

ROEHAMPTON GARDEN SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1873

MONTHLY BULLETIN

August 2020

www.roehamptonallotments.co.uk

Chair's Report

Chair's report for August 2020 Bulletin

We have a new President of the RGS. Fleur Anderson, the MP for Putney, Roehampton and Southfields, has kindly agreed to accept our invitation to be our President. She said: 'What a wonderful invitation. I would be very honoured to be your President and would love to come to as many events as I can. I love gardening myself and would love to learn a lot from you all and see the outcome of all the lockdown work you have all been doing.' Great to have her as our figurehead especially as she loves gardening and hopes to be able to come to events that we have.

The summer has been very busy especially on site 3. We were given very little notice that the long-awaited upgrade of our water supply on site 3 was going to start. The contractors came on site with a small digger and an amazing machine called a 'Ditch Witch' which digs a narrow but deep trench.



Inevitably some of the existing pipework got severed by the Ditch Witch but, although the men were not contracted to fix it, they were kind to us and did fix most leaks.



We are now waiting for the new tanks to be delivered and installed. They will fill automatically and will have a cut off ball cock mechanism and have 2 taps to which a hose can be attached. The other waiting game is with Thames Water who have to install a new water supply and a meter. Unfortunately, we have very little control over this work as we are not the customer in that we are not paying for the work, the Council is footing the bill. Eventually we will have 11 water points replacing 7 - let's hope we don't have to wait too long for it all to be connected up! Patrick Crawford has been the mover and shaker in this project and unluckily for him now chief nagger! I have every confidence in his patience and persistence so we will get there. Many thanks to Patrick for getting us this far.

Another innovation on site 3 is we have another card reader so the most popular bags of compost and some fertilizers can be bought directly from the sheds rather than having to go to the store and be issued with a chitty. This mini-store is open on Sundays from 10.30 to 12.15. We can only accept card payments.

Site 2 are forming a team to push on with developing the communal area behind the store so we will be seeing some progress there. The outdoor communal area on site 3 has been well used and we look forward to the interior of the shed being finished. Progress with getting power on site 3 has stalled as again we are at the mercy of a large corporation, EDF who need to install a meter. They say they are unable to give any idea of when they will be able to do the work as they are over burdened with a build-up of work during lock down.

I hope everyone has managed to enjoy our rather odd summer coming to terms with learning to live with the dreaded virus, Covid-19. Most allotments are looking better than ever as working them has for most of us been one thing we were able to do during lock down. It has been very heart-warming to see how plot holders have helped those who were not able to attend to their plots for various reasons. It is a great testimonial for our community to see members pulling together and helping each other out.

Helen Finch,
RGS Chair

Store Report

It is getting easier to order composts now, although John Innes No 3 has not been available from Westland and No 2 has had limited stock.

Also Slug Stop has been out of stock for a few months. We do now have slug pellets containing Ferric Phosphate. These are by Doff and cost £4.50 for 800g. The ones we usually stock by Growing Success have not been available for some time. The manufacture changed the packaging which resulted in the tops falling off. They are still trying to rectify this problem.

Watering cans have been popular this season but unfortunately these have been out of stock and will not be available until September at the earliest.

We are trialling a new compost, **SylvaGrow** Multipurpose Compost. This specialist compost is a unique blend of fine bark, wood fibre and coir. It contains balanced nutrients sufficient for the first 4-6 weeks of growth. It is used by professional growers and is suitable for a wide range of uses around the allotment, for instance, seed sowing, pricking out, potting on and cuttings. It is not suitable for lime-hating ericaceous plants. It comes in 50 litre bags and sells for £8.25.



MAXI CROP LIQUID FEEDS - We now have 3 types of Maxicrop liquid feeds each of which do different things to promote healthy plant growth:

MAXICROP ORIGINAL SEAWEED EXTRACT - £5.00 PER LITRE This is a natural plant booster, a tonic for all plants rather than a fertiliser. It stimulates growth and builds up resistance to pests, diseases and drought stress. It improves seed emergence, aids rooting, and alleviates transplant shock. It is ideal for flowers, shrubs, trees, fruit and vegetables and indoor plants.

