

photo by  
Tina Xinia

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

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**SPRING  
NEWSLETTER  
2022**

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“Nothing ever seems impossible  
in spring, you know”

L. M. MONTGOMERY

# 2021 AGM

Since the 2020 AGM was by email, and not totally satisfactory, we did a zoom AGM for 2021 and this worked better. It allowed for discussion but oddly enough, did not result in more members attending. That was a surprise.

We started with a talk by Vicki Hird about her new book, *Rebugging the Planet*. This was a timely reminder of all the good that bugs provide for gardeners and other people who inhabit the planet. Vicki's message was stop disliking bugs and appreciate their beauty and all the help they provide for cultivation.

The meeting then went on to cover the usual topics: finance (we are solvent but spent more than we took

in last year) including the anticipated bequest from two former members; election of officers (same old, same old); new site reps on Church Walk and Spring Hill; best plot awards (listed at the end).

Best of all, we had lively discussions on whether we should assign plots to those who already have an allotment somewhere else. Good points were made for (we already do not allow two of our plots to the same household, and the scarcity of urban land) and against (it should not be our business as to how people chose to spend their free time, especially if a second allotment is in an area where there is no waiting list). A vote was taken, 19 in favour, 4 against, but it

was decided as this was an important issue, with comparatively few members present, so an email vote would be taken after the meeting. This was done and the overwhelming vote was in favour of not offering an allotment to someone who already had one elsewhere. There was also a point made that the second allotment had to be of an equivalent status to our allotments, i.e. not just a small raised bed somewhere.

Another motion was put forward by the Spring Hill site, asking that all new members agree to avoid using any harmful pesticides, allowing organic or natural ones to continue to be used. A short discussion but no opposition so it passed.

## BEST PLOT AWARDS

### ■ Aden Terrace

#### Best Plot

*Betty and Geoff Manning*

### ■ Leaside:

#### Best Plot

*Ian Dick*

#### Most Improved

*Mr G Saha*

### ■ Spring Hill:

#### Best Plot

*Nadia O'Mara and Lawrence Sgroi*

### ■ Spring Lane:

#### Best Plot

*Elisa de Grey*

### ■ Small Sites:

#### Best Plot

*Deborah and Martin Jeffries (Church Walk) and Jane Hough (Overbury Street)*

#### Best Newcomer

*- Philippa Lloyd (Queensbridge Road)*

## WHAT TO SOW IN SPRING

*From Grow your own veg, Carol Klein*

■ **EARLY SPRING** - the soil might be still too cold to get good results. If in doubt wait until weeds begin to germinate, when they germinate, so will your seeds

### Sowing in the ground

Broad beans, calabrese, early carrots, lettuces, onions, parsnips, peas, radishes, rocket, salsify, spinach, spring onions, turnips and herbs such as parsley, dill and chervil.

### Sowing indoors or under glass.

Aubergines, beetroot, celeriac, celery, bell and chilli peppers, tomatoes, and tender herbs such as basil.

■ **LATE SPRING** - the main sowing season for hardy vegetables is over, except where planting for successive showings.

### Sowing in the ground

Beetroot, calabrese, carrots lettuces, onions, parsley, parsnips, late peas, radishes, rocket, swedes, spinach, spring onions, turnip and herbs (such as parsley, dill, and chervil.)

### Sowing indoors or under glass.

Tender, frost sensitive crops can be sown indoors. Sow courgettes, cucumbers, French beans, marrows, melons, pumpkins, squash and sweetcorn. All have large seeds and produce fast growing plants, so sow only when the date of the last frost is no more than six weeks away.





# 10 WAYS TO REBUG YOUR ALLOTMENT AND SAVE THE PLANET

by Vicki Hird

**1** Garden without pesticides — great tips are available from Garden Organic and other organisations.

**2** Go organic and add a small wild area – encouraging beneficial insects and other invertebrates onto the plot to tackle pests and weeds.

