

HACKNEY ALLOTMENT SOCIETY  
[www.hackneyallotments.org.uk](http://www.hackneyallotments.org.uk)

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**AUTUMN/WINTER  
NEWSLETTER  
2022**

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*Sue Kay,  
Aden Terrace*

“Autumn is a second spring  
when every leaf is a flower.”

ALBERT CAMUS

# NOTES FROM THE 2022 AGM

This year's special guest was Sam Parry, Parks Development Manager at Hackney Council. Parks are changing to reduce or remove the boundaries between formal green spaces and the communities in which they are located, to become more user-friendly, more a part of the community. Another trend is to connect up green spaces so there is a continuous river-like flow of open space which is better for people (improving their wellbeing) and better for wildlife (improving biodiversity). There are many possibilities for future action and this is an exciting time in Hackney.

A very lively question-and-answer period followed Sam's talk. There were suggestions on how allotments could complement and support this work (more info on the next page). The

meeting expressed its appreciation of this stimulating talk.

It was suggested that all sites should become pesticide and herbicide free. There were points made for and against, some in recognition of the intention to support wildlife and biodiversity, others recognising that it is often difficult to coerce others and difficult to monitor. On Leaside and Spring Lane a policy of discussion and persuasion with members seems to work and the sites are reported to be largely free of chemicals, slug pellets aside.

In light of the requirement for notice to be given to members for proposed changes to be bylaws, it was agreed that the secretary would ask members six weeks before the AGM if there were any proposals for discussion and that there should be a link to the website so

members could review the bylaws.

At Overbury site, three micro ponds have been installed in 2021 with spawn to encourage a frog population to control the snail/slug population.

The wider use of water butts was promoted as a way of making better use of water during periods of droughts and to prevent flooding. Queensbridge Road for example, does not have a supply of piped water but instead has approx. 10 water butts that collect rainwater off a roof. Large storage containers are used to empty the butts towards the end of the winter so they can store spring and summer rain. Several members mentioned that Hackney Council offers a discount on water butts and the site representatives might want to explore this with the ploholders on their sites.

Members were reminded that they need to leave 18 inches between plots for pathways, accessibility, and safety (it has also been noted that the lack of clear paths has led to ploholders encroaching on land belonging to a neighbouring ploholder). The importance of discussing the planting of trees with site representatives BEFORE planting and that trees need to be on dwarf root stock was also mentioned. Bay trees in particular should be planted in pots.

There was an inconclusive discussion about how to respond to plots being left unused during the summer and the proportion of a plot used for flowers. This should go back to the Committee for further discussion. There was a strong feeling at the meeting that people who let their plots unused during the summer should get a Neglected Plot letter as 75% of plot should be under cultivation during the main growing season.

Bug hotels and wood piles should be promoted on each site

Lastly, it was mentioned that some ploholders do not harvest what they grow. St Mary's offers free lunches every Thursday and Friday from 12 to 4 and would welcome donations of vegetables and fruit. The Migrants Centre at the Church would also welcome such donations. Food banks might be added to this list. We need to make this more widely known.

## BEST PLOT AWARDS

### ■ Aden Terrace

#### Best Plot

Ian and Susanna  
Burton

#### Best Newcomer

Jennie Long

### ■ Leaside:

#### Best Plot

Wayne Minter

#### Best Newcomer

Grant Cocks

### ■ Spring Hill:

#### Best Plot

Marlis Scholz

#### Most productive

Jon Fuller

### ■ Spring Lane:

#### Best Newcomer

Judith Losing

### ■ Small Sites:

#### Best Plot

Ann Leatherly  
(Overbury  
Street)

#### Most improved

Mairin Power  
(Springdale  
Road)





# GREEN CORRIDORS, HOW CAN ALLOTMENTS CONTRIBUTE?

Just a few easy measures can help Hackney  
in its efforts to support dwindling wildlife

*by Annie Wilson, Springdale site*

Hackney, like other London boroughs has suffered a huge biodiversity loss in recent years despite its number of parks and green spaces. One problem is the isolation of parks and green spaces, surrounded as they are now by roads or building developments which reduces the opportunities of some species to breed, feed or find shelter.

