

# The Grapevine



Newsletter of the Finchley Horticultural Society

Summer 2020

## Charity Veggie Box Scheme

This year the FHS is supporting this scheme set up by local allotmenters. Radhika and Rachael are collecting excess fruit and vegetables to give to Barnet food kitchens and foodbanks. See inside for details.



## FHS News

It is great to see everyone getting back to the allotments as the weather has improved and Covid infection rates drop. I'm delighted that the Trading Hut has reopened and has been restocked. Thank you to Tuuli and Munira for volunteering to take on this task. The shop will be open every Sunday during the summer from 10.30 until 12.30. We have an impressive number of volunteers who have agreed to help run the shop. These volunteers ask the people who come to the shop to respect the social distancing rules and not to come too close to the person taking the money who will be sitting outside as this is safer. Cash is welcome but members can also pay by online bank transfer. Only one person at a time will be allowed into the shop and volunteers would like everyone to wear a mask as an additional safety measure, so please respect their wishes. If you would like to email an order to Munira (see the back page), this can be made up and be ready for collection on alternate Sundays. This will help us to keep to the social distancing rules.

Catherine and Christine will be selling their beautiful perennials every Sunday as well, and they have an extraordinary wealth of knowledge about plants which they are happy to share.

Sylvia Berente has kindly agreed to take on the role of Allotment Secretary which June Brookes used to do, which includes, very importantly, invoicing members for the rents for your plots. The Allotment Committee members will share some of her tasks.

## Could you be the new Editor of the Grapevine?

I'm looking for someone to take it over as I have become Chair of the FHS. There is no obligation for the newsletter to continue in its current form. It comes out 4 times a year and is a great way to celebrate our community and our activities. Please let me know if you are interested.



## Saving Water

We all have to become smarter and more careful when we water our plants this summer and into the future. There are several reasons for this. I'm sure we all remember the recent heatwave and that many of our flowers and especially vegetables suffered from the lack of water. The water bill at Gordon Road more than doubled last year to over £2,000. The water on all our sites is metered so from a financial point of view we need to be vigilant about not wasting water. The Royal Horticultural Society has been looking at the most efficient ways to water our plants and there is a wealth of information on their website, which I urge you to visit, search "Water wise" at [res.org.uk](http://res.org.uk). It helps to understand the needs of plants and use techniques to prevent water loss from both plants and soil. I have made a brief summary of some of their recommendations.

Ideally water plants early in the morning, to avoid evaporation loss during the day. On warm summer days, evening watering is effective, the dry soil soaking it in readily and low humidity at



night reducing the risk of evaporation.

- ◆ Water can be saved by applying it to the base of the plant rather than to the foliage or over a wide area.
- ◆ Water pots in trays or saucers to save waste.
- ◆ Mulching with a layer of organic matter or gravel at least 5cm (2in) thick reduces moisture loss from the upper layers of soil.
- ◆ Removing weeds is vital, as weeds use up valuable soil moisture reserves.
- ◆ Planting new plants between autumn and spring gives them the best chance of growing deep roots before the dry weather begins.
- ◆ **Reminder** - FHS rules require plot holders using a hose to have a spray gun attached and to be hand held at all times.

## RHS advice on Pruning Raspberries

Raspberries are a delicious and popular summer fruit and are really easy to grow. With summer and autumn fruiting varieties you can harvest raspberries from midsummer to mid-autumn. Pruning is pretty straightforward and will promote healthier plants and good quality berries.



Summer fruiting raspberries are pruned in a different way from autumn varieties, so it's important to know which you have. Floricane or summer fruiting raspberries fruit on one-year old canes. After you have finished harvesting cut back the canes that have fruited right down to ground level. Choose around 6 or 8 of the strongest remaining canes for each plant and tie them in about 10-15cm or 4-6 inches apart along wire supports. Cut the surplus stems right down to the ground. Primocane or autumn-fruiting raspberry cultivars fruit on canes that have grown in the current year. In February cut all the old canes back to ground level; new shoots will start to grow in spring ready to produce raspberries later that year.

## RHS advice for thinking ahead in July

For their monthly diary of tips for 'growing at home' visit [rhs.org.uk/july](http://rhs.org.uk/july).

Now is a good time to sow turnips, fennel and spring cabbage as well as autumn and winter salad crops.

You can start collecting seeds from the plants you want to grow again next year - especially annuals such as pot marigolds, love-in-a-mist and opium poppy.

Biennials that are good for wildlife can be sown now for flowering next year.

