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NEWSLETTER 2026

tough root, scrubbed root, soil-tangy blood-
root:

wise earth-fox baked in its foil chimney until
the knife slides out easily, the bulb stoppered
to tenderness – a hot blood-pear like a
swollen

eye, with a worm-stalk, curled stump, and
flesh

like a tongue, like an oyster, a smooth
saturation run through with rings to hold
a plume of leaves – my son's favourite word,

his answer to all questions! Its skin slips
to stain the plate with rags of clotted blood.
He won't touch it, or eat it, but the weeping
word

keeps him safe as he grows the sweet and
bitter

of his own strange bulb – among the other
boys,

a silliness to hide his dark, good heart.

JEMMA BORG

HAS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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Elsa Hamaz, Elisa De Grey, Judith Losing

SPRINGDALE ROAD

Annie Wilson

ST KILDA'S ROAD

Marie O'Shea

WE WANT YOU TO KEEP YOUR PLOT

We know that life can sometimes get in the way of allotment gardening. Work, family commitments, illness, changing circumstances, holidays or simply feeling overwhelmed by the amount of work a plot can require can all make it difficult to keep on top of things.

Our aim is to help you keep your plot — not to see you lose it.

If you're struggling to manage your plot for any reason, please talk to us before things become overwhelming. You don't need to feel embarrassed, and you don't need to have everything under

control before getting in touch.

There may be ways we can help, whether that's discussing your circumstances, agreeing a manageable approach, offering practical advice, or simply giving you some time to get things back on track.

An allotment doesn't have to be perfect. We understand that plots go through good periods and difficult periods, and sometimes just getting a few beds cleared and planted is a great achievement.

Please don't disappear or give up on your plot because you're

struggling. Come and talk to us.

We want our allotment community to be somewhere people can enjoy growing, learn from each other and get support when they need it.

If you're finding it difficult to work your plot, for whatever reason, please reach out to us. We'd much rather have a conversation and see how we can help you keep your plot than see you feel that giving it up is your only option.

We're here to help.

CALL OFF THE SEARCH; WE HAVE A VICE CHAIR!

