

WINTER NEWSLETTER 2019



Allotment view
from Jeff and
Betty Manning

The 2019 AGM

*Reports, items raised and a talk
by Growing Communities*

The Prince pub in Stoke Newington was the venue for the AGM, as the Church Hall at St Mary Stoke Newington was undergoing renovation. There was a good attendance of almost 45 members. The standing items all passed peacefully - acceptance of the minutes of the 2018 AGM, treasurer's report (we are in good financial condition), chairman's report and some statistics from the year passed.

Members raised various items which will be considered by the committee during the year: whether people with gardens should be considered for an allotment; whether people with allotments in other boroughs should be given an allotment by HAS; whether the late payment fee should be increased to encourage on-time-payment; whether members should receive an individual invoice for the amount they owe.

We also had a talk by Sophie Verhagen from Growing Communities, an organisation encouraging people to get involved in growing vegetables and fruits and selling organic produce locally. It began in 1996 with a farm bringing its produce to Hackney to sell locally as an alternative to the supermarket system. Its aim was to avoid industrial farming and to sell at a fair price to consumers and producers. At present it has 30 PT members of staff and three main arms to its activities: it sponsors farmers' markets; it has a vegetable box scheme, seven food growing sites in Hackney and more across London. It currently has 1600 households involved in its vegetable box scheme and also works with local schools, getting children involved in growing.



Notices

STANDING ORDER PAYMENTS

Members are reminded that they can pay their membership fee and plot rental by standing order. This is something members must initiate at their own bank. The payment is to HAS, sort code 08-92-99 and account number 65555383.

NEW TREES AND SHED

Winter is often the time to put in new trees and sheds on your plots. Members are reminded that before they do so, they MUST consult their site rep for agreement. We are concerned that trees have been planted which were not on dwarf root stock which can result in pruning costs being incurred later on. If

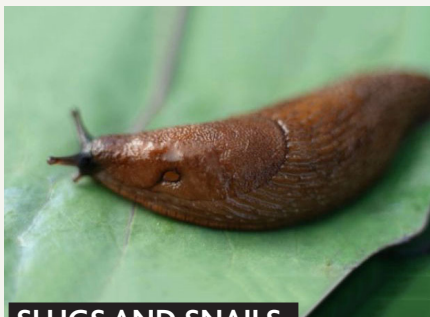
inappropriately sited, trees can cast shade on neighbouring plots, also a bit of a no-no. Lastly they need to be sited at least 3 feet (1 Meter) from a pathway. Sheds must be of a reasonable size; if you can live in it, it is too big.

SURPLUS PRODUCE?

If you are still suffering from a glut of courgettes or anything else, there is a food bank at St Mary Stoke Newington Church on Thursdays and they will happily relieve you of anything you would like to donate.

DATE FOR THE DIARY

The 2020 AGM will be held on Wednesday, 7 October.



SLUGS AND SNAILS

WHAT IS IT?: Slugs and snails scrape their food up with a spiky, rasping tongue. Snails tend to hibernate in the winter and are unable to move through the soil, whereas slugs can be active all year round both above and below ground. Both mostly feed by night.

SYMPTOMS: The tell-tale trail of slime, the seedlings completely eaten, the large holes in leaves, and even the hollowing out of potato tubers.

PREVENTION AND/OR TREATMENT:

Protection of vulnerable plants is the key – and it's important not to rely on only one method. Always renew barriers after rain, and accept that some damage is inevitable. The following may help: dig to disrupt both slug and its eggs; encourage natural controls such as beetles, frogs, birds and hedgehogs; frequently inspect your plants and hand pick off (particularly in damp weather and at night); create barriers of dry material which slugs find hard to traverse, such as grit, sheep wool – and renew when wet after rain. You can also put a thick layer of dry oats or bran around small vulnerable plants for slugs to gorge on and dehydrate- making easy pickings for the birds. Again, renew when wet after rain. If you use traps (a can or saucer with dregs of beer) empty them

frequently.

To avoid killing ground beetles which eat the slugs, it would be better to put your beer into a saucer with raised edges. Use of nematodes (microscopic organisms, available to buy online) can have some success, but they only work once in a season, and the conditions are very specific for the nematodes to function. If you have to use slug pellets make sure they are approved for organic growing, use SPARINGLY, and store safely. Most contain ferric phosphate, which will break down in the soil. However they also contain other chemicals which can affect earthworms.. Using non organic slug pellets is to be avoided at all costs. Not only do they kill the slugs, but they also can affect the hedgehogs, thrushes, frogs and other wildlife that eat the slugs.