Sam Parry's (Parks Development Manager, Hackney Council) talk about green corridors across Hackney at this year's AGM stressed how we can all help by creating habitats in our gardens or allotments which enable species to move around or provide food or shelter for them. Details on Green Corridors and the maps can be seen in the [Green Infrastructure Strategy](#) which provides a framework for protecting, improving, expanding and connecting Hackney's green infrastructure.

There is also the [Local Nature Recovery Plan](#), which includes actions for specific areas of Hackney. There is even a specific action for allotments:

*"Flagship species requiring projects and management to*

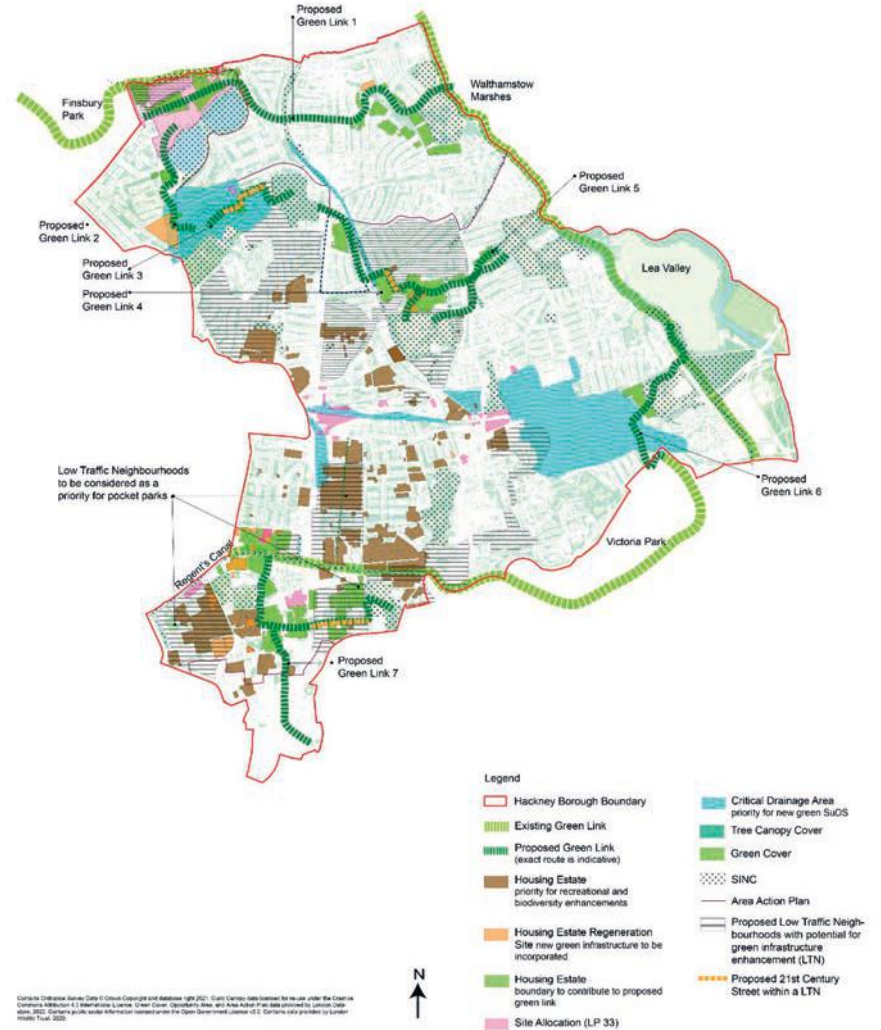
*maintain or expand populations, include the common toad, by encouraging and supporting creation of additional ponds in allotments, residential gardens and other private green space around Springfield Park"*

Spring Hill allotments are close to one of the proposed green corridors but all allotments, unlike fenced gardens, can support wildlife and act as green corridors.

