

Highgate Allotments Association Newsletter

June 2017

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"Summer afternoon—summer afternoon; to me those have always been the two most beautiful words in the English language."

- Henry James to Edith Wharton, 1934

The Opening Of Our New Gates

Earlier in May, our new gates were installed by Haringey Council, and we were delighted when they were officially opened by the HAA's very own Security and Maintenance Manager, Angelo!

Some of you who have been using the new gates may have found the padlocks a bit awkward to open and shut with the new design of gate bolts. We'll be looking hard to see what (if anything) we can do to make it easier to open and close the padlocks, but we're limited by the necessity to continue to use the same padlocks – replacing these would mean issuing every tenant and council official with new keys, which would be very expensive.

Although the locks might be a bit fiddly, it's really important to persevere for the sake of everyone's security. It has been noticed that the gate has occasionally been left unlocked since the new gates were installed, so please do double-check it's locked properly when you enter or exit.

We've also added new signs on the gates to remind all tenants and contractors that:

- a ONLY Disabled Blue Badge holders may park on site, and:
- b There is NO other parking on the site. You may bring a vehicle in briefly for loading/unloading, but you must take it off site again immediately.

This rule has been around for years, but following some complaints made by tenants about parked cars on-site in the last few months, we want to make sure everyone is aware of this rule.

EcoHut Opening - Sunday 25th June

The amazing EcoHut (just up to the left, some 20 yards past the Site Shed) is now virtually complete and builder extraordinaire Ellen Scrimgeour is holding an Opening Party for the volunteers who worked on the project - and has invited all HAA tenants to come along too! Ellen will be there from 12pm until 4pm and if you've not had a look around it yet, this is the perfect opportunity. It's a spectacular addition to our allotments!

Tree Surgery - Wednesday 14th June

The HAA have arranged for some fairly major tree surgery work to take place

on Wednesday, 14th June.

This is to reduce the size of seven leylandii in the rear garden of 14 Denewood Road, and also to crown lift the large horse chestnut in the garden of 16 Denewood Road: these trees heavily shade the plots in the southwest corner.

The work will all take place **from the allotment site side**, so inevitably there will be substantial disruption and movement of large tree cuttings going on all day. So we apologise in advance for any inconvenience, but rest assured, it's for a good cause.

HAA Tenants' BBQ and Plant Sale - Sunday 9th July

After the successful debut BBQ last year, we're pleased to invite all tenants and their family and friends to the Highgate Allotments Summer Barbecue Party and Plant Sale. Located at the revamped BBQ Area opposite the Site Shed, we'll be firing up the BBQ from midday and hopefully the charcoal will still be hot by 4pm. So bring your burgers, veggies and favourite food along, and our expert team will be on hand to cook it for you! And just like last year, there will be an entirely separate BBQ for vegetarian use.

Plus, we'll be holding our second allotment Plant and Seed Swap, with the proceeds being split between HAA and the Harington Scheme, our local gardening charity. So please get potting up any extra plants, packet up your excess seeds, wrap up your surplus produce, and hopefully we'll beat the fantastic £100 total we raised last year.

The Allotment Officer's April Inspection

Dick Tomlinson, our Haringey Council Allotment Officer, wished to pass on his comments to the Highgate Allotment tenants that he was really impressed by how good the site looks overall. But he noted that some tenants risk receiving a Non-Compliance Notice because they lack a clearly visible plot sign. To ensure this doesn't happen, the HAA can spray-stencil your plot number onto any permanent plot structure for you – costing just £2. The next full inspection will most likely be in late summer but Dick may decide to check plot signs well before then, so if you're lacking a sign, get in touch now!

Access Lane and Verges

Last month, a number of plot-holders gathered together with David to help tie back and hack through the over-and-undergrowth along the access roads on the site. We're very grateful to all the volunteers who gave their help at this busy time of year and a special big thank you to Ian Greenwood for not only helping out on the day but for spending hours in the days following, using his shredder to make new wood chippings from the debris. It's now so much easier for all of us (including our less mobile plot-holders) to access the site without damaging vehicles.

This isn't just an aesthetic issue. If you have a plot adjacent to one of the main lanes running through the site, keeping these lanes clear is essential in case

an emergency vehicle requires access to the site (which, of course, we hope will never happen!) Haringey Council require that all tenants whose plots are adjacent to the lane **must maintain a verge of at least 18 inches** - free of posts and poles, overgrowing shrubs, overhanging trees, or rank long grass - so that vehicles may pass without problems.

As this is one of Haringey's rules, tenants who do not comply with it may receive a Non-Compliance Notice from the Allotments Officer, and ultimately risk loss of tenancy. If you're unsure whether this applies to you, please do drop a note in the committee letterbox on the shed and we can advise you!

