

ROEHAMPTON GARDEN SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1873

MONTHLY BULLETIN

May 2020

www.roehamptonallotments.co.uk

Chair's Report



We have not allowed Covid-19 to get in the way of progressing the RGS. The communal 'Tea Hut' on site 3 is coming along. The base is currently being prepared ready for the Tuin Chappo hut that is on order. The plan is to have it erected at the

end of this month or beginning of June. Many thanks to Vivien for making sure this project is pushed along.

The work on the store has been completed so we now have very smart doors. The soak away has been constructed so waste water from the store kitchen area now is taken straight into it so no more emptying the bucket at the end of a store session on Sundays. Hurrah! The water butts have been moved to the front of the store to allow freer access to the shredder shed and overflow from these water butts has been routed into the new soak away. Many thanks to Jackie for getting this project done.

Another step taken by RGS into the 21st century – we have a card reader which does



contactless and chip & PIN payments. It is very easy for the store volunteers to use and it will help us to trade in a safer way reducing the risk of cross infection. We will be using it in the store when we are able to open. It will take most cards:

The plan is to open the store when garden centres are permitted to open. Thank you to Elaine for doing the research into payment by card and getting this all set up. We are also looking at setting up an online 'click and collect' system for buying a range of goods from the store. This will help reduce any queue for the store when we open. Details will be sent out by email when this is ready.

One of the gratifying effects of this awful virus is the helpfulness and kindness that is being spread around (the virus is not alone in being spread about). So we have many 'Thank Yous' to make: Ian Maggs for repairing the standpipe that was leaking on site 3; Charles Gillbe on site 2 and Artan on site 3 for barricading the toilets; Jackie, Charles Gillbe and Richard Hundreds for doing the online seed deliveries; for Jeanette Sweetland and Johanna Williams for filling the water tanks on site 3; to Vivien who organised the plant sale; and to all parents for keeping their children on their plots. A special 'thank you' is deserved by all those who have and are still helping to keep plots going for plot holders who are unable to get to their allotments.

Another person worthy of mention is our very own Vice President, Sheila Konig who walks 40 minutes **each way** from home to get to her plot which she does most days. Her determination and physical fitness, at something of an advanced age, is an example to us all!

Helen Finch
RGS Chair

Store Report

As I write this, we are hoping to be able to reopen the Store soon and to offer a 'Click and Collect' service. In anticipation of this we have had 2 deliveries from our suppliers who have been experiencing challenging times. They are short of staff and short of products just when orders are picking up in readiness for the reopening of garden centres.

We buy a few products from Clover, but this company has been closed for several weeks and has only recently reopened. As a consequence, two of their products are out of stock, the Multi-Purpose Peat Compost and Grow Bags. We have decided to use this opportunity to no longer stock the peat compost due to environmental reasons (see Brenna's excellent article in last month's Bulletin), so the bags we currently have in stock will be the last. We have been able to order replacement grow bags from Westland at £3 per bag and have ordered extra bags of New Horizon Compost although not as many as we would have liked due to supply shortages.

The Solabiol Bug Free Spray has been discontinued and our supplier does not stock an alternative environmentally friendly one to offer us. We do stock SB Plant Invigorator Spray which is not only an environmentally friendly pesticide but also acts as a folia feed and against mildew. These cost £6.

We have also sourced replacements for the items that we sell loose or decant to prevent manual handling.

We have Fish, Blood and Bone in 1.5kg boxes for £3.50 and hope to have Bonemeal and Growmore in similar size boxes when these are back in stock at our suppliers.

We have Maxicrop Original Seaweed Extract in 1 litre bottles for £8 and Tomorite for £4.

We also have Potting Grit, Sharp Sand and Silver Sand in small bags for £2.50 per bag.



You will have heard elsewhere about our introduction of cashless payments. This increases the costs of the running of the Store and thus we have had to marginally increase our prices. We are also incurring increased delivery charges. Our prices will still be competitive when compared with garden centres.

These are such challenging times for all of us. Several of our volunteers will no longer be able to help at the Store due to being on the vulnerable list, so if you are able and willing to help, please email RGS.

Gill Tamsett, Trading Secretary

Update about Summer Show

As regrettably we will be unable to hold a summer show this year due to the social distancing restrictions, the show committee have come up with another idea to involve all members.

As your crops are coming up to harvest, we would like you to take a photograph of the produce you are proud of. This could be brassicas, broad beans, asparagus, new potatoes, strawberries, salads, sweet peas, roses - anything that will be growing up to the middle of June when the show would have taken place. There will then be a special edition of the June bulletin showcasing all the photos.

So, get your camera ready and take a picture, preferably with you or a family member (get your kids involved), proudly showing us your delicious crop.

Please send your photo(s) to rgs.sw15@gmail.com by 15th June with your name, description of the crop and the date it was taken.

