the river flowing into the River Don. From the upper allotment, the larger of the two, there's a view of the Hillsborough Football Stadium.

The allotments had been vacant for a long time, regarded as undesirable, I would think, although the problems were nothing unusual. Brambles flourished. I cleared them with a scythe. There's a factory which manufactures scythe blades and other gardening and agricultural equipment in the valley. Sometimes, it's possible to make a tedious allotment chore exhilarating and I liked the swish of the scythe blade, the speed with which it was clearing the brambles, if only the top growth.

The allotments I took on had two structures, both significant for me. In the upper allotment, there was a long, low greenhouse, a steel framework with glass panes – very useful but very old. In the lower allotment there was, and still is, an Anderson Shelter of thick, corrugated metal. I treasure this for its historical associations, a reminder of the Sheffield Blitz and the 'Dig for Victory' campaign.

The shelter in an adjoining allotment was stolen by metal thieves and my greenhouse was destroyed by strong winds. Clearing the piles of rusting metal and broken glass from the site was a chore that I couldn't make exhilarating. The fate of this greenhouse has strongly influenced my view of greenhouse design. I don't favour glass, for a range of reasons.

These allotments are places which have had unexpected benefits for me,



including new interests like design and construction. I decided to construct a new greenhouse but not of established design. The whole process went very smoothly. This was pleasurable work and new ideas came as I worked. None of the materials were difficult to install, even though I was already in the older age group at the time. The work could easily have been done by one person and was done almost completely by one person – me!

What kind of building emerged and is still there, 10 years later? What was different about it?

The core structure is very simple. When I constructed it, I excluded complications. The structure takes the form of a triangular prism. The triangle is a particularly strong and rigid structural element. The pairs of wooden rafters of a pitched roof are two sides of a triangle, held in place at the apex by the ridge board which runs the length of the roof.

The core structure is like this kind of roof, but instead of being supported by walls, it's supported by the ground. Conventional greenhouse construction generally starts with putting in place a base, often concrete. Compacted soil has been sufficient for this structure but if I were building it now, I would have pockets of concrete, placed at the same level. As the width of the structure is 320cm, the two rows of concrete pockets would be 320cm apart. The sloping wooden components would rest on these. A conventional base is unnecessary. The sloping boards which form two sides of a triangle in this design are used as they are - no need for sawing, for shaping the upper ends for attachment to the rafter board. The boards are simply secured with screws.

Tomatoes are the most important greenhouse crop for me – grown in a mixture of soil and compost for year after year. I grow grafted tomatoes, which don't need changes of compost every few years. I also have a horizontal grapevine growing overhead inside the greenhouse.

Long polycarbonate sheets, each of them 3 metres long and 90 cm wide, are



The sloping boards which form two sides of a triangle in this design are used as they are - no need for sawing, for shaping the upper ends for attachment to the rafter board. The boards are simply secured with screws.



the light-transmitting materials. Sheets with other dimensions can be used. In the design, a portable drill is needed to remove the lightweight metal strips which keep the polycarbonate sheets in place. A newer fast-release system is preferable.

The temperature – outside the greenhouse, not inside – reached 40 Celsius last year. During heatwaves, one polycarbonate sheet can be removed for more ventilation. There's a storage area for the sheets removed. Putting the sheets back into place is as easy as removal.

Plastic coverings don't enhance the appearance of a site, for most people. When polycarbonate sheets aren't needed, then no sheets need be visible.

When the crops in the greenhouse need water and it's raining, then this is another time to remove the panels, most of them or all of them, to secure the benefits of natural precipitation.

All the polycarbonate sheets, curved and straight – apart from verticals – can be used as water collecting surfaces. The water can be diverted to storage containers, to the ponds I've constructed, of different sizes or to plants growing just outside the greenhouse.