## A Lifeline in Lockdown

I'm sure many of us feel that being able to come to our allotment has been a lifesaver over the last few months. The experience supporting us all both mentally and physically.

After the lockdown announcement on March 23rd many public parks, gardens and open spaces were closed and there was a fear that allotments would have to close too. However, immediately, the National Allotment Society (NAS) initiated a successful campaign to keep allotment sites open to support the nation's health and wellbeing, as well as ensuring a supply of fresh food. NAS guidelines on safe working and social distancing on allotments are now referred to by local authorities. Liz Bunting, the NAS Legal and Operations Manager said, "The significance of allotments as a contributor to the maintenance of good mental health and physical wellbeing has been pushed up the agenda." The NAS celebrates its 90th anniversary this year and our experiences over the last 10 weeks show how important this organisation is to us at FHS.



As a matter of interest regarding allotments in general, there is a new study by Miriam Dobson from the University of Sheffield, called *Urban food cultivation in the United Kingdom: Quantifying the loss of allotment land and identifying potential for restoration*, which shows areas where future generations might be able to grow their own food. Urban allotment space fell by 65% between 1960 and 2016, but it may be possible for councils to reclaim some of this land. The most deprived urban areas have experienced eight times the level of allotment land loss than the least deprived areas. Miriam is interested in community gardening projects and their potential to support people learning to garden and grow vegetables.

## Vegetable Collection Service for Local Charities

Judy would like to remind everyone who might be sowing seeds or planting out vegetable plants that this year we are joining with other allotment sites in North London to donate excess produce to local charities which include Homeless Action in Barnet, The Trussell Trust and the East Finchley Refugee Kitchen.

At Gordon Road we are planning to place a large crate in front of the shop so that vegetables can be placed there. These will be collected once a week. A similar arrangement will be made for Brent Way Allotments and for Nethercourt Avenue.



Towards this endeavour Gordon Road volunteers have already planted tomato plants and pepper plants in the border in front of the greenhouse next door to the kitchen.



At Brent Way, Elaine has planted pepper, tomato and courgette plants on an unused plot to support this worthwhile scheme. Judy says we will be getting further information about how the collection will work and the

dates shortly. Watch out for our emails. We hope that everyone will support this project and our local community.

## The Finchley Horticultural Society

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[www.finchleyhorticulturalsociety.org.uk](http://www.finchleyhorticulturalsociety.org.uk)

[twitter.com/finchleyhort](https://twitter.com/finchleyhort)

[www.facebook.com/FinchleyHS](https://www.facebook.com/FinchleyHS)

For all Finchley gardeners and for plot holders at Gordon Road, Nethercourt Avenue and Brent Way

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Member of the Barnet Federation of Allotment and Horticultural Societies



## Events Diary

**Following the latest Government advice on Coronavirus, four RHS Gardens – Wisley, Harlow Carr, Hyde Hall and Rosemoor – have reopened from 1st June under a pre-booking system**



### Enjoy Virtual RHS Gardens

Bringing our gardens to you. There is so much to inspire and take delight in at the RHS Gardens. If you're unable to visit, take a virtual trip and enjoy video footage, virtual tours and images.

Visit [rhs.org.uk/gardens](http://rhs.org.uk/gardens)



### Virtual Chelsea

The world's greatest flower show has gone digital and they are bringing you a new line-up every day, with world-leading designers, plant experts and practical gardening advice.

Explore the virtual show at:

[rhs.org.uk/chelsea](http://rhs.org.uk/chelsea)



### The RHS Garden Podcast

This month's podcast is about ways to get the most from herbs.

Download The Garden Podcast at [rhs.org.uk/thegardenpodcast](http://rhs.org.uk/thegardenpodcast)



The FHS is affiliated to the Royal Horticultural Society. Don't forget you can borrow tickets to get a 30% discount at any RHS garden.



### National Garden Scheme

So many garden treasures await... With many of our gardens now open across England – and many more planned openings to come – we're hugely excited to bring you the chance to book a ticket for a real visit and to offer a lovely selection of new virtual visits too. Some of the show-stoppers in our Virtual Garden Visits this week, including Rhodds Farm, Herefordshire and Goddards Green, Kent will be opening their gates soon so it's your chance for a quick taster of the treasures that await you!

### Newsletter

If you received a paper copy of this newsletter and are now able to receive it by e-mail, please inform Christine Williams,

[finchleyhorticulturalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:finchleyhorticulturalsociety@gmail.com)

## Winkworth

This issue of the Grapevine has been generously sponsored by Winkworth Estate Agents.

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