



Allotment Newsletter

New Alresford Allotment Society Issue 4: September 2025

Chairman's corner

Welcome to the summer edition of our newsletter and a special welcome to new members who have joined us in recent months. Now that you have joined the world of allotment plot holders, we hope this is the beginning of an enjoyable, rewarding time where you meet many other like-minded neighbours.

I begin my column by saying a big thank you to Brigid Taylor for volunteering to take on this and subsequent newsletters and I hope you will all give her your support and provide ideas for future articles. This may also be an appropriate time to remind everyone that the committee are all volunteers and much of their hard work takes place in the background and is often unseen and goes unrecognised so please take a moment to acknowledge their efforts when you do see them on site.

As you will be aware, we are embracing digital tools and platforms to improve communication with our members and thanks to the hard work and commitment of Jo Downie, we have recently “gone live” with our new website:

<https://www.alresfordallotments.org>

We hope it will allow easy access to documents, facilitate news updates and event promotion as well as being a platform for plot holders to interact with the Committee. Please look at the website and provide us with your feedback.

The speaker at our August event was Ray Broughton. Ray is a highly qualified horticulturist, teacher, lecturer and examiner, with over 30 years' experience of addressing gardening clubs and societies. His talk, illustrated with slides, covered “80 things you may not know about horticulture”. The event, held at the golf club, was attended by 42 people and our

thanks go to Jo Downie for finding the speaker and to Barry Davis for arranging the venue, successfully managing the evening and ensuring the smooth running of what was an interesting and informative event. We are considering undertaking further talks during the year and would welcome your feedback on this initiative along with the subjects you would like the talks to cover.

Although our free visit to Wisley for up to 55 members of the Society had to be cancelled due to a lack of support we will attempt to rearrange the event at a later date.

We were fortunate enough to receive a grant of £500 from New Alresford Town Council towards the cost of installing two new standpipes to the northeast corner of the Spring Gardens site and thanks to the herculean efforts of Tim Dodd and Nigel Webb this major project was not only completed on time but within budget. It is worth noting, that without Tim and Nigel both project managing and providing their labour free of charge, the standpipes could not have been installed within the budget available. Spring Gardens is now well provided with water points throughout the site.

Finally, a special thank you goes to Geoff Ellis, an original plot holder, at the Spring Gardens site for building us a new noticeboard that, by the time you read this newsletter, should have pride of place in the Watercress Garden's car park. It never ceases to amaze me of the practical skills that a few of our members provide freely for the benefit of us all.

Happy gardening,

Tony.

What needs doing in late summer/autumn?

- Keep harvesting those beans, courgettes, pumpkins, squash and autumn raspberries.
- Sow spring cabbages, spinach, broad beans and peas.
- Plant out onion and shallot sets and garlic. Cover them, initially, to prevent birds pulling them up.
- Sow green manure over any beds which will be left bare over winter. This does three jobs: it will prevent weed growth, improve your soil structure and also soak up any nutrients which would otherwise be washed away in the rain (and some will also fix nitrogen from the air). In spring, dig the green manure in and let it rot down for a few weeks.
- Stake your Brussel sprouts with a sturdy cane.
- Spread manure over your empty beds and allow the worms to work it in over the winter.
- If the soil is compacted from the dry summer, start feeding pollinating birds, as they might find it harder to source worms. Sunflower seeds are ideal.

Dates for your Diary

AGM – 19 November 2025

The AGM will be held at Alresford Golf Club on Wednesday 19th November 2025 @7PM and this year we will not combine the event with having a speaker. Attending the meeting will give you the opportunity to learn more about the Society's current operations, progress since last year, and financial situation. You will have the opportunity to ask questions regarding our operations, finances, and items on the agenda, and vote on any motions raised.

Seed Saving

It's the time of year where we can harvest seeds from our allotments for use next year. This not only saves you money but also helps preserve heirloom species, allows you to grow varieties that are well-suited to your local climate and soil conditions (if you choose from your strongest plants) and contributes to a sustainable and ecological approach to gardening. We have boxes at both Spring Gardens and Watercress Gardens for sharing seeds with one another.