On the site I also have a small wildlife/ water storage pond, a solar composter, which speeds up the production of compost by the greenhouse effect. I've used it for growing a pumpkin plant, with the pumpkins secured to the roof. Outside the greenhouse, there are views of the lower allotment and the south facing side of the valley – a built up area rather than pristine nature but with deeply satisfying woodland.

Paul Hurt, NAS member

All change

Greetings from Firs Estate Allotments in Derby! We're a 6.5-acre oasis of 52 large plots in the heart of the Stockbrook area of the city, surrounded by Victorian terraces. Firs Estate is Derby's oldest allotment site with an incredible 140-year history; it's privately owned by an ancient investment company who were responsible for building much of the surrounding housing and factories. The landlord relationship is very positive, but if yours is either absent or fractured, reach out to them; for us, it was a simple fix, and we're looking forward to welcoming their representatives to our open day during National Allotments Week (on August 12th; all welcome to visit!).

Our committee is youthful by comparison to most; at least 50% are under 40, there's a mix of genders, sexualities and diverse backgrounds, and a lot has changed since the majority of the committee were voted on almost a year ago. We inherited a site we loved, that had no online banking, empty plots, no fundraising plan, poor governance packs, no database of plotholder email addresses, no social media, and wasn't too sure what to do with a fledgling community kitchen idea that two plotholders had. The response was always the easiest one – no.

We've worked hard to transform the site. We now have a waiting list, regular community events including bonfires and food evenings (communicated through email and social media) and a full set of policies. And the fledgling community kitchen? It's now the hugely successful Sprout Derby CIC, a space

where all can gather for a free nutritious meal and some time outdoors. It's open every Friday and Saturday.

We've had funding success too, with £2,000 from the Tree Council to reinstate lost hedgerows, creating 3km of wildlife habitat that will outlive us all. We've received a small grant from Derby Cathedral's congregation to update our signage (we're going to have a sign on the gate telling locals who we are and what we do – a first! – alongside the site rules in six different languages), and we have plans to conserve some of our Second World War Anderson shelters and introduce an accessible toilet. On our very first day as a committee, we painted our (long-closed) shop-shed and reopened it, providing a valuable source of revenue selling compost and second-hand tools at affordable prices, and the community spirit has continued; we've worked with plotholders to reset the communal plot we have planted up for wildlife, and we held a wassail in our orchard!

Our prices are low (£38 for a full 0.2-acre plot), our governance is strong, there's a great sense of community and we're inundated with enquiries from new tenants. But the one thing I'm most proud of is that we are up for the challenge. If someone comes to us with an idea, we don't take the easy option and say no; we explore it, we see if it fits with our identity, and if it does – we say yes!

Dr Alex Rock, Vice Chair, Firs Estate Allotment Association
firstateallotments@outlook.com



Borders Organic Potato Day – a really positive success story

We arranged to attend Borders Organic Potato Day at the Borders Event Centre in Kelso, Scotland. This was to show a presence to our existing Scottish membership and to show potential members all the benefits we can offer.

I travelled up the afternoon before the event and stayed in Kirk Yetholm, a stone's throw away from Kelso. There I met a couple of local allotment gardeners, who directed me to where their allotment site was. It was very nice.

In the morning I set up the NAS promotional stand at the Event Centre. Dr Deborah Burn, our Research and Development Officer, joined me at the start of the event.

We were rushed off our feet the whole of the day, with well over 1000 attendees passing through.

We had such a positive response to our presence, and so many people were pleased to see us there. There were lots of enquiries about new membership, and a very healthy demand for the latest information regarding new developments, so it was very beneficial having Deborah with me.

It was an extremely positive experience all round.

