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Published by Eynsham Allotment Association.

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Welcome from Peter Taylor -Chair

Welcome to the June newsletter – and ‘thank you’ again to Deb Arrowsmith for putting it all together.

Firstly two ‘**Housekeeping**’ items come from the recent Plot Review, and from just strolling around the plots, talking to people... these are in no particular order. A big reminder – we suggest weedkiller is used **sparingly** on plots, and then only if it’s non- harmful environmentally. HOWEVER, do NOT use weedkiller in a way that impacts your neighbours; examples of this would be spraying when there is wind, and spraying a boundary where there is an impact on the plot next to you. And remember, we do often now have children on plots (excellent!), but most parents will not want their children to be in contact with weedkiller.

On the North field, someone has been dumping their weeds on the ground outside their plot! **Why?** Please compost your weeds and grass cuttings OR (especially if they are ‘bad’ weeds) take them home and put them in your green bin for proper heat treatment. We are trying to improve our ‘common’ spaces, and they are certainly not for dumping weeds and rubbish! (Take a look at the tips on composting later in the issue.)



On a lighter note, you probably read how interest in allotments spiralled during Covid. Our waiting list was nothing like those for city allotments, but we did get up to about 35 people waiting. The list is now down to around 10, which means new people ought to get a plot within a year of applying. We are trying to keep all plots worked as this seems the most lasting solution to keeping pests and weeds under control.

Have you discovered our Facebook Page?

It’s a good place to ask questions, post pictures and make small (public) announcements. Just do a search for Eynsham Allotments.

The page is administered by Rachel Yuen and Andy Swarbrick.



Talking of ‘IT’, the allotments also have a presence on Eynsham Online, and if any friends, neighbours or family want to apply

for an allotment, the waiting list can be accessed via our Eynsham Online pages.



More ‘IT’ – Rachel Yuen is close now to completing our new database for administering everything to do with allotment membership. Once we have it all in place, we will be asking you to check your data which we only use to administer everything to do with the Eynsham Allotment Association. Any feedback or questions to eynshamallotments@gmail.com.



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OPEN DAY

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SUMMER ALLOTMENT OPEN DAY

Saturday 20th July 10am-2pm

This summer, we are hoping to turn the annual 'Best Kept Plot' competition into something more to encourage participation from plotheholders and their families. Here's the provisional programme, keeping it simple, but helpful and social for all of us.

For... Friends and family, and anyone **you** invite!

Competitions?

We hope to have kids competitions (like best homemade scarecrow)... and adult competitions (like 'best new plotheholder', most interesting plot, maybe a "People's Choice" Plot?)

Attractions!

We hope to present ideas for how to make the most of your plot, get you interested in our big 'Call of Nature-Composting Toilet' project, have some "OPEN PLOTS" to explore- and share the social benefits of having an allotment in Eynsham.

Provisional Plan-

- 10am setup, including a presentation on the 'Call of Nature-Composting Toilet' project which we aim to complete in the autumn.
- 10.30 am – plant/tool swap– bring what you have to give away!
- 11am – plot viewing and 'voting'...there will be talks from some plotheholders helping us to understand various 'styles' and approaches, and we will all have a 'vote' for what we find most interesting and helpful.
- 12.45pm – 'awards'
- 1pm – BBQ – including veggie options (barbecued food provided, please bring your own drinks)
- All over by around 2pm, when you can get back to digging and weeding!

Once the plans are fixed, there will be a special mailout with all the details.

Please let us know if you can help!



And later in the year- Plans for the 'poor old AGM'

This year's AGM will be at the Swan Hotel, in Acre End St. We will be aiming to keep the business side 'under control' and change the evening into a social event for allotment holders by having a quiz and maybe a guest speaker. Tickets will be free to allotment members – ***why do I need a ticket?*** – because using your ticket, your first drink will be 'on the house'. What more can we do to get you to play your part?!



Metal shed example.

Helping us all– to help each other.

We are looking at installing a secure shed for ‘in common’, shared items. We have been given a mower and a strimmer for work on our public areas, and we would like to be able to collect/distribute tools to those who need them. If you would like to donate to this, or to the ‘Call of Nature’- Composting Toilet project, please contact Michael Green via the normal email – eynshamallotments@gmail.com



Rosa ‘Goldfinch’ on North Field

Volunteering

Local councils in England have a duty to provide allotments to meet any demand from their residents. Our two fields are owned by the Parish Council and part of your annual rent goes towards the overall rent to the council. However, the day-to-day running of our two fields is done by your Allotment Association, and this relies totally on the efforts of volunteers (going ‘higher up the tree’, the Parish Council itself is comprised of volunteers, and needs more members urgently).