Save a Little Water

Did you know that by 2040, it is predicted we will require an extra **1.1 billion litres** of water a day, just to keep up with projected demands? By 2030, we'll need an extra **50 million litres** a day to keep up with demand. Hose-pipes use around 1000L of water an hour, which is equivalent to around **12 bath-loads**. We can all play our part to help secure water supplies now and for future generations.

Despite the recent rain, there remains in place a hose pipe ban. Whilst the allotments, as a food cultivation area, are officially exempt, all members are encouraged to use their rainwater supplies in the first instance to minimise our demands on the water supply. A reminder that all sheds or greenhouses at the allotments need to be fitted with a water-butt.

Southern Water have generously donated 14 water butts and stands to our society, to help our members get started with rainwater harvesting.

If you are unsure how to connect guttering to your shed or greenhouse do reach out to your plot neighbours or committee members for guidance. Stores such as B&Q sell shed and greenhouse guttering kits, and end caps (pictured below) for a relatively low price.



The use of harvested rainwater not only reduces pressure on our water supplies; many plants prefer the temperature of rainwater and ericaceous plants such as blueberries do much better with rainwater than our local tap water.

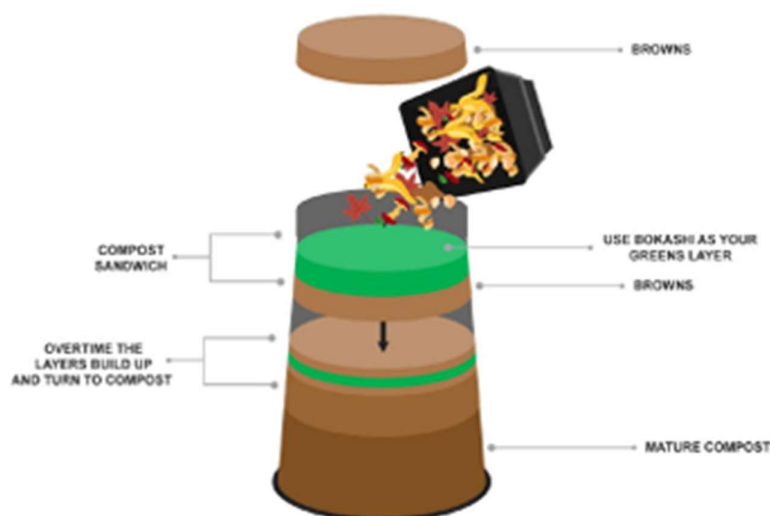
Other Water Saving Tips

Below are some other tips to reduce your water requirements:

- Improve your soil with manure and compost – it will absorb/retain more water naturally;
- Mulch the surface of beds to keep moisture in;
- Cover unplanted areas;
- Water in the evening or early morning to minimise evaporation from the direct sun/hot soil.
- Construct paths with an edged slope so rainwater drains into the beds;
- Maximise the use of your semi-shade areas;
- Also collect water used for washing vegetables/hands;
- Consider planting drought resistant plants and cultivars
- If your plot is sloped, start watering at the top so that water under the surface trickles down
- Check hoses/watering cans for leaks and repair
- Closer planting will shade the earth and reduce surface evaporation
- Regularly hoeing the earth between plans (breaking up the top 2-3cm) will reduce capillary evaporation
- Consider lining porous pot plants to prevent evaporation out the sides
- Place trays under pots to save water and catch rainwater
- Place pots in to the shade during the hottest part of the day

Composting *by Jo Downie*

Making your own compost has got to be one of the most environmentally and sustainable gardening practices you can do. Turning your garden and kitchen waste into a wonderful, nutrient-rich organic matter teeming with beneficial microbial organisms is like magic to me! It can be applied to pots, borders and even as a lawn dressing, if sieved of the bulkier pieces. It will hugely improve the soil structure and thereby improve drainage and aeration and also help with water retention, the latter becoming more of a pressing issue during long, hot summers as we see the effects of climate change and more drought-like conditions.



