



Alan Kay,
Hagen Terrace

**SPRING/SUMMER
NEWSLETTER
2023**

“Spring being a tough act to follow, God created June.”

AL BERNSTEIN

HAS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

CHAIR

Penny Miller - pmshrink@yahoo.com

VICE CHAIR

Ruth Gladwin

SECRETARY

Nancy Korman -
hackneyallotments@gmail.com

TREASURER

Hugh Naylor

SITE REPRESENTATIVES

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

*Some
of our
site reps,
enjoying
a festive
meal*



A NEW REGIME

By sheer coincidence, Penny Miller, the Chairperson and Nancy Korman the Secretary have given notice that they do not intend standing again for office at the next AGM on 4 October, 2023. I know it sounds as if we have embezzled the Society's funds and now want to get out before caught, but I can assure you that is not the case. For me, it is just that I feel it is time for someone fresh to take up the reins.

It was 12 years ago that Penny approached me on the Aden Terrace allotment where we both have our plots. She asked me whether I would consider being secretary of HAS. I am not sure whether I had

even spoken to Penny before, but she assured me it wouldn't be too much work, just taking notes of the committee meetings and writing them up after. It didn't sound too bad, so I said yes.

She was right, it has involved taking notes of the meetings but it has also involved a lot more. Had it not been enjoyable I would not have stayed so long. The note-taking turned out almost to be the least of it. There are general inquiries to answer - how do I join, when will I get a plot, etc. - and memberships, the AGM, and liaison with Hackney Council, from whom we rent all but one of our sites. For me the best

aspects have been managing the waiting list and seeing the happiness when a member finally gets a plot, and doing the site visits in June/July - seeing how people on the various sites manage their plots, what they are growing and the sheer beauty of some plots. I have always finished the visits feeling inspired by the great gardeners we have.

So I am looking forward to someone taking over, shaping the role to reflect their interests and enjoying it as much as I did.

Nancy Korman

*The
AGM will be
on Wednesday
4 October, so
you have time to
consider stepping
forward.*

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR CHAIRPERSON AND SECRETARY

This is an advance notice that at the AGM you will be asked to elect a new Chairperson and Secretary of HAS.

Both Penny Miller, the Chairperson, and Nancy Korman, the Secretary, are resigning, Penny because her health issues

do not allow her to fulfil her responsibilities to her own satisfaction, and Nancy because she now feels a bit stale in her role.

Ruth Gladwin, the Vice Chairperson and Hugh Naylor, the Treasurer, are both willing to continue

in their roles.

There are job descriptions available (contact Nancy) so you can see what is involved and if you want to talk about a particular job, we will find someone to talk to you.



PEST CONTROL WITHOUT THE POISONS

by Nicki Scott

Encourage birds

Our allotment is a great place for blackbirds and robins who are constantly patrolling the paths and beds finding slugs and snails and goodness knows what else. True they might also steal the cherries but that's a payback for the great job they do.

Don't tidy up too much

Especially over winter, as predatory insects, like lacewings and ladybirds need hollow stems and places like that to hibernate. They and their larvae can then Hoover up countless greenfly, blackfly and other sap sucking insects. Build a bee and bug hotel and plant plenty of good pollinating plants to encourage more biodiversity and you will quite naturally get fewer

pests and problems and don't be in such a rush to control. I used to hand pick and squash cabbage white caterpillars until I realised that so many of them were full of the larvae of the parasitic wasps which were helping me control them.

Plant Diseases

There are some really problematic diseases and we all know about potato blight being the classic. Potatoes are prone to disease largely due to the fact that all the potatoes we grow have come from a few tubers brought back hundreds of years ago so the gene base is very small. However there are developments with blight resistant potatoes—e.g. see <https://www.potatohouse.co.uk/>

[which-potato-should-i-grow/the-best-blight-resistant-potatoes/](https://www.potatohouse.co.uk/which-potato-should-i-grow/the-best-blight-resistant-potatoes/)

Tomatoes also get blight of course and outdoor grown ones are particularly susceptible to our unpredictable British summers.

Grow plants that attract predators

A great thing to do is to allow parsley, carrot, parsnips and other umbelliferous plants which have tiny flowers to go to flowering as they attract the tiny parasitic wasps, no bigger than a fruit fly which will then lay their eggs inside caterpillars and the larvae of other pests.

