



Earley Allotment Association Newsletter

Chairman's Chatter

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The last ever skip?

Working with Earley Town Council we have persuaded them to provide a skip at the beginning of December. They were understandably reluctant as the last one was filled with a mix of waste that significantly increased the cost to them.

Here is the understanding I have from my conversations with ETC:

- A 12 yard skip with just green waste in costs £180. This is because all the contents can be taken to the council composting centre that turns out waste into a marketable product.
- A 12 yard skip with mixed waste is all treated as landfill and costs £360. The reason for this is that it incurs a land fill tax charge of £84 a tonne to process.

Here is the sneaky but sadly true bit. If the skip contains mixed waste the company taking it away will:

- Charge the whole skip at landfill rates – even if the vast majority is green waste.
- Separate it at their own cost to remove the “contaminants” and send the green waste as green waste, but they have charged ETC for this at landfill rates.

To be clear this is not just the company that ETC use – they all operate this way and it represents a significant part of their profit.

To get the cheaper rate, which is all the council can afford, the skip has to be purely green waste from our allotments.

What CAN'T go in the skip?

The last one had lots of material from the allotments but also contained:

- **Metal and other non-compostable** material like broken glass, dead wheelbarrows and flower pots. This is all matter that we bought onto the site when it was shiny and new and used it, probably for many years, but don't want to make the return trip when it is worn out. I am afraid that it now needs to be taken away in the same way that it came to the site – carried by the plot holder and disposed of off-site.
- **Green matter from people's gardens.** The skip is only provided for material from your allotment and is sized accordingly. Despite what some plot holders might feel – it is not a free for all for clearing out your garden waste without making a trip to the tip, or composting it yourself.
- **Household waste.** I have spent months working out how someone might have used the curtain pole that was dumped in the last skip on their allotment and have failed. It was not just the pole – it was still in some of the packaging!

Again – the correct place for this if the weekly waste collection lorry won't take it, is a trip to the tip.

If we can't get this one right then there will be no more skips – the council does not have the fund to pay for landfill skips – especially when most of the waste is green and a large part of the charge is easy profit for the skip company.

By happy coincidence there is a special offer on compost bins – for home or your plot that is subsidised by Wokingham BC. Details in the newsletter.



Chairman's Chatter continued...

An apology

Apologies if you think I am wrong on this.

I know there are some plot holders who really value the skip – as for example they don't have a car. For these people in particular I am passionate about working hard to maintain access to a skip for plot holders to take green waste they can't compost. For their sake especially we need to resist putting anything in the skip that is not green waste from our plot.

If you do think I am wrong and that we should have a landfill skip, please let me know. If lots of people have that view I will talk to the council about providing a landfill skip and putting the plot charges up to cover the extra cost.

If we contaminate this one it will be easy in the future as the only option will be to take it all to the waste site at Smallmead / Island Road – there will be no further skip.

Helping us all to get it right

I will put signs up by the skip and on the notice board to make sure everyone is aware that the skip is for green waste from your plot only.

I very much hope we can get this right. The skip will arrive on Thursday 1st December (the end of the week as previously requested) and be collected on Thursday 22nd December.

Composting

Composting your green waste is a great way of getting rid of what is a problem and using it to create a useful product that will improve your soil.

It is a really simple process that works best if you remember a couple of rules:

- A mix of green and brown material will give the best results – we have all seen piles of just green grass cuttings which don't make anything like compost.
- Greens are plant matter and kitchen vegetable waste including tea bags, banana skins and the like. To avoid problems don't compost weeds with persistent root systems, and weeds that are going to seed. Brown material is paper and cardboard and dead plants (not diseased) – think of things like cardboard cereal packets.
- If you are in a hurry, turning or mixing the heap will add air and speed things up. Do this by stirring the pile, or if you want a twenty minute workout tip it all out and put it back in again –

EAA AGM

Many thanks to all the folks that turned up for the AGM in October. We achieved a number of things:

- The usual necessary but not very exciting AGM type business was completed.
- We announced the results of the ETC plot competitions. **The winner was Chris Sinclair on plot 49 and the most improved plot (really second place) was Rob Hine on plot 24. Congratulations to both.**
- We celebrated John Snow from the shed's birthday with a large cake. I am too polite to mention his age but it was a big one with a zero on the end.
- We had a friendly quiz to round off the evening that tested our allotment related knowledge – thanks to Dave Pelling for organising this.



It just remains to wish you a happy Christmas and good planning for 2017.

Richard Tredgett

Plot 46

Tredgett@gmail.com

like going to the gym but without the loud music. This also allows you to extract the compost that is ready, and make more space for further waste at the top.

The other advantage of home-made compost is that you know exactly what is going on your plot, and therefore into your food. If you want more advice and guidance there is a clear explanation on the garden organic site <http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/how-do-i-make-my-compost>.

If you have not got a compost bin, or need more compost space then take a look at the subsidised compost bins at www.getcomposting.com. At the moment Wokingham residents can get a 220 litre bin for £14 including delivery or a monster 330 litre bin for £16 including delivery. Reading council also offer a subsidy, but slightly less generous. The councils do this as they know it is cheaper and greener for you to compost your waste than them to collect it and drive it around in lorries.



Shed Break ins - Thursday 10th November

Sadly as you are probably all aware now there were multiple break ins to the sheds on the allotments either later on Wednesday 9th or earlier on

Thursday 10th November 2016. Little was taken across the forty or so sheds that were broken into which in many ways makes the damage even more frustrating.

