

THE ALLOTMENT

HAMPTON COURT WAY ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

A Spring message from your site manager

Hello all,
I am pleased that at long last the Council have fulfilled their obligation to maintain the access road.

It would have been nice if they had used tarmac but that would be much more expensive and require a regular maintenance plan, drainage and guttering. Our neighbour at 31A Broadfields has had to contribute to the costs of the repairs but luckily we have not.

Although the resurfacing was nothing to do with our neighbour he was a great help and spent the day overseeing and helping with the work.

It is disappointing that he was abused by some people and, if that was you, I hope an apology was given.

As you know we now have a regular supply of manure, I have requested another load which hopefully will be with us very soon. Now is the ideal time to leave a heap on your plot to decompose in readiness for spreading in the autumn.

Here are a few helpful facts about manure:

*It is okay to add fresh manure directly to bare garden soil **but only if you are not planning to plant there** for the next few months. It should be dug in before planting.*

Stable bedding material contains urine which holds nitrogen, potassium and sulphur. Wood shavings soaked in nitrogen rich urine should not create an imbalance in the soil whilst it is breaking down.

It is ammonia in the urine that causes burn damage to young plants. It can also inhibit seed germination so do not use fresh manure near any plants that you want to keep, or seed beds.

Grass seeds pass through a horse's digestive system intact, this is one of the reasons why it is a good idea to compost manure for six months or so before using. The heat generated in the process should destroy most seeds and prevent them from germinating on your plot.

Don't plant root crops, such as carrots and parsnips, in freshly manured beds. The resulting crops will have all sorts of issues; distorted growth, multiple stems, abundant top growth and stunted roots.

Do not use manure on tomatoes, peppers or blueberries, it is too rich in nutrients

Manure is humus rich and improves the soil structure. It enables the soil to hold more nutrients and water, makes the ground more fertile and promotes the soil's trace mineral supply.

The spring work week-end will take place on **9th and 10th April**. There will be a varied list of jobs to do and I am pleased to say that the Council will again be providing us with a skip.

It is respectfully requested that you do not work your plot during the maintenance mornings. If you are on site you will be expected to help with the clean-up.

Here's hoping for a warm and productive growing season!


Jill

PS: If you have not received emails from me in the last couple of weeks then there may be an issue with the details we have. Please email one of the committee to pass on your up-to date contact details.

Tips to keep your plots happy and save us some money!

Hand held hoses and watering cans are the preferred methods for watering your plants on site please. This ensures we can afford our water!

Watering Techniques

Watering little and often is bad for your plants. It encourages them to develop roots near the soil surface where they quickly dry out. One good soak every 7 to 10 days is better than a daily sprinkle. Only water in the cool periods of the morning or evening when evaporation from the heat of the day will be reduced.  **Use a watering can aim it at the base of the plants rather than watering overhead.**

Prevent run off by gently breaking up the soil surface before watering or make small holes around plants using a cane or something similar. Then water individual plants rather than doing the whole bed.

A useful technique, particularly on thirsty plants, such as tomatoes and courgettes, is to plant in a dip so that water pools around the base of plants. Alternatively, partially bury a short length of plastic pipe or a bottle (no cap, neck down, base removed) in the earth next to each plant. You will can then fill these with water and allow this to percolate down to the roots.

Mulch

Mulches will not only inhibit weeds and improve soil condition, they also prevent water evaporation. Mulches can be made from natural materials such as wood chips, leaf mould, compost, manure, grass cuttings or straw.

A mulched bed will need considerably less water than those with bare soil and the thicker the mulch the more effective it will be; **a mulch of 5-10cm will make a big difference to water conservation, productivity and soil structure.**

Weed suppressant fabric or thick cardboard will also help.

Water Butts

If you have a shed and/or greenhouse then consider attaching guttering and a water butt so that you can harvest rain-water. You'll be surprised how quickly the butt fills up and if you can get more than one on your plot it will be a great help.

Some plants, such as blueberries, cannot cope with tap water.

Drought Tolerant Plants

If you want to have flowers on your plot there are a huge range that will survive without regular watering.

The list is quite extensive but some to try are **Echinacea, Lavender, Echinops, Iris, Alliums, Verbena, Wallflowers, Foxgloves and Geraniums;** they all have the added benefit of being much loved by bees and other pollinators.

Grassed areas

Reduce the number of outings with the lawn mower and, when you do cut, raise the level of the blades; a longer cut will help grass to survive dry weather.

Use the cuttings to mulch around the bases of trees, fruit bushes and numerous vegetable beds; potatoes, carrots, sweetcorn, and beans will be particularly appreciative.

Grass cuttings are an excellent heat source for compost bins and also provide protection from late ground frosts.

DIARY REMINDERS

WORK WEEKENDS

Sat 9th April 9.30 - 1pm
Sun 10th April 9.30 - 1pm

Sat 8th October 9.30 - 1pm
Sun 9th October 9.30 - 1pm

SUMMER BARBECUE

Saturday 9th July

AGM

Monday 16th January 2017

Literary Compost

*In the Spring, I have counted
136 different kinds of weather
inside of 24 hours.*

Mark Twain

*Spring is the time
of plans and projects.*

Leo Tolstoy

If you would like to publish anything in the newsletter we would love to hear from you. Please email:- sheenaclarke0@gmail.com or macanjill@ntlworld.com

SITE REMINDERS:

**Site speed limit is 5mph;
This applies to everyone!
Please respect the limit.**



Bonfires - only until 30th April.

PLEASE - Don't wash your veg or tools in the water tanks.

**YOUR PLOT
NUMBER MUST
BE SEEN !**



Who's Who

CHAIR - Julie Smith
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