Soil health

Most plant diseases though are exacerbated by bad soil health

and regular applications of compost and leafmould will build soil health and resistance to pests and diseases. There is a wealth of evidence that now supports this. EcoSci which used to be based in Exeter did much work on this with field trials and now BioCycle in the States are also proving and strengthening the case. <https://www.biocycle.net/compost-plant-disease-suppression/>

Nicki Scott has provided several articles for this newsletter. He has written several books (published by Green Books) and various manuals for Devon County Council. He has founded the Growing Devon Schools partnership and together they have used Lasagna and no-dig gardening techniques.



DANGERS OF GLYPHOSATE

New research by top US government scientists has found that people exposed to the widely used weedkilling chemical glyphosate have biomarkers in their urine linked to the development of cancer and other diseases.

The study, published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute, measured glyphosate levels in the urine of farmers and other study participants and found that high levels of the pesticide were associated with signs of a reaction in the body called oxidative stress.

Oxidative stress is considered by health experts as a key characteristic of carcinogens.

The authors of the paper – 10 scientists with the National Institutes of Health and two from the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – concluded that their study “contributes to the weight of evidence supporting an association between glyphosate exposure and oxidative stress in humans”.

Glyphosate also damages wild bee colonies which are already under threat from climate change.



SUCCESSFUL COMPOSTING

by Nicki Scott

Remember everything that lived recently can be composted

- The stuff we add to the compost heap contains carbon and nitrogen
- Its easiest to think of carbon as the tough fibrous or woody material and nitrogen as the soft wetter material—often called browns and greens (I call them ‘air’ and ‘water’)
- The tougher materials allow airflow and the soft materials add water to the heap
- Composting is a biological process and the life in the

compost need, primarily, both air and water.

- If you just pile up soft materials such as grass cuttings you end up with a smelly air-less mess generating methane. But if you layer or mix with woodchip, straw or tougher plants then it will compost aerobically—with air flow.
- Turning compost is not vital—it helps mix the two main types of material but it doesn’t ‘add air’; the tougher materials ensure airflow
- Composting is just a

matter of balancing air and water. Too much woody stuff and it will only slowly rot over years as beetles and other insects eat the wood and rain can wet it enough for fungi to take hold. A huge pile of grasscuttings can also take years to break down as air is excluded and only the anaerobic (putrefying) bacteria can get to work. This can be controlled as in silage making or making sauerkraut but not on a garden or allotment scale! Here it just tends to vent off methane!

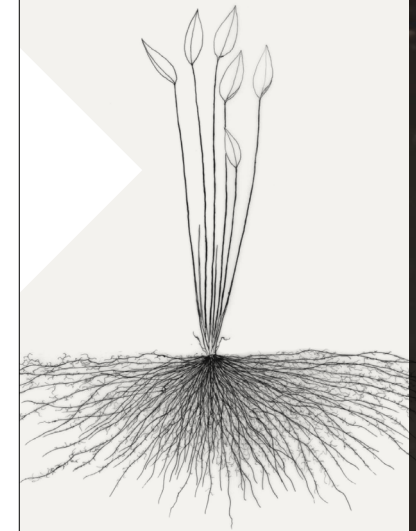
MIX BROWNS WITH GREENS

Browns are dry, hard and high in carbon

Paper and cardboard
Dead leaves
Wood chipping
Sawdust
Hay
Straw
Dry plant stems
Twigs

Greens are wet, soft and high in nitrogen

Grass
Grass cuttings
Weeds
Urine
Manure
Fresh plants
Tomato, pea and bean tops



WHAT TO DO WITH ROOTS OF WEEDS

Roots of weeds such as couch and bindweed can either be drowned in a barrel of water, laid out to dry off to a crisp or, if too bound up with soil, they can be stacked into a ‘loam stack’. Just make as neat and square a pile as you can and wrap the whole lot up in heavy duty black plastic sheet or anything to exclude light. After a year or so you have lovely friable loam.

I’ve use an old split plastic water butt for this for years with a light excluding lid and that does the trick.



EAT YOUR WEEDS

by Annie Willson

Dandelions greens are a great source of vitamins and minerals such as Vitamin A, C and K, Calcium and Potassium. They also contain several different types of antioxidants throughout the roots, leaves and flowers. Dandelions may also reduce inflammation which can lead to serious health problems such as cancer and heart disease. Studies have found that compounds in these plants can reduce inflammation.

How to eat dandelions

Every part of the dandelion is edible, but because it is a member of the same family as ragwort and daisies it may cause allergies to some individuals though such cases are very rare.

Leaves: Add some fresh leaves to a salad. Soak the leaves in cold, salted water for 10 or 15 minutes, then cook for 5 minutes in boiling water then sauté with some olive oil or garlic. Top with Parmesan cheese.

Flowers: Add to a salad for colour. Infuse them in oil or vinegar - dandelion oil can be used to make a salve for muscle ache. A syrup can also be made with the flowers which is supposed to be delicious.

