

The Plot Thickens...



AUGUST ON THE PLOT

Welcome to August!
we are now *officially* in the thick of harvest season. All your digging, sowing, and careful tending from the spring is finally paying off, and hopefully your plots are overflowing with produce.

But did you also know, that August 1st is historically known as “Lammas” or “Loaf-Mass”. This is an ancient pagan festival and Christian holy day celebrating the first grain harvest. Traditionally, loaves of bread were baked from the newly harvested crops and placed on church altars.

Coming up in this issue:

- Weather Warnings
- Summer Show 2026
- Focus On.... Watering and Theft
- Jobs for August
- Defence Mechanism- Vine Weevil
- Did You Know... Blackberries
- Monthly Make- Apple & Blackberry Jam
- Useful Resource- National Allotment Society
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SITE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please join us in wishing enormous congratulations to Mike and Denise Whalley, who celebrated their 33rd wedding anniversary on Friday 31st July! We wish you both many more years of happy allotmenting together!

Photo credits: Mike Whalley

A reminder- we'd love to celebrate any good news stories or achievements within our community. Weddings, big birthdays/anniversaries or awards etc. Please get in touch and let us know if you have any moments you'd like us to mark in future issues!

URGENT- WEATHER

WATER AND FIRE WARNING

Did you get a shock when the Government phone warning came through the other day? I certainly did!

Like him or loathe him (and we are **NOT** about politics here please!), our new Prime Minister warned that “the UK is like a tinderbox right now”. And he’s right. It’s been an extraordinarily hot and dry year and we’re probably all lamenting what that is doing to our plots and gardens.

Like many of us at home, the site is on a water meter, and we need to conserve our supplies and be water savvy. It is unacceptable to:

- Water plots directly with hoses
- Leave hoses on overnight to water plots
- Use hoses attached to IBC/ water butts (I know this one sounds strange but using a hose in ANY manner uses up significantly more water than using a watering can)

At the moment, given the extremely dry conditions and risk of fire, please DO NOT have a barbecue or any other form of fire on site. IF you have any questions regarding this please reach out to a member of the committee (Adrian, Martin, Louise, Kath, Laura and Dave)

Severe alert

Issued by the UK Government

There is a very high risk of wildfires nationally. Residents, landowners and visitors should not undertake any activity that could start a fire, including disposable barbecues, firepits, garden incinerators or fireworks. Even a small flame can rapidly develop into a major wildfire placing lives, homes, businesses and emergency responders at risk.

Follow official updates and report signs of fire immediately by calling 999. Search [gov.uk/alerts](https://www.gov.uk/alerts) for more information.

OK

SUMMER SHOW



SUMMER SHOW 2026

We managed to have one this year!!!

The weather was on our side and we had a wonderful Show this year, with lots of very lovely entries.

Congratulations to all our winners- many of whom are pictured above.

Many thanks as ever go to Adrian, our Chair, for co-ordinating the day. Thanks also must go to the rest of the Committee for their help in preparing and supporting on the day to ensure we had a well-organised and fun day.

Many thanks go to Loz Harrop who volunteered his time to head up the judging on the day. Congratulations to everyone who won prizes this year- there were some great entries and I can tell you that we thoroughly enjoyed the judging.

I had the pleasure of joining Loz in judging some of the food and drink entries and can I just say that we had some absolutely delicious entries- you are certainly a talented bunch! In fact, I've already managed to get the recipe for one of those entries and am thoroughly looking forward to trying it out (thanks, Abbie!).

And I simply cannot end this article without mentioning that we also had a few winners at the SOUTHPORT Flower Show- Sam Jackson, Judith Jones and Frauka for their honey, Carole Whalley in a few categories, and Laura & Steve from Allotment Rd who won a number of prizes including 1st prize for plums! Aren't we a talented lot!!

FOCUS ON....

WATERING USING A HOSE AND THEFT OF ITEMS

When the summer heat sets in and the crops begin to get parched, it is incredibly tempting to either attach your hose to the main taps, or rig up a hose to one's water butts or IBC tanks. It seems like a brilliant time saver and I know it feels like the plants need it when we have long periods without rain. But it is a practice that causes significant issues for the site.

Last month, we talked about the significant water bill that we received from Sefton Council. We want to avoid this at all costs in future.