MAXICROP SEAWEED PLUS TOMATO FERTILISER - £5.00 PER LITRE This is a fertiliser for all fruiting and flowering plants, high in potash. It improves the quality and taste of tomatoes. It stimulates plant and tomato growth and gives better flavour, size and the shape of tomatoes. Also good for strawberries and sprouting broccoli. NPK: 5.1-5.1-6.7.

MAXICROP NATURAL FERTILISER PLUS SEAWEED EXTRACT (NEW) - £5.50 PER LITRE This fertiliser helps to stimulate strong root growth and promotes green leaves. It is good for salads, spinach, kale and carrots. NPK: 5-2-5. This is decanted into bottles, so do bring your used 1 litre bottles for use in the Store.

We have ordered some Spring bulbs to sell at the Autumn Show and then in the Store. These include tulips, daffodils and alliums. We have not ordered so many this year as we are not having a full show and are looking to sell them either pre-packed or sorted into small bags and stapled shut. No rummaging into the bags this year, I'm afraid.

Gill Tamsett, Trading Secretary

See the RGS website for jobs to do this month

<http://www.roehamptonallotments.co.uk/growing-things/plot-jobs-month-by-month/>

Update on the Autumn Show

We have taken the decision not to have a show in the church hall this autumn due to continuing social distancing requirements.

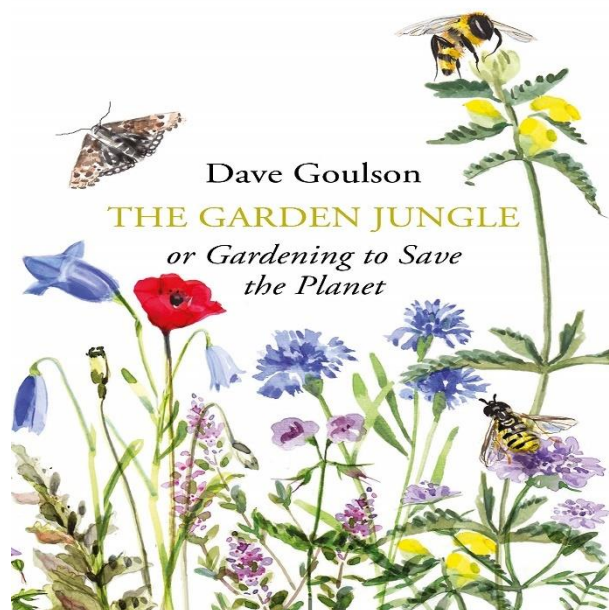
However, as long as we feel it is safe, on **Sunday 13th September**, on Site 2, we will have a display of flowers, fruits and vegetables that plot holders are proud to have grown and would like to display for all to see. For those who have lots to show off, a harvest box can be displayed with a mixture of different crops.

Because of limited space we will ask that one plot can only enter once in each category. There will be no rules about numbers and the displays will not be formally judged. It will just be a good excuse to see what your fellow growers have been up to.

Look out for the posters on the gates and we will remind you by email a week or so before the planned date, with more details.

Book Recommendation

"A really enjoyable and informative book explaining how to maximise the wildlife in our gardens and on our allotments. Even our smallest effort is meaningful." **Jackie Savage**



This article about our allotment's history was recently published in the Allotment Society magazine – Allotment and Leisure Gardener - apologies for the quality of the reproduction.

how far back

Roehampton Garden Society

I am a member of the Roehampton Garden Society with a long and fascinating history. The Society currently manages 250 allotment plots in SW London on the Dover House Estate and continues to hold shows as well as talks and events. www.roehamptonallotments.co.uk

The Dover House Estate was built by the London County Council after WW1, as "Homes for Heroes", on the 94 acres of land belonging to two large mansions, Dover Park and Putney Park House. The Estate contained over one thousand homes and three allotment sites (8 acres) were incorporated into the design. The land, some 94 acres, was once upon a time a royal deer park and, in the twenties, still an area of great natural beauty.

RGS was founded in January 1922 by a group of tenants who elected Richard Sudell (later a famous landscaper and journalist as well as a member of the National Allotments Society!) as Chairman. Original hand written committee minutes show that, from the outset, competitions and shows were organised and lectures given on allotment growing.

RGS incorporated the Roehampton Horticultural Society, founded in 1873, making the Garden Society the oldest horticultural society in London.

