

SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2011



The future of allotments is secure

Plot-holders revolt over plan to scrap historic right to council land

Though demand for allotments across the country has been huge since the grow-your-own movement mushroomed in the past decade, it has recently been reported that the Government has been examining plans to free local authorities from a 103-year-old obligation to provide plots of public land for cultivation by gardeners.

Because of the zeal to cut local government bureaucracy, section 23 of the 1908 Smallholdings and Allotments Act, which orders that councils must provide sufficient number of plots for local residents where there is demand, is on a target list of “burdensome” regulations.

The proposals could see local authorities, many of them strapped for cash under government-imposed cuts, selling off allotment land for social housing or even for profit to major companies.

The proposals are all the more surprising when many councils have been forced to close waiting lists, and some gardeners are waiting up to 10 years for a plot – highlighting the national enthusiasm for growing fruit

and vegetables.

The move has triggered a wave of protest from allotment society members and gardeners, who have lobbied Mr Pickles, the Communities Secretary, to rethink the plans.

It is with great relief that we are able to report the following response from a spokesperson for the Department for Communities and Local Government:

“The Government is reviewing old and unnecessary duties imposed on councils in order to free them up from Whitehall red tape and as part of this we have published the full list of duties which includes allotments. However, we will not remove statutory protections for allotments or vital frontline services.”

ACCORDING TO THE STATUTORY Duty Review Team, until now, there has been no comprehensive list of the legal duties placed on councils. To remedy this, the Government agreed with the Local Government Association (the national body representing councils) that such a list should be compiled so that everyone is clear what legal

obligations local councils have and check whether the duties are still relevant.

There is no implication that any particular duty on the list is being considered for removal. The review is as much about ensuring vital duties are retained as it is about removing unnecessary burdens. Any changes to statutory duties which come about as a result of the review will subsequently be properly considered and consulted on where necessary.

The Government says it will not remove statutory protections for allotments or vital frontline services and, as such, there is no intention to remove local authorities’ statutory duties to provide allotments or to remove the requirement for local authorities to seek the Secretary of State’s agreement to use statutory allotments for other purposes.

The 1908 legislation applies to England and Wales. In Scotland there is no such obligation, although the demand for land is not as great. The law does not apply in London because competition for space is so high.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SITE VISITS & PLOT AWARDS 2011

Annual site visits will take place at the end of June in order to award prizes for best plots. The criteria are creativity, variety of crops, most improved and productivity. Other factors include tidiness of verges, reasonable control of weeds and the overall attractiveness of the plot. As well as deciding on the awards, failing plots will be taken note of. These visits also give plot holders a chance to meet committee members. The results will be announced at the AGM on Oct 5th. *As judges, committee members are out of the running for the awards.*

VACANT POSTS

It is with great regret that we have to announce that June Lancaster and Jackie Breakwell are standing down as committee members. This means the posts of Secretary and Treasurer will be vacant as of October 2011. So if you ever wanted to get more involved, here’s your chance! Put yourself forward at the elections which will take place at the AGM 2011, on October 5th.



10 points to help you grow a wide range of crops through the driest of summers

1 Use a **water butt** and position it close to your shed so water can be collected from its roof. It is important to cover the butt to avoid algae growth.

2 **Mulch** fruit and other long term crops to conserve water and prevent weed growth. Well rotted manure or garden compost, even straw or grass clippings, can be used. Soil needs to be well watered before mulching.

3 Plenty of **organic matter** incorporated into the soil will help retain moisture.

4 When growing 'hungry' crops, such as beans, sweet peas, etc., **dig a deep trench** and fill the bottom with any type of organic matter, even

old damp newspaper. This will help to act as a reservoir.

5 Grow crops that **do not require excess watering**. Many mediterranean herbs such as sage and rosemary can survive fairly dry conditions.

6 If you grow plants in **tubs or containers** incorporate a water retentive gell into the compost. Stand on trays to catch any drained water, which you can then recycle.

7 A good **watering can** should be well balanced and not too heavy when full. Polythene cans are inexpensive and with reasonable care should

last for several years. Keep two roses (perforated heads), a fine one for watering seedlings and a coarse one for general purpose.

8 A **thorough soaking** at weekly intervals is better for plants than a daily sprinkling. It is best to water early in the morning to keep evaporation to a minimum but also to ensure that plants are surface dry at night. This helps to keep diseases down.

9 If watering has to be curtailed, the addition of a dilute **liquid feed** to the water used gives an immediate benefit to the struggling plant and less water will go further.

10 Regular **hoeing** reduces competition for water from weeds as well as breaking the soil capillaries and therefore reducing evaporation.

HAS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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SOWING CALENDAR

www.realseeds.co.uk

JUNE

... still time to sow most of the summer crops, although starting to get a bit late for courgettes, squashes & cucumbers. From the middle of the month start to sow crops for autumn & winter.

OUTSIDE

- French and runner beans
- Root crops including carrots, beetroot, turnips, and also swedes for winter
- Herbs including parsley, coriander
- Swiss chard & leaf beet
- Keep sowing salads, after the middle of the month including oriental salads (mizuna, mibuna, mustard greens etc)
- Fennel
- Sweetcorn

IN TRAYS OR POTS SOMEWHERE

WARM (*germinator/warm airing cupboard etc*).

- Courgettes, squashes, cucumbers and melons (start of the month)

IN A POLYTUNNEL OR GREENHOUSE

- Basil & coriander
- Plant out summer crops started indoors

JULY/AUGUST

Hopefully you'll be having lots of sunshine, but enough rain to keep things growing. Don't forget to keep sowing over the summer, there are lots of things to put in now that will keep your garden productive over the winter and into next year.

OUTSIDE

- Dwarf french beans (up to early July) in warmer areas only
- Last sowings of root crops including carrots, beetroot, turnips (July)
- Winter radishes and swedes
- Swiss chard & leaf beet
- Oriental greens (mizuna, mibuna, komatsuna, mustard greens etc) and turnip greens
- Lettuce, moving over to winter varieties by late August, rocket, cress and salad radishes
- Fennel
- Spring cabbage (from late July)
- Bunching and spring onions

IN A POLYTUNNEL OR GREENHOUSE

- Coriander
- Salads, particularly in later summer as other crops finish and you have space available.