

# THE ALLOTMENT

HAMPTON COURT WAY ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

## SEASONS GREETINGS FROM JILL, SITE MANAGER

Well it's been a funny old winter so far; daffodils are already in bloom, the grass is still growing, onion sets are well on their way and I suspect the fruit trees are yet to be fully dormant.



*Although the rain has been a regular visitor we should be thankful not to have experienced the deluges that have flooded many northern areas.*

*Now is supposed to be the time for cleaning sheds, greenhouses, tools, pots, etc., mending broken frames or creating new ones. Browsing books and seed catalogues, thinking about the growing plan for the coming year and generally preparing or clearing beds for the new season.*

*It all sounds great in theory but putting it into practice is another thing. I have yet to make a start on most of the jobs although I did manage to plant some garlic and a few onion sets in December; amazingly they are already showing substantial growth!*

*I am pleased to report that there has been minimal vandalism and theft on site this year. There were two episodes of 'apple golf' recently but hopefully the golf clubs have been removed from site so it shouldn't be a problem in future.*

There are a few site maintenance jobs that need to be done, mainly fence repairs, but these will have to wait until the ground is firmer and drier.

*Please don't forget to apply leaf mulch on the young beech whips along the Hampton Court Way fence line. With a bit of luck 2016 will be the year they start to fill out.*

I wish you all a happy and prosperous New Year and look forward to seeing you at the AGM on 18th January.

**Jill**

**AGM - Monday 18th January, 7.30 pm at Thames Ditton Lawn Tennis Club.**  
*We are not having an outside speaker, but there will be a quiz organised by Tom Appleton. As usual the bar will be open and refreshments will be provided. Hope to see you there!*





# Great Carrots & Cabbages

At the end of the growing season we may look back and feel we did well. Others may feel they grew less-than-perfect vegetables and wonder "why did this" or "that" happen?

Some common disappointments are misshapen carrots or poorly formed cabbage heads. Luckily there are a few things we can do to ensure our crops improve in the next season.



## Curly Carrots!

Hairy, misshapen or multiple rooted carrots which twisted around each other may be due to :-

## Spacing

It helps to thin them to an inch apart after the leaves reach up about three inches.

## Soil type

Heavy clay soil may force carrot roots to grow crooked. In the following year's carrot patch dig in leaf mould (with leaves well broken down) and compost that is well-rotted. Carrots do well in light sandy soil that is not full of debris.

Carrot roots can get hairy in heavy waterlogged soil.

## Pests and disease

Root-knot nematodes may cause deformed carrots and can be verified with a soil test. You might have to solarize (treat soil with the sun's heat using plastic sheeting in the summer) or rotate your carrots to another area next time.

## Fertilization

Excess nitrogen can cause carrots to form multiple roots or get hairy. If you add manure to your soil, do it in the autumn and let it overwinter before planting carrots in the spring.



## Cracking Good Cabbages!

Growing good cabbage with well-formed heads can be a challenge

Some cabbages don't set heads and sometimes those that do set crack open. You might be watering too much.

Too much water after a period of drought (little or no watering) can cause the heads to swell until they crack. Cabbages may also crack when they are mature. Try watering less and harvesting earlier.

Poor heading in cabbages can be caused by several factors:

## Overcrowding.

Thin the plants early in the season to at least 18 inches apart.

## Under-watering.

If the soil is dry are you watering deeply enough? Good infrequent watering is far better for cabbages than short bursts of surface watering.

## Hot weather.

If cabbage heads starts to set during a hot spell, the head can be stunted or misshapen. Adequate watering may overcome the effects of heat.

## Club root fungal infection.

If your plants wilt after just being watered pull up one of the stunted plants and examine the roots. If they look "clubby" with large swellings the pathogen is present so avoid planting any of the brassica family in that spot again. The pathogen may persist in the soil for 10 or more years.

## Root rot fungal infection.

In clay or wet soils, root rot infections thrive, killing much of a plant's root system. Rotate this area with a different species of plant.

# Literary Compost

*In seed-time learn,  
in harvest teach,  
in winter enjoy.*

William Blake

*The days are short  
The sun a spark  
Hung thin between  
The dark and dark.*

John Updike,

"January," A Child's Calendar, 1965

## SITE REMINDERS:

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



**Bonfires - permitted until 30th April.**

**Please don't wash your veg or tools in the water tanks.**

Please make sure  
your plot number  
can be clearly seen



## DIARY REMINDERS

**18 January 2016 - AGM**

Thames Ditton Lawn Tennis Club

## Who's Who

CHAIR - Julie Smith  
smirkysmith1@hotmail.com

TREASURER - Tom Appleton  
tomcein@aol.com

SECRETARY - Sheena Clarke  
sheenaclarke0@gmail.com

SITE MANAGER - Jill McDermott  
macanjill@ntlworld.com

TRUSTEES - Sheena Clarke,  
Marie Mullard & Tom Appleton

MEMBERSHIP / LETTINGS -  
Piotr Hennig - piotr@admojo.co.uk

COMMITTEE - Marie Mullard  
mariemullard@gmail.com  
COMMITTEE - Ian Billett

WEBSITE - Rupert (Plot 13)  
epichouse@yahoo.com

NEWSLETTER - Anne Cox  
poppycox@f2s.com

**ALLOTMENT POSTCODE - KT8 0BW**

**Do you have allotment NEWS, VIEWS, CARTOONS, PHOTOGRAPHS or POEMS you would like to share?**  
If so we would love to publish it. Please forward to either [sheenaclarke0@gmail.com](mailto:sheenaclarke0@gmail.com) or [macanjill@ntlworld.com](mailto:macanjill@ntlworld.com)