Roots: Roasted dandelion roots can be used to make a drink similar to coffee but my experience of it is that it tastes nothing like coffee- more like barley cup.

NETTLES

by Annie Willson

Nettles have been eaten throughout history, "nettle pudding" was eaten in 6,000bc, and nettle beer and wine were very popular in medieval times

To prepare: Pick wearing rubber gloves, discard any that have thick stalks. Wash the leaves then pick the leaves off the stalks. Quickly blanching them in a pan of boiling water will deaden the sting.

Squeeze the moisture out of the leaves, then add a splash of cream for a delicious side dish or chop them into a pasta sauce. Treat in the same way as spinach so dandelions can be used in omelettes or risotto.

NETTLE SOUP

Ingredients

- Half a basket of nettle tops and leaves
- 50 g butter
- 1 large onion
- 1 litre vegetable stock
- 1 large potato peeled and cubed
- 1 large carrot, peeled and chopped
- Salt and pepper.

Melt the butter and fry the onion for 5-7 minutes until softened.

Add the stock, nettles, potato and carrot. Bring to a simmer and cook gently for 15 mins.

Purée the soup with a hand blender then season with salt and pepper.

NETTLE PASTE

The recipe for this nettle paste comes from a collective in Sweden called Ljusbacken.

You mix half and half dried nettles with lightly dry roasted barley flour (I've used other types of flour in the past too, like chick pea). Then you bind it with olive oil and add salt, chilli powder, crushed garlic.

They would sometimes use paprika instead of chilli, and add thyme or marjoram or even basil. Whatever you have, whatever you like...



TAKING ON A NEGLECTED ALLOTMENT: LASAGNA GARDENING

by Nicki Scott

It can be pretty daunting looking at taking on a plot that's been abandoned for some length of time, the grass is up to your waist and the brambles can cover a huge area in a single season. It all looks like a massive amount of work, however there are some techniques which can really lighten the load.

Firstly brambles often look far worse than they are. Using a long-handled slasher, or some good loppers, secateurs and good gloves you can cut back the long stems cutting them into smaller sections as you go. Then you need to chop out the crown where all the stems are coming from. A mattock is the best tool for this job, failing that, digging out the crowns with a spade.

Grass and other softer herbage can be scythed, trimmed or mowed off with a rotary mower and put to one side. Relatively quickly you have cleared an area to work with. The next step depends on the time of

year to a certain extent. Also, to what other bulky organic materials you can beg borrow, or steal.

A tried and tested technique is called lasagna gardening or barrier mulching. Ideally you would do this after rain to capture as much moisture as you can in the ground. You can also plan the layout of the beds and paths at this time which helps the materials go further. With sticks and string mark out where you want the beds. Best to run them across the slope rather than up and down it. Make them the width you can reach into the middle without having to tread over them; about four feet make the paths between generous enough to push a wheelbarrow down; about 2 ft wide. Cover these beds with overlapping sheets of opened out cardboard boxes, remove all the plastic tape first. It's a good idea to water the cardboard and then put opened out newspapers on top and water well.

The next step depends on a few

factors, e.g what other materials you have gathered. You will have the top growth you have raked to one side which can now go back on top. This could be covered with a generous layer of compost or manure, leafmould, hay, straw etc. This next step also depends on the time of year. I've used this technique in schools and on the allotments for many years and you can create instant gardens if you have plants grown before hand in modules or trays, or in the spring you can plant potatoes very successfully. Squash plants work very well as they can sprawl all over the bed and cover it up, but it also works well with reasonably large plants that can go in to a scrape that you fill with a little mature compost; brassicas, peas and beans, sweetcorn or any perennial fruit bushes or trees.

The paths can be either left to be mown or trimmed, or can also be covered in cardboard and then covered in woodchip, sawdust or

thatching straw. After a few years these paths can be rotted down enough to scrape up on the beds and fresh woodchip etc put down.

Pros of this approach – your garden can get off to a flying start, the soil ecology is not disturbed, and the soil is radically enriched, also weed seeds are not brought up into the light to germinate. You can do this any time of year and even leave overwinter to come back to in the spring.

Cons of this approach – you need to gather up your cardboard, take the plastic off and get a pile of newspapers ideally as well as all the other bulky materials but woodchip, thatch and manure are all delivered to the allotment. Perennial weeds, especially bindweed and couch grass can run along underneath the cardboard until it can root through and emerge. However then the roots can be satisfyingly pulled out in long strands to be dried off or shoved into a barrel of water etc (see section on weeds).