**3** If weeds are growing in the wrong place use brute force, boiling water or vinegar to remove them.

**4** Build up the soil health on your allotment with home made compost and home made or organic feed. Avoid too much bare soil which may be eroded in heavy rain or wind, and too much digging, which also disturbs the delicate systems below ground.

**5** Build some insect friendly habitats, like a brick full of holes or build a bug hotel or bee hotel for solitary bees made of old hollow bamboo sticks or drill holes in small logs.

**6** Save seeds for next year. Using your own saved seeds or organic certified seeds – produced without chemical pesticides or fertilisers – will help reduce chemicals in the environment. Look for local seed swapping events or start your own.

**7** Ideally buy plants only from local nurseries who grow from seeds.

**8** Grow your vegetables and fruit without chemicals. Many will be flowering plants that provide food and habitats for insects.

**9** Make a pond, it doesn't have to be big. Many invertebrates rely on these freshwater habitats as a permanent home, food source or a place to breed.

**10** If you plant flowers prioritise nectar rich flowers and herbs. Avoid double flowered cultivars, they often have less nectar and pollen.

If you see a bug or insect on your plot that you don't recognise, take a photo and Vicki will endeavour to identify it and your photos will be published in the next newsletter.

## KNOW YOUR BUGS

Vicki Hird, a Hackney resident and former allotmentee on Springdale road, gave a talk at our AGM. In her book she shows us how fascinating insects (and other invertebrates) are and how they are responsible for pollinating plants, feeding birds and cleaning water systems. Our planet is heading towards an insect apocalypse with 40% at risk of extinction. Vicki illustrated her talk with photos from her own small garden in Hackney.





# BEETROOTS

Beetroot are enjoying a revival at the moment. My experience of beetroot, as a child, was of pickled cooked beetroot, which I hated, but now they seem to be having a revival and feature in every cookery programme. They are a very versatile vegetable and can be grated raw in salads with a dressing, combined with coconut in curries and even made into cakes.

Different varieties add colour. Beetroot Chiogga has red and white concentric rings in the flesh which look great sliced, and its dark green leaves with red stems can also be used in salads.

Beetroot Boltardy has deep red globe shaped roots and a sweet flavour. It's also resistant to bolting.

Golden beetroot are supposed to be sweeter than the red varieties and not only add colour to dishes, but are fantastic roasted.

## Growing Beetroots

### Sites and soil

Beetroots grow best in an open sunny site in well drained soil. Soil should be improved with well rotted organic matter previously. Heavier soil can be pre-warmed by putting cloches in place for several weeks before sowing. Beetroot doesn't germinate well below 7.5 C

### Sowing and planting

The best way to make beetroot seed germinate is to soak it overnight. Sow extra short rows every 14 days to provide a continuous crop. Mark out straight rows using a string line or bamboo cane, water the drill if the soil is dry and sow the seed thinly, 2.5cm (1 in) deep in rows 30cm (12 in) apart. Seedlings should appear in 10 - 14 days. Thin to 10cm (4 in) between seedlings.

### Cultivation

Water thoroughly 10-14 days during dry spells.

Lack of water causes splitting, an excess means leaves at the expense of roots. Regularly hand weed close to the plants and hoe the soil between the rows.

### Harvest time

Harvest when the roots reach tennis ball size, any larger and they develop an unpleasant, woody texture. Before lifting, use a garden fork to loosen the soil beneath, but take care not to damage the roots.

### Storing

Beetroot stores well and will keep through the winter. Lift the roots in early or mid winter and select only sound ones for storage. Knock off any surplus soil and twist off the leaves several centimetres from the top of the root.

Carefully place the roots, not touching each other, in boxes of dry sand or coir. Store in a cool shed or garage.

