

North Hainault Allotment Holders Association & Protection Society Ltd

Members' Newsletter

February 2019

31b Tomswood Hill, Barkingside, Essex IG6 2HL
website: nhaha.org.uk



THE FRIENDLY ROBIN

Have you noticed how quickly robins spot a freshly dug bit of soil and will perch close to where you are working? No, they are not being friendly, they are just after the little bugs that you have brought to the surface. Many of you will have tried to capture them with your camera. Let's see in 2019 how many of you can photograph them. Send in your photos and they will be featured in future newsletters.

Photo Competition

Have you voted?

TRADING HUTS OPEN SUNDAYS 10AM TO 12 NOON

There will be another **Seed Swap** at the New North Road Shop on Sunday 24th February from 11.00 to 12.00. Hot drinks will be served to those who attend.

Both shops are selling seed potatoes and onion sets so if you haven't got yours yet, now is the best time to get them.

What to sow in February

The days are getting longer and there are some spells of sunshine so now is the time to be getting your soil ready for sowing. Rake the soil to a fine tilth and leave it to dry for a few days. On a sunny day sow spring onion, parsnip, radish, lettuce and carrots. Early varieties of broad bean and peas can also be sown this month. For extra protection you can cover with fleece, both before and after sowing.

Now is the best time to plant garlic. Plant them with a trowel rather than pushing them into the soil. They need to be about 2 inches deep. Shallots can also be put in now but they should have their tips above the soil. The birds will pull them out but will get fed up if you keep pushing them back.



Potatoes

Although potatoes are a relatively easy crop to grow, they do best on fertile, well-drained soil that has been improved with the addition of manure or home-made compost. Somebody recently asked, "How many potatoes do you get from each one that you plant?" Many of you will know that apart from the condition of your soil, there are other factors that will affect this too. Last year was very warm and potato crops were poorer than usual. This is because maximum tuber formation occurs when soil temperature is 15 – 21°C. Tuber formation stops when soil temperature exceeds 27°C. Mulching with a 15cm layer of straw or other organic matter can help reduce soil temperature by 10°C. Also, potatoes are sensitive to drought and plants need to be kept moist, especially during and right after flowering.

Did you know ... Potatoes were first cultivated by the ancient Incas in Peru and were first brought to Europe in the 16th Century but, they were not regarded as 'safe' to eat until nearly two hundred years later?

Health & Safety

THE PATHS AROUND PLOTS ON BOTH SITES ARE STILL A CAUSE FOR CONCERN.

In the Terms and Conditions of Tenancy it states:
All paths surrounding the plot must be kept tidy, free from obstruction and accessible. Grass paths at the front and rear of the plot must be trimmed for a width of at least 30cms/1 foot and the whole of the grass path to the left of the plot must be trimmed.

All plots will be inspected from March and the condition of paths will be something stewards will be particularly looking at. There will also be a focus on the general cultivation standards and whether plot holders are maintaining their plots according to the Terms and Conditions of Tenancy.

To Rotavate Or Not To Rotavate?

- Have you spent the winter months digging your plot and clearing the soil ready for cultivation?
- Have you dug in some well-rotted manure or home-made compost to enrich your soil?
- Is your plot clean and tidy and ready for the new season?
- Or, are you one of the people who will turn up in March or April and use a rotovator expecting it to be the answer to all soil cultivation problems?

If your soil is not clear of perennial weeds **BEWARE!**
A rotovator will simply chop them up and bury them – just what is needed to force them into renewed growth and before long your plot will be covered in a lush crop of weeds that will be even harder to remove!
The only sure way to produce clean soil is to remove the roots of perennial weeds by hand.



Has your plot got its number at the front?

Contact your Committee

Emails: tomswood_stewards@nhaha.org.uk
new_north_stewards@nhaha.org.uk