Phil Gomersall



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gardening gems



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Lampport Hall

The gardens are steeped in history and include extensive herbaceous borders and shrubbery walks containing some rare and interesting plants. The Walled Garden is full of unusual tall perennials. The gardens are open to visitors April-October on Wednesdays and Thursdays, 10am-4pm. www.lamporthall.co.uk



Markshall Estate

2,350 acres of gardens, arboretum, and leafy woodland walks. An Essex gem, home to trees and plantations from across the globe. The Walled Garden sits in the heart of the 200-acre arboretum and is home to the longest double border in the county. www.markshall.org.uk

Garden Organic

Set within one acre, the organic demonstration garden at Garden Organic features several unique areas including a large glasshouse and polytunnel, a four-bed veg garden, a no-dig system trial area, and a container garden space. During the summer it is bursting with ornamental plants, flowers and an array of seasonal fruits and vegetables. The garden also features vegetable varieties selected from the Heritage Seed Library - it really is a must-see for any gardener. The garden is open to members and visitors for pre-booked tours only.

024 7630 3517
gardenorganic.org.uk/get-involved/courses-and-events



For inspiration we've rounded up the best of our days out and gardening gems across the UK. Happy days! There is plenty to do and don't forget to take advantage of special offers wherever possible!



Please check the venue's website or call before visiting.

Parham House

Parham House is one of the country's finest Elizabethan houses, with splendid and award-winning gardens. Set in an ancient deer park at the foot of the South Downs, it has been a well-loved family home since its foundation stone was laid in 1577. www.parhaminsussex.co.uk



Gresgarth Hall Gardens

Created by internationally renowned designer Arabella Lennox-Boyd, these stunning gardens and arboretum are open 2nd Sunday of the month, February to November. 01524 771838 arabellalennoxboyd.com



Jordans Mill Gardens

These beautiful gardens were designed by Chelsea Flower Show Gold Medal winners Julie Toll & Ian Kitson using ancient field layouts and hedge patterns as inspiration.

During your visit, you'll see displays of cereals and crops grown alongside flowers, fruit and vegetables in a nature friendly way, reflecting Biggleswade's rich history of market gardening.

Entry to the Mill Gardens is free. The Riverside Café, Mill Gardens & Mill Shop are open Wednesday to Sunday, 9am to 5pm. Plant sales, pre-bookable mill tours and coach parking are available.

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DEPUTY REPRESENTATIVE

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Welcome to our new members...
Blackleach Allotments Association
Cromac Terrace Allotment Society
Radcliffe Homer Street
Allotment Association
9 Individuals
St Chads CE Primary School



News from the North West Counties: Region Three NAS

The weather has finally begun to improve, as the days get warmer, and the nights get shorter. I am pleased to say we recently had our first picking of Timperley early rhubarb – a full week earlier than last year. A great saving on having to buy it from the supermarket at £7 for 400g (just four sticks), although that was for an expensive supermarket's organic brand.

Forcing rhubarb is easy as long as you do not force the same plants year after year, and you feed them with plenty of manure.

Many annual general meetings have been taking place and I am lucky enough to have been invited to some of them, although finding venues in unfamiliar towns has been difficult at times. When you are reading this, I should have visited eight sites, from Liverpool to Lancaster, helping, giving advice and hopefully steering committees into maintaining their national membership.

Here in the North West, we had our AGM late in the year 2022, and have welcomed new members and old onto the steering committee. In consequence, we have a new chairman and secretary, and our next general meeting will be taking place in Liverpool, at Sefton Community Hub, where we hope to have a good attendance.

I wonder how many sites have been noticing a drop off in early doors attendance. Some plots near me have not been touched properly since the beginning of winter, compost heaps have not been turned or touched in some cases, and the plots have a derelict feel about them; it can be quite depressing. Luckily, we have had an influx of ploholders from Poland and Eastern Europe, who are not afraid of cold weather, but their plots are now beginning to put the rest of us to shame!

Things to look forward to; yes, gardening is the

hobby of faith in the future. That small seed will grow into a record beating sunflower stem at least four metres tall, those early Nantes carrots will germinate and be magnificent, and this year, please, pretty please, parsnips will grow, swell, avoid canker, and last through until late November.