*From Grow your own veg, Carol Klein*



## BEETROOT FALAFEL

by Annie, Springdale Rd

### Ingredients

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 2 onions, chopped
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- 2 x 400g cans chickpeas, drained
- 500g raw beetroot, peeled, trimmed and coarsely grated
- 100g fresh breadcrumbs
- 1 egg
- 1 tbsp tahini paste
- vegetable oil, for brushing or frying

### To serve

- 1 tbsp tahini paste
- 2 x 150ml natural yogurt
- pinch of sugar
- flatbreads
- 3 handfuls beet leaves or salad

### Method:

**1** Heat the olive oil in a frying pan and fry the onions until softened but not coloured.

Add the cumin and cook for 1 min, then scrape the mixture into a food processor with the chickpeas, two-thirds of the grated beetroot, the breadcrumbs, egg and tahini. Whizz to a rough paste, then scrape into a bowl and stir in the remaining grated beetroot with plenty of seasoning.

**2** With damp hands, shape into about 20 balls and space on baking parchment-lined baking sheets. Chill until ready to cook.

**3** Heat oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6. Brush the falafels with a little vegetable oil and bake for 20-25 mins until crisp and hot through. Alternatively, heat 2.5cm oil in a deep wok and fry in batches, turning, until crisp and hot.

**4** To serve, mix the tahini with the yogurt, sugar and some seasoning, then dollop onto the flatbreads with the warm falafels, diced beetroot and beet leaves or salad.

## BEETROOT BROWNIES

from BBC Good Food

### Ingredients

- 500g whole raw beetroot (3-4 medium beets)
- 100g unsalted butter, plus extra for the tin
- 200g bar plain chocolate (70% cocoa)
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 250g golden caster sugar
- 3 eggs
- 100g plain flour
- 25g cocoa powder

### Method:

**1** Wearing a pair of rubber gloves, top, tail and peel the beetroot – you'll need about 400g flesh. Roughly chop and put into a large bowl. Add a splash of water, cover with cling film, then microwave on High for 12 mins or until tender.

**2** Heat oven to 180C/160C fan/gas 4. While the beetroot cooks, butter then line a 20 x 30cm traybake or small roasting tin. Roughly chop the chocolate and cut the butter into cubes. Tip the cooked beetroot into a sieve, drain off any excess liquid, then put into a food processor with the chocolate, butter and vanilla. Whizz until the mix is smooth. The chocolate and butter will melt as you do this.

**3** Put the sugar and eggs into a large bowl, then beat using an electric hand whisk until thick, pale and foamy, about 2 mins. Spoon the beetroot mix into the bowl, then use a large metal spoon to fold it into the whisked eggs. Sift in the flour and cocoa powder, then gently fold these in to make a smooth batter.

**4** Pour into the prepared tin and bake for 25 mins or until risen all over. Cool completely in the tin, then cut into squares.



## ROASTED SQUASH WITH KALE, FETA, ALMONDS & CHILLI VINEGAR

by Sue, Aden Terrace

Serves 4

### Ingredients

- 1 x butternut squash peeled & chopped
- 100g curly kale or spinach
- 20g feta cheese
- almonds to taste, toasted
- 1 chilli deseeded & chopped
- 2 tablespoons cider vinegar
- 10ml virgin olive oil or sesame oil
- 1 tablespoon chopped thyme
- 1 clove garlic
- Vegetable oil
- Salt

### Method:

Heat 3 tablespoons of vegetable oil in a roasting pan, add the butternut squash, garlic and chopped thyme, then bake in the oven until softened.

Meanwhile blanch the kale in boiled salty water for one minute. Drain and place in a bowl.

Stir together the chilli, cider vinegar and olive oil. Place the cooked squash and kale on a plate. Add the toasted almonds and crumble the feta cheese around the edge. Drizzle the chilli oil vinegar mix around the salad.



## POLITE REQUEST

Please help a project to trial a Gardeners Collective across Hackney by responding to (and sharing) any of the surveys below to help identify where support and resources are needed:

### Gardeners in the Community

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/K1SJSF/>

### Home Growers

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/GGNDMO/>

### Professional Gardeners

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/M1F70C/>

All residents of the seven boroughs that make up the North London Waste Authority are invited to respond to the survey on waste management, including potential for community composting: <https://www.letstalkrubbish.london/>