For the fairness of the community and the preservation of our water supply/costs, attaching hoses to water butts or tanks is **strictly off-limits**. Here is why we must all stick to the humble watering can

Protecting the Supply: Hoses are notoriously deceptive. It is easy to stand and spray, using hundreds of litres in minutes without realising it. IBCs and water butts hold a finite supply. A hose can drain a tank rapidly leaving you needing to fill back up again far quicker than if you used a watering can. The average IBC contains around **1000** litres of water, and the average water butt holds **200** litres. - We are on a water meter at the Allotment site. So if people are filling these up more quickly due to hose usage, you can see how our water bill will quickly rise to unmanageable levels.

Thank you for your co-operation with this- let's stay Water Savvy!

Theft Notice

We were informed that one of our plotholders had their wheelbarrow stolen from their plot recently.

I shouldn't have to remind everyone that theft of produce, plants, tools or other items from another person's plot or from communal areas is unacceptable.

Any incidents of theft will be taken seriously by the Committee. Where a plotholder is found to have stolen items, this may result in **termination of their tenancy and loss of their plot**.

PLEASE RESPECT OTHER PLOTHOLDERS & THEIR PROPERTY AT ALL TIMES!!!

Jobs for August



HANDY REMINDERS

This year has been a beast hasn't it? The hot weather has stayed far longer than any of us expected, we've had something like 4 heatwaves so far, and there's more to come, if you believe the weather people!

Despite our harvests being very varied due to the weather, here are a general list of things that you can still be doing in August:

Hoe regularly

- Getting rid of those pesky weeds is still an issue (how is it, that those weeds can show no sign of being bothered by the constant heat and drought conditions, yet my produce is barely limping through the season?!)

Keep watering wisely

- Water deeply rather than little and often.
- Water early morning or late evening where possible- I know I said this last month but it bears repeating since the weather is still largely the same.

Watch those tomatoes

- We're coming to the end of the season, so keep an eye on tomatoes that are still green.
- Cut off any foliage that is hiding the fruits, giving them as much light as possible to finish ripening
- (If all else fails, you can make a delicious green tomato chutney!)

Consider green manures

- As crops finish and you're clearing out beds, consider planting green manures instead of covering
- Green manures drive nutrients back into soil and help continue to suppress weeds

Defence Mechanism!



VINE WEEVIL

I HATE Vine weevil. With. A. Passion.

If you ever get me started on them, I could probably talk for far too long about them (insert “Lol” or “eyeroll” emoji here as you see fit!).

That said, they are probably one of the absolute worst pests possible in the garden. They are utterly indiscriminate, completely destructive, and incredibly difficult to eradicate.

Why are they so bad? Well, are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin.....

You only need ONE vine weevil to start an infestation. Why is that, you say? Because they are female only, and reproduce parthenogenetically, meaning they don't need a male in order to reproduce. Each female can produce up to 1,000 eggs per laying. So you can see how in a very short space of time you will go from one single vine weevil, to millions of them infesting your garden.

Now, one of the main things to note is that they will inflict far more damage in pots and containers than they will in the borders and so for that reason it is so so important to check pots regularly for these little blighters. That said they will inflict some damage within borders, but generally populations can often be a bit lower in those conditions because of other predators.

Signs? Well the first sign you'll probably notice are little irregular notches in leaves. It's NOT the very rounded notches that you see where, for example, leafcutter bees have taken a bite. They are distinctive notches as seen on the picture to the right.



Now, don't panic too much. We're going to sort this!

First, have a dig around the roots. You might notice that there are some little white “C” shaped grubs around the roots. If these are in the beds, I simply dig them out and either squash them, or leave them out for the birds- depending on how evil I'm feeling!

The best tips I have for ongoing management are:

- Nematodes- you MUST use these at the correct times of year (Spring, or end of Aug/Sep), and you absolutely must ensure you use them within the timescale noted on the packet, and KEEP THE SOIL MOIST so that the nematodes can swim around where they need to go.
- Attract natural predators- there aren't many predators that will eat the beetle itself as they cover themselves in a disgusting tasting coating apparently! But, my research tells me that centipedes and some other beetles are natural predators, so we can attract them by having log piles that give them a nice place to stay while they have their weevil feasts.
- DO NOT use the chemical controls on your allotment. UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES. They are absolutely not for use on food crops as they will not “wear off” over time and will just get in to the plants so you end up consuming them.

DID YOU KNOW



BLACKBERRIES

I had a great chat with Mike Whalley recently about blackberries, which we thought might be useful to share. I know lots of our seasoned ploholders may already know this but for those of you who don't, we hope that you find this useful information!

Did you know, that blackberries work on a 2 year cycle? (Not a bike!)

The canes that have blackberries on this year, will never produce again. So rather like we do with raspberries, those canes need to be cut out at the end of the season. However, it's really easy to tell which those canes are as they have **THREE** leaves per set (see above).