Until the outbreak of WW2 in 1939, the estate was immaculately maintained by the Council and by the residents. But by 1972, as a result of the war and public indifference, the estate and its amenities had deteriorated. The Greater London Council, which had taken over responsibility for the estate in the 1960s, proposed to take over all three allotment sites for extra housing. The net gain was to be 185 extra houses. Site 1 was to be developed in 1972, Site 3 in 1973 and Site 2, the smallest site, at some time in the future. In March 1972, the Putney Society, together with the Roehampton Garden Society and the Wandsworth Historical Society, published a Joint Report recommending, among much else, that:

- All three allotment sites should be retained.
- Proper arrangements should be made for the security of the sites.
- Proper arrangements should be made for letting and managing the sites.

Except for the fact that it was too late to save Site 1, the Report was successful in saving Sites 2 and 3, whose numbering is retained to this day. In 1972, at the time of the Report, the allotments were available only to GLC householders, which included not only those on the Dover House Estate, but also those on the Alton, Ashburton, Eastwood and Ranelagh Estates (6,557 persons). The fact that not all the allotments were tenanted was attributed to the GLC which, by failing to maintain site security and by allowing plots to remain uncultivated (instead of resuming possession and re-letting them), had pursued a deliberate policy designed to provide evidence of lack of demand. This led to the assumption that efforts to preserve the allotments were bound to fail.

In 1975, after considerable negotiation, the Roehampton Garden Society was granted a 14-year lease to manage Site 2. Virtually all the plots were now let. In 1978, the GLC agreed also to lease Site 3 to the Society for a period of 11 years. The Society now manages both allotment sites on behalf of Wandsworth Borough Council. When the allotments became the responsibility of the Society, tenancies became available to local people, now



The Dover House Estate was built by the London County Council

those living in Wandsworth. As many of the original plots have now been halved, there are now about 250 plots on the two sites. The average area of each plot is 4 rods (100 sq m) though very few are of that size. The areas range from 1 rod to 9 rods.

Jackie Savage



1910 ordinance survey map showing Putney Park before the estate was built
Photo credit: Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland

Looking after your back.

We are very lucky to have a physiotherapist new to our allotments who has shared her knowledge about how we need to look after ourselves whilst working on our plots. I expect to see more people stretching on the paths.

On the first day of lockdown I received an email from the Roehampton Gardening Society informing me that after nearly 4 years I had reached the top of the waiting list and asking if I would still like to have an allotment. YES! I shouted out loud at my laptop. Within two weeks I had seen my plot and had been given the keys. It has been a little bit of magic in these very strange times and I count myself extremely lucky to be one of the people who know the peace and quiet of our beautiful allotment sites.

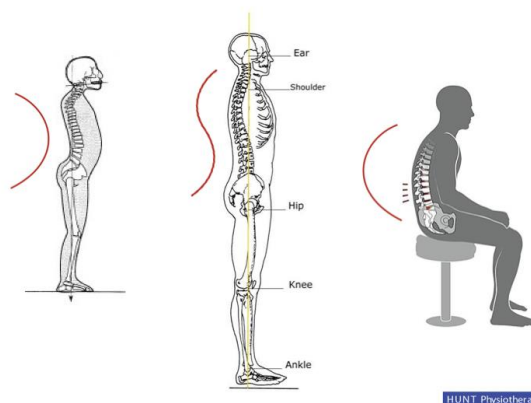
When I am not at my allotment, I am a musculoskeletal physiotherapist and my special interest is the treatment of spines. I have been asked by the Allotment Society to share some tips with you about how you can garden hard but still protect yourself from back strain.

I have inherited a wonderful plot that I can tell has been much loved and I know I have some very big shoes to step into. It involved a lot of digging and clearing over the first few weeks that have now turned into months and I still have some to go. Gardening is certainly as much of a workout as a gym session! I have fallen into bed exhausted and woken with aches and pains and stiffness I have never had before! Gardening has many health benefits and is an activity that provides much needed movement in an increasingly static world but it can easily also cause strain. Sessions of heavy gardening often involve poor postures with repetitive lifting, carrying, twisting and periods of constant bending which can easily lead to acute low back pain and repetitive strain injuries.