And so, as we approach summer, let us put the winter gardening dreams to bed and go out there, to cultivate by dig or by no dig, mulch, fertilise, manure, hoe and grow the best allotment year we have ever had. And remember, in that soil you are working with, there are other smaller gardeners, working all the time, 24/7 helping that soil be alive. Look out for them, they are there.

John Irwin

East Midlands

Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire,
Derbyshire, Northamptonshire and Rutland



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DEPUTY REPRESENTATIVE

Russell Attwood
✉ rattwood.nas@gmail.com

Welcome to our new members...
Bridge View Allotments
Buxworth Allotment
Longyards Volunteer Allotment
Group Mansfield Woodhouse
Nocton Park Allotments
8 Individuals
Broughton Town Council
East Bridgford Parish
Council



Groby Allotment Society News

CHRISTMAS AT GROBY

By the time you read this, Christmas will be a vague memory, but at the time of writing I am still trying to get organised!

We had our Christmas Open Shed Sunday event early, on 4th December, and everyone was invited as usual. To celebrate Christmas, and to also say thank you to all our loyal social event visitors over the year, we offered free mulled wine, hot drinks, mince pies or Christmas cake cupcakes to all comers. Our Christmas stall, with lots of homemade beautiful Christmas decorations and wreaths, all made from recycled materials, went down a storm! We are lucky to have a very talented member who made all of these herself!

Santa also managed to take time out of his busy schedule to pay us a visit again this year and eagerly listened to the Christmas wish lists from the children, handing them a small present to take away. He had a warm mince pie and some organic carrots for his reindeer as usual!

We hope that some of our visitors got back home okay, as some felt the need to warm themselves against the cold weather with

several servings of mulled wine! I think that one or two perhaps walked home on 'unfamiliar legs' that lunchtime!

DEFIBRILLATOR

We took delivery of a defibrillator recently, a vital piece of equipment that could save the life of anyone suffering a heart attack. It is fully automated with a recorded message explaining what to do. We decided on one at our last AGM and so, in consultation with our neighbours, we decided that the best place to site it was on the URC church wall, next to an allotment entrance and next to a public footpath, so it can be of wider use to the village.

We had help from the local Thomas Herbert Smith Trust Fund and help, support, and donation of the cabinet by the Joe Humphries Memorial Trust.

We hope it will never need to be used but we are so pleased that it is there to potentially save a life if necessary. In January 2023 it joined the list of defibrillators available for use so emergency services can see where each one is on the 'circuit' and direct anyone to their nearest machine.



HOGLET PROBLEMS

After the end of a very cold spell, just as it rose above freezing, an allotmentee encountered a very hungry and very small hedgehog gobbling up the food she was putting out for the birds. It looked far too small to survive and so we took it to our local hedgehog rescue lady. She estimated that it was only about ten weeks old. So, she took it in to look after, feeding it up so it can come back home to the plots when the weather is warmer. However, it's unlikely that there was only one hoglet from this late litter and so we're checking to see if we can find any more, as they must weigh 650g to survive. Hedgehogs usually sleep through the winter months, only coming out briefly during warmer spells to grab a snack before sleeping again. As they are really good at munching up many garden pests, we are happy to welcome them back to our allotments very soon!!

**Carol Lincoln, Secretary
Groby Allotment Society**



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DEPUTY REP/MENTOR
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West Midlands update

As the West Midlands Mentor, one of the major delights I get is meeting members who are proud to make a contribution to the allotment movement. I've given just a few examples of the activities that I've been involved in...

In 2022 the region was at the Malvern Spring Show. We had a prime spot, which showed off the vegetable garden brilliantly. The weather was kind, and we attracted a great number of visitors including HRH Princess Anne, who spent a good 10 minutes admiring the vegetable display. The stand was staffed by volunteers from member associations across the region. Their enthusiasm was tremendous, and without their help it would have been impossible to cope with the volume of enquiries and promote allotments so effectively.