NATURAL CONTROLS TO COMMON PESTS

Pests and diseases are part of the natural environmental system. In this system there is a balance between predators and pests. If this system is imbalanced some creatures and organisms can become dominant and their activities start to cause damage. The aim of natural control is to restore a balance and to keep pests and diseases down to an acceptable level. The aim is not to eradicate them altogether, as they also have a role to play in the natural system. Where possible, use non-toxic techniques to avoid or prevent pest and disease attack in the first place.



CABBAGE WHITEFLY

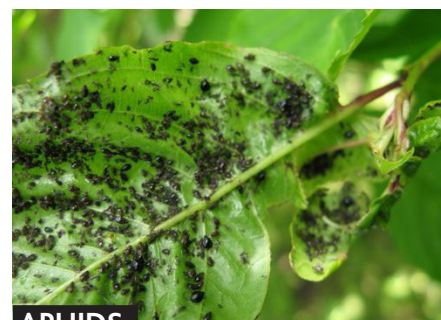
WHAT IS IT?: Small white winged insects on the underside of leaves of brassica plants, which fly up in clouds when disturbed. The young whitefly, known as 'scales', remain on the leaves.

SYMPTOMS: The whitefly themselves can cause severe distortion and stunted growth, and the scales make leaves unappetising and covered in sticky

honeydew that is exuded by the feeding insects. Sooty or black moulds often grow on the honeydew.

PREVENTION AND/OR TREATMENT:

Most plants can tolerate quite a high infestation. Limitation measures include creating a healthy soil, which produces strong, resistant plant growth. Fennel, coriander and cow parsley will attract parasitic wasps which lay eggs inside the whitefly scales. Their larvae consume them from the inside out. Remove infected leaves before the immobile young whitefly 'scales' turn into adults. Alternatively insecticidal soap or sprays based on vegetable oils can be effective. Biocontrols will only work in a greenhouse/polytunnel.



APHIDS

WHAT IS IT?: Aphids are sap-sucking insects that can be found on a very wide range of plants – and in roots, stems and leaves. Often known as greenfly or blackfly, they can also carry viruses.

SYMPTOMS: In large numbers clustered around tender young growth they cause young shoots to become weak and distorted, sometimes killing the plant.

PREVENTION AND/OR TREATMENT:

Avoid using too much nitrogen-rich fertiliser which encourages soft leafy growth which is attractive to aphids. Encourage creatures that feed on aphids, such as birds, insects and their larvae, earwigs and bats. Grow flowers that attract hoverflies, lacewings and ladybirds). During winter, hang up pieces of fat in fruit trees and above rose bushes to attract blue tits which eat aphid eggs. Inspect plants regularly and squash any aphids that are seen. Pick off heavily infested shoots and leaves and drop into a bucket of soapy water. A strong jet of water can also dislodge them.



How to grow Yacon

"Yacon" means "water root" in the Inca language and its tubers were historically highly valued as a wild source of thirst-quenching refreshment for travellers. Yacon also benefits the bacteria in the intestinal tract and colon that boost the immune system and aid digestion.

VARIETIES

Yacon tubers can be red, orange, yellow, pink and purple but most of the more colourful ones are found only in South America, where yacon originates. The rest of us are likely to find only white varieties.

GROWING

Yacon is a perennial plant, so once you have planted it, so long as you look after it, you will have it forever.

Yacon is easy to grow in most soils where there is reasonable rainfall and moderate heat. The plants do require a long season to grow – forming their tubers in autumn – but anywhere that parsnips and Jerusalem artichokes thrive will suit yacon well.

You can either buy plants or if you know someone who has them you can divide the crown including the smaller roots that grow above the main tubers.

Yacon can be slow to get growing in spring but quickly puts on lush growth through

the summer to a height of 2m, occasionally a little more once established. It flowers some years towards autumn, but it's what's happening under the surface that's of most interest.

Nose below the surface in late autumn and you'll see that yacon produces two sets of roots – the large edible tubers that act as the energy storage facility for the plant, and the smaller propagation roots (resembling Jerusalem artichokes) which grow just under the soil surface and are the seeds for the following year's growth.

When you lift your yacon plants to harvest the tubers, cut the stems back to about 10cm long and store the crowns covered in damp compost in a cool frost-free place where they won't dry out.

In early spring plant the crowns into large pots and wait for shoots to start growing from each small tuber. Split the crowns into individual shoots with their tubers attached and plant into smaller pots.

Yacon plants are quite sensitive

to temperature, so plant them out when you would tomatoes, a metre or slightly more from their neighbour, in a sheltered, sunny spot. Any compost you add to the planting hole and watering through dry periods will ensure good growth throughout the season.

Yacon is very rarely troubled by pests or diseases, but they are hungry plants so either add much compost between growing seasons or move their growing site altogether.

