

# Blondin Allotment News

THE BLONDIN ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER · SUMMER 2017



## Plots available soon

Not so very long ago we had a very long waiting list at Blondin and people looking for a plot sometimes had to wait for several years before they got one.

But recently a number of seasoned old plot-holders have decided to move on, and a few new people, who initially seemed very keen, discovered that having an allotment was actually quite hard work and not for them after all.

So if you have friends or neighbours who are interested in taking on a plot, and you think they might have the stamina to work one, they should call our secretary Helen on 020 8840 1506 and put their names down. They might not have to wait as long as they think.

## Getting hold of strimmers

Paths at Blondin are looking neater than they have for years, so Strimming Sundays, which are usually on the last Sunday of the month, seem to be working well.

On these Sundays, between 11:00 and 1:00, a committee member will be around so you can get a strimmer, mower or rotovator out of the container.

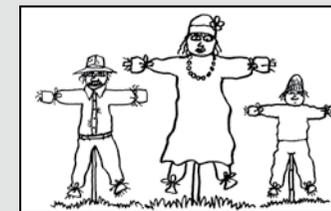
If you'd like to use a machine at any other time, please phone one of the numbers on the notice board by the toilet to book one, and give us 24 hours notice. Thanks.

## Blondin Summer Picnic

On Sunday 23rd July we're having our Summer social and workday. This year we're going to have a bring and share lunch. So pack up a picnic, preferably things you can share and swap, and come and join us. We'll be lunching at about 1 o'clock.

It's always lovely to have a get together in the summer to compare how the season's going, to catch up with old friends and meet some new people. So let's hope for good weather and do try and join us.

And don't forget we're going to have a scarecrow competition. So if you've not made your scarecrow yet, get on with it. There's a prize to be won for the best one. And we'll be having a contest to find the most picturesque shed too.



Before the social begins though, from 11 o'clock, you can work up an appetite by helping tackle a few essential maintenance jobs. Rule 8 of our Ealing Council Allotment rules does say... "You are jointly responsible with all tenants on the site for the general maintenance of hedges, ditches, main pathways and other communal areas and features of the allotment site".

Sadly we don't have any ditches that need digging out, but the strimmers and mowers will be out so we can get our paths and communal areas looking nice and tidy. Please do come along if you can to join the gang and lend a hand.

## Security and intruders

We have had a number of reported shed break ins over the last few months. It seems that generally only a few things have been taken, so this might just be mindless vandalism. We have reported these incidents to the local Police Safer Neighbourhoods Team and to the Council.

If you find your shed has been broken into, or if you see strangers or suspicious activity on the site, please get in touch through Facebook, by sending an email, or by calling one of the numbers on the newsletter.

Of course sheds are normally quite flimsy affairs and it's probably best not to keep valuable items in them. And, quite often if you lock your shed it's often more of a nuisance to have to fix a broken door than if you'd not locked it in the first place.

## A good potato salad recipe

1lb allotment-grown new potatoes  
 4 spring onions, trimmed and finely chopped  
 2fl oz hot vegetable or chicken stock  
 3 tbsp mayonnaise  
 2 tbsp crème fraîche  
 2 tbsp chopped herbs (flat-leaf parsley, chervil or tarragon)

Steam the potatoes until tender, then cut into pieces. Put them, warm, in a bowl with the stock and stir (the potatoes should soak up some of the stock). Leave to cool a little. When the potatoes are warm (but not hot) add the spring onions, mayonnaise, crème fraîche, herbs and season. Gently mix. Fine in a fridge, even better served at room – or allotment – temperature.

## Watering in hot weather

We recently had an incredibly hot week with temperatures up to or over 30 degrees every day. So what's the best plan for watering when the weather's hot?

I thought I'd do some research.

Water in the morning if you can. Plants are ready for a drink early in the morning, when the sun is up but before it's high in the sky.

Or water when the sun is going down, then the water won't evaporate before it can get to the plants' roots.

Try and water near the roots, not over the leaves, as it's the roots that absorb the water and nourish the plant. Water that hits the leaves just drips off or evaporates.