Also in 2022, I was asked to represent the region at the official opening of Lansdowne Allotments' waterless composting toilets. They had been awarded a grant from Severn Trent Water, and Sue Heyes from Severn

Trent performed the opening 'ceremony'. John Young (Chair of Lansdowne Allotments Association) said the toilets were a huge asset to the site. In particular it meant that One Direction (a group of adults with various disabilities) could now spend a full day at the site.

Last year we were at Gardeners' World Live with a smaller version of the Malvern Show (in terms of the vegetable garden) but with the addition of a large stage where guest speakers delighted the audience with their expert knowledge on various aspects of vegetable growing. Again, the work put in by the volunteer team was brilliant with many putting more hours in than they were scheduled for.

At the end of the summer, I was invited to the Myton Green Allotment Society inaugural AGM in Warwick Town. This is a new site, and it was great to hear how much new plot holders were looking forward to obtaining their land and how they were establishing an environmentally friendly site from day one.

Welcome to our new members...
Delves Green 2 Allotment Association
Hilderstone Road Allotment Association
5 Individuals
The Bradley Trust
Cofton Hackett Parish Council
Madeley Town Council



Tilling Drive Allotments near Stone in Staffordshire asked me to visit their site to advise on ways they could reduce their water costs. I was treated to sandwiches and homemade cake – that went down well! Whilst eating, we discussed various aspects of site management. This was followed by a tour around the site enabling me to pass over a few ideas.

Colin Bedford,
West Midlands Mentor

Eastern

Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk, Essex, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire



REPRESENTATIVE
Ray How
5 Dalys Road, Rochford,
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07720 719224
ray.how@bopenworld.com



DEPUTY REPRESENTATIVE
Mark Vincent
mvincent.nas@gmail.com

Eastern Region report

Spring is here, and the growing season has started.

I am thinking about last year and the possibility of another hot summer. Mulching and careful watering is very important to us all. Please consider making your own compost and mulch. Not only does it save money, but it helps the environment. Let us all do our little bit to help.

Gardeners' World Live – Autumn Fair

The above event is being held again at Audley End House and Gardens from Friday 1st September to Sunday 3rd September. After last year's success, Eastern Region have been invited back with a bigger and better area. There will be the usual marquee and stand. This year, however, we will be having a show garden exhibiting what can be grown in a small area.

Obviously, there is a lot of preparation before the event. When it is open to the

public, we need volunteer helpers on the stand over the three days. If you have time to help whether it is for a half day, all weekend or just a few hours, your help will be very much appreciated. Please email me with any offers of help. Thanks in advance.

Over the winter months we have had the usual problems on sites which in the main have been resolved. I have also visited various sites and local councils advising on improving site facilities and forming associations. Please support your councils and associations to help improve facilities.

Happy growing and here's to a successful 2023.

Please support our region and help it grow stronger.

Ray How, Regional Rep Eastern Region

Welcome to our new members...
Clapham Community Allotment
and Garden Association
14 Individuals
Black Notley Parish Council
Copdock & Washbrook Parish Council
Great & Little Eversdens Parish Council
Lowestoft Town Council
Nazeing Parish Council
Rawreth Parish Council
White Colne Parish Council



Volunteer shout out!

The Eastern Region of the National Allotment Society are looking for volunteers to help out at BBC Gardeners' World Autumn Fair.

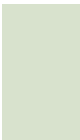
The show runs from 1st-3rd September, with an attendance of around 18,000.

Volunteers can take on as little as one half day up to the whole show, and will help run the stand, speaking to the public about the National Allotment Society and answering horticultural and growing questions. Volunteers receive a free ticket and are expected to work on the stand for half a day with the rest of the time available to take in this brilliant show.

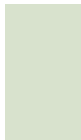
If you are interested in taking part, please email marketing@nsalg.org.uk or contact Ray How directly.

