

# Ealing Allotments Partnership

*A partnership of council and community, improving allotments in Ealing*



EAP website: [www.ealingallotmentspartnership.co.uk](http://www.ealingallotmentspartnership.co.uk)

Spring 2018 No. 30

Heathrow Community Fund



Photo courtesy of the Northfields Camera Club [www.northfieldscameraclub.org.uk](http://www.northfieldscameraclub.org.uk)

A little late this year but at long last Spring has Sprung.

The EAP-AGM in early March went off extremely well. The minutes of the meeting, together with the annual report of Chris Welsh (LBE Parks Manager), are available at <https://www.ealingallotmentspartnership.co.uk/index.php/the-partnership/agm>. As usual, the formal business of the AGM was kept fairly short allowing plenty of time for two excellent presentations (summarised below) by Lucy Clark of MindFood and Nic Ferriday from the Perivale Wood Nature Reserve.

Please note that the time to enter your plot in the annual Ealing in Bloom competition has come around again. You are strongly encouraged to enter. It's fun, it provides a useful focus for planning how to get the best out of your plot, and it helps make Ealing allotments more attractive. Details of how to enter are given in the body of the newsletter but don't forget entries need to be in by 11<sup>th</sup> May!



## **MindFood**



The first of the two AGM presentations was on the work of MindFood. In the absence through illness of Ciaran Biggins, the advertised speaker, his close colleague Lucy Clark kindly stepped in to take his place.

MindFood is an ecotherapy social enterprise based in Ealing, part-funded by Ealing Council and working in association with the local NHS Clinical Commissioning Group. It supports people from West London with mental health issues such as depression, stress and anxiety, helping to improve their mental wellbeing through the growing of flowers and vegetables.

It runs free six week ‘Growing Wellbeing’ courses consisting of an afternoon session a week. They run at two venues: Fridays are at the sensory market garden in Cleveley Crescent allotments close to the Hanger Lane Gyrotory System, and Tuesdays take place at Horsenden Farm working together with the “Friends of Horsenden Hill”.

The aim of their courses is to utilise gardening and horticulture to relieve anxiety and stress, build participants’ self-confidence and awareness of their surroundings, and to reduce their feelings of isolation by group working. The five basic strands of their courses are helping participants to:

***Connect - talk to other people, keep up with friends and family and reach out to neighbours and their local community. (This can take a bit of practice, but a smile’s a good start!)***

***Be Active - do some physical exercise, which is a great distraction from rumination and worry***

***Take Notice - stop and take time to appreciate the here and now (aka ‘life in the present’)***

***Learn - discover something new every day***

***Give - even the simplest act of kindness can benefit you as much as the recipient***

Lucy explained how these different strands could be achieved by careful planning of a related group of tasks. First encouraging participants to use their different senses sight, hearing and touch to become more aware of their surroundings; then planning a group programme of how to go about such tasks as preparing the ground/seed trays etc., so as to achieve a fixed outcome; and then putting these plans into action. The emphasis throughout the courses is to create a relaxed, friendly atmosphere and to enjoy working together as a group. Special emphasis is put on the use of fast-germinating and easy-growing vegetable varieties so that positive results can be achieved as quickly as possible, and to ensure that there is produce to share at the end of the course.



MindFood is now running a new longer-term programme at Horsenden Hill for those who have completed the Growing Wellbeing course. It will have a more focused approach to food-growing, with a view to potentially selling produce at local markets and events. They are also trialling a one-day Growing Wellbeing course for those unable to attend during the week.

The courses have been successfully running for 3 years at Cleveley Crescent, and 5 years in total. This success, as Lucy pointed out, is well-illustrated by her own experience of having started out as a participant on one of the early courses and now having the time of her life as MindFood's Food & Wellbeing Grower, helping others to overcome their problems. For more info, please visit [www.mindfood.org.uk](http://www.mindfood.org.uk), or contact Lucy directly at [info@mindfood.org.uk](mailto:info@mindfood.org.uk), or on 07720 092954.