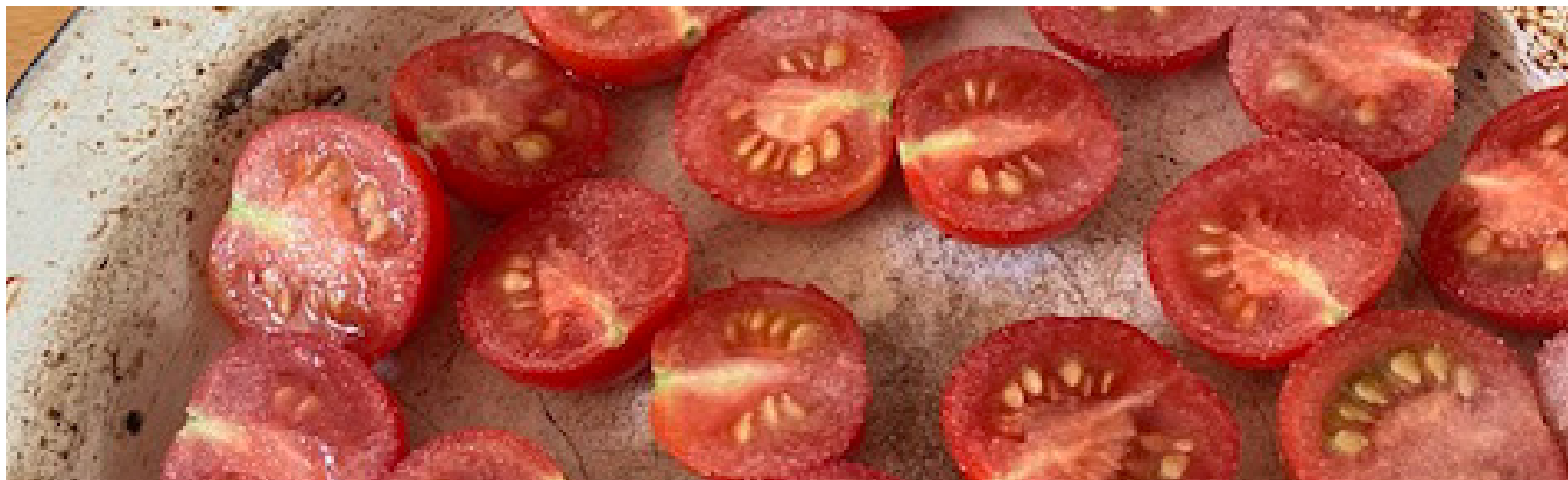
Big hellos,

I'm very excited to be a part of the Hackney Allotment Society committee. For those of you that were present at the AGM, thank you for voting to appoint. I had a whole speech prepared to win you over!

I look forward to working with Jana, Julia and Hugh to better support you.

Best wishes,
Sandra





LA DOLCE VITA

by Jana Hasegawa

A Little Italian Inspiration for Growing Tomatoes

If there's one country that knows how to make the most of a tomato, it's Italy!

Italian growers have developed countless local varieties, from the famous San Marzano to small cherry tomatoes, with different varieties suited to fresh eating, drying, preserving and sauces. Traditional growers also commonly support tomatoes with poles and wires, keeping plants upright and making harvesting easier.

So what can we borrow for the allotment?

Give them the sunniest spot

Tomatoes love warmth and sunshine, so give them the brightest position you have. Against a sunny

wall or in a greenhouse can be particularly useful in the UK.

Support them properly

Think like an Italian grower: give those plants something to climb! Strong canes, poles or a sturdy wire/string system will keep plants upright, improve airflow and make it easier to pick the fruit.

Don't be afraid to train them

For cordon tomatoes, remove the side shoots regularly and tie the main stem to its support. Keeping plants under control helps prevent a jungle of foliage taking over your tomato bed.

Water wisely

Give plants a good, thorough watering rather than constantly sprinkling the surface. Keeping

watering consistent is particularly important once fruit starts developing.

A good mulch around the plants can also help retain moisture — especially useful during those increasingly dry British summers.

Try an Italian variety

Why not grow one Italian tomato alongside your usual favourites?

San Marzano is famous for its meaty, relatively dry flesh and suitability for sauces and preserving.

Or try a smaller Italian cherry or salad variety for something different.

Think beyond the fresh tomato. One of the great Italian traditions is preserving the summer harvest.

Tomato sauce, passata, dried tomatoes and bottled tomatoes can turn a glut into something you can enjoy long after the plants have finished producing.

The Italian lesson?

Grow tomatoes for flavour, give them plenty of sunshine, support them well, don't waste the harvest — and when you've got more tomatoes than you know what to do with...

Make passata!

La dolce vita starts on the allotment!

HOME MADE SUNDRIED TOMATOES

by Annie Wilson

This summer I thought I'd try sun drying my own tomatoes as I had a bumper crop by August .

I chose Gardeners delight as they're small but juicy . I cut them in half and then arranged them on a metal plate as I figured this would add more heat . I then sprinkled them lightly with salt. Tomatoes lose around 90% of their original weight so you don't want them too salty .

I wrapped the plate in muslin to protect the tomatoes from flies and put them on my south facing balcony.



The tomatoes are done when they are dry but still pliable - by the end of the day they had shrunk a lot .

I removed some of the salt with kitchen paper then packed the tomatoes in a small jar the poured olive oil over them and sealed the jar tightly . I'm storing them in the fridge and haven't tasted them yet but they look great .

I only wish I'd done more earlier in the month as that was the last of the very hot days and the second lot I tried didn't dry properly and I had to finish them off in the oven which took several hours .



**HAVE WE EVER
HAD A SUMMER
THIS DRY?** by Jana
Hasegawa



WILDLIFE ON THE ALLOTMENT

by Annie Wilson



I invited Shelagh Taylor to set a moth trap on my allotment and she recorded 7 different species which she'd never come across before. Shelagh set up the trap in the evening and during the night the light attracted the moths into the container. In the morning the moths were carefully put into pots for identification.



