

ROEHAMPTON GARDEN SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1873

MONTHLY BULLETIN

April 2014

www.roehamptonallotments.co.uk

TRIPS AND TIPS



Chiswick House Camellia Festival - see page 5



Know your onions - page 2

**Additional Store Opening
during April
Wednesday evenings
between 6.00 and 7.00 pm
from Wednesday 2nd to 30
April.**



**Gardener's Question Time
Panel at Putney Library -
see page 5**



**RGS Stall at Gardener's
Question Time - page 5**

A car key was found on Site 3 on Sunday 16th March. The finger grip is in the shape of an M and there is an M logo on it as well - might be for a Mazda car. The owner should contact either Jackie Savage (07508 559 134) or Helen Finch (07736 422 373).

Chair's report

Most of us are well underway with our plots by now, having taken advantage of the lovely March weather this year, and the water was turned on in the middle of the month. The plot inspections are complete and you will have heard from us by now if we have any questions.

Unfortunately there have already been reports of trespass, unsupervised children, and dogs' off lead, rubbish dumping and theft this year. Please make sure you report any incidences to the Site Manager (Paula), your Site Secretary (Georgina or Helen) or me. We are keeping a record and in that way we hope to catch the offenders.

Rent collection starts on Weds 2 April and continues all month on Weds evenings and Sunday mornings. (The Store will be open at the same time.)

The Store has been very busy, with potatoes and seeds popular as well as our other great value products. We have outgrown the little shed on Site 3 so we have added a larger shed, where we will stock not only Country Natural but also New Horizon (peat free) and Clover Multi-Purpose Composts. The same procedure applies: buy your goods at the Store and take your receipt to Site 3 to collect your goods.

APRIL EVENTS Please let me know if you would like to join the free Wildlife Workshop in our Store on Sunday 27th April from 1 -3pm. Under 16 are welcome if accompanied by an adult.

Full details of all events are posted on Notice Boards and the Website as well as in the Bulletins.

Happy Easter to you all!
Jackie Savage
jisavage@talktalk.net
07508 559134

Know your onions

Now that the soil is warming up it is the time to start thinking about planting your onions.

Haven't bought them yet? The store is selling Red Baron and Sturon sets either for 1p per onion or £1 per 300 grams. Mix and match with as many as you like of each.

It is a good idea to start them off in a shallow seed tray so that they develop a root system before putting them in the ground. The ones shown on the front cover are ready to plant out.

Prepare the patch on your plot where they are to grow where organic matter such as Country Natural composted stable manure has already been dug in over the winter. Add lime if you think it needs it and you can also add some fertiliser such as fish, blood and bone (organic, slow release) or Growmore (inorganic). Flatten the soil and water before planting. Plant them in a hole rather than pushing through the soil. Keep the 'neck' of the onion just visible above the ground; leave about 4" to 6" between each one. Cover them if you can to stop birds pulling them up. If you cannot cover them keep a look out for stray uprooted ones and replant.

Onions don't like to be over watered but need to be kept moist and can be fed through the summer with a light top dressing of fish blood and bone or seaweed extract. Weed regularly as they can easily become swamped.

Stop feeding and cut down on watering when the onions have swelled to a good size and the foliage has started to yellow and die back.

Carol Martinez, Show Secretary

Consideration and Safety

With the better weather being enjoyed by all it is especially important that rules intended to ensure a safe and pleasant environment conducive to cultivation are abided by. I refer to the rules in the Wandsworth Council Letting Agreement, which we have all signed up to:

31. To ensure that children who are the responsibility of the tenant are appropriately supervised while on site, and do not trespass on other plots where they may cause or suffer injury.
32. Not to allow any dog onto the site unless controlled by a lead by the tenant; not to allow any dog for which the tenant is responsible to enter the plot of another tenant without the permission of the tenant and to clear away from the site all dog faeces that may arise. Dog Control Orders apply on allotment sites.

If a tenant is found consistently to be in breach of these, or any of the rules, they are at risk of losing their plot.