The new canes that will be producing next year, (or "whips" as they are also known) will have **FIVE** leaves on. And of course, no fruit!

No matter whether you have the thorned, or the thornless varieties of blackberry this process is exactly the same- which unlike raspberries with their Summer/Autumn variety rules- makes this quite an easy process to follow each year.

So for now, enjoy picking those lovely juicy berries, and when they have finished, you now know what you can afford to cut away!

Monthly Makes



APPLE AND BLACKBERRY JAM

Ingredients

750g or 1lb 10oz Green apples
1kg or 2lb Blackberries
1.5kg or 3lb of Jam Sugar warmed

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Preparation 20 mins

Cooking 55 mins

Makes approx. 8 jars

This recipe comes from Ask Charlie- an online creator with a wealth of home made recipes.

Method

Put two small plates in the freezer for testing purposes (you may not need the second plate).
Peel and core and chop the apples into small chunks.

Place the apple chunks in a large pan with the berries and 125ml (4fl oz) water.

Cook covered over medium heat stirring often for 30 minutes or until the fruit has softened.

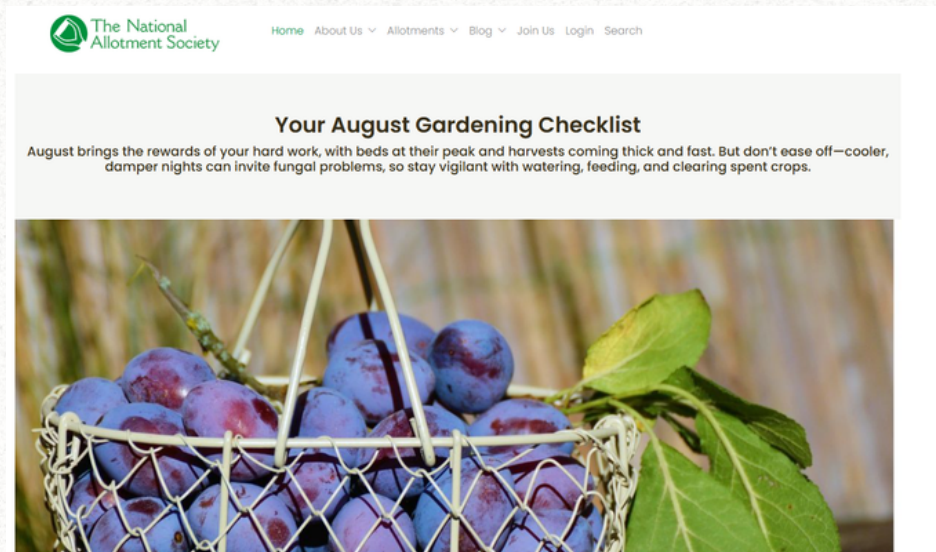
Add the sugar and stir without boiling for 5 minutes or until all the sugar has dissolved.

Bring the jam to a boil and boil for 20 minutes stirring often. Stir across the base of the pan to check that the jam is not sticking or burning. When the jam falls from a tiled wooden spoon in thick sheets without dripping start testing for the setting point.

Remove from the heat, place a little jam onto one of the cold plates and place in the freezer for 30 seconds. A skin will form on the surface and the jam will wrinkle when pushed with your finger when the setting point is reached. Remove any scum from the surface with a slotted spoon. Transfer to a heatproof jug and immediately pour into clean, warm jars and seal. Turn upside down for 2 minutes then invert and leave to cool. Label and date.

Store in a cool dark place for 6-12 months. Refrigerate after opening for up to 6 weeks

USEFUL RESOURCE



The National Allotment Society is the leading representative body for UK allotment holders with over 125,000 members. Their mission is to protect, promote and preserve allotments for future generations.

Their website is an absolute wealth of resources - they list on their About Us page that they work with allotment sites, associations, councils and individual plotholders to provide advice and guidance. We provide expertise on issues ranging from site management, environmental concerns, tenancy agreements, fundraising, setting up and managing associations and more.

We also provide a wealth of membership benefits including:

- Free Allotmenteer's liability insurance
- Free initial legal advice from our law experts
- Discounted seed scheme
- Gardening product offers
- Allotment Gardener magazine
- Regular email newsletters
- A members' only area of the website
- On-the-ground support from a network of regional representatives
- Gardening advice from a horticultural adviser
- Support and templates for associations and councils

I highly recommend having a look at the site. There is so much useful advice on there, including a breakdown of month by month advice for what to be doing on your plot- so I encourage you all to take a look!