Many thanks to all the people who gave me updates on their situation and those that made the time to report the break ins to the police. Sadly the lesson is, especially during the winter when there are fewer people about on the allotments we need to all consider what we keep in our sheds.

Ultimately these little wooden boxes are hard to make completely secure – however we come to think of them.

I have talked to the Deputy Town Clerk at Earley Town Council about the damage and met with the management team at the mosque to discuss security. Sadly their CCTV did not have any useful

pictures we could share with the police, but it was useful to meet our neighbours.

Several members asked whether the gate code could be changed as it has now been the same for several years. Whilst I am not convinced this alone will sort security, it seems sensible to change it regularly. There will be a note in the ETC bills for next year's rent advising us when the padlock code on both gates will change and what the new code will be.

If you have any concerns or ideas about this matter please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

Richard Tredgett

Seasonal Tips - December / January

Surprisingly, December isn't as lean as you might expect. With luck, your winter brassicas should be at their peak now, Brussels, cabbages, cauliflowers and the almost indestructible Kale.

Top tasks for December

- Harvest leeks, root vegetables, autumn and winter brassicas, and perhaps a few hardy salad crops
- Plant garlic, rhubarb, and new bare-root fruit trees and bushes provided the ground is not frozen or waterlogged.
- Prune apple and pear trees, soft-fruit bushes and outdoor grape vines if it's not too cold
- Dig over your plot, add plenty of well-rotted organic material and cover beds to protect the soil
- Check nets over Brussels, cabbages and other brassicas

January isn't likely to draw you out to the allotment so why not stay indoors, order the seeds you want for the year and perhaps start off a few by sowing them at home either in a heated propagator or greenhouse. Buy your seed potatoes and lay them out to chit in a cool, light room. Buy shallot and onion sets ready for planting in February and March. Perhaps sketch out a new planting plan for what you're aiming to grow and where you're going to grow it during the coming year..

Top tasks for January

- Harvest hardy winter varieties of cabbages, cauliflowers and other brassicas, plus leeks, celeriac and roots such as parsnips, swedes and winter radishes
- Spread well-rotted manure or compost over empty vegetable beds
- Warm up areas of your seedbeds by covering them with sheets or polythene, carpet or cardboard.



Huntley & Palmer Trading Shed

Hello Everyone,

Firstly ,I'd like to wish you all a Happy Christmas and New Year, hope that you manage to have a great time whatever you do.

The shed will reopen in the New Year, on Saturday 14th January and we're hoping to be very busy with customers who may want to:

- Renew their membership which will now include providing us with their email addresses. (Subscriptions will remain at £1.50 which is still the cheapest in the area. It is necessary to be a member of the society to comply with the Sunday Trading act.)
- Buy from our new stock:
 - Seed potatoes – all £2.70 for three KGs:**
 - Earlies: Pentland Javelin, Arran Pilot & Foremost
 - Main crop: King Edward, Majestic, Picasso, Desiree
 - Salad: Charlotte
 - Onion sets - £1.10 for 500 grams**
 - Red Barron, Sturon, Stuttgarter & Turbo
 - Shallots -- £1.40 for 500 grams**
 - Golden Gourmet & Pikant
 - Bulk seeds**
 - We have various pea and bean seeds which sell loose by weight, and these show considerable savings on the price of packaged seeds.
- Buy from our existing stock items such as our variety compost, slug pellets (both pet and non-pet friendly varieties)

To cover the initial rush of people coming in, we may need 2 people to cover both Saturday's and Sunday's in January and February, then 1 person per weekend day from March.

During July and August we may only open 1 day over the weekend but this will depend on demand and based on previous experience.

Your continued support and commitment to volunteering in the shed is really appreciated and may I ask that give some thought as to whether you can commit to any weekends during 2017 so that you can be added to the calendar.

Please let me know by emailing handptradingshed@gmail.com

In the New Year, we'll aim to have a to have a calendar on the wall again.

If you have ideas or suggestions for the trading shed, please feel free to let me know either by email: lizatkinson28.8@btinternet.com or by phone 07775 713700 & 0118 926 3289

Thanks again

Liz Atkinson
Plot 35



Cookery Corner - Roasted Winter Vegetables

Roasted Winter Vegetables with Soured Cream & Chive Sauce

Takes 1 - 1 1/2 hours and will serve 4

Ingredients:

- 1kg/2lbs of mixed winter vegetables such as carrots, parsnips, swede and turnips
- 12 new potatoes, halved if large
- 2 small onions cut into wedges
- 12 garlic cloves, unpeeled
- Springs of thyme and rosemary
- 3 bay leaves
- Olive oil to drizzle
- Salt and pepper
- 300ml/1/2 pint soured cream
- Bunch of chives, snipped

Trim the vegetables and cut them into pieces, keeping them roughly the same size as the potatoes so they will cook evenly. Place

vegetables, potatoes, onions, garlic, herbs, oil and salt and pepper in a large roasting tin and toss until well coated with oil

Roast the vegetables in a preheated oven; 230c/450f/gas 8, for 50-60 minutes, stirring from time to time, until all the vegetables are tender

Meanwhile, make the sauce. Mix together the soured cream and chives and season with salt and pepper. Cover and chill until needed. Serve the vegetables with the sauce for dipping.



Dates, Reminders & other

- * *Skip - will be available from the beginning of December!*
- * *Remember - if you find anything interesting on your plot please do let me know..*
- * *The shed has now closed for the Christmas break and to allow stocktaking. It will reopen on Saturday 14th January 2017.*