HARVESTING

As frosts approach it's worth putting a little straw around the plant to protect the tubers. The leafy growth is withered by the cold – as soon as this happens, use a long fork to gently lift the tubers. It helps to have another person pulling on the stems of the plant at the same time to get the whole plant up.

Snap the large tubers from the crowns. They're crunchy, tasty and refreshing immediately, but a few days in the sun can add to their sweetness.

A cool, dry shed or garage is perfect for storing tubers until you're ready to eat them. They may well sweeten a little over time, and (if you're lucky) they can last many months in storage.

Yields can be variable – in the first year I had around six tubers the size of very large baking potatoes per plant, in the next year considerably more.

RECIPES

KALE CHIPS

This version is seasoned with sweet paprika but you can experiment with chilli flakes, cayenne pepper, ground cumin, smoked paprika, garlic powder, ground fennel seed or just good old sea salt

- Small bunch of kale (about 200g)
- 2 tsp olive oil
- Pinch sea salt
- Pinch of paprika

Serves 4

- Pre-heat oven to 180 degrees C.
- Remove the stems of the kale and tear the leaves up into large pieces. Wash and pat dry thoroughly. This is essential because if they are a bit wet the final product will be soggy.
- In a large bowl toss the kale pieces with the oil, salt and spices. Don't over do it on the oil – it's essential but too much will mean your chips will be greasy so stick to 2tsp and make sure you rub it in thoroughly with your fingertips.
- Spread out on 2-3 baking sheets. You'll want the pieces to be in one layer without touching each other too much.
- Put in the pre-heated oven for 10-15 minutes. I recommend checking them after 8 minutes just to see how they're doing. You want them to be crisp but not burned so keep an eye on them.
- Once cooked, remove from the oven

and leave to stand on the trays for at least 3 mins to crisp up even more.

- Transfer to a bowl and eat immediately. They don't store too well but I'm pretty confident you won't have any trouble finishing them.

www.growingcommunities.org/recipes



ROSEHIP SYRUP

Now the rosehips are prevalent it's time to pick them before they get too squishy. They are high in vitamin C & were commonly used as a healthy cordial for children as I remember!! Now try it poured on porridge, pancakes, ice cream... delicious.

Say you pick 1kg / 2lb of hips:

- First wash them, weigh them, trim them & roughly chop them.
- Boil up 2 litres / 4 pints of water. Throw the chopped hips into the pan of boiling water. Return to boil, then remove from the heat to infuse.



- Strain thro' a **jelly bag**, return the hips to the pan & add a further 2 litres / 4 pints of boiled water. Return to the boil & infuse again. Strain as before & add to the 1st juice.
- Pour combined juice to a clean pan & heat to reduce by a half. Off the heat add 1kg / 2lb caster sugar & stir to dissolve.
- Bring to boil & boil hard for 5 mins. Pour into warmed sterilised bottles as for jam. Leave to cool & store in a warm place. Enjoy.

Sue, Aden Grove

CURRIED SQUASH SOUP

This year I tried a new variety of squash as well as Butternut squash that usually crops quite well,

Squash Moscata "Moscade" is one of the varieties that are supposed to thrive in a hot summer with plenty of rain and this year the conditions must have been ideal because when I came back from a week's holiday the plant had completely colonised my allotment, covering the paths and climbing up the fences.

Two huge squash have resulted from all the growth and several tiny ones are still swelling. The flesh is supposed to be sweet, orange, and high in carotenoids.



Serves 4

- 25g unsalted butter
- 2 shallots, finely chopped
- 1 leek, finely sliced
- 1 tsp each of ground cumin, ground coriander, turmeric, mild chilli powder and garam marsala
- 1kg squash, peeled, seeded and grated
- 900ml chicken or vegetable stock
- Small handful of thyme
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- Handful of coriander, chopped

- Melt the butter in a pan over a medium heat and cook the shallots and leek gently, stirring frequently, until softened. Season.
- Stir in the spices and thyme, and cook for a couple of minutes. Add the squash, then the stock, cover and simmer gently for 25 minutes. Taste and season again if necessary.
- Allow the soup to cool a little before puréeing in a blender until smooth. Return to the pan, over a low heat. •
- Add 3/4 of the coriander to the soup just before serving, taste and season if needed.
- Ladle the soup into the bowls, sprinkle with the remaining coriander and serve.

Annie, Springdale Road



Tomato gluts and other successes

Another year, another tomato glut. Hurrah!

There are a few things which I grow successfully every year including tomatoes, climbing french beans, salad, rhubarb, sprouting broccoli, etc ...and every year I try to increase this number successes by trying something new. Dwarfing this small but significant number of successes are a vast number of weedy, aphid infested, undersized failures which include carrots, beetroot, kholrabi, cauliflowers, brussel sprouts, etc.