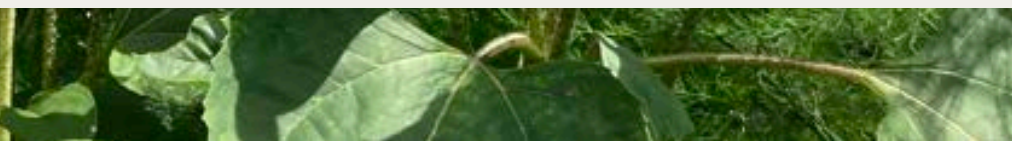
Many of us may feel we've never seen an allotment summer quite like this one — and there is some truth to that. While 1976 remains famous for its devastating drought, 2026 has produced some extraordinary dry spells, particularly across southern England. Some locations went almost two months without measurable rain.

The difference is that this year's conditions have also come with record-breaking temperatures, making the lack of rain especially challenging for gardeners, crops and water supplies.

So if you're struggling to keep your plot watered, you're certainly not alone. This has been an exceptional year.

LOG

<i>Springdale Allotments</i>	<i>31.08.26</i>	
<i>Common name</i>	<i>Scientific name</i>	<i>Number</i>
<i>Shuttle Shaped Dart</i>	<i>Agrotis Puta</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Straw Underwing</i>	<i>Thalpophila Matura</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Lesser Yellow Underwing</i>	<i>Noctua Comes</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Rush Veneer</i>	<i>Nomophila Noctuella</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Bright Line Brown Eye</i>	<i>Lacanobia Oleracea</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Chestnut Tortrix</i>	<i>Cydia Splendana</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Unknown micro moth</i>		<i>1</i>





Kew have been trialing unusual plants to see what new plants we can grow in our changing climate. Here are two that were thriving in their gardens.

INSPIRATION FROM KEW - DUDI

Dudi or bottle gourd is one of the oldest cultivated crops, having been used by humans for more than 14,000 years. When they are mature the fruits (calabashes) are hardwearing, decorative and waterproof. They are often used to make lightweight and hardwearing cooking or water-carrying utensils, musical instruments or birdhouses.

How to grow a dudi

A single thriving dudi plant can climb to over 3m/12ft in every direction, so they need plenty of room and a solid support

Sow two seeds to a 10cm/4in pot of general-purpose peat-free compost in May. Discard the weaker seedling. Dudi need at least 18C/65F to germinate.

Harden the dudi plants off as soon as they have two or three true leaves (they will rapidly outgrow a windowsill) and plant out as soon as outside is warm enough, usually late May-early June.

Space them 2m/6ft or more apart. Try growing dudi over a robust archway, pergola, or a stout framework made of posts no thinner than 5cm x 5cm/2 x 2in.

INSPIRATION FROM KEW - AMARANTH

Amaranth is categorised as a “pseudocereal,” being a seed rather than a grain. It belongs to the same family as buckwheat and quinoa, known as Amaranthaceae. Considered a staple food in the Inca, Maya, and Aztec civilisations, amaranth has been cultivated for over 8,000 years.

Amaranth species that are primarily used as a grain are *Amaranthus caudatus* L., *Amaranthus cruentus* L., and *Amaranthus hypochondriacus*.

Amaranth can be used as whole seeds or ground into flour. Amaranth flour is a popular choice for gluten-free baking. The leaves are also edible. It is gluten-free, and rich in protein, fibre, micronutrients, and antioxidants.



How to grow amaranth

Amaranth is relatively easy to grow in a garden.

Planting: Sow the amaranth seeds directly into well-drained soil after the last frost date in your area.

Sunlight: Amaranth thrives in full sun, so choose a sunny spot in your garden for optimal growth.

Watering: Provide regular watering to keep the soil moist but not waterlogged. Amaranth is relatively drought-tolerant once established. **Harvesting:** Harvest the amaranth leaves when they are young and tender for culinary use. Allow the flowers to mature and dry on the plant for seed collection.