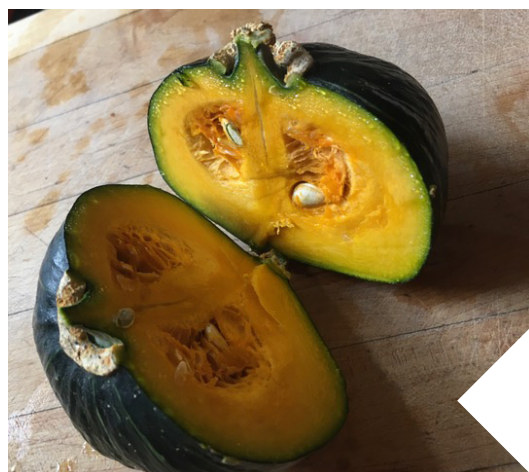
Anyone interested in anaerobic digestion and supporting food growing as part of a sustainable circular economy may be interested in supporting this project

<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/source-trailblazing-local-circular-food-systems#start>



**Drawing of Chris' allotment on Aden Terrace**

Jo Trench



**One of our last squashes in December**

photo by Sue Kay

**Broccoli - Overbury**

photo by Julia Clarke



## FROM OUR SITES





**Cooking up a storm**

Betty and Jeff,  
Aden Terrace

**FROM  
OUR SITES**

Supermarket  
bought vegetables  
not only taste bland  
and boring. Have you got  
any photographs of strange,  
interesting or funny vegetables  
or fruit you've grown on your  
allotment? The best ones  
will be published in the  
next newsletter.



**Bee habitat**  
photo by Annie,  
Springdale Rd



**Contorted parsnip**  
Sue Kay, Aden Terrace

*The Green Life (in growing terms) Parsnip*

**Natural lovers?**  
Bron, Aden Terrace

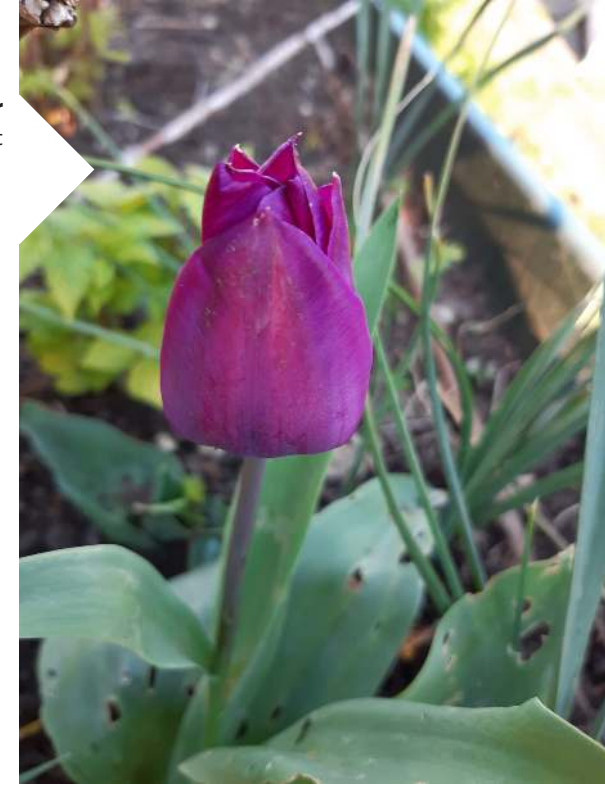




# FROM OUR SITES



**Flower power**  
Overbury Street



**Daffodils**  
Sue Kay  
Aden Terrace



**Flower power**  
Overbury Street



**Hellebores**  
Sue Kay  
Aden Terrace



**PLEASE**  
**be sensible and think of**  
**others when going to**  
**your allotment:**

Wear gloves or apply hand  
sanitiser before and after touching  
**ANY** hard surfaces: ie padlock, chain,  
fence rails, watering cans and taps.

Covid19 can stay on metal,  
glass & plastic for as long as 9 days.

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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

Kay Kante, Andrea Sinclair, Ginny  
Strawson

### SPRING LANE

Helen Bishop, Elsa Hamaz

### SPRINGDALE ROAD

Annie Wilson

### ST KILDA'S ROAD

Henrietta Soames

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