Wales

All counties of Wales



REPRESENTATIVE
Chris Winwood
01443 816077
ru4mechris@hotmail.co.uk



DEPUTY REPRESENTATIVE
Granville Pitman
07901 561 582
granville.pitman@btinternet.com

Volunteer call out

The Welsh Region of the National Allotment Society are looking for volunteers to help out at the Royal Welsh Show 2023.

The show runs from 24th–27th July with an attendance of around 200,000.

Volunteers can take on as little as one half day up to the full week, and will help run the stand, speaking to the public about the National Allotment Society and answering horticultural and growing questions. Volunteers receive a free ticket and are expected to work on the stand for half a day with the rest of the time available to take in this brilliant show.

If you are interested in taking part, please email marketing@nsalg.org.uk and we will put you in touch with the appropriate person in the region.

Welcome to our new members...
Cascade Allotment Association
Tregarth Community Allotments CIC
5 Individuals
Llantwit Major Town Council
Chris Winwood



Calls to 0845 numbers cost 3p (ex VAT) per minute plus your telephone company's access charge



London

London



REPRESENTATIVE
Terry Dickinson
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DEPUTY REPRESENTATIVE
Paula Owen

DEPUTY REPRESENTATIVE
Alan Marsh
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Book recommendations from the London Regional Representative

SILENT EARTH – DAVE GOULSON

I make no apologies for recommending for a second time ‘Silent Earth : Averting the Insect Apocalypse’ by Professor Dave Goulson of the University of Sussex.

I have been banging on about this book for ages and at every opportunity, welcome or not! But now I will pinch a quote from Waterstones “Eye-opening, inspiring and riveting, Silent Earth is part love letter to the insect world, part elegy, part rousing manifesto for a greener planet.”

In my view, it is the most well researched description, that I have ever read, of why allotments are so beneficial for all of us, for the immediate surrounding area, for soil health, for insects, invertebrates, birds and so much more.

It is also the most cogent and persuasive argument as to why we should be doing all that we can to create more allotments.

This book is now out in paperback so, basically, it is available at ‘half price’. Treat yourself.

A LIFE ON OUR PLANET – DAVID ATTENBOROUGH

‘Read this book to learn, but also to honour the man. We shall never see his like again’ The Sunday Times

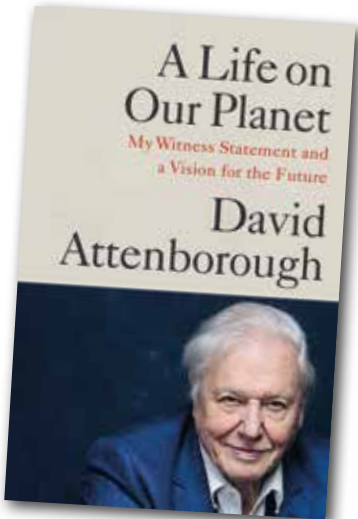
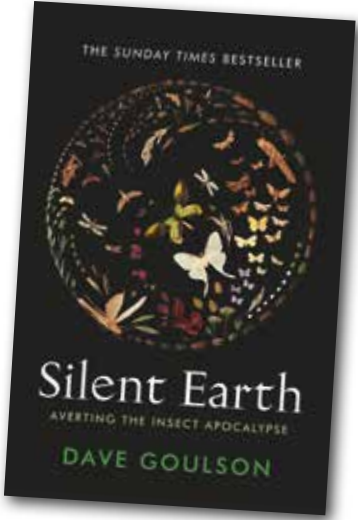
Enough said!

Well almost – the full title is ‘A Life on Our Planet - My Witness Statement and a Vision for the Future’ - David Attenborough with Jonnie Hughes.

Incredible piece of work which is not only riveting reading from first to last page but absolutely packed with immaculately researched facts and information. The little version that I have - a Witness Books paperback from Penguin – costs the same as two/three pints of beer or one bottle of half decent wine. So much history, passion, research, information in such a small inexpensive package.