Here some quick facts on what can be added and what should definitely not be put into your compost bin. You can divide your compost material between 'green' waste and 'brown' waste. Green waste includes garden and kitchen scraps, brown waste includes shredded woody prunings, cardboard, newspaper (nothing with a glossy finish though). As a general rule of thumb, you want roughly twice as much brown waste as green. Think of it as the green waste being like the kindling for your wood burner and the woody 'brown' waste as the logs that keep the fire going.

Most of us at the allotment have the 'dalek' style bins and a few have open air composts. For those of you who attended Ray Broughton's talk recently, the subject of compost temperature was raised. He surprised some people when he said that worms shouldn't be added to compost bins. The thinking behind this is that in order to kill pests and diseases and harmful fungi the temperature inside the compost bin needs to be between 40-60°C. Worms, however, usually can't survive above 30-35°C. In reality though, most dalek style compost bins will struggle to reach the higher temperatures of 40-60°C so, personally, I do place my compost on bare ground to allow the worms in and often find slow worms have

also moved in (make sure you check for wildlife before forking out your compost!). I often recommend Hotbins to my clients who want a rapid turnover of compost, usually within a 30-90 day turnaround and because of the high temperatures they reach, worms should definitely not be added (a client once did this, painstakingly collecting worms from all around her garden before delivering them to their certain death into the Hotbin).

Green Waste (high in nitrogen)	Brown Waste (high in carbon)
<i>Do Add:</i> *Fruit and vegetable scraps *Grass clippings (in moderation otherwise you'll end up with a soggy, airless mass in the compost bin) *Coffee grounds and tea leaves *Annual weeds (don't add if they have gone to seed) *Spent flowers and plants	<i>Do Add:</i> *Dry woody waste, such as prunings, dead stems and hedge trimmings (shredded or chopped up) *Torn up paper and cardboard *Wood chips, sawdust, straw (comes in handy if you have a rabbit or guinea pigs as we do!) *Small amounts of wood ash (it can raise the pH and make the compost too alkaline)
<i>Do not add to your compost bin:</i> Do not add meat, dairy, oily foods, pet waste, diseased plant material or chemically treated garden waste. Don't add weeds that have gone to seed as you'll just spread these about when you put down your compost. Glossy magazines and the like contain chemicals and microplastics, which you don't want contaminating your compost.	

Bokashi composting

I have started experimenting with bokashi and as it seems 'on trend' at the moment, I thought I would add a bit of information about it. Bokashi originated in Korea where it was a traditional method used in agriculture, but it was popularised in Japan in the 1980s as a convenient way to recycle a wide range of food waste without emitting harmful gasses or suffering nitrogen loss. It is an anaerobic form of composting as the process relies on the exclusion of air, unlike traditional hot composting which needs air for microorganisms to break down food. As the product of bokashi is not fully broken down, it is not technically composting on its own.

The system uses 'bran' – a medium such as rice, wheat or sawdust, inoculated with bacteria which ferments food waste. This 'pickles' the waste, creating the byproduct 'bokashi tea', which can be diluted and used as a plant food, or can be used neat to help unblock drains. After around two weeks the food waste will be at a pre-compost stage. It will look like pickled food rather than compost and it can either be added to a compost bin – where it will break down very quickly – or buried directly into the ground and left for two weeks before planting.

Why use bokashi if it still needs to be composted?

- The bokashi process means a far wider range of food waste can be composted than in a traditional compost heap, which doesn't allow cooked food or meat. So it's a good way to maximise how much food waste you are able to compost.
- The bokashi process releases practically no harmful emissions and keeps all the nutrients in the nutrient cycle – including a rich by-product in the bokashi tea.
- Bokashi 'pre compost' breaks down very quickly when added to a compost bin or buried in the ground. There are lots of bokashi kits you can buy and they generally all consist of two airtight buckets with a drainer tray and a tap. There is usually also a supply of bokashi 'bran' with a scoop and a tool for pushing down the food waste to get rid of air pockets.

However, you like to compost, just know that you are doing wonders for your garden/allotment and instead of trudging to the garden centre and spending money on buying in compost, you can feel a certain amount of smugness at having created your own for free!

Happy composting,

Jo.