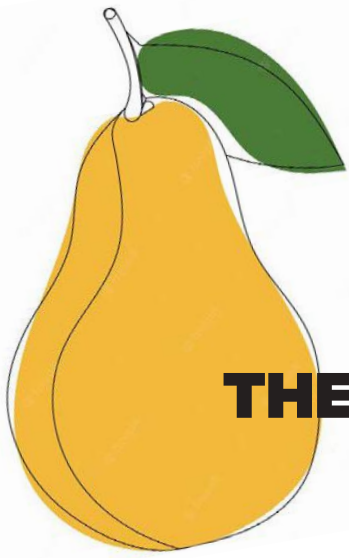
We can all help by making small ponds, creating or buying bee hotels or creating a small log pile for invertebrates. A patch of flowers will attract beneficial pollinators. Chemicals and pesticides have caused huge damage to the insect population, on which birds depend, the council are trialling alternatives to these and so should we.

■ **The next newsletter will feature ways we can all support wildlife and prevent biodiversity loss. Please send in ideas or examples of what you have done on your plot or site to encourage wildlife or alternative methods of dealing with pests and diseases.**

## PROPOSED GREEN LINKS







# PEAR, THE POWERHOUSE FRUIT

Andrea, Spring Hill

A good pear is a thing of beauty and to my mind one of the most delicious fruits from the allotment. But they are tricky! If you pick them too early they won't ripen and if you leave them too long they go mushy or get taken by the multitude of wildlife that also love them such as foxes, squirrels, birds, slugs and snails, wood lice etc. I have found that if the pear comes off when you gently lift it up then it is ready to pick. It will still need 1-2weeks to ripen so keep an eye on them.

Of all the crops I grow, pears and gooseberries are the ones most likely to completely disappear overnight and I never know if it's animal or human thieves. I grow my pears on step-over trees so they are close to the ground and accessible for those pesky squirrels but that also means they are easier to net and that does make a difference. I bought them as maiden whips and they were fairly easy to train into the shape I wanted along wire supports.

I grow Onward, which is an English dessert pear not unlike Comice with excellent flavour and good reliable cropping. Also Buerre Hardy: which is one of the finest dessert pears, but has not been very productive for me apart from one beauty this autumn.

Despite their difficulties though I would say that pears are completely worth the bother!



*Pear with leaf  
is Buerre Hardy  
and other pears  
are all Onward.*





*Trombocino and patty pan squash were trained over metal trellises to create colourful walkways and there were wonderful displays of different types of squash and pumpkins.*

## A VISIT TO KEW GARDENS

Annie, Springdale Site

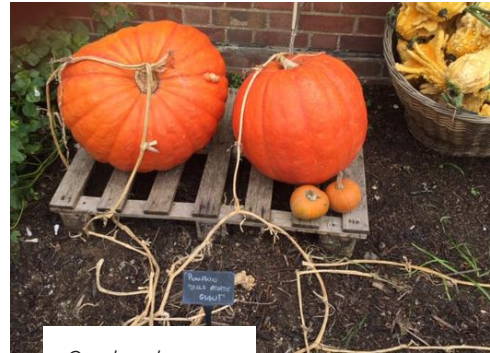
A trip to The Kitchen Gardens in Kew in September showed how a vegetable and fruit garden can be as beautiful as a flower garden and it's a great way to see new varieties being trialed. The immaculate crops and the mounds of compost they are grown in might leave you feeling a bit despondent about your own plot!