## **Perivale Wood Nature Reserve**



The main presentation for the evening was given by Nic Ferriday who provided a fascinating overview of the Perivale Wood Nature Reserve located south of Horsenden Hill close to the Grand Union canal. The reserve is owned and managed by the Selborne Society; founded in 1885 to perpetuate the name and interests of Gilbert White (1720-93) who as Vicar of Selborne in Hampshire is widely recognised as the father of ecology – the study of the interactions of native flora and fauna. It has been managed by the Selborne Society since 1902 and is the second oldest nature reserve in the country.

The reserve covers an area of about 27 acres of mainly oak woodland containing areas of old unimproved pasture, a marsh, a stream and five ponds providing a wide range of diverse habitats in a limited area. This in turn is reflected in the extraordinary biodiversity of the site. While many of the audience were probably aware of its reputation as a superb “bluebell wood” providing a magnificent site each year; few had any idea of the extraordinarily high number of different higher plant, fungi and animal (particularly bird and insect species) to be found in the reserve.

Of particular interest were the many stories that Nic related regarding the challenges involved in maintaining this biodiversity. As he pointed out, left to itself rough pasture will soon disappear under a mass of secondary growth of nettles and bramble before eventually reverting back to woodland. Preservation of native grassland plants and associated insect populations requires the pasture to be managed. For many years, this was achieved by allowing horses to graze but has had to be abandoned and replaced by a careful mowing regime as most native

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grassland plants thrive on relatively low fertility soil, as opposed to regularly manured ground. Problem solved – not entirely; the effect of rising air pollution in the form of the high levels of diesel NOx emissions which when mixed with falling rain lead to raised soil nitrate concentrations is harder to control. Another surprise was that even setting up honey bee hives in the reserve can have knock-on effects. Competition from honey bees has been found to adversely affect populations of many wild bee species and other pollinating insects. Not a case so much of too many bees as too few flowers! It was good to hear that at least one potential threat to the well-being of the reserve, nearby HS2 construction, has been averted. HS2 is now planned to go in a tunnel some fifty metres below the reserve, well out of harm's way.

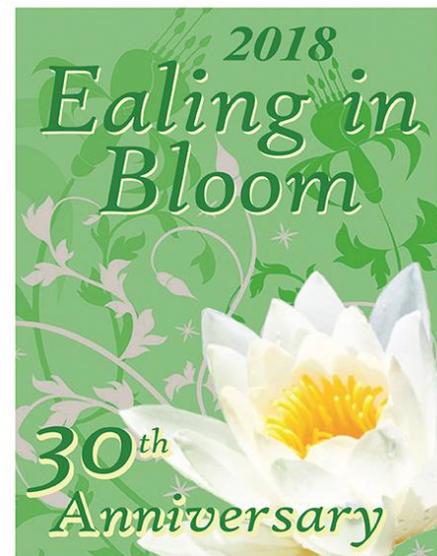
Given the fragility of the balance between the various species of, plant, fungi and fauna, the reserve is not generally open to the public. This doesn't mean that it remains unvisited. It is widely used for educational purposes with a well-established programme of school visits. It is also used for a variety of conservation courses on topics such as hedge laying and coppicing. The general public is welcomed once a year on its Open Day – timed to coincide with peak bluebell flowering. For more details go to: <http://www.perivalewood.k-hosting.co.uk/>

## *Ealing in Bloom*

The launch of the 30<sup>th</sup> Ealing in Bloom competition took place on 12<sup>th</sup> April at the Rose & Crown in South Ealing and was attended by Ealing's Mayor, Councillor Simon Woodroffe with his consort Helen Johnson together with many of our sponsors.

The competition is divided into categories ranging from single balconies through to entire allotment sites. There are four allotment categories covering large and small allotment sites and large and small allotment plots. Entries under the allotment site categories should be made by the local site manager. We particularly encourage site managers to enter their sites. Gaining an award, as those who follow our "Around the Associations" section may have noticed can be a great morale booster for a site. Entries under the individual plot categories, should be made by the relevant plot holder. All allotment entries should be in by Friday 11<sup>th</sup> May.