Tallest Sunflower 2025 Competition

In the August newsletter we announced there would be a competition to see who could grow the tallest sunflower; and we are pleased to report that we've seen a number of very tall sunflowers across both Spring and Watercress Gardens. Congratulations to Eleanor (pictured below) who grew the winning entry!



*"Wherever life
plants you, bloom
with grace".*

Johnny's Jottings

I hope you have all had a successful summer on the allotments (despite some tricky weather). With autumn on the way, we are approaching the 1st anniversary of the unofficial opening of the Watercress Gardens Allotments. The transformation from barren earth to a sea of abundance has been brilliant to watch. Whether you are a new plot-holder at the site or an existing plot-holder who has taken the time to help out a newcomer, I'd like to thank you for contributing towards making the site a success.

Thank you also to all members who have made improvements following the recent plot inspections. With a waiting list that has started growing quickly, it's really important that plots are utilised to the maximum and maintained in accordance with the Society's policies. A follow up inspection is to be arranged for the end of September so please can I encourage those members with improvements still to make to get started as soon as possible. If there are special circumstances that mean you cannot make the required improvements, I'd encourage you to contact NATC (committeeclerk@newalresford-tc.gov.uk) urgently to discuss this.

Finally, autumn also brings an end to the Council's summer recess. With this in mind, if you have any suggestions for how either site can be improved, please pass these onto the Society committee, your Chair, or to me directly and I will try to get them before the relevant NATC Committee as soon as feasible.

Wishing you all a great end to the growing season,

Johnny.

Cllr. Johnny Dakin

Email: Johnnydakini@newalresford-tc.gov.uk

Tel: 07912643426

HARVEST RECIPE: BEETROOT BURGERS

Thank you to Margaret Barton who has kindly shared her recipe for beetroot burgers.

A food processor is recommended. Serve with pitta bread , tomato and cucumber salad and a dollop of Greek yoghurt

Ingredients:

- 2 red onions, finely chopped
- 2 raw beetroot, peeled and grated
- 1 courgette, grated
- 2 large carrots, peeled and grated
- 100g porridge oats
- 400g tin of chickpeas, drained
- 3 tablespoons tahini paste
- 1 medium sized egg
- Salt and pepper
- ½ teaspoon ground coriander
- A little vegetable oil for frying



1. Fry onion in large frying pan over medium heat for 4-5 minutes until soft
2. Add grated veg and cook for a further 5 minutes until soft. Tip into a large bowl
3. Put oats, chickpeas, tahini and egg in food processor and pulse to combine
4. Add to veg in bowl and mix well and season
5. Divide into portions, anything from 6 to 12. For 6 large burgers shape with hands, place on a flat tray lined with baking paper, cover and put in fridge for minimum 30 minutes, maximum 24 hours For 12, smaller burgers use a large, plain biscuit cutter as a mould, pressing mixture into ring, removing ring and repeating.
6. To cook from fresh fry 2-3 minutes each side until golden and hot. To cook from frozen bake on oiled tray, 180 degrees centigrade fan / 200 degrees centigrade / gas mark 6. Turn once.

Meet the Plot Holder: **Howard Boardman** (Plot No B10, Spring Gardens)

Q How long have you held your plot?

I got my allotment in November 2016, after being on the waiting list for a year. The plot was rather neglected, and I took 40 barrow loads of bind weed out of the plot over that first winter, plus about ½ ton of stones. However, all that hard work has paid off and maintaining the plot is so much easier as a result.

Q What has been your greatest success this growing season?

I think soft fruits have been the greatest success this season, with bumper crops of cherries, raspberries, blackcurrants and plums – but that's probably more to do with mother nature than anything I did!!

Q Which is your favourite dahlia?

I've got a few strong contenders for this one, as I have about 30 different varieties, but probably Bora Bora is my favourite - photo below. I've also managed to perfect growing dahlias from seed over the last couple of years, so am now able to pass many of these varieties on to others



Q Where is your favourite garden centre?

I think Brambridge Park Garden Centre (just north of Eastleigh) is my favourite as it has a good selection of plants and a wide range of gardening equipment at reasonable prices – and a very nice

Q What do you like best about being an allotment holder?