*The gardeners are experimenting with different fruit and vegetables in a warming climate like these okra.*



*Crookneck squash are arranged next to Dills Atlantic Giant pumpkin which has a world record for being the heaviest pumpkin.*



*Companion planting: Tomatoes planted with colourful French Marigolds (Tagetes patula) to deter white flies, tomato moths, and cabbage white butterflies.*



*I liked this collection of logs impregnated with the spores of different varieties of mushrooms, maybe something we could try in a corner of the allotment?*







photo by Markus Spiske

# FRANKENSTEIN'S KETCHUP

How to craft your own tomato plants

by Emmanuel de Lange

Readers will all of course be familiar with HAS bylaw 11, which requires all fruit trees to be grafted on dwarfing rootstock. Some may be aware that almost every grapevine planted in Europe is grafted to avoid the pest phylloxera; but grafting humbler annual vegetables is common in commercial production, and after last year's disastrous blight, I gave it a go.

The principle is straightforward – the desired cultivar is attached to a rootstock of another variety of the same plant family. If successful, the plant will maintain its features while benefiting from desirable traits – usually vigour and disease resistance – from the

rootstock.

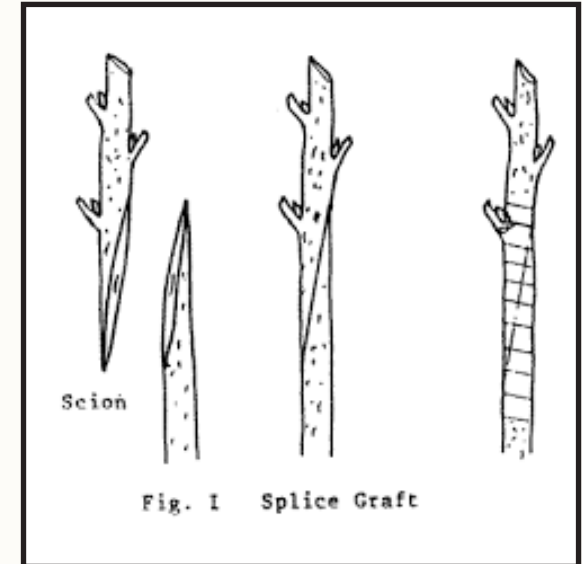
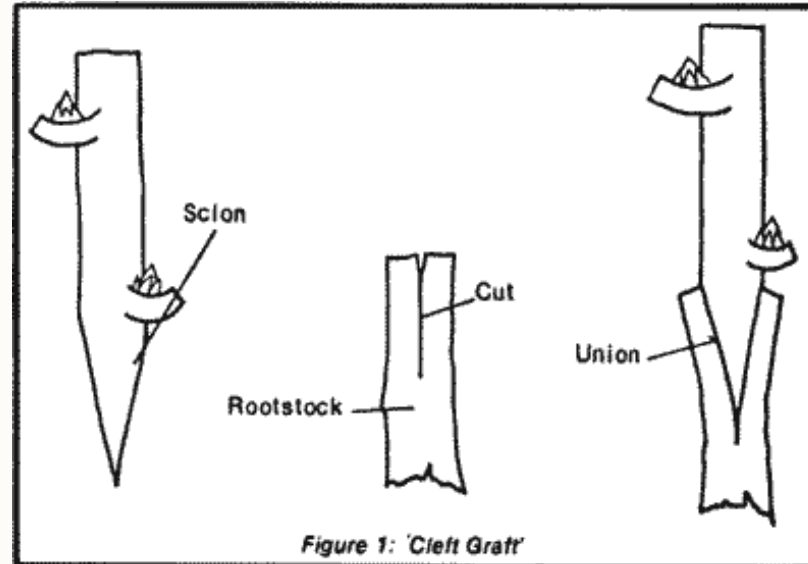
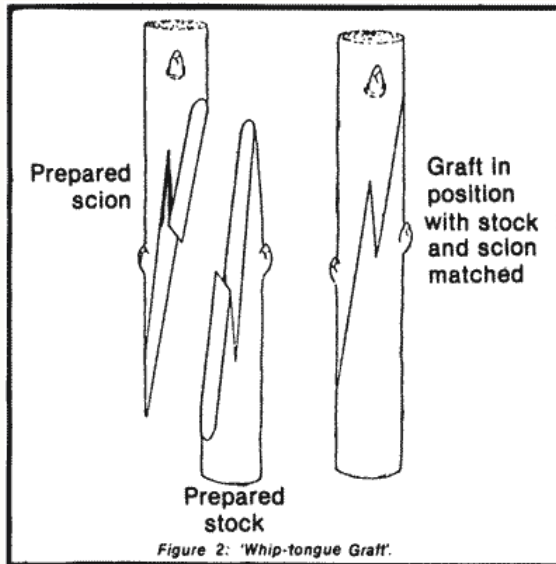
For this trial I used the first rootstock I could find seeds for. Named Estamino it promised improved resistance to various common tomato diseases. The seeds are expensive compared to usual tomatoes, around 50p each, which seems more reasonable if you consider a grafted plug plant can cost a tenner. The only other special equipment I used was a razor blade (tape one side to stay safe), small plastic grafting clips, and some reused plastic bags and cups.