This year for the first time it is possible to enter on-line using the new Ealing in Bloom website [www.ealinginbloom.org](http://www.ealinginbloom.org) where you can also see pictures of past competitions, competition



Enter your Garden, Patio, Balcony, Allotment, Floral Art Exhibit, Licensed or Commercial Premises. Entry Forms are available from Libraries, Town Halls or email: [ealinginbloom@gmail.com](mailto:ealinginbloom@gmail.com) Allotment entries must be received by **11 May** Other entries must be received by **8 June**

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rules and guidelines. Entry forms will, as usual, also be posted to previous entrants. Site managers wanting posters to display please contact [ealinginbloom@gmail.com](mailto:ealinginbloom@gmail.com)

Go to <http://www.ealingallotmentspartnership.co.uk/index.php/ealing-in-bloom> for more information on Ealing in Bloom and factors such as marking criteria.

*Debbie Fogarty*

## *Italy from Seed to Plate*



Back on a chilly, damp Sunday afternoon in January, Framfield Allotments organised a talk by Paolo Arrigo from Franchi - Seeds of Italy, in the function room of the Viaduct in Hanwell (a great venue!). As this was the first winter social event we've held, we weren't sure what the response was going to be... With 10 minutes to go and just 3 of us there plus the speaker, we were beginning to think it was going to be a very intimate event indeed! Suddenly there was a stampede of people at the door, and eventually we ended up with well over 40 people in the audience. We had quite a few attendees from other allotments, including a couple who had made it all the way from South Acton Allotments.

Paolo is really enthusiastic, and the talk was very entertaining. He described the history of some of the vegetables that we grow in the UK today. Franchi - Seeds of Italy has the distinction of being the oldest family-run seed company in the world, and is very proud of the fact that it grows much of its own seed in Italy. In this context, he raised some very thought-provoking issues about the branded seed industry in this country, and the provenance of the seeds that they sell in the UK. Very little of this seed is sourced in this country. Most of the seed sold by the large, well-known UK seed companies actually comes from China.

He concluded his talk by describing some interesting varieties of Italian vegetables in the Franchi range <http://www.franchiseeds.co.uk> that grow well in Ealing. A range of these were available at discounted prices after the talk and, judging by the scrum, there is a good chance that you will be seeing many of them in the coming season.

### *Seeds of Thought*

Paolo Arrigo's comments on the provenance of most of the seeds sold in this country raise some important questions. An article looking into the social and environmental records of seed companies published by Ethical Consumer in 2014

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<http://www.ethicalconsumer.org/buyersguides/homegarden/seeds.aspx> makes very interesting reading in this context. It reports that;

*“A growing trend of industrialisation and corporate monopoly within the seed industry has led to 67% of the branded seed market now being controlled by ten companies, all of which have interests in biotechnology. These companies are, in order of dominance: Monsanto, DuPont, Syngenta, Groupe, Limagrain, Land O’ Lakes, KWS AG, Bayer Crop Science, Sakata, DLF-Trifolium Takii. Monsanto accounts for more than 27% of the branded seed market alone. An emphasis on uniformity, high yielding varieties and patentable traits, has resulted in F1 hybrids being favoured over open-pollinated varieties. This has led the UN’s Food and Agricultural Organisation to estimate that 75% of agricultural diversity has been lost since the 1900s.”*

Most of the catalogues from the major branded seed companies in the UK offer a very limited number of varieties. Many of the standard offerings are F1 hybrids, where every seed is identical, in every packet, year after year and have no adaptability for different soils or for changes in climate over time. F1 hybrids are mostly produced with commercial growers in mind, with a focus on yields and easy-harvesting rather than flavour or suitability for varied local conditions. Seed companies’ commercial interests are protected by concentrating on F1 hybrids because seeds cannot be saved as they do not breed true-to-type. Growers thus have to go back to the companies each year to buy more seeds. With this uniformity, comes the increased risk of a pest or disease wiping out a whole planting. If you wish to grow something different, it could be worthwhile to look outside of the major companies.