RGS STORE – IN THE TIME OF CORONAVIRUS

CLICK AND COLLECT

As soon as we knew we couldn't open the store normally, on the 5th April we organised a "Click and Collect" session. Orders were taken on line and then members came to collect their goods. Without the help of Greg, who carried all the "heavy stuff" outside to the various collection piles, we couldn't have done this. Thanks too to Vivien, Helen and all of you who patiently observed social distancing when it was just new to us all!

SEEDS

As lockdown had taken us by surprise a lot of us hadn't bought our seeds to sow this season. So RGS offered "seeds by post" from the store to all members and there was an excellent response. For about 10 days in April we sold over 350 packets of seeds which were delivered by plot holder and voluntary bike courier, Richard Huntrods. Richard went out on his bike round Wandsworth on several occasions delivering seeds to the homes of approximately 50 delighted gardeners. Charles Gillbe monitored the on line payments and made sure we all had good protection and quarantine regulations were observed.

We have now re-stocked some of the seeds and have plenty of BEANS (French, dwarf and climbing and runners) and PEAS (including Kelvedon Wonder which can be sown through to July) along with BEETROOT, LEAF BEET, CABBAGE (e.g. Wheelers Imperial and Spring Hero), CARROTS, RADICCHIO/CHICORY, LETTUCE, SALAD LEAVES, PAK CHOI, RADISHES, ROCKET AND SORREL. Most HERBS can be sown year-round; we have Basils, Chives, Dill, Tarragon and Parsleys. Jobs to do this month can be found on the link below;

<http://www.roehamptonallotments.co.uk/category/plotjobsbymonth/>

PLANT / SEEDLING SALE FOR CHARITY

On Saturday 25th April we held a plant sale for charity on the communal plot on site 3. Donations of seedlings came mainly from members who were growing plants for eventual sale at our summer show. 35 Members bought plants and most were sold in 20 mins. £179 was raised for The Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability (RHN).

"Thank you so much for your recent fundraising efforts and raising an amazing £178.90 through The Roehampton Garden Society plant sale. It's so lovely seeing local communities supporting one another at such difficult times. Please do pass on our thanks to everyone involved". Sarah Hickman, Senior Community and Challenge Events Executive

Thanks to Vivien Fowler, Helen Finch and Johanna Williams (and Barley) and, of course, to all those who donated plants.

We plan to do this again once some more seedlings are ready – perhaps at the end of May.

PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU READ YOUR RGS EMAILS!



♪ We'll meet again..... ♪ (in the store, on the path, over the fence)

Mel and Mariangela's gorgeous iris



The site 2 newly painted store with repositioned water butts and drainage





Getting ready for a tea hut on Site 3 – nearly there!

Valerie at Enable recently sent advice about how we can make our own compost – especially when it is hard to come by in the shops.

Green Waste

It was a pity we had to remove so much green waste as part of the annual rubbish collection last autumn. This is not the purpose of the collections; it adds to the cost and is unsustainable. Please make every effort to reuse your green waste arising from your allotment on your plot. Below are some suggestions including composting, leaf mould and dead hedging.

Composting

There is an increasing awareness around sustainable growing and healthy soils. One of the most useful things you can do on your plot to contribute is to compost your vegetative waste. Compost can replenish nutrients saving you money you might otherwise need to spend on fertilizers, improves the structure of your soil and recycles green waste. It is your individual responsibility as a plot tenant to deal with all waste arising from your plot in accordance with the rules and we would hope you would wish to do this in a sustainable manner. As a Wandsworth resident you are entitled to a compost bin at a reduced price via <https://getcomposting.com/>. You will need to arrange for it to be delivered to your home address and then make your own arrangements to get it to your plot. We did investigate getting bulk deliveries to sites but this is unworkable for the supplier.



You really can get it looking like this if you do it properly.

Composting Do's:

- A compost bin or heap works best if it is subject to constant conditions, e.g. stable temperature and moisture. Make sure it is on level, well drained ground.
- The recommended size for a compost pile is generally no smaller than 1 m high and wide and no larger than 1.5 m. Anything smaller may not heat up efficiently and anything larger may hold too much water and become difficult to turn
- Try to exclude rain, retain some warmth, allow drainage and let in air – make sure the sides are sturdy enough to prevent the composting material collapsing
- Creating your bin directly onto the earth without any base will result in worms, invertebrates and microorganisms getting to work quicker to help materials decompose faster for you.

- Be vigilant about ensuring a mixture of materials - aim for one third soft green materials (e.g. grass clippings, annual weeds, vegetable waste, or manure) to feed the micro-organisms. The two-thirds should be woody brown material (e.g. prunings, wood chippings, paper, cardboard, straw or dead leaves). Avoid letting any one material dominate the heap.
- There is no need to add accelerators, activators or lime to a compost heap – if you have the mix right these should not be necessary.
- Turn your heap every month to let air in. In dry weather this lets you assess moisture; you may wish to sprinkle it with water if it gets too dry; if the pile gets too wet, you can turn it more frequently to dry it, or add more brown materials to soak up excess moisture.
- The single biggest failure of compost heaps is the lack of air caused by a lack of turning.
- Be patient – compost can take between 6 months and 2 years to reach maturity. Mature compost will be dark brown, with a crumbly soil-like texture and a smell resembling damp woodland.
- Not everything will fully compost at the same rate - any remaining un-rotted material can be added to the next batch of composting materials.