The advice is to sow the seeds as usual indoors in January, giving the rootstock a week head start over the scions. Once both plants have reached

a reasonable size, around the four leaf stage, they're ready for surgery.

There are many grafting techniques, of which I attempted cleft, whip and tongue and splicing (see next page). Although recommended by the seed supplier, I found cleft to be hopeless, as the pressure of the clip tends to squeeze the scion out of the cleft, while both others worked fine.

For the graft to take you need the cambial layers of both parts to be in firm contact with each other, so that once the cells have fused water and nutrients are able to flow from root to leaf. Cuts are made at angles to maximise the exposed cambial area, and it helps with lining



them up if you have two sections of roughly equal diameter. Make your cuts cleanly and confidently in a single action, and apply a clip once you're happy with the positioning. If you are splice grafting you can attach the clip to the rootstock stem and drop the scion into place without disturbing the clip.

After the operation the plants need high humidity and cannot take any direct sun at all. During the initial healing period the scion will be relying on atmospheric humidity to survive, and in the trade new grafts go into dedicated 'healing chambers', which are shaded, warm and very humid. The common advice is to use a plastic bag to achieve the same at home but be very careful – the slightest touch will send your

scion crashing out of the clip, breaking the graft and your heart. Save your tears by using upturned plastic cups instead, or use chopsticks inserted vertically into the soil around the plant to support a bag.

You may well see the scions wilt badly in the hours following the procedure. No panic. Keep things humid and say a grafters prayer. All being well they will begin to take up water and stand proud within 48 hours. Like a tray of wilted seedlings there's a point of no return, but seemingly lost causes can pull through. I would recommend resisting the temptation to check the graft by removing the clip, better to leave it on until the plant's growth pushes it off.

### Results

Pretty, pretty good.

The first noticeable impact was the speed with which the grafted plants got going when I planted out in May. Planted side by side with ungrafted plants of the same cultivar, sown on the same day, the grafted stems were double the thickness within two weeks, and had stems the thickness of a wine cork by maturity.

Overall vegetative growth was significantly improved. Grafted plants reached double the height of their siblings, and fruiting was great too with more, bigger tomatoes.

After all that, of course this year was largely disease free. End rot was a problem though, no doubt caused by the need for

watering, inevitably irregularly. The grafts weren't immune, but performed significantly better. What I didn't get was any earlier ripening.

I'll be doing this again next season, and hope some of you might try it too if you haven't before. If you don't mind fiddly work, it is a pleasing technique to get the hang of, wear a lab coat for the full mad scientist experience. If nothing else, grafting some tomatoes keeps cold impatient hands busy in the long winter months. If you don't fancy it but still want to experience the gift of the graft, a big glass of french wine works well too.