Two independent seed companies offering only open-pollinated seeds (which breed true to type from home-saved seeds), are *Real Seeds* and *Stormy Hall*. *Real Seeds* specialise in unusual and heritage varieties produced in Wales. Their website <http://www.realseeds.co.uk/> has lots of useful info on how to save your own seeds (which doesn’t really seem like good business practice!) but I can personally thoroughly recommend them. *Stormy Hall* <http://www.sh-organic-seeds.co.uk/> is the biggest organic vegetable seed producer in the UK - sourced from Botton Village in North Yorkshire, and a network of Biodynamic farms across the UK and Europe. It is part of *Seed Co-operative* <http://www.seedcooperative.org.uk> a UK community-owned seed company. Capital backing for the *Seed Co-operative* is through community shares, and they are currently looking for more co-owners. For a minimum of £100 you could become a co-owner of a seed company! Another good source of such seeds is the Heritage Seed Library <https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/hsl>. They aim to conserve vegetable varieties that are not widely available. Seeds (open-pollinated) are distributed to members annually.

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One of the best ways to encourage diversity (and save money!) is to save your own seeds, or swap with your allotment neighbours. Many plot holders in Ealing grow unusual ethnic varieties that you won't find in mainstream catalogues – make friends with them! Until recent years every gardener saved their own seed. Each gardener maintained a slightly different strain of each vegetable that did well locally, and this made for a huge living genebank that was very resilient against disease or climate change. Both the Garden Organic and Real Seeds websites have lots of useful information on how to do this. A frequently recommended book to look out for is: “Back Garden Seed Saving: Keeping Our Vegetable Heritage Alive” by Sue Strickland. The title says it all!

*Hilary Jayne,  
Framfield Allotments*

  
Heritage Seed  
Library



SEED SAVING GUIDELINES

## Bonfires

Ealing Council receives far more complaints from local residents about bonfires than any other issue concerning allotments. To its credit, it has not adopted the



easy response of introducing either a ban on all allotment bonfires or imposing an extremely restrictive set of rules that have essentially the same effect.

The fundamental principle when it comes to bonfires, which hopefully all allotment tenants recognise, is that local residents have a right to expect that allotment bonfires should not have an unreasonable effect on their enjoyment of their home or garden. Agreed, the term “unreasonable” is open to interpretation but this right clearly outweighs the right of convenience of a bonfire to allotment tenants. Allotment

tenants have the responsibility of being good neighbours and the counter argument that is occasionally heard “that if you don't like what allotment holders do, you should not have taken a house bordering an allotment site” is no defence for bad behaviour. The related matter of individual tenants' responsibility to act as good neighbours to their surrounding plottolders also shouldn't be forgotten.

The question, then, is how sites and tenants implement this policy of being good neighbours. The first thing to recognise is that circumstances vary greatly from site to site and often even within a given site. What may be acceptable in an isolated site may be completely unacceptable in a small site surrounded by houses.

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Similarly, on larger, more isolated sites what may be acceptable on plots far from back-gardens, schools, roads or public paths may be unacceptable elsewhere on the site. It is not a case of one size fits all!

The current approach by Ealing Council is to issue a set of Bonfire Guidelines rather than try to devise a universal set of rules. A copy of these is circulated together with this newsletter. It must be stressed that although entitled “Guidelines”, failure to follow them will put individual tenancies at risk and, where appropriate, may lead to a total site ban on bonfires. More optimistically, careful adherence to these Guidelines will hopefully lead to both improved relations with local residents and far fewer bonfire complaints.

## ***Youth Power!***

Some readers may remember reading my article in the Summer 2017 Newsletter about having the National Citizen Service helping out with a major bramble clear-out at High Lane. If you have a project on your site that needs some added “personpower” then contact Rhiannon Maher ([rhiannon.maher@the-challenge.org](mailto:rhiannon.maher@the-challenge.org)) to get involved in their Summer 2018 programme. You'll also find out how brilliant our young people are!



**Simon Higginson,  
High Lane Allotments**



## **Around the Associations**

### **Cleveley Crescent Allotments**

Shortly before Christmas, Cleveley got the news that they had been chosen as a site for one of the composting toilets funded by the Heathrow Community Fund grant to EAP. The frosty winter weather didn't stop the [MindFood CIC](#) gang from building and erecting the toilet for the benefit of all ploholders at Cleveley Crescent. Special thanks go to Joseph Mangar (EAP Chair) for constructing and installing a suitable base, to volunteer 'chief engineer' Bob Parsons for helping the team to make sense of the flatpack assembly and to Heather Parsons for keeping the troops fed with sandwiches, tea and other goodies!!