So, what can we do to encourage more participation? (Ideas please to eynshamallotments@gmail.com, or to 68 Shakespeare Rd, OX29 4PY).



Spring work party allotment volunteers with Hettie from the Siemens Eco group helping to improve the track on South Field.

One thing the committee is going to do to encourage participation is to change the look of the annual ‘Best Kept Plot’ competition into a Summer Open Day– (see above), and, later in the autumn, to improve the thinly attended ‘Annual General Meeting’ (just the name puts you off!)- into a social evening for all plot-holders.

Your 2024 allotment committee.

Peter Taylor: Chairman. Peter Feakes: Vice Chairman Christine Cox: Secretary. Michael Green: Treasurer. Chris Baker. South field coordinator. Rosanne Gunn– Russell North Field coordinator. Rachel Yuen: Sustainability and Biodiversity IT/ Database. Cllr Sue Osborne: Parish Council rep. Deb Arrowsmith: Newsletter.

We’d welcome more help on the committee and if you have expertise or interest in a particular area– maintaining the site, researching the borehole project or maybe developing the copse area let us know.

Get in touch via eynshamallotments@gmail.com.

Eynsham Allotments

‘call of nature’

Fundraising campaign

We are combining our fundraising for the Kazuba K2 fully accessible toilet and the biodiverse and sustainable improvements to our woodland area into a “Call of Nature” campaign and we need you to answer the call. We need help applying for grants– filling in forms– distributing posters, making a video and lots more to get the job done this Summer– or keep our legs crossed forever! See details over.

Chop chop- its composting time

Composting basics

There has been some dumping of compostable material in the allotment common areas. Please be aware this is in violation of the allotment rules and the spirit of the allotments. Please manage your own waste appropriately and responsibly

Composting can feel daunting but the truth is anything that grew, will eventually compost. It doesn't need to be complicated.

A few tips:

Brambles and similar things tend to keep their spikes for a long time, keep them out of compost if you can any to avoid spiky mulch

Weed seeds and perennial weeds will often stay alive in cold compost, best to keep these out, or rot them in water first

Chop chop chop, the smaller the bits, the faster the compost

Add browns, then add more browns! Things that can be composted can be divided into greens and browns. Browns are crucial to aerating the compost and prevent it ending up in a smelly soggy mess. If you don't have enough on the allotment you can add cardboard, newspaper, egg boxes, anything paper based that isn't shiny (the shiny bit is plastic)

Ways to use it:

Keep it simple, use it as a mulch to keep in moisture and reduce weeds, earth up potatoes, spread anywhere you want to improve the soil.

Rachel Yuen

What's in my bin?

Rachel's right—if it grew it can be composted and almost everything goes in my bin. The golden rule is to chop up everything as small as you can— this creates greater surface area for bacteria and bugs to enter and rot down material quicker. I keep a sharp set of shears next to the compost in case I forget. So— no excuse- don't dump your weeds make them work for you!

If you gather up weeds and cuttings in a barrow or bucket first chop them then! It's a lot easier to move chopped up material (and safer than getting whacked in the face by a long bending branch!) Its also easier to turn chopped material in the heap with a fork if needed.

A balance of green and woodier waste is great— just chop the woody bits as fine as you can— I even add shredded paper.

Warm and wet- A larger heap will keep the heat in to rot stuff down quicker and in dry spells I add a watering can full of water to keep the whole process ticking over. You can cover a pile to keep it warm but you do need air in too.

I layer up everything— even grass cuttings act like petrol on a fire keeping the heat up. Even all the kitchen peelings and egg shells go in.

All this means those little beauties the detritivores (who get munching on all your rubbish) get a square meal in your bin and you end up with deep, dark, soil enriching compost to nourish the next planting of your crops.

Deb Arrowsmith

Eynsham Allotments

'Call of nature'

Fundraising campaign



We needed a snappy title for our campaign to build the composting toilet for all the plot holders to use. Combining this project with the improvements we want to make to the woodland area we think we found one— Our 'Call of Nature' fundraising campaign is live and we really need your support. As well as the fully accessible Toilet— potentially sited at the top of the track in North Field—we want to plant more diverse species in the wood, have a Willow and Hazel coppicing area for plot-holders to use sustainable materials. We want some low maintenance recycled picnic tables for plot holders and families to use and maybe a few more bird boxes and bug hotels too? To move safely around we need a discrete and wheelchair friendly path through the wood and we also plan a 'Clearing Classroom'— an outdoor communal area for use by plot holders, schools and other groups for more nature education. This way we make more of our precious place and we can share it with the wider community too. More details at the Summer Open Day so come along.