Clockwise  
from top left:  
Gardeners  
Delight, Constolito  
Florentino and  
Black Crimea



# MY 2022 TOMATOES

Annie, Springdale Site

This year's hot summer produced a bumper crop of tomatoes in contrast to the previous summer when my crop was destroyed by blight in July. I planted three varieties this year, Black Crimea (from saved seeds), the Italian beefsteak tomato Constolito Florentino and the reliable Gardeners Delight so it was interesting to see which varieties would thrive in the hot sun and lack of rain. My watering was sporadic, I'm afraid, as I escaped London in the heatwave but all the plants grew well though there was quite a marked difference in the crop of the different varieties.

The picture on the left was taken in mid August and shows that even with minimal watering the Black Crimea plants cropped heavily and the tomatoes were of a good size and had a fantastic taste. The beefsteak tomatoes were smaller this year and rather dry to taste whereas the Gardeners Delight produced a reliable crop throughout the summer.

Happily blight didn't strike until October by which time I'd picked a huge crop of green tomatoes. Green chutney anyone?



## WATER BUTTS AND WORM HOTELS

Last summer was one of the driest on record. One thing we can do to save water and prepare for next summer is to install a water butt.

The council offers discounted water butts and compost bins: [getcomposting.com](https://www.getcomposting.com)

Here are links to information on Dutch Worm Hotels and other community composting initiatives plus micro-anaerobic digester projects.

**worm hotels**

**defi-zero-dechet-vert**  
*composting*

**vert le jardin**  
*composting*

**terra leo**  
*composting*

**brighton-hove food partnership**  
*composting*

**Source: trailblazing local circular food systems**  
*turning food waste into energy, fertiliser and compost*



# GROW YOUR OWN THREAD

## Growing flax

Flax, one of the first crops domesticated by man, was used primarily for fiber. In recent years, we have become more aware of the plant's many benefits – rich in fiber and Omega-3 fatty acids, flaxseed is considered by many to be a wonder food. Growing your own isn't difficult, and the beauty of the plant is an added bonus.

### How to grow your own

You will get about 5 metres or 10g of yarn/metre sq.

- 1** Prepare your soil by weeding thoroughly and raking until it is fine.
- 2** Sow between late March and late April either in rows about 4cm apart or broadcast. Cover the seeds with enough soil to hide them from the birds. Flax grows best in fairly densely-sown blocks. The plants will support each other.
- 3** Flax takes about a week to germinate and 90-100 days to mature. It shouldn't need watering.
- 4** Weed your patch. Flax doesn't like competition and the fibre will suffer.
- 5** Harvest after flowering when seed heads (bolls) have formed. The stalks and bolls start to go brown. Pull the plants up by their roots and remove soil and weeds. Keep the stalks straight and parallel.
- 6** Hang your harvest in a dry place or lay it out on a shed floor. Turn to avoid it getting damp.
- 7** Once the seed heads are brown you can take them off. Save them to eat or sow.
- 8** Wet the flax to encourage bacteria to break the outside of the stalk down and to release the fibre. You can lay your flax on grass to dew ret. This takes a couple of weeks, or you can put the flax in a barrel or large bucket for about a week. This is the smelly option but is more efficient and produces paler flax.
- 9** Dry again until you are ready to turn your stalks into string.



*Flax grown by Julia,  
Overbury Street*





**A successful crop!**

Jana's produce, Overbury Street

# FROM OUR SITES

**Our two pumps for our water supply, which the wonderful Ben kept functioning all through the hot summer. They needed regular greasing in order not to dry and seize up in the heat**

