



## PARADISE ALLOTMENTS AUTUMN/WINTER NEWSLETTER

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2020 has been an incredibly challenging year for everyone due to the virus and sadly it looks like it is going to remain difficult still for some time to come. One thing that the situation has highlighted is just how important green spaces are to everyone! Public or community spaces, balconies, yards, gardens, or allotments seem to support wellbeing during difficult times and the challenging times this year have been no different.

We received many messages from people saying how their allotments were essential to them and many did not know how they would have coped without them. It was difficult not to feel even luckier than usual to be able to spend time tending our plots and saying hello to other human beings (whilst socially distancing of course)!

Applications for people wanting an allotment has increased during the lockdown months and whilst we have been able to welcome 10 new plot holders to Paradise Gardens this year, there is still a long waiting list.

It was a privilege to be on the allotments during the lockdown. The road noise disappeared, the skies were clear from vapour trails, the air was fresh, and the birdsong seemed so much louder. Nature seemed to have been let off the leash in some ways and we spotted many more birds visiting our plots.

On the whole, the weather has been kind to us this year and plots had more work done on them than in many years. Harvests have been much greater as a result and we have been impressed to see the amount and range of food that people can produce mainly without pesticides and chemical fertilisers while working in harmony with nature rather than in competition with it.

### About the Working Group

The group is currently nine allotment holders and our main aim is to work together to help nurture the community spirit on the allotments. We're not a committee so there are no Officer roles or Chair. The Council are responsible for finances, contracts and health and safety of the whole of Paradise Garden Allotments. The Group manages the waiting list, allocate vacant plots and act as go between the staff at the parish council and all the allotment holders. Using our combined skills and knowledge we offer growing advice, help with watering or tending of your allotment while on holiday. We arrange community events like the summer show, an early spring social (new for 2021), plant swaps in April and May and plan work groups with other plot holder volunteers to help keep the allotment tidy and maintenance work. These are usually 10 till 2 on the second Wednesday and last Saturday of the month and we hope to continue these over the winter period (Covid restrictions permitting).

Future projects include adding greenhouses, polytunnel and new slab paths to the south-central vacant area as well as developing the central well and completing all slab paths between allotments. If you would like to volunteer to help with any of the activities, you are more than welcome. We hope to start recipe swaps, sowing and growing tips and tricks, composting and crop rotation classes and demonstrations. There is a lot of experience for both traditional and more modern ways of growing on the allotment. If you are interested in giving a demo or class or would like one on these or other topic's let us know.

### Social prescribing

Social prescribing is a new initiative for GP's to refer patient's to a link worker. Part of the role of the link worker is to connect people with their local community groups. Accessing green spaces and gardening has been proven to help a person's health and well-being.

We have been trialling a volunteer scheme with the NHS social prescribing team in Rushcliffe. We have had some individuals coming to the allotments for the past few weeks now. They will be tending and growing veg in the new raised beds, as well as helping on the volunteer's plots. They will always be mentored when on the allotments.

If you are interested in volunteering to help with the group please speak to Sheena Gibbons, who will gladly give you more information on this amazing community scheme.

### The Show 2020

Our first summer show took place on a dry August day! It was deemed a success by all and was well attended with more than half of the allotment holders coming along to support or take part. A big thank you to Barbara Venes, Harold Swift and Ian Murdoch for judging all the entries.

Well done to Deb Snape who won best in show for her prize-winning onion, Chole Curtis for winning most prizes and to Phoebe Lawless for winning first prize for her flower posy.

We will add more classes for 2021 and hope to combine it with the social event (food cooked from allotment produce) that we were unable to do this year due to Covid. The classes and show format will be announced early 2021 to give you a chance to sow and tend your prize-winning produce. The provisional date for the show will be Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> August.

### NG11 Food Bank

Many thanks to everyone who has contributed to the food bank this year. Please keep up the good work next year as your produce is desperately needed. A big thank you to Carol Jagers who coordinated this and delivered all of the donations to the food bank depot.