I like being able to grow our own food – it always tastes so much better, but not necessarily cheaper than shop-bought food! I also really appreciate the Allotment Community we have on site, where people are so helpful, kind and friendly.



Housekeeping Notes

Please play your part

Note that as recorded in the minutes of the July Committee meeting (circulated recently) the cost of manure has been raised to **£2.00** to ensure we can fully cover the costs of transportation to the site. We hope you will agree this still offers good value. Please play your part and pay for what manure you use promptly.

Bank details are -:

- Alresford Allotment Society
- Sort Code: 30 99 71
- Account Number: 02752705

Communal Table at Spring Gardens

When placing unwanted items on the communal table please be mindful that the shed behind this does belong to a plot holder; please ensure you are not obstructing their shed access.

Dogs on site

Just a quick reminder that dogs are allowed on site, but they must be kept on a lead. It is also your responsibility to pick up any of mess and dispose of the same in a responsible manner.

Green Waste

Please do not abuse Merv's generosity in providing the Spring Gardens site with a green waste area. The area is only to be used for green waste that is compostable, and it is not to be used to dump paper, cardboard or plastic items.

At Watercress Gardens, there is an area to the rear of the site (to the left of the entrance to the horse paddock) which will be used for green waste; let a committee member know if you are available to help with getting this set up (along with the communal shed).

NAS Brochures

A number of brochures have been placed in the communal seed box at Spring Gardens; please return these to the box after use.

Membership Benefits

As an RHS Affiliated Allotment Society, we can access the following benefits:

- An annual free visit to one of five RHS gardens for up to 55 members of our Society.
- 50% discount card for RHS Gardens (see below for details of how to use this).
- Free gardening advice -from dedicated RHS plant specialists.
- Access to their group Facebook page.

The RHS Discount Card is kept with the New Alresford Town Council (NATC), who operate a booking system on our behalf. Please ensure that you book well in advance and return the card as soon as practicable as others may be waiting to collect it for their visit.

Please be aware that the Council offices are not open on a Friday and can we re-iterate the urgency of returning the card promptly. The card must be returned in person during office opening hours, and not put through a letterbox. Please show courtesy to the staff at the Council who are doing this as a favour to the Alresford Allotment Society.

Contact Details for NATC:

Phone: 01962 732 079

Email: committeeclerk@newalresford-tc.gov.uk

Address: Alresford Recreation Centre, The Avenue, SO24 9EP

Office opening hours: Monday – Thursday 10:00am – 3:00pm.

As a member of the National Allotment Society, we also benefit from the following:

- Free public liability insurance - protecting individual and society plot holders with up to £5 million cover in the case of being accused of accidental injury or property damage.
- Free initial legal advice- from their legal team on a range of issues including tenancy agreements, health & safety, contract & company law and environmental issues.
- Discounted seed scheme from Kings Seeds -offering huge discounts for members.
- Access to the digital and printed 'Allotment Gardener' magazine - our society receives 1 paper copy per 10 members, plus regular email updates. The paper copies are in the Seed Swap Box.
- Expert allotment advice and support- from regional representatives in our area.
- Gardening advice- from their horticultural adviser
- Retail discounts- on a range of gardening products.

If you would like to take advantage of the NAS Discounted Seed Scheme, you will need to have a registered email account with them which our committee member, Barry Davis, will kindly arrange. Send an email to Barry at barry.m.davis63@gmail.com and once registered you will receive an email from Kings Seeds where you can complete set up of your individual account with password and delivery address. Please also note that orders should be placed on the NAS linked site <https://nsalg.kingsseeds.com/> rather than the main Kings seeds site.

Thank you to our sponsors

We have secured sponsorship from three local businesses for which we are extremely grateful and it is our intention to advertise their services in each of our newsletters as well as on the back of our notice board,

Please consider supporting these friends of the Allotment Society whenever possible and do remember to tell them that you saw it here first.

We also wish to thank Winchester City Council, for awarding us a grant with which we purchased our rotavator), NATC (for a grant which allowed us to provide an additional standpipe at Spring Gardens) and Southern Water for donating 14 water butts to plot holders.



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