



NEWSLETTER

January
2021

IN THIS ISSUE:

Welcome	1
3TG Membership	
Contacts	
Pathways	2
The Pond	3
Hedgehogs	
NAC Funding	
H & Safety	
RSPB Birdwatch	
Planting advice	4
Skip Hire	
Eco-Build	

Welcome to 2021

We are all hoping that 2021 will be a vast improvement on 2020, and that we can look forward to a great year on the allotments.

Thanks to everyone who responded to November's newsletter. If you have any more ideas or comments, please use the contacts list to get in touch.

Thanks in anticipation to everyone at the allotments who will make a difference this year



Contacts

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Membership of the 3TG

Membership of the allotments begins when you are allocated a plot or raised bed. Members are given a **Plot Holders' Agreement**, which contains vital information to follow during your membership.

Maintaining membership means following the principles of this agreement, and it is important that all members regularly refer to this document.

Paying plot fees annually and on time is part of this agreement. The **2020** fees were due on **31st October**; this has been extended to a final date of **31st January 2021**. After that date any unpaid plots and raised beds will be **reallocated** to new members, allowing them time to prepare for the new season.

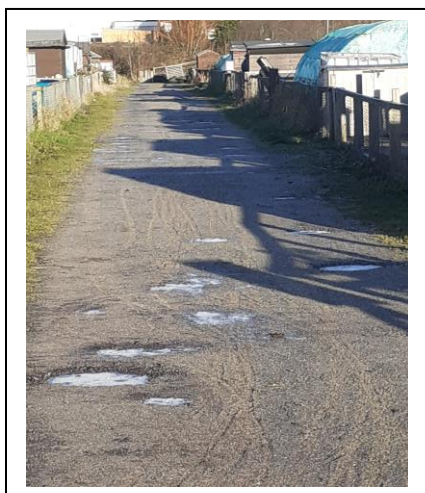
Advance notice: the fees for season 2021 are due on **31st March**.



Allotment Pathways 1, 2 and 3

After feedback from plot holders, there is a real desire to make the site pathways safer for children, more accessible for wheelchairs and bikes, and generally part of a peaceful haven where the natural world can be enhanced and enjoyed. This is something that we can all work on, particularly once this current health situation is over.

An early view of future planning for these routes through the allotments site are given below. Repairing the potholes is a major and expensive task, with no 'repair team' that comes in; it is always a small group of fellow plot holders. This is not possible at present but will be undertaken later if there are enough volunteers. Repairs will be in conjunction with a number of other measures that will seek to change the whole look and purpose of the pathways.



Pathway 1: over 130 potholes.

Every car driving through the site drives up this pathway, with the worst damage 2/3rds of the way up where speeds are greatest. Every car degrades the pathway surfaces in some way.

The aim is to bring this pathway to the much more natural, safer, quieter state of pathway three above.

Half-barrel planters, benches, and wildflower planting on verges will produce a much more pedestrian-friendly route for children, wheelbarrows and disabled access.



Pathway 2: over 100 potholes

Wheelchair and bike access, as well as a safe footing for walkers, is extremely poor here as well.

Heavy duty 4-wheel trolleys (puncture-proof tyres) and wheelbarrows will be provided inside the gate, where there is room for cars to park on both sides rather than driving through the site.

These are measures particularly for better times once the current health crisis is over.



Pathway 3

This shows what can happen when car volume is greatly reduced.

It would be ideal to have a much more natural look within the site; we can all use pathway three as an example of what we could achieve if we put our minds to it.

The addition of planters and benches in this pathway will also give us a real sense of being in a peaceful, natural environment as we tend to our plots and raised beds. Something to aim for as we progress through 2021!

The Pond

The pond is a tremendous asset to have on site, and it has already attracted a wide range of wildlife.

Frogs, toads and newts spend the winter in vegetation surrounding the pond, as well as further afield; it is more than likely that many are currently in plots close to the pond!

They will move to the pond during **February** to breed, with the exit pathway for the site being on their route- another reason to reduce vehicles on site.