WHAT TO SOW IN JUNE

Direct sow outdoors

- **runner beans and french beans, beetroot, broccoli and calabrese**
- **carrots** - protect with fleece to prevent carrot fly attack
- herb seeds such as **coriander, dill** and **parsley**
- hardy **corn salad** (Lamb's Lettuce) for summer and winter salads
- **courgette, squash, radish, spinach, radicchio** and **spring onion**
- **swede, swiss chard, turnip**
- try some **kohl rabi** — it'll be ready in as little as 8 weeks after sowing
- try direct sowing **Pak Choi** every 3 weeks for a continuous crop.
- sow **pea seeds** directly into the ground or start them off in modules if mice are a problem.
- **salad leaves** are one of the fastest and most productive crops you can grow — sow direct outside and thin out the seedlings. Sow every 3 or 4 weeks for continuous harvesting.
- sow **sweetcorn** directly outside. Grow at least 12 plants for good pollination and cropping.



WHAT TO PLANT IN JUNE

Plant outdoors

- **pumpkins & squash, pepper plants, kale, celery, celeriac, cucumbers, tomato plants**
- plant out **sprouting broccoli** spacing the plants 60cm apart. Calabrese plants can be spaced at 30cm apart.
- plant your **Brussels sprout** plants deeply in the soil and earth them up as they grow for stability.
- plant out **summer cabbages** about 35cm apart.
- plant out **cauliflowers** into moist soil, and be sure not to allow the soil to dry out during growth.
- plant out **leeks** by dibbing a hole 15cm (6in) deep, dropping the leek inside and filling the hole with water. There's no need to refill the hole with soil — this method will ensure a good blanch on the stems.
- 'Charlotte' and 'Maris Peer' **potatoes** can be planted from mid June to late July. No chitting is necessary as the warmth of the compost and the summer temperatures will quickly entice growth.

FROM OUR SITES

Most people want to attract pollinators onto their plots but don't have enough space to create flower beds.

Bulbs are great for Spring and early Summer and take up very little space. Annuals like nasturtiums, calendula and violas can be planted to provide nectar for insects, they are easy to pull up once they fade or die and self seed so you don't have to buy more seeds next year.



Borders are an easy way to provide food for pollinators as well as creating an attractive edge to the plot

Jane, Overbury site

Tulips in bloom

picture by
Jane Hough,
Overbury Street



Broccoli flowers

Pat, Aden Terrace



Primroses self seeded with a black currant bush

Annie, Springdale



more tulips!

from Annie Willson

CHANGES TO BYLAW

The Society supports the LBH Biodiversity Action Plan and Hackney's Local Nature Recovery Plan. Tenants are therefore requested to comply with appropriate local and national legislation with regard to preserving and protecting biodiversity and therefore not to bring, store or use on the allotment site any poisons, pesticides and herbicides that are detrimental to biodiversity and the environment.

Exceptions may be made with the agreement of the Management Committee if special circumstances arise e.g. to remove rampant invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed.

Any potentially dangerous products should be used with health and safety requirements in mind and with respect for neighbour's plots.

At the last AGM it was proposed that we ban pesticide and herbicide use on all allotments. This followed Sam Parry's talk on Hackney council's biodiversity action plan and the proposal to create green corridors linking nature reserves. The proposal will be voted on at the next AGM



purple beauties at Overbury Street
pictures by Yvonne

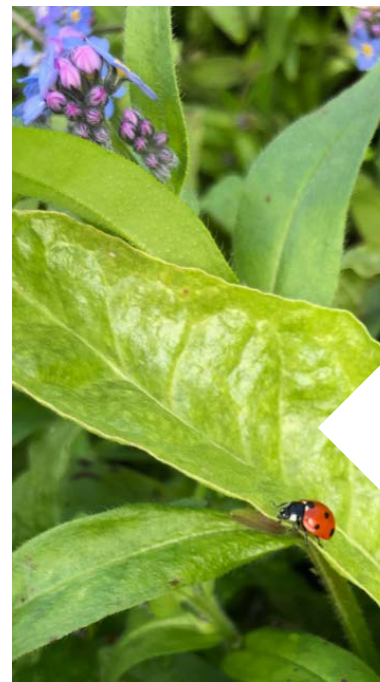


A bee hovering in the lungwort blossom
Sue, Aden Terrace

FROM OUR SITES



A very welcome sighting at Overbury Street
picture by Julia Clarke, frog claimed by Kerry Morgan



The first recorded spotting of a ladybird this year, April 12th.
Sarah, Aden Terrace



Sketch of daffodil and fading arranged daffs
Susan Kay, Aden Terrace