



HAA Winter newsletter

New Site Secretary and Treasurer

Our wonderful Treasurer Hinchee Hung has had to step down, so current Site Secretary Geoff Kemball-Cook is taking over as Treasurer as of 1 February. At the same time, experienced Committee member Sally Jones will take over the role of Site Secretary. Geoff will continue to look after our Waiting List, Site Plot Plan and website. The contact address for Site Secretary (and HAA generally) remains as highgateallotments@outlook.com. Thanks to Hinchee and Geoff for all their service and of course to Sally!

We are looking for people to get involved with equipment hire - do get in touch if you think you might be able to help.

Important date for your diary: our AGM is 27 April

All tenants and probationers are welcome to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Highgate Allotments Association. **This year's AGM will be held on Saturday 27th April at 2pm**, in the main hall of Highgate Primary School (round the corner from the allotments, entrance on Storey Road).

Next year's Committee will be elected at the AGM and new **nominations for the HAA Committee** of volunteers who help to run the allotments on behalf of all are always welcome. Do speak to a member of the current Committee or contact us via highgateallotments@outlook.com to discuss what joining the Committee involves.

All papers including nomination forms for the AGM will be posted on our HAA website Documents page (when ready) at <https://www.highgate-allotments.org/documents> (scroll down to AGM 27 APRIL 2024 PAPERS).

The Jim Greenhill Shop

Many tenants will remember our Chairman Jim Greenhill, who is now very comfortable in Highgate Care Home and receiving visits from family and HAA tenants. Jim celebrated his 90th birthday recently and members of your Committee visited Jim to present him with a letter thanking him for his many years of service to the HAA and show him the brass plaque which is now proudly displayed on our trading shed, where Jim presided for so many years.



Allotment rent invoices

All the rental invoice information has been prepared by the Haringey Allotment Coordinator but unfortunately there is a staff shortage in Finance which means the invoices now can't go out until sometime in February. We will aim to alert tenants by email when this begins so you can look out for them. Where Haringey have a valid working email address they will always send invoices by email or otherwise by post.





Our new Artist in Residence

Welcome to our new Artist in Residence Sophy Wollaston. This picture is one she made last February. Check out her work on her [website](#).

The art of composting and how to use other nutrients



Early spring is a good time to prepare your soil and add nutrients via compost and manure. You might like to dig into your compost heap and see what has been accumulated over the last year or so, when you last started the heap. You will find some un-rotted material, but you can remove that and start a new compost heap whilst digging down to the better rotted material underneath. If there are still a lot of worms in it, you might leave them be or put them on the new compost heap. Their presence en masse would mean they are still working away and it is the materials that they deposit which is the real black gold!

You might wonder or worry what happened to all the **weed seeds in your compost**: are they still viable? Did the compost ever get hot enough to kill them? if you have that dilemma, one answer is to dig a trench and bury your compost, so that light won't activate germination.

Composting is a very worthwhile process, almost an art, and there are recommendations for getting the right balance of materials by adding carbon and nitrogen containing stuff - plus some way for air to play its part. Nitrogen can be boosted by Garotta, Sulphate of Ammonia or urine! Carbon is to be found in cardboard and leaves, but too many of these will slow up the rotting down.

Somehow, compost has come to mean two things: compost, as in compost heap, and compost, as in plant growing material,

found in a bag. Both help plant growth, as does manure. If you have heavy clay soil, breaking it up and getting compost into the mix is highly beneficial. If your soil is lighter, organic material will retain moisture and help a good root systems to form.

Nutrient availability varies a lot between materials and even in bagged products. Gro bags have high levels of plant food, but even they get depleted and liquid feed will be required at some point. Other composts with lower levels are recommended for seedlings and higher concentrations for potting on for more mature plants. If you read the labels on John Innes, they are labelled from 1 to 3. **We do stock chemical fertilisers in the shed shop as well as organic fertilisers.** In general, chemical fertilisers are a quick fix, but you really want to build up nutrient levels in your soil and base dressings of phosphorus and potash - that is potassium - would be worth aiming for. Bone meal for phosphorus and rock potash for potassium. **Manure has a bit of everything.**

By the way, is anyone doing **soil testing**? Even pH values (acidity/ alkalinity) might be interesting. Discussions do go on about the utility of such and such a compost, especially for getting your seedlings started. Although February sounds early, some packets of seeds will suggest that this month, indoors is the right time to start certain seeds on the windowsill or in a propagator - leeks for instance. Happy plotting!

Dan Hackett

How to deal with waterlogging



If your plot became waterlogged during all the rain we have had this winter, you might find Richard Chivers' Sharpen your Spades [website](#) useful. Lots of good advice there and why not 'go with flow' and create a wildlife-friendly pond in the wettest area?!

Woodchippings can help to absorb moisture between your beds - and remember it's your responsibility to keep up the common paths between plots, too.

Winter wildlife delights



Admire the winter aconite (above) pushing its yellow bloom through the frozen wood chip. On the plot you can only rip the surface off the weeds, whilst their roots remain in the frozen soil. You admire the hairy bitter cress for flowering. NOW?

The birds seem more noisy and easier to locate - on the plane trees the nut hatches pelt out their bubbly monosyllables and the smallest bird of the UK, the goldcrest, is actually perching nearby and singing sweetly! Later it will be busy fluttering hummingbird-like and disappearing into the tree crowns.

The spider pictured is the woodlouse spider. Once warmed up under the weed-suppressing membrane it feeds on nothing but woodlice - no shortages ...

The Bigger Picture

For the 13th year the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland encouraged the general public to participate in the New Year Plant Hunt. The top three in flower between 30 December 2023 and 2nd of January 2024 were: Daisy, Dandelion and Groundsel.

Just now the Garden Bird Count will have taken place - will the wren win in numbers? Plot holders not only participate in such activities for their own enjoyment, but the recordings also add up to the bigger picture.

iNaturalist is an app of a global open source software. It is endorsed by the Natural History Museum London and is used by our local biodiversity officers and the Conservation Volunteers. Not only does the app help you identify wildlife from your photos, it also let's you upload your records on to the national database. <https://www.inaturalist.org/>

Heath Hands

More locally and less techy, **Heath Hands** organises many free educational and volunteering activities. On this occasion they would like to be in touch with plot holders from the HAA regarding bio-connectivity and biodiversity in the green spaces near Hampstead Heath. Check their website <http://www.heath-hands.org.uk>

Rita Drobner

*Copyright © *2023 Highgate Allotments Association, All rights reserved*

Our mailing address is:
highgateallotments@outlook.com