How can you protect your spine from gardening overstrain? When I am treating patients an important part of my work is having a focus on prevention. After many years of working with long waiting lists I really want to try and prevent people having the problems that cause them to need physiotherapy. I teach my patients why problems occur, helping them to understand what is a normal minimal strain position for the spine and what positions cause maximum strain. Low back

pain is a very common problem that is associated with sustained poor postures and repetitive tasks and there are many of these in gardening such as those required for weeding and digging.

Understanding Your Spine - S and C Shapes



Curves are a normal part of the structure of the spine. Looking from the side, the spine in a neutral position resembles a gentle S shape. This is a position of minimal strain.

When we deviate from this S position and sit in bad postures the spine takes on a C shape which increases strain and loads pressure onto the discs of our spine. It is this gradual everyday loading that eventually causes the discs to bulge and put pressure on nerves and leads to the referred pain known as sciatica. The same thing can happen in our necks and lead to referred neck shoulder and arm pain.

Using laptops flat on a table, using mobile phones, working on the sofa, gardening and watching television in bed all put us into C shape postures for many hours. We need to keep our spine supported and avoid the C shape positions.



Understanding this is crucial to understanding how you can protect your spine. Over our lifetimes we tend to develop postures that cause some muscles to work harder than others leading to muscle

imbalance. Building good core stability and recruiting and using the right muscles for the job is essential to build resilience in your spine.

So, can we take that knowledge and use it to analyse our allotment tasks and postures in terms of minimal strain S shapes and maximum strain C shapes?

We can try to get more S into our postures whilst working on our allotments. Very simple adjustments such as not bending from our full height but getting down lower whilst working can be very helpful in reducing the C loading of the discs and therefore strain. You will find just by taking a good look at the postures involved in any particular task you will be able to work out which tasks make us more vulnerable and therefore the ones we need to take care doing!

Tying up tomato plants



Maximum strain working position



Minimum strain working position

Netting the Broccoli



Maximum strain working position



Minimum strain working position

In summary here are some tips to help prevent and manage low back pain whilst gardening and keep you gardening safely!

Before gardening warm up and stretch!

Stretching before you begin gardening can help prepare your body for time in the garden. Do some simple stretching exercises to loosen up before starting any heavy lifting or digging. Stretching should target your back and core, shoulders and arms, and leg muscles. Some simple stretches are shown here to help you do this.

Whilst doing gardening take breaks and stretch

Don't work for longer than 20-30 minutes on one task without having a stretch break. Stand up or lie down and stretch your back.

Vary your position when doing tasks

- Keep objects and work surfaces close to your body. This will prevent you from overreaching and

keep your spine in a balanced position.

- Work at waist height with your elbows bent and your arms at your sides whenever possible.
- Bend your knees, instead of bending down from the waist, and squat or kneel to get to ground level for weeding and planting. If your knees are stiff or it is painful to bend for long periods of time consider sitting on a garden stool, kneeling cushion or bench.



- Gardening that requires looking up and reaching above shoulder height, such as when trimming branches or pruning, puts considerable strain on the neck. Consider using a ladder or step stool to bring the work closer and more within reach.
- Use tools with long handles to avoid excessive bending and reaching altogether, or garden in raised beds.
- Avoid bending for the waist and hips when doing low tasks e.g. use kneeling pad, or squat down if you are able.

Vary your tasks and pace yourself

- Often, we do a good 3-4 hours gardening when we wouldn't think about doing that amount of time in the gym. Gardening is a tough workout even if you are fit and healthy and you are sometimes in strange postures for quite some time. So, take your time, vary your tasks and positions, interrupt heavy work such as digging or heavy lifting with easier tasks such as pruning or fruit picking.
- Minimise repetitive motions by varying jobs. Don't try to get everything done in one session and risk getting back pain. Alternating activities is a great way to break up the repetitive motions, for example, follow half an hour of digging or raking with some potting or pruning.

Digging and Raking advice

Make sure you keep the shovel in front of you and avoid twisting motions. If you need to get to an area on the side, re-position yourself to keep the shovel in line with your body. The same goes for raking – pull the rake towards your body, not off to

the sides.

Use the right muscles for the job!