Helen Bishop, Spring Lane



**Brussels getting ready for Christmas**

Betty and Jeff, Aden Terrace



**Brighid's mega pumpkin which seemed to keep growing despite the drought and stood 18 inches high**

Helen Bishop, Spring Lane



**Nasturtiums**

Ann, Overbury Street





# THE WEIRD AND WONDERFUL

**It's a radish - yes, really...**  
Jane Hough,  
Overbury Street



**Cucumbers**  
Bron, Aden Terrace



**Reaching out**  
Francesca Mahoney  
Aden Terrace



**A feast for the eyes**  
Francesca Mahoney,  
Aden Terrace

**Aubergines were some of the most exotic and envied veg spotted this year**  
grown by Jana  
Overbury Street



**Gargoyle or squash?**  
Yvonne,  
Overbury Street





**Last of the season**  
Betty and Jeff,  
Aden Terrace



**Fauna  
AND Flora**  
Overbury Street

## FROM OUR SITES

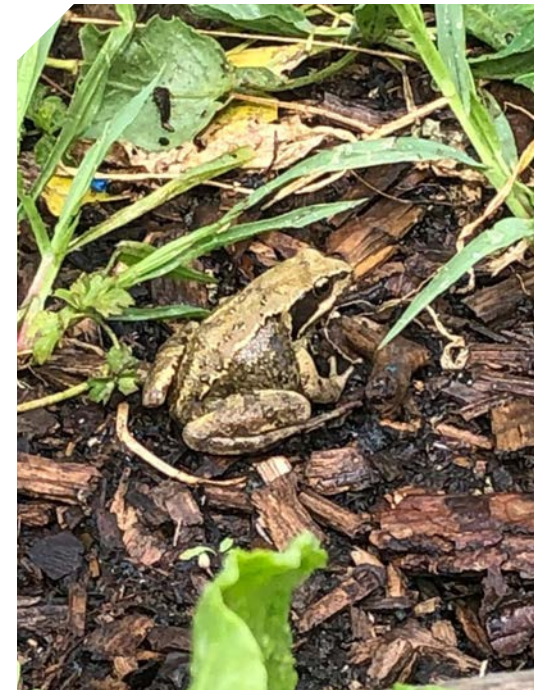
**Kerry's squash**  
Overbury Street,  
picture by Jane Hough,



**Yvonne's pattypan**  
Overbury Street,  
picture by Jane Hough



**What a whopper**  
Bron, Aden Terrace





# FROM OUR SITES

A visit to any allotment site shows the ingenuity of plot holders to recycle, repurpose and adapt all sorts of objects to make useful and quirky gardening equipment and furniture. Allotments show how you can garden without spending lots of money and yet still create productive, creative growing spaces.

photos by Annie, Springdale Rd

Have you repurposed and recycled on your plot? Please send in your photos for the next newsletter.



Spring Hill



Plant carrier



Spring Hill



Bean support,  
Church walk



Spring Hill



# INSECT IDENTIFICATION



## Asparagus beetle

Not a huge pest but will eat your leaves & stems. Hand pick off your plants



## Closterotomus trivialis

originally from the Mediterranean where it's a pest on olives, first recorded in London 2009



## Green shield bug

The common green shield bug is native to Britain and does not cause any damage. The nymphs of the southern green shield bugs arrived in London from Europe in 2003. They are green or black with many white, yellow or pinkish circular markings on their upper surface. This species may cause damage to some vegetables, especially runner and french beans but the bugs do not become numerous until late summer by which time the beans have already formed .

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## HAS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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### CHAIR

Penny Miller - pmsrink@yahoo.com

### VICE CHAIR

Ruth Gladwin

### SECRETARY

Nancy Korman -  
hackneyallotments@gmail.com

### TREASURER

Hugh Naylor

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## SITE REPRESENTATIVES

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### ADEN TERRACE

Sue Sharples

### CHURCH WALK

Marian Shaughnessy, Val Shepherd

### LEASIDE ROAD

Jack Eldon, Guy Dehn

### OVERBURY STREET

Julia Clarke

### QUEENSBRIDGE ROAD

Phillip Turner

### SPRING HILL

Catharine Wensley, Ginny Strawson  
Laurence Sgroi, Sophie Mathias  
Brent Cunningham

### SPRING LANE

Helen Bishop, Elsa Hamaz

### SPRINGDALE ROAD

Annie Wilson

### ST KILDA'S ROAD

Henrietta Soames

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