Water well so the water gets right down into the roots. Watering deeply, so that you completely saturate the soil, ensures that water gets all the way to the tips of the roots, and it encourages downward root growth.

Instead of watering just a little bit every

day, choose one or two days a week to give the plants a really good, deep watering.

Apply water slowly so it's absorbed by the soil rather than running off.

Mulching plants helps to reduce evaporation and retain moisture in the soil for longer. Use wood chippings, leaf mould, home-made compost, shredded prunings or well-rotted horse manure compost. Alternatively, shade plants with horticultural fleece. Try to keep mulches away from the stems of plants.

Try and avoid digging in hot dry weather as this brings moisture to the surface where it evaporates, although you should hoe or pull out weeds because weeds are competitors for the moisture in the soil.

Of course you'll not need to be reminded that Ealing Council no longer allow us to use hose-pipes on our allotments. So it is a good idea to have a water butt and a way of collecting water from your shed roof if you have one.

And if you're going out to buy extra watering cans, remember that plastic goes brittle and eventually breaks up. So you might be better off in the long run with a metal one.

Now I've written this, it'll probably rain for the rest of the summer.

## What do we think about weed-killer?

A bit of heat and some rain and the weeds all shoot up. And none of us have infinite patience when it comes to weeding.

Around your crops it's obviously best to hand weed, so you can be sure to take out the weeds and leave the plants you're trying to grow in place.

But on paths, or if you're taking on a badly overgrown plot, should you revert to weed-killer?

Ealing Council do not have an out and out

ban on the use of weed-killer in their parks or on allotment sites. But there has been extensive international research that links the use of weed-killer with the decline of many insect species.

Your Blondin Allotment Association have discussed at great length, and with some passion, the pros and cons of weed-killer, and whether in this day and age we should be using it on our allotment site.

What we've decided is that we should discourage the use of sprays on plots unless a plot-holder individually feels it's absolutely essential to wrestle their plot back from the wild.

On the hard side paths, sometimes called Hoggin paths, careful weeding or hoeing will keep weeds under control. On these hard side paths we also really discourage spraying, though if an individual plot-holder feels they need to spray where their plot butts up to a hard path they can.

Of course grass paths between plots need to be maintained as grass paths and we should not be spraying these at all.

## Bindweed

Convolvulus or Bindweed is a curse for gardeners at any time of the year. But in summer when it's flowering and setting seed it's even more crucial to weed out as much as we possibly can.

Bindweed seeds can evidently stay viable for almost 40 years. And of course they spread, so it's not just your plot they're a pest for, it's your neighbours too, and generations of plot-holders to come.

Whether you have bindweed in the ground or climbing up fences, please try and get rid of it before it goes to seed.

Thanks to Tracey for this research.

<http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/weeds/field-bindweed>

<http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/weeds/hedge-bindweed>

## Dates for your Diary

Sunday 23rd July 11:00.....Workday & Social  
 Sunday 20th August 11:00.....Strimming day  
 Sunday 3rd September..... Brentford Festival  
 Wednesday 20th September 7:30.....AGM  
 Sunday 24th September 11:00..Strimming day  
 Sunday 8th October 11:00....Autumn workday

## Parking reminder

Please remember that we are not supposed to park in front of the allotment gates or across the gates into the nature reserve, as access is needed for emergency vehicles in case of an accident in the park.

Also, this is a turning circle, and allotmenters who come by car will have trouble turning their cars round if there's a car parked there.

Please park above the turning circle and as close to the fence as you can. Thank you.



## Your Committee

Roger Sealey (Chair 07796 308 905),  
 Keith Massey (Vice Chair 07788 151 616),  
 Doug Dickson (Treasurer 020 8579 5271),  
 Helen Johnson (Secretary and Friends  
 of Blondin Park rep),  
 Con Dwyer, Virginia Fassnidge,  
 Dina Karklina, Chris Kilpatrick,  
 Tracey Powell, Mike Smith.  
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