## Benefits of allotment gardening

### Social Capital

Gardening is good for you and allotment gardening offers additional benefits that help to ameliorate loneliness and enable citizens to contribute to society, especially beyond retirement. Hundreds of allotment holders volunteer on their association committee and give up precious time, helping to manage and maintain sites. Even on a site with no allotment association plot-holders are part of a community of like-minded people, many of whom are eager to share their knowledge and spare produce. The social contact offered by gardening in an allotment environment helps to combat the lack of social capital embodied by loneliness, which has the equivalent risk to health as consuming 15 cigarettes daily and is twice as harmful as obesity.

### Mental well being

There is a growing awareness of the role that gardening plays in both preventing and alleviating mental ill-health. Many allotment gardeners will tell you that a spell on the plot nurturing plants and contemplating nature makes them feel calmer and more hopeful and there have been recent studies that have measured this benefit

### Healthy activity

The physical benefits of regular spells of gardening help plot-holders to keep fit even if they have sedentary jobs, the physical exercise also contributes to their mental well-being. Gardening can also help to maintain good gait and balance in older gardeners and help with cognitive decline. Spending as little as 15 minutes a day out in the summer sunshine can build up your levels of vitamin D if you are fair skinned. And for those whose skin is naturally darker, anywhere up to 90 minutes of sun exposures will help your vitamin levels. However, gardeners do need to be aware of skin cancer risks, Melanoma is the fourth most common cancer in the UK and on the rise. So, make sure that you dress appropriately and wear sunscreen on exposed areas.

### Fresh, local, seasonal produce

If managed properly, an allotment can produce enough food to supplement a family's weekly shop, with fresh fruit and vegetables over the year. Allotment gardeners can choose to garden organically and avoid ingesting chemicals that are likely to be present on shop bought fruit and vegetables. In a survey of National Allotment Society members nearly every person said their love of allotment gardening comes from the fresh air, home grown produce, healthy lifestyle and like-minded people this activity offers.

### Sense of achievement

As many new plot-holders discover, growing vegetables requires acquiring new knowledge and skills and the satisfaction gained from eating their first home grown tomato or new potato makes them taste even more delicious!

### Contact with nature

Working a plot year- round means that allotment holders experience the seasons, witness the behaviour of birds, insects, and other animals, and gain an understanding of the eco-system. This appreciation of the natural world also has the potential to inspire more environmentally aware behaviour by themselves and their children. In 2018 the UK Government produced a 25 Year Environment Plan, which acknowledges that connecting people to their environment will also improve their health and well-being. A study in the Netherlands showed that every 10 per cent increase in exposure to green space translated into an improvement in health equivalent to being five years younger, with similar benefits found by studies in Canada and Japan.

### Allotments during the pandemic

For many people their allotment plot has been a refuge during the covid19 pandemic, a place where they could exercise during lockdown and spend time safely distanced but in company with like- minded souls.

## Working parties

Second Wednesday and last Saturday of each month 10 till 2 post lock down or not in tier 3 only

We are working on an annual programme of maintenance tasks mainly during the winter months, to keep the allotments in good order, and projects will be added to list as they are needed. Some future tasks include clearing plots, central area work, removal of disused compost boxes, tree and branch removal and path repairs.

Community help mornings will start again soon with social distancing!!! If you would like to volunteer for this, please contact one of the group.

## Ideas for our next newsletter in spring!

If you would like to contribute or share tips, short stories about your allotment, photographs or good news please email or contact one of the group. Thanks in advance

## Dates for your Diary

Early spring social format and date TBC Covid dependant

Plant and seedling swaps  
Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> April Hardy plants  
Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> May Tender plants

Summer Show Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> August

## Big waiting list

**There is a long list of people wanting an allotment. If you are thinking of giving some of your plot or even all of it, please let us know so we can reallocate as soon into the new year as possible.**

## Finally!

Thank you to everyone who has pruned back their fruit trees. This helps let light into your and Neighbours plots, makes it easier to harvest the fruit and keeps the trees healthy! There has been an unofficial rule to only plant dwarf varieties and not to be too close to the edges of your plot. Fruit trees are advised to be no more than 3 metres in height when fully grown and not to spread over dividing community pathways. If you would like advice on what to plant, please ask.