Sorry to be so blunt about this but these rules are there so we all understand what is expected of us so we can all live in peace and harmony on the allotment sites.

Paula Alderson, Site Manager

Making Compost on an Allotment

In gardening terms, "compost" is an earth like substance that forms as an intermediate product in the decomposition of organic waste (waste that was once part or all of a living organism). It is a substance that can easily be made on an allotment and one in which plant roots grow particularly well.

Whole books have been written about "Compost" and I have one of them that is 278 pages long. But I have also had neighbours on my allotment who have shown me how to make wonderful compost without the help of the book. They used two different systems, plastic compost bins (ideally three) and, essentially the same principle, two (or three) neighbouring square open "boxes". Most people who start with two, later wish they had started with three. The principle behind the three is that while one is being filled with raw material, another contains compost in the making and the third contains finished compost that is being slowly emptied and used on the allotment.

The same principle is always involved. You need non-woody

organic waste as a starter. Although woody material or bones will eventually decompose, they take too long. Whatever method you use, it pays to make your compost from non-woody material only: leaves, weeds, kitchen scraps, shredded paper, manure and grass clippings – but never too much of one thing at a time. It is then that living organisms, the decomposers, will turn this into compost.

Decomposition starts with the animal decomposers such as snails and slugs, beetles, mites, millipedes, centipedes, flies and worms of different kinds. They eat the organic waste and leave behind excreta and dead bodies. This partly breaks it down both physically and chemically to a form that is “food” for the microscopic decomposers such as bacteria, fungi and protozoa (simple animals). It is these microscopic decomposers that are vital in turning your organic waste into compost – and it is they to whom you must give the best conditions. Apart from the suitable food (the non-woody organic material) they must have air (oxygen) and water. Air and water are essential. It therefore helps to keep the potential compost aerated (by turning it occasionally) and moist but not saturated to provide water.

In addition, decomposition can be greatly accelerated by products that are now available from the Store on Site 2 (open Sundays 10-12 noon and more often in summer). For example: **dried seaweed** (£3.50 a kilo), being 100% organic and 100% decomposable, will provide “food” and increase the number of

decomposers – of all kinds. **Rock dust** (£1.00 per kilo) improves aeration, and therefore provides better conditions for the microscopic decomposers. Either of these products can be used, added to layers of potential compost, every 13 cm (6 inches).

There are also the long-tried non-organic products available from the Store. For example ammonium sulphate (sulphate of ammonia) and Garotta (which is probably mostly ammonium sulphate) are additives which can also be used every 13 cm of potential compost. I have used ammonium sulphate and lime added to alternate 13 cm (6 inch) layers of potential compost for many years.

Lack of air (often through water-logging or compaction), lack of water (dryness) and too much woody material are the major causes of failure to produce good compost.

Paula Alderson, Site Manager

Car parking at the store

We are fortunate to have a small parking area near the store that can be used by plot-holders who need to collect bulky items on Sundays. However, the space is very limited and does get very congested at times, which can cause inconvenience for allotment users. Please park considerately at these times and, if possible, park outside the site and use the trolleys to wheel up your goods.

Georgina O'Reilly, Site 2 Secretary

Chiswick House Camellia Festival

A small group from RGS visited the Chiswick House Camellia Festival on a bitterly cold day. It is an amazingly easy journey by train from Putney to Chiswick and then a short walk down Park Road to the entrance of Chiswick House.

After a visit to the café for hot coffee we went to the refurbished conservatory where the Camellias' are housed.

The 4th annual festival celebrates these beautiful flowers within the elegant Conservatory, a 300ft glasshouse designed by Samuel Ware in 1813 for the 6th Duke of Devonshire.

The Chiswick House Camellia collection is, considered to be, a national treasure and believed to be the oldest collection under glass in the Western world. It includes rare and historically important examples of these beautiful plants, with a gorgeous array of blooms; pink, red, white and striped. Many of these are descended from the original planting in 1828. Among them is the unique Middlemist's Red, originally brought to Britain from China in 1804 by Londoner John Middlemist, a nurseryman from Shepherds Bush. It is one of only two in the world known to exist – the other being in Waitangi in New Zealand.