Composting Don'ts:

- Do not add meat, bones, fish scraps or other kitchen waste. This will attract pests such as rats.
- Do not bring in pet waste from home (e.g. from a rabbit hutch).
- Banana and orange peels take a long time to compost in our weather and are best not placed into your allotment compost heap.
- Please do not urinate onto your allotment compost heap – this is anti-social behaviour under the allotment rules.
- Do not add diseased plant material or perennial weeds – your allotment compost heap will not reach sufficiently high temperatures to kill off the diseases. Take any such material free of charge to the Smugglers Way Household Waste and Recycling Centre, Smugglers Way, Wandsworth SW18 1EG (020 8871 2788 or info@wrwa.gov.uk) from where it will be transported to a facility to be composted at a much higher temperature.

Leaf mould

Leaf mould is formed from decaying leaves and produces an invaluable soil conditioner. Good quality, well-rotted leaf mould (more than two years old) can be used as seed-sowing compost, or mixed equally with sharp sand, garden compost and good quality soil for use as potting compost. Poor quality leaf mould, or leaf mould that is less than two years old can be used as mulch, soil improver, or winter covering for bare soil:

- Make a square or round frame from chicken wire or similar, supported at the corners or at intervals around the circle with stakes or bamboo canes.
- Ideally this should be in a sheltered part of the plot to ensure that the leaves are not blown away.
- Keep the heap to a similar size as a compost heap generally no smaller than 1m high and wide and no larger than 1.5m
- Moisten it periodically if it becomes dry.
- Most leaves take about two years to break down
- If your leaf mould pile is slow to break down into leaf mould, try turning it regularly to aerate the leaves and speed up the breakdown process.
- Some articles recommend making leaf mould in plastic bags, but we would ask you to think carefully about your use of plastics on your plot and would prefer you not to do it this way.

Manure

Unfortunately, we have no idea when we might have manure deliveries to site again. However, we are reliably informed that manure is available for collection at Barnfield Riding School Parkfields Rd, Kingston upon Thames KT2 5LL. 020 8546 3616. Please ring before you make the journey!

Staying Safe and well on the allotments:

Stay within your **own** plot and only use your **own** gardening equipment.

Any surface that is **communal** is likely to be **contaminated** so **avoid touching**:

- **The gate:** it is possible to open and close the gate **without touching** it with your hands.
- **Taps:** the virus will survive on metal surfaces, so taps are likely to be contaminated. Safer to use your **own watering can** filled with water from the **dipping tanks**. If you have to use the taps, cover your hand or glove with a **plastic bag** which you then **turn inside out** and **discard**. The bag is easier to remove from your hand than disposable gloves without contaminating your hand.
- Keep some **hand sanitizer** with you or in your shed.

Gloves do not protect you or stop the spread of Covid-19. Keep gloves away from your face. Take care, when removing them, you do not contaminate your hand with the outside of the glove.

At best a Covid-19 infection is nasty, at its worst, catastrophic. We must **all stay well**.

Welcome to New Plot holders

Site 2

Site 3

Kate Hunt

Nicolet Gianni Galavotti

Kim and Steve Clarke

RHS CONTACTS

Committee Chair: Helen Finch.

Site 2 Allotment Secretary: Catherine Maunsell-Bower.

Site 3 Joint Allotment Secretaries:
Vivian Fowler & Alison Linton

Site Manager: Charles Gilbe

Comments or questions for Chair and/or Committee via website:
rgs.sw15@gmail.com

All policies and procedures are on our website.

www.roehamptonallotments.co.uk

RGS ADDRESS AND POST BOX
(Fixed to the right of the gate at site 2)

Roehampton Garden Society
The Pleasance Allotments
The Pleasance
London SW15 5HF

BASIC RULES FOR THE PROMOTION OF SOCIAL COHESION ON OUR ALLOTMENT SITES

- Respect the rights and belongings of other plot- holders.
- No dogs without leads.
- No unsupervised children.
- Lock the gate behind you.
- Dispose of your own rubbish.
- No structures to be erected or trees to be planted without permission of your Site Secretary.

If you think someone is breaking the rules contact a committee member or me, Helen Finch, rather than confront another plot holder. Helen.finch2@btinternet.com 07736 422373

SECURITY

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

NEXT BULLETIN

June 2020. Editor Carol Martinez.
Email stories and photos to

carolmartinez@hotmail.co.uk by 15th June 2020.
Recipe suggestions always welcome.