Use more bottom and abdominals and less back! When patients come to physiotherapy with low back pain, they often ask us for exercises to strengthen their back muscles but often what they need to do is the opposite. They need to reduce the work of the back muscles and increase the work of their gluteal muscles (buttock muscles) and abdominal muscles. The back tends to do all of the work as we get older and our core muscles get weaker unless we work hard on them. By recruiting a mix of our bottom, stomach and back muscles we improve muscle balance and we stop our backs taking all the strain. You can try this out by simply standing and gently squeezing your bottom - you should feel your stomach muscles engaging and this is called core connection and provides a good strong base from which to move and work from. Practice engaging your core in this way and try to keep doing this while doing simple gardening tasks!

Avoid sharp and prolonged twisting of your back.

While pushing a lawnmower or wheelbarrow, keep your back long and arms close to the sides of the body with your hands near your hips. Likewise, when working in place, as when potting plants or pruning, make sure your hips, shoulders and feet are facing the object you are working with. Keeping everything within arm's reach will also help to avoid twisting your back.

Rest and hydration.

Make sure you take frequent breaks, standing up straight and stretching every 15-30 minutes and have a water bottle with you to stay hydrated. I have learnt that the hard way when I have forgotten to take a drink with me on these wonderfully sunny and hot lockdown days!

Don't immediately flop on the sofa after coming back for the allotment - stretch and have a hot bath or shower and then perhaps go for a short walk. A walk home from the allotment is a good way of cooling down and then have a hot bath or shower and stretch out before you take to the sofa or armchair!

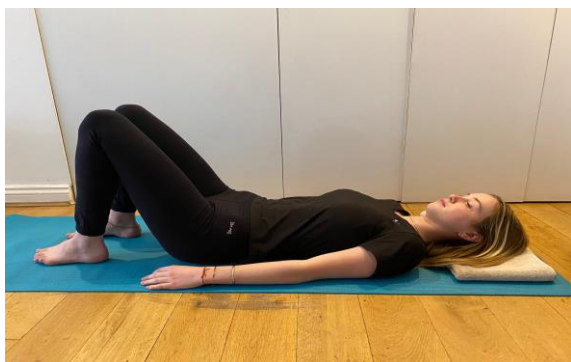
Remember - Most pains come and go but if you have any acute pain or tingling/shooting pain in your legs - stop working and rest. Try the exercises

below but if the symptoms are persistent seek some guidance for your GP.

Stretches for Before, During and After Gardening

Below are 4 exercises that can reduce loading in the discs of your spine, increase flexibility of our muscles and nerves, reduce tension in overworked muscles and increase strength in underworking muscles. There are many exercises that you can do to keep your back healthy but I suggest here the four that I think can help you most and not take up too much time and can do done at the allotment or at home. These done on a daily basis will be good insurance policy to keep you working on your allotments and your spines happy and healthy!

1. Shoulder and neck stretch



Lie flat on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor. Keep your head and neck in a neutral straight position with your upper body relaxed and your chin gently tucked in. You can use a small pillow or towel under your head to keep your neck straight if needed. Begin in the start position above. You will find that after long hours of working (laptop or spade) your shoulders will be hunched forward and lifted off the floor caused by tight over worked pectoral/chest muscles. Stretch your shoulders back to the floor keeping your chin tucked in and your neck straight. Breathe in through your nose and then hold in this position for a long, exhaled breath. Repeat 10 times and keep checking that your shoulders have not lifted up during each breath.

2. Pelvic Tilt



Begin in the start position above. Keep your shoulders stretched back onto the floor to open your chest and relax your upper shoulder muscles as in the last exercise. Breathe in through your nose before starting and then gently push your lower back down, flattening it against the floor as you take a long breath out. You can put your hands underneath your lower back to help you guide the pressure down in the right place. Repeat 10 times

3. Hip Rolls



Begin in the same start position above. Bring your knees and feet together and keep your shoulders and upper body gently back against the floor. Roll your knees and pelvis to one side stretching the whole side of your body, keeping your head facing up to the ceiling. Breathe in through your nose and hold this stretch and then push your back down to bring your knees back to the start position as you breathe out. Repeat 10 times, alternating sides.

4. Pilates roll like a ball exercise



This exercise provides a good stretch and relief of tension in your lower back and so it is a nice stretch to do when taking a break in a long heavy task. Push your lower back on to the ground and hold using your stomach muscles as in the pelvic tilt exercise. Bring your legs up to your chest and hug your knees. Gently roll side to side and forward and back in this position to massage and release your lower back. Repeat 5 -10 times and then rest back with your knees bent.