Seed saving: To grow amaranth in subsequent years, save the dried flower heads. Store them in a cool, dry place for future planting.

Annie Wilson

SUMMER 2026 AND HOW TO PREPARE FOR ANOTHER HOT YEAR

by Annie Wilson

This year has been incredibly difficult for allotment holders. First there was a warm but very wet winter and early spring followed by an extremely hot and dry late spring and summer. The temperature in Hackney was 4 c above average and the heatwave lasted over 33 days. It was also extremely dry with very little rain. A hosepipe ban was imposed in July which still stands.

What can we do in future hot summers?

Watering

Frequent, shallow watering encourages roots to stay near the surface, making plants more vulnerable to drought.

Instead, water deeply and less frequently. A thorough soaking encourages roots to grow deeper into the soil where moisture levels remain more consistent. Early morning is usually the best time to water, as less moisture is lost through evaporation. Evening watering can also work well, although wet foliage left overnight can occasionally encourage fungal problems.

Concentrate on

- Newly planted seedlings
- Container-grown plants
- Courgettes and cucumbers
- Beans and peas
- Tomatoes when the fruits are forming

Apply mulch

Applying mulch is one of the most effective ways to protect an allotment during hot weather.

A layer of organic material helps:

- Reduce evaporation
- Keep the soil cooler
- Suppress weeds that compete for water
- Improve soil structure over time

Good mulching materials include:

- Compost
- Well-rotted manure
- Straw
- Grass clippings (applied thinly)

Even a few centimetres of mulch can dramatically reduce water loss during prolonged hot spells

Create shade

Not every vegetable enjoys intense sunshine. Leafy crops such as lettuce, spinach and rocket can quickly bolt or become bitter during hot weather. Young seedlings are also particularly vulnerable. Temporary shade can make a huge difference.

You can create shade using:

- Shade netting

- Garden fleece
- Old net curtains
- An umbrella or parasol
- Temporary wooden frames with fabric attached

Providing shade during the hottest part of the afternoon can significantly reduce stress on sensitive plants.

Prioritise containers and raised beds

Containers and raised beds warm up and dry out much faster than open ground. Plants growing in pots may need watering once or even twice a day during exceptionally hot weather. Raised beds, especially those filled with light compost, can also become surprisingly dry.

If possible:

- Move containers into partial shade
- Group pots together to reduce moisture loss
- Add extra mulch to raised beds
- Check moisture levels daily
- Harvest little and often

Leaving vegetables such as courgettes, beans and cucumbers to become oversized forces plants to divert more energy into maturing fruit rather than producing new growth.

Regular harvesting encourages continued cropping and reduces overall strain during difficult conditions.

Remember to help wildlife

Heatwaves don't just affect your vegetables.

Pollinators, birds and beneficial insects also struggle during prolonged dry periods.

Adding a shallow dish of water, keeping a pond topped up, or leaving a small muddy area for insects can make a big difference to the wildlife that helps keep your plot healthy

Should you feed plants in a heatwave?

Generally, no. Plants under severe heat stress often struggle to make use of additional fertiliser. Feeding can sometimes make matters worse by encouraging soft new growth that requires even more water.

Plan for the future

Heatwaves are becoming more common in the UK, so it's worth thinking long-term about making your allotment more resilient.

Consider:

- Installing water butts
- Improve your soil by adding organic matter which makes it more able to hold water .
- Creating permanent shaded areas
- Using mulch routinely

A SIMPLE REWILDING STARTER PLAN

by Jana Hasegawa

Not sure exactly where to begin with rewilding your garden or allotment? Try this simple, easy-to-follow approach:

1. Pick one small area — even a tiny 1–2 metre corner of your plot is enough space to get started and see some results.
2. Add some flowers — choose a diverse mixture of pollinator-friendly plants that bloom at different times throughout the growing season to support a wide range of insects.
3. Create a mini wildlife refuge — add a small log pile, some stones, or a bundle of hollow stems to provide shelter and nesting spots for beneficial creatures.
4. Leave a little longer grass — but make sure to give it a clear, defined edge so it looks intentional and well cared for.
5. Let one or two crops flower — plants like leeks, onions, herbs, and carrots are excellent choices to allow to flower for pollinators.
6. Keep the rest of your plot tidy — maintaining clearly defined paths and cultivated beds will help your

wildlife areas look purposeful rather than neglected or overgrown.