The notes are a pathway to a world of learning, education and discovery – truly encyclopaedic. Every household should have a copy because this book touches us all.

Terry Dickinson



Welcome to our new members...
4 Individuals



In full sail in the Royal Borough of Greenwich

Early in 2022, the Royal Borough of Greenwich appointed a new site manager at the Church Manorway Allotments.

A rapid programme of renewal was set in sail. Since the spring of 2022, there have been 31 neglected plots cleared of weeds, de-fenced and re-let. The Royal Borough of Greenwich (RBG) have been fully supportive of this renewal programme and also of the volunteers on site carrying out the day-to-day work, supervision and guidance. It is fair to say that a renewed community spirit has been uncovered to the benefit of all plotholders.

A plotholders meeting was held on a very wet and cold November evening (“There is no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothing.” – Alfred Wainwright) with a heroic turn-out of eager members. The meeting included three stalwart officers from RBG – a point which was very much appreciated.

Furthermore, the council are proposing, via the Community Payback project, to send in a team (on Saturdays) to help with improvement work across the site. To this end, two steel box ‘Welfare Facilities’ have already been installed on site.

At an EGM on 28th February members were able to elect officers and committee members for the coming year who will push on with the renewal programme and offer more plots to the residents in the Royal Borough of Greenwich.

Terry Dickinson



Painting by Karen Humpage

Karen’s Allotment series was a new project for 2022, charting a year in paintings of Hainault Road Allotments, Chadwell Heath.

Northern

Northumberland, Cumbria and Durham



REPRESENTATIVE
TBC



DEPUTY REPRESENTATIVE
TBC

Welcome to our new members...
Ashington High Market
Allotment Association
4 Individuals
Thornley Parish Council



Yorkshire

Yorkshire and parts of Humberside



REPRESENTATIVE
Mike Farrell
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✉ mfarrell.nas@gmail.com



DEPUTY REPRESENTATIVE
Tony Urwin
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✉ turwin.nas@gmail.com

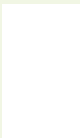
Welcome to our new members...
11 Individuals
Bramley Parish Council



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South East

Surrey, Kent, West Sussex and East Sussex



REPRESENTATIVE
Vacant
Contact natsoc@nsalg.org.uk if interested in volunteering with the Region



DEPUTY REPRESENTATIVE
Andrew Bird
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DEPUTY REP/ MENTOR
Paul Neary
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✉ pneary.nas@gmail.com

Welcome to our new members...
Ashdown Vale Allotment Association
Crockenhill Allotment Association
Maypole Allotment Association
8 Individuals
Bexhill On Sea Town Council
Broadstairs College



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Southern

Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Wiltshire, Berkshire, Hampshire and Isle of Wight



REPRESENTATIVE
Mike Cantillon
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DEPUTY REP/MENTOR
Paul Neary
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Welcome to our new members...
3 Individuals
Brockworth Parish Council
Hartley Wintney Parish Council
Highworth Town Council
New Alresford Town Council
Thame Town Council



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South West

Cornwall, Devon, Somerset and Dorset



REPRESENTATIVE
Mark Joynes
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DEPUTY REP/MENTOR
Allan Cavill
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Welcome to our new members...
Mithian Allotments
Turning Heads
4 Individuals
My Patch Ltd



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ITEM: 45170

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ITEM: 45172

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Security Code Valid from / Expiry Date /

Delivery details

Name

Delivery address

Postcode Phone number:

Product	Code	Price	Qty	Sub total
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Natural Jute String - 500g	45137	£5.15		
White Fly Killer	46033	£8.50		
Phostrogen Plant Food - 40 Can Pack	45103	£7.00		
Phostrogen Plant Food - 80 Can Pack	45104	£10.00		
Potato Sacks - Pack of 5	45163	£9.00		
Potato Sacks - Pack of 10	45164	£16.00		
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