In terms of recent successful additions which have really provided lots of food the best newcomer is definitely cuttings of Taunton Deane, a perpetual kale bush which some friends grow in Somerset, and which have grown into massive small trees which provide kale all year round (healthy).

Another successful addition has been the sowing of Lollo rossa straight into the soil at this time of year which has resulted in me now having lettuce in the ground for most of the winter.

This years additions were to grow

sunflowers and basil. The food benefits were only slight perhaps, but the joy of getting on the bus with a bunch of sunflowers smelling of basil made it all worthwhile.

The only addition I'm going to make this year is to augment to the wonderful purple climbing french bean Blauhilde by growing Scarlet Emperor runner beans again as well,

having seen my neighbours prolific crop this year.

Also I'm going to pinch another of their ideas, and sow a high cropping outdoor climbing cucumber which were called Market More by Franchi.

My big project over-winter however (inspired by the massive double-dig project of my neighbour Tim) will be to create a double-dug sand filled hole in which I am going to grow proper carrots and parsnips. To be a real allotment you have be able to grow at least some root vegetable. Surely I can achieve this simple aim?

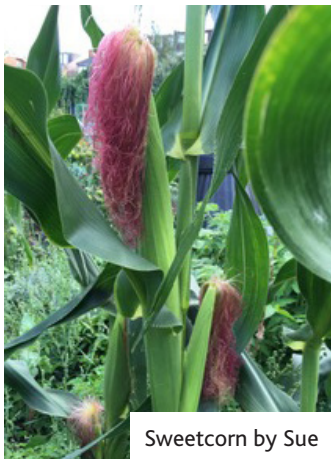
And if I can't, there's always the tomato glut to look forward to.

FOR TOMATO BLIGHT FUNGAL INFECTIONS AND MILDEW ETC.

Disolve 3 tbs
baking soda in
warm water and
add to make up to
1 gallon. Then add
1 tbs vegetable oil,
2 drops non
chemical liquid
soap or washing up
liquid.

Spray till dripping
every 2-3 weeks.

Bron, Aden Grove



Sweetcorn by Sue

There is a lot of free advice about growing vegetables and fruit available on the web. Try Thompson and Morgan, Homebase or The Organic Society which all suggest monthly tasks.

FREE ADVICE TO HAS MEMBERS

RHS and NSALG can be accessed free as members with the details listed below.

» ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY (RHS)

Over the last few years, the RHS has expanded its interests into the growing of vegetables, and has become involved in the Master Gardener programmes. You can tap into their advice at: www.rhs.org.uk/gardening/grow-your-own.

This has lists of vegetables and fruits to plan, monthly tips on what to do, a section on allotments and some useful videos.

» NATIONAL SOCIETY OF ALLOTMENTS AND LEISURE GARDENS (NSALG)

Hackney Allotment Society is a member of the NSALG, which gives tips on what to do, has a section on allotments and some useful videos. You are also entitled to use the members area, which you can access through:

www.nsalg.org.uk.

This has an e-voucher booklet which may interest you; for this you need to use our username (K3729) and password (nsalg12).

HAS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

CHAIR

Penny Miller - pmsrink@yahoo.com

VICE CHAIR

Ruth Gladwin

SECRETARY

Nancy Korman - secretary@hackneyallotments.org.uk

TREASURER

Hugh Naylor

SITE REPRESENTATIVES

ADEN TERRACE
Sue Sharples

CHURCH WALK
Maggie Wilkinson
and Sarah Madge

LEASIDE ROAD
Jack Eldon and Guy Dehn

OVERBURY STREET
Julia Clarke

QUEENSBRIDGE ROAD
Phillip Turner

SPRING HILL
Jon Fuller, Kay Kante,
Andrea Sinclair and
Sylvia Cummins

SPRING LANE
Helen Bishop and Elsa
Hamaz

SPRINGDALE ROAD
Annie Wilson

ST KILDA'S ROAD
Henrietta Soames

Plot Awards 2019

ADEN TERRACE

Best plot: Anna Dixon
Most improved: Tim Maby

LEASIDE

Most improved: Nevill Binns
Liz de Monchaux

SPRING LANE

Best plot: Joanna McAllister

SPRING HILL

Best plots: Cedric Rety and
Aurore Sebastian

Best Newcomer: Dominica
Walton

SMALL SITES

Best Newcomer: Yvonne Lloyd (OS)

Best plot: Caroline Gilchrist (CW)
Ann Leathley (OS)



“ I found a duck sitting on a nest of wild rocket with two beautiful eggs in one of my raised beds at the Spring Lane allotment. So cute. ”

Kelly