If you have any questions or need any more specific advice and you are passing my allotment and I am there, please ask, as I am very happy to help!

Kate Hunt, plot 122B

Welcome to New Plot holders

Site 2

Site 3

Cristina Vrech

Amanda Flint

Eoghan Kelly

Recipe

As there is a glut of courgettes at the moment – here is a delicious recipe to use them up.

Courgette Soup

6 servings – delicious hot or cold

Ingredients

60g butter
1 onion - chopped
500g courgettes – cut into chunks
2 tablespoons plain flour
500ml vegetable stock
500ml milk
Salt and pepper to taste

Method

Melt butter and add onion till soft but not brown
Add courgette chunks and soften for about 5 mins
Add flour and stir in cooking gently for about 2 mins
Add stock and milk
Bring to boil and simmer for 15 mins
Cool and blend



Wild life spotting

Georgina has been busy spotting butterflies on Site 2.



Small Tortoiseshell



Gatekeeper



A barricade to stop a fox making a den in my shed. Time to replace the window! (Ed)



Gary's dahlias on Site 3

Flower quiz answers from the June bulletin

1. A bovine mishap (7) Cowslip
2. A very proper flower (8) Primrose
3. Sounds like herds of sheep (5) Phlox
4. Kept in a warehouse (5) Stock
5. This saves you money (6) Thrift
6. Sad sight at a dance (10) Wallflower
7. You will drop this quickly (3,3,5) Red hot poker
8. Keeps his paws warm (9) Foxglove
9. Sounds like he hates you. (7) Anemone
10. Hard working girl (4,6) Busy Lizzie
11. Avalanche (8) snowdrop
12. Dear Bill (5,7) Sweet William
13. Kentish ringing (10,5) Canterbury bells
14. Country of drivers (9) Carnation
15. Sugary veg (5,3) Sweet pea
16. It led the kings (4,2,9) Star of Bethlehem
17. Mythical beast that bites (10) Snapdragon
18. Hello Cynthia (8) Hyacinth
19. Mix up and hide in plum (10) Delphinium
20. Canine stood up (7) Dogrose
21. Soccer is confused when U replaces E (6) Crocus
22. Avaricious mother's advice to daughter (8) Marigold
23. Said to a departing sweetheart (6-2-3) Forget me not
24. Sanguinous sign of broken heart (4,4,8) Love lies bleeding
25. Not shaving, Granddad? (3,4,5) Old man's beard
26. Alone, but surrounded by onions (7) Petunia
27. Modestly recoiling in the woods (6) (shrinking) violet
28. Sounds as if the water in my home is vanishing (9) House leek
29. Confused? Gum in ear will help (8) Geranium
30. Nancy or Mary? (5) Aster
31. Hidden in Mordor, chiding Frodo (6) Orchid
32. Chain on your bike (5) Daisy
33. I can't believe it's not a mug (9) Buttercup
34. Foggy passion (4,2,3,4) Love in the mist
35. Flying around in Eden (4,2,8) Bird of paradise
36. Not a sour pasture (11) Meadowsweet
37. Sprightly dancer (8) Daffodil
38. Pink inventor of a medicinal compound (4) Lily
39. One in the eye (4) Iris
40. Sounds like neither the past or present (7) Fuchsia
41. Mixed wear, is it? (8) Wisteria
42. Edna's favourite (8) Gladioli
43. Schubert's Operetta Time (5) Lilac
44. Tea on the lawn (8) Camomile
45. Pull up in a lay by to find the answer (5) Lupin
46. Ali had become all puzzled (6) Dahlia
47. Nana's hat (9) Aquilegia (Granny's bonnet)
48. You need these to frame your teeth, I hear (5) Tulip(s)
49. He really fancied himself to death (9) Narcissus
50. Prickly wine (9) Hollyhock

Staying Safe and well on the allotments:

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

Any surface that is **communal** could 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**.

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

September 2020. Editor Carol Martinez.

Email stories and photos to

carolmartinez@hotmail.co.uk by 21st

September 2020. *Recipe suggestions always welcome.*