Dragonflies, pond skaters, butterflies, daytime moths, birds, even bats- all are now benefiting from having such a well-constructed pond.



The Big Garden Birdwatch 2021

This takes place over the weekend of 29-31st Jan. Spend 1 hour noting down the bird species in your garden or at the allotments.

Go to rspb.org.uk for further information.

Hedgehogs

Over 1/3rd of hedgehogs in Scotland have been lost since 2000. Hedgehogs can roam over 1-2km every night, requiring routeways through gardens, hedges, and allotments.

'Hedgehog Streets' are being produced across the country by cutting holes in garden fences to allow free movement.

Our allotment site will be visited during 2021 by an expert on hedgehogs, who will advise on changes needed to the site. These will include access gaps and tunnels, and hedge planting along the outer boundary and elsewhere.

As a large part of our funding depends upon our 'Eco-credentials', this is a welcome initiative. The first person to spot a hedgehog on site wins a prize!

Hedgehogs love eating slugs and snails!



January Jobs

Prune apple and pear trees for shape and height over Jan/Feb. Keep the centres of the tree open and remove any crossing branches.

Winter-prune gooseberry and currant bushes.

Spread compost or manure on beds now if you haven't done so already.

Start the great job of planning your planting!

Health and Safety

Everyone on the allotments should continue follow all Government restrictions at this time. Hand cleansing should always take place before and after using the main gate and padlock.

New NAC Well-being Project Funding Jan 2021

Our application from this fund is for enhancement of the site in order that it can be an even better place for people in the community to visit, walk around and sit. This will be in conjunction with the pathways initiative, making the site very much nature-friendly: a place to relax and enjoy the peace and tranquillity.

Planting

Seed planting

Sweet peas, broad beans, a whole range of flowers can all be brought on indoors and give us something to keep ourselves occupied at this time.

Remember to label everything!

It is a good time to start preparing for the new growing season which will be upon us come March.

We are planning to pilot a regular online gardening/allotment quiz-25 questions over no more than an hour. More to follow.

Skip hire

This is very expensive, and the last few times it has ended up full of wardrobes and mattresses! There will be one on site for a very limited time at the end of March/early April- notification will be given regarding dates.

Priority will be clearing the rubbish left at the polytunnels/cabin. Then new plot holders clearing plots. If space remains, then existing plot holders can put waste in.

Plot holders are urged to think first before bringing things on to their plots; baths, sinks and tyres are not good ideas, and have ended up in previous skips.



Potatoes

No potato day this year means that we will have to find our seed potatoes elsewhere.

Online sellers are very good, with a wide range that can be delivered within a week.

First earlies eg **Swift, Pentland Javelin**: plant mid to late March after 'chitting' in a cool, bright, frost-free location. Harvest June/July once the flowers open. Space between tubers planted in 6" deep trenches: 10". Trenches 24" apart.

2nd earlies eg **Arran Pilot, Desiree**: plant late March-April. Harvest June-August when flowers open. Tubers 15" apart, trenches 28" apart.

Main crop eg **Maris Piper, Cara**: plant late March-late April. Harvest August/October. 15" apart for tubers, 28" between rows. Harvest once the leaves turn yellow.

Can you half tubers to make them go further? Yes- leave to dry for 3-4 days before planting.

Harvesting early in the season will reduce slug damage.



Onions

Onions: growing from seed should probably have started by now indoors.

Onion sets are a good way to get going. 'Heat-treated' sets will give faster, more vigorous growth, with a greatly reduced risk of running to seed or 'bolting'. They also tend to store better. For successful storage after harvest, it is vital that onions are dried out properly-more on this in the autumn.

Rhubarb: 'forcing' rhubarb now by covering the crown with a bucket or large pot will give you delicious early pale rhubarb after 6 weeks.

Drawback: it weakens the plant and it should then be left next year to recover.

The Eco-Build: Our architect is working on the next stage regarding the project, and we will have more information in March's newsletter.

Bringing water and electricity on site will be one of the first moves, and this will give us a chance to solve the ongoing water issue.

It was hoped to start the build in late spring/early summer, but the current restrictions may push that back.