Back from the plot – into the kitchen! Chris Baker

Nistisima by Georgina Hayden (Bloomsbury 2022) ISBN 978-1526630681 <https://georginahayden.com/nistisima/>

This is a book of recipes from Cyprus. The author describes ‘Nistisima’ like this:

“The Greek word nistisima translates as Lenten, or fasting, foods. These are foods that, on the whole, do not contain any animal products and adhere to the Orthodox church’s fasting rules. It’s the plant-based recipes and traditions that I am exploring in this book. Those of Orthodox faith can spend up to 200 days a year ‘fasting’ or eating in this restricted way, and historically our recipes and diets in Greece and Cyprus reflect this (despite the kebabs and grills that you may be familiar with). It’s so ingrained in our everyday life that it isn’t uncommon to find sections of the local bakery or deli dedicated to plant-based foods. While there isn’t a huge appreciation for veganism, or even vegetarianism, in Cyprus, if you were to explain your diet as ‘nistisimo’ people would know exactly what you meant.” Clearly while the fasting requirements prohibit certain ingredients, they don’t mean going hungry, or eating boring food.

And so this book is great not only for anyone who wants meat-free recipes, but also for those of us who have grown a lot of veg and are looking for interesting ways to cook it. It’s also a beautifully illustrated book, and has many interesting insights into Cypriot food and culture.



This recipe, Yahini, is as much of a method you can mess with as a recipe that has to be done strictly. The general principle is that vegetables are braised in oil, making a satisfying dish from a few simple ingredients.

Georgina’s recipe calls for peas, but last season we did this a lot with allotment broad beans (which are just coming up to harvest this year as I write this in early June). But you can keep changing the vegetables to whatever is in season all summer. There’s plenty to this dish, so you don’t need much to serve it with – some flatbreads maybe.

Chris Baker

Ingredients to serve 4 (keeps very well as leftovers for the next day)

600g potatoes	80-100ml olive oil [yes really! that much!]	Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 onions	2 garlic cloves	5 ripe tomatoes or 1 x 400g tin of plum tomatoes
1 heaped tablespoon tomato purée	4 carrots	1 bay leaf
A few flat-leaf parsley sprigs	600g baby peas	500ml vegetable stock

Method

Peel the potatoes and cut into large chunks, around 5cm. Pour enough olive oil into a large saucepan or casserole to fill it by 1cm, around 80ml. Place on a medium heat, and fry the potatoes, seasoning as you go, until browned on all sides. Remove from the pan and keep to one side.

Meanwhile, peel and finely slice the onions and garlic. Peel and roughly chop the carrots. If using fresh tomatoes, peel them, then roughly chop and keep to one side. After the potatoes are browned, add the onions, garlic and carrots to the same pan, reduce the heat a little and sauté for 10 minutes to soften slightly. Stir in the tomato purée then after a minute add the chopped or tinned tomatoes, the peas, bay leaf and the vegetable stock. Bring to the boil and let it bubble for 5 minutes, then reduce the heat to low, cover with a lid and simmer for 45 minutes. Check the vegetables: everything should be tender and the liquid thickened. If it still looks a little watery, remove the lid, turn the heat up a little and cook uncovered for 5-10 minutes to reduce down. Remove from the heat and leave for at least 10 minutes before serving. Finely chop the parsley and stir through. Check the seasoning, adding more if need be, and then serve.

Let’s face it you must have too many courgettes. It’s not my fault – it’s an allotment byelaw or something. If you don’t have too many courgettes, someone on a neighbouring plot will probably have way too many and will give you too many. I’m not sure what allotmenters do if they don’t like courgettes. I suppose you have to creep around the site avoiding eye contact all summer. At the time of writing (early June) we’re having some cold nights which is making it difficult to get tender summer plants like courgettes out and thriving. So maybe courgettes will not be in glut this year. But I’m hopeful we’ll be needing a stock of recipes:

Courgette pasta (Riverford) <https://www.riverford.co.uk/recipes/slow-courgette-pasta>

Lemony courgette linguine (Jamie Oliver) <https://www.jamieoliver.com/recipes/pasta-recipes/lemony-courgette-linguine/>

Courgette fritters with smoked salmon and tzatziki https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/recipes/courgette_pancakes_with_35104

And of course there is always courgette cake ‘Easy’ recipe https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/recipes/courgettebread_85718

Courgette cake Intended for children to cook https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/recipes/courgette_cake_99031