We'd also like to remind all plot holders across the site that they're responsible for keeping the paths adjacent of their plots clear enough to allow a wheelbarrow through without hindrance - without hands and legs being scratched, thick grass making it hard work, or overhanging branches hitting your head! At this time of year it is very easy to miss how overgrown they can get. If you have any difficulties with this duty, do let us know.

A New Disabled Parking Space

We are in the process of siting a new single disabled parking space at the northeast corner of the circular lane. This will be signposted, but this is initially for a specific tenant who is temporarily on crutches, so other Blue Badge holders should continue to use the tarmac parking area in the southwest part of the site for now.

Slugs and Stories on the Highgate Primary plot

Highgate Primary School is still looking for retired people to listen to children reading on Summer Term Friday afternoons on their plot. The sessions take place every week on a Friday, and will be running until the 7th July. You don't have to commit to every Friday, it's only for an hour (2-3 pm) and there is tea and biscuits! It's fun to talk to the friendly pupils and good to know you are helping those struggling to read on a one-to-one basis. You also get to sit in their lovely eco-lodge! Please contact Oliver Parsons on oparson.309@lgflmail.org if you think you might be able to make even a couple of sessions.

"From Acorns Grow Mighty Oaks!"

Our site secretary David Gittings is collecting tree seedlings and saplings to help replant a depleted wood in Hertfordshire. So whilst you are weeding if you find any seedling trees that you don't want please leave them in a bag by the shed shop door and they will be collected. Bare root trees will be fine and any species is welcome!

Children and other Non-Tenants on Site

We'd like to issue a reminder that **unaccompanied children are not allowed on site under any circumstances** – whether their parents have a plot or not.

Highgate Allotments is not a public park or playground! We have a lot of ponds, rusty wire and sharp tools hiding around the allotment, and the last thing we want is any children hurting themselves on the site.

Similarly, adult friends or family of tenants are generally **not permitted on site without the tenant**. The site is private Council property and only legal tenants (and registered Co-Workers) are allowed to enter the site - although tenants are welcome to bring friends and family with them, of course.

Tenants who wish to temporarily pass their key to another adult (for example for watering duties in the tenant's absence) should tell their plot neighbours and also inform the HAA Committee via our email address. Once on site, such visitors may not enter any other plot without the plotholder's permission. Tenants who allow unauthorised persons to use their keys on a routine basis do risk losing their tenancy.

Even though we've got new shiny big gates, we recently heard from a plot-holder who bumped into three friendly people wandering around the allotment on a nice balmy evening – the only problem being they had no connection with the allotments. It turned out a previous plot-holder had sold his house to them a couple of years before, had left them his keys, and they had been in the habit of taking regular evening walks through the allotment. While they weren't up to anything sinister, it demonstrates there are still a small number of incidents of the site being accessed by people who shouldn't be there.

So if you see people on the site who you don't recognise but don't feel able to ask them whether they're a plot-holder, please do let a member of the committee know – if not at the time, as soon as you can afterwards. Knowing who's coming and going on the site is in all our interests.

Shed stocks & prices

We have large piles of general compost, peat-free organic compost and gro-bags, as well as 5ft and 8ft canes, slug pellets and much more. And best of all, our beloved chairman Jim is always happy to give you some expert gardening advice for free!

Some items have gone up in price a little, but everything is still very close to the cost price. This rise is to ensure we can cover the running and repair costs of the shed shop. Even though the sums are minimal, every single penny in profit is ploughed straight back into site improvements.

Fly tipping and Rubbish Removal

Every now and again, we notice that some plot-holders dump non-recyclable rubbish near the site gates, next to the site shed or lobbed into the manure compound. Presumably, this is in the expectation that "someone else" will dispose of it. Please don't do this! If you have a particular problem with waste, do let the Committee know via email and we may be able to help. Persistent offenders risk loss of tenancy.

At some point in the late summer, we're hoping to arrange a skip that tenants can use to dispose of any rubbish.

Vote 'Yes' for the Highgate Plan on July 6 to protect our allotments

If you live in Highgate, you will have a unique opportunity to vote in the Referendum on the Highgate Neighbourhood Plan on July 6. It includes two policies which specifically protect allotments (check out Policies SC3 and OS3 at <http://www.highgateneighbourhoodforum.org.uk/plan/> for more detail). Unfortunately, with local authorities short of cash and developers sniffing out any "available" land, we can't take anything for granted, so these new protections are very welcome indeed and, remarkably, supported by all our local political parties. The Plan has been put together by local activists, approved by Camden and Haringey Councils and an Independent Examiner - it just needs you to support it. Please vote 'yes' on July 6!

This newsletter has been produced by the Highgate Allotments Association Committee. You can contact anyone on the Committee via highgateallotments@outlook.com.

The minutes of our meetings and many other useful documents –about the running of the allotments (inc application forms) - as well as some inspiring photos - are available on our website: <http://www.highgate-allotments.org>.

Please let us know if you didn't receive this email directly but would like to do so in future.