*Joseph explaining the base assembly to Bob and the team*



*Job Done – Lucy with others of the MindFood Team*

To celebrate, MindFood would like to give something back and fund the fantastic charity Toilet Twinning build of a toilet for a community in need. To donate, just go to our [Just Giving](#) page. To find out more about MindFood, go to [www.mindfood.org.uk](http://www.mindfood.org.uk)

*Pauline Shakespeare,  
MindFood*



## ***Framfield Allotments***

Despite the inclement weather, Framfield has been very busy over the last few months. In addition to the “Italy from Seed to Plate” talk by Paolo Arrigo referred to earlier in the Newsletter, we hosted a training day for a group of 20 or so students from the Film School at Ealing Studios. They enjoyed themselves but, given the weather, one of the most important lessons that they learned was probably the benefit of thermal underwear on outdoor shoots!



Like most other allotment sites in Ealing, we have regular wood chip deliveries from a few reliable companies. However, in recent months we have had a lot of problems with rogue wood chip deliveries, when large unsupervised loads of very poor quality wood chip and garden rubbish have been dumped carelessly in our stores and across our paths. We attempted to control access by installing a pop-up barrier at our main gate. The very next night, the barrier was deliberately damaged and driven over, and another pile of poor quality woodchip, branches and other rubbish arrived. Back to the drawing board...! We have now installed heavy duty fixing points at each gate, and have restricted the gates opening with motorcycle chains and padlocks. The reliable companies have contact phone numbers for access to the site. Hopefully this resolves the issue.

On a more cheerful note, we have also had a couple of well-attended work parties to clear the space for our new community garden, clear rubbish and start working on replacing some rotten doors on our community sheds. Roll on spring!

*Hilary Jayne*

## ***Horsenden Allotments and Grape and Honey Farm***

Our allotments have been unusually quiet - as I'm sure they have throughout Ealing. The weather has just slowed everything up and we still have plenty of seed potatoes stock left in the shop as there has been less interest in them as it's been so cold and damp. We were meant to have our first volunteer morning the first Saturday in March - but the snow put a stop to that as well.

What has been achieved is all the new water pipes at our larger site Whitton Drive. The trenches were painstakingly dug and the new pipes have now been put in. At certain points over the winter the trenches turned into mini moats and the pipes floating within them - but slowly they're draining and being filled back in with earth

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so hopefully this summer the water across the sites will finally be evenly distributed and the leaks will be no more. We're also underway with steps and platform up to our composting toilets at the same site so they should be sorted there in time for the busy season.

Surprisingly - we did manage to put on a Spring Show! There was talk of whether it should be cancelled - did anyone actually have ANY daffodils to enter, let alone prize winning ones. Admittedly the daffodil entry was much less than usual - but the ones that did make it were corkers. There were plenty of other things on display - including a large amount of delicious looking coffee and walnut cakes entries - obviously as people have been less able to get outside, they've decided to make the most of their time whilst stuck inside.

Up at the Grape & Honey Farm things are also moving less quickly than we would like, but we have achieved some things. The new roadway has started to go down - it will run from the entrance gate at the top - down the side of the site - to where the buildings and parking will be at the bottom. The soil test is back and with advice from experts our vines have been chosen, ordered and have arrived. We have gone for a red grape "Regent" and a white "Solaris" - 75 of each to start us off. We need to put them in within the next month - but currently are waiting for the contractors to come back and do the final turn over of the soil (which they haven't been able to do as its been too wet). We have put lots of photos of the work in progress on our Facebook page (Horsenden Grape and Honey Farm) and there will be lots of things to do and help with over the next few months so keep an eye on it to check out all that is happening.

*Milly Mills*

*Chair Horsenden Allotment Association*

**Keep up to date by checking out "Latest News" on the EAP website and signing up for the EAP newsletter using the "Contact Us" link.**