One of our group, Linda from Site 3, a New Zealander, has now seen both camellias!
<http://www.chgt.org.uk>

Gardeners Question Time at Putney Library

Friends of Putney Library

You might know that Wandsworth Library Services have been put out to tender and are now managed by Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) on behalf of the Council. GLL, previously the in-house team at Greenwich Council is now one of the biggest social enterprises in the country. A group of people has set up the 'Friends of Putney Library' to 'protect, enhance and promote the role of Putney Library in the Community'. They are planning to put on a series of events in conjunction with the library and other local groups.

Everyone who uses the library and support the aims of the group would be welcome to join the 'Friends'. It is free to join and be kept informed of events and activities. Please email your details to:
www.friendsofputneylibrary@gmail.com

Question Time

On 26 March the 'Friends' organised a 'Gardener's Question Time'. They worked with RGS and Jackie Savage was invited to Chair the Panel.

The audience of 50 people enjoyed a lively question and answer session with the panel of experts. The RGS set up a lovely stall to encourage people to join the Society and purchase our wares.

The evening started with Colleen Samuel, the Chair of the Friends introduced the event, with some background about the setting up of

the Friends, events to date, such as library tours and badge-making to design a FPL logo for a badge.

She then handed over to Jackie to introduce and the panel and chair the evening.

Jackie provided a brief introduction to the RGS, that we self managed our 240 plots on behalf of Wandsworth Council and had two sites and a productive store.

The Panel consisted of: Lucy Hart, Head Gardener at Fulham Palace; Sophie Guinness, Landscape Gardener, Lecturer and Allotmenteer; John Low, Allotmenteer (for 25 years); Patrick Langley, Tree Officer in the Arboricultural Department at Wandsworth Council.

The panel had an excellent spread of knowledge when it came to answering the questions.

Some 25 questions were asked in all. A small sample of the questions are set out are below:

Tomato blight: There was the suggestion of growing cherry tomatoes as they don't seem to be affected by blight, or to try a new blight resistant strain. Or to grow tomatoes in pots, under glass or in well ventilated greenhouses as the blight is caused by wet, warm conditions. It was also recommended that plants suffering from blight should not be composted but burnt if possible.

Use of Growmore or non-organic alternatives. Several panel members were organic gardeners and suggested that as Growmore is synthetic and it might change the

balance of the soil, that it feeds the plant but not the soil. Some alternative suggestions were, to grow Russian Comfrey or pick Nettles and put in a hessian sack and immerse in a bucket of water, then use to feed the soil, or use of chicken pellets, liquid seaweed. Rotted down horse manure was highly recommended, as was slow release rock dust and use of a wormery, in a small space.

Slugs were dealt with by using nematodes' or by hand removal morning and evening when the allotment is damp. Some, in desperation, used blue pellets in early spring for protecting Hostas etc.

Roses were of concern as they have continued to flower throughout the winter. Pruning and feeding now was recommended.

What fruit tree could be grown on a north-facing wall? It was agreed that a Morella Cherry was hardy enough.

The next event planned by the 'Friends' is the 'Future of Libraries' and an event in conjunction with Putney Arts Theatre.

A theft has been reported from a greenhouse on site 2. Any person caught stealing from other plot holders plots, greenhouses or sheds will automatically lose their plot.

Please inform your site secretary if you experience a theft.

Recipe for April

Cheesy Leek and Potato Bake with Steamed Lemony Broccoli

These are topical recipes using vegetables currently being grown on allotments and support the latest thinking of eating '10-a-day' rather than those '5-a-day' portions of fruit and vegetables.