Start small, observe what wildlife arrives, and gradually build from there.

The trick is to embrace “managed wild” — creating wildlife-friendly areas in your garden while still keeping the overall plot looking intentional and well cared for.

How to Rewild Your Allotment Without It Looking Wild

Want to attract more wildlife to your plot without giving the impression that you’ve simply stopped gardening altogether?

The secret is structure and planning. A little thoughtful design can make a huge difference in how your space looks.

Create a wild corner

Choose one small area of your plot and let it do its own thing naturally. Sow a wildflower mix, allow some grasses to grow tall, and resist the urge to tidy everything up perfectly.

The key? Give it a defined edge. A mown strip, path, or simple border immediately makes your “wild” area

look intentional and cared for.

Plant for pollinators

Integrate flowers among your vegetables rather than keeping flowers and food crops completely separate.

Good choices include:

Marigolds
Nasturtiums
Borage
Calendula
Cornflowers
Lavender
Foxgloves
Verbena

These plants provide valuable food for bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects while adding plenty of vibrant colour to your plot.

Leave a little mess — but contain it!

A small pile of logs, sticks, or stones can provide essential shelter for insects and other wildlife.

Place it somewhere discreet and give it a neat boundary. “Wildlife habitat” sounds much better than “pile of stuff I haven’t got around to moving.”

Let some vegetables flower. Don’t pull everything up as soon as it stops producing fruit or vegetables.

Allowing plants such as leeks, onions, brassicas, herbs, and carrots to flower can provide important food for pollinating insects. You can also collect seed from some plants for next year’s crops.

Grow a wildlife-friendly hedge or boundary

If you have the space, planting shrubs or native plants along the edges of your plot can provide shelter and nesting opportunities for wildlife, while creating a natural boundary.

Keep the paths tidy

This is perhaps the biggest secret to making your plot look cared for.

Neat paths + defined beds + one or two deliberately wild areas = a plot that’s wildlife-friendly rather than neglected or overgrown.

Mow or strim paths regularly and keep the main growing areas clearly defined to maintain a tidy appearance.

FROM OUR SITES



Pumpkins of Kew
Annie, Springdale



Spring Hill Sunflower patch Jana, Overbury Street

Rosehips ready for jelly making
by Sue, Aden Terrace



Home made sun dried tomatoes Annie, Springdale



Site visit snap
photo by Jana Hasegawa

WHAT TO PLANT NOW

October might feel like the end of the growing season, but there are still plenty of things you can get into the ground now.

Garlic

Plant individual cloves now for a crop next summer. Choose healthy, firm cloves and plant them with the pointed end upwards.

Autumn onion sets

Autumn-planting onion sets can establish roots before winter and give you an early crop next year.

Broad beans

Hardy varieties of broad beans can be sown now in many parts of the UK. An early sowing can give you a head start next spring.

Winter salads

Try hardy salad leaves such as winter lettuce, land cress, lamb's lettuce and rocket. Growing them under some protection can extend the harvest.

Spring onions

Hardy varieties can be sown for small crops through the colder months, particularly under protection.

Peas

Some hardy pea varieties can be autumn-sown in suitable conditions, although they may need protection from cold and pests.



Pumpkin worth a Cinderella & Delicate Sweet Pea
Sue, Aden Terrace



Award winning plot
Guy Dehn, Leaside

FROM OUR SITES

Simon and Tom's award-winning plot
by Annie, Springdale



Bron's poetic hideout was also amongst winners this year picture by Annie Wilson



Fancy scare crow
photo by Jana Hasegawa