Cheesy Leek and Potato Bake (serves 2)

2 leeks
1 onion
4 medium potatoes (I like Charlottes)
1 sweet potato
1 tablesp. Olive oil and knob of butter
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
Cheese – any Cheddar/Goats Cheese/Feta

1. Peel and slice (1 cm) the potatoes and cook for about 5 minutes until just done. Drain and keep to one side.
2. Peel and chop onion into small pieces and put in a saucepan with butter and oil and sauté on a low heat until softened. Wash leeks well and slice (3 cm) and put in with the onions. Add 3 tablespoons water and salt and pepper and cook for about 5 minutes until softened.
3. If using Cheddar or solid Goats Cheese grate it or crumble feta.
4. Grease a small ovenproof dish and layer the potatoes, leeks and cheese ending with potatoes and cheese.

5. Bake in a hot oven (gas 7, electric 220°C for 15/20 minutes until nicely browned).

Steamed Lemony Broccoli

300 -500 gm Purple Sprouting Broccoli
Juice ½ lemon
Knob butter
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1. Wash the broccoli well steam for 5 minutes. Drain.
2. Melt the butter in the pan add the broccoli and lemon juice and season to taste.
3. Serve hot with the Cheesy Leek and Potato Bake.

BOOK YOUR PLACE NOW!

WILDLIFE WORKSHOP

**ONLY 15 PLACES
AVAILABLE**

**SUNDAY 27TH APRIL,
1 – 3 pm at Store on Site 2
(The Pleasance)**

An interactive workshop with in-depth discussion, tips and practical skills on how to make your allotment attractive to all sorts of wildlife, especially amphibians and reptiles.

To book your place please contact Jackie on 07508 559134 or jisavage@talktalk.net

NOTICES

RGS CONTACTS

Site Manager is Paula Alderson;
Site 2 Allotment Secretary is
Georgina O'Reilly;
Site 3 Allotment Secretary:
Helen Finch & Paula Alderson

SECURITY

If you see anyone trespassing or
causing damage on the Sites or in
an emergency phone 999 or text
phone 18000.

DISCOUNTS

10% discount to RGS card holders
when you show your RGS card:
Adrian Hall Garden Centre at
Sheen;
Capital Gardens, opposite
Wandsworth Prison.

DATES FOR

2014 DIARIES

Wildlife Workshop	27 April
Summer Show	14 June
Autumn Show	13 September
AGM	26 Nov

Small Ads

The Cartridge People

Help raise funds for the RGS while
saving money yourself when you
buy ink cartridges from the
"Cartridge people":

**[www.cartridgepeople.com/
RaisingMoneyFor/Roehampton-
GS](http://www.cartridgepeople.com/RaisingMoneyFor/Roehampton-GS)**

10% of your order goes to RGS

Recycle Used Cartridges in the
box in the Store.

The Conservation

Foundation Tool Shed

Mend and re-furbish broken and old
gardening tools for schools.

conservationfoundation.co.uk

THE STORE

The Store is open Sunday morning
between 10.00 a.m. and noon.
There is a café serving, tea, coffee
and homemade cake.

**Additional opening times:
Wednesdays 2-30 April 6.00 –
7.00 pm**

We are always looking for
volunteers to help run the Store on
Sunday mornings. If you can help
Contact Carol Martinez via the
website

**[www.roehamptonallotments.co.u
k](http://www.roehamptonallotments.co.uk)**

Or leave a message in the Store or
email at

**[root@roehamptonallotments.co.
uk](mailto:root@roehamptonallotments.co.uk)**

www.vegetableseeds.com

AUSTIN MOWERS (sharpens shears as well)

300 Garratt lane, SW18 4EH.
020 8874 4206

**www.austinmowers.com
austinmowers@aol.com**

NEXT BULLETIN

Comments, questions to Chair &
Committee via the website:
**[root@roehamptonallotments.co.
uk](mailto:root@roehamptonallotments.co.uk)**

Comments and copy for the next
Bulletin, by 25 April 2014 please,
to Pat Dark (tel. 8789 7568) 27 St
Margarets Crescent, SW15 6HL.
patdark13@yahoo.co.uk

**Next Bulletin: 4 May 2014, by email,
in the Store and on both sites.**