

The Plot Thickens...



JULY ON THE PLOT

Welcome to the July issue of our brand new newsletter, **The Plot Thickens**, dedicated to helping all our members with hints, tips, and advice on all things related to cultivating, growing, cooking and preserving!

This month, we'll be taking a look at everything you can do in July to optimise your allotment plot, and letting you know any important updates.

In this month's issue we have:

- **Jobs for July**
- **Defence Mechanism!** - this month we're focussing on animal damage and how you can protect your crops
- **Monthly Makes**- a timely refreshing recipe for your July produce
- **DIY**- a genius make for your shed
- **Useful Resources**- this month we're taking a look at a website that will take all the guesswork out of where to place your crops!

In this issue we've used photos of some of our own lovely plots- see if you can spot yours!

A final note- 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!

Site Announcements

We are hoping to really improve the community area over the coming months so that we can start to make it a hub for coffee and chats. The community area is for everyone to benefit from, but we would particularly like to help encourage new tenants by having some regular dedicated time to chat, or get advice (or sometimes just the motivation to carry on battling those weeds!).

With that in mind, please let us know if you hear of any tables and chairs available as these would be really useful. Committee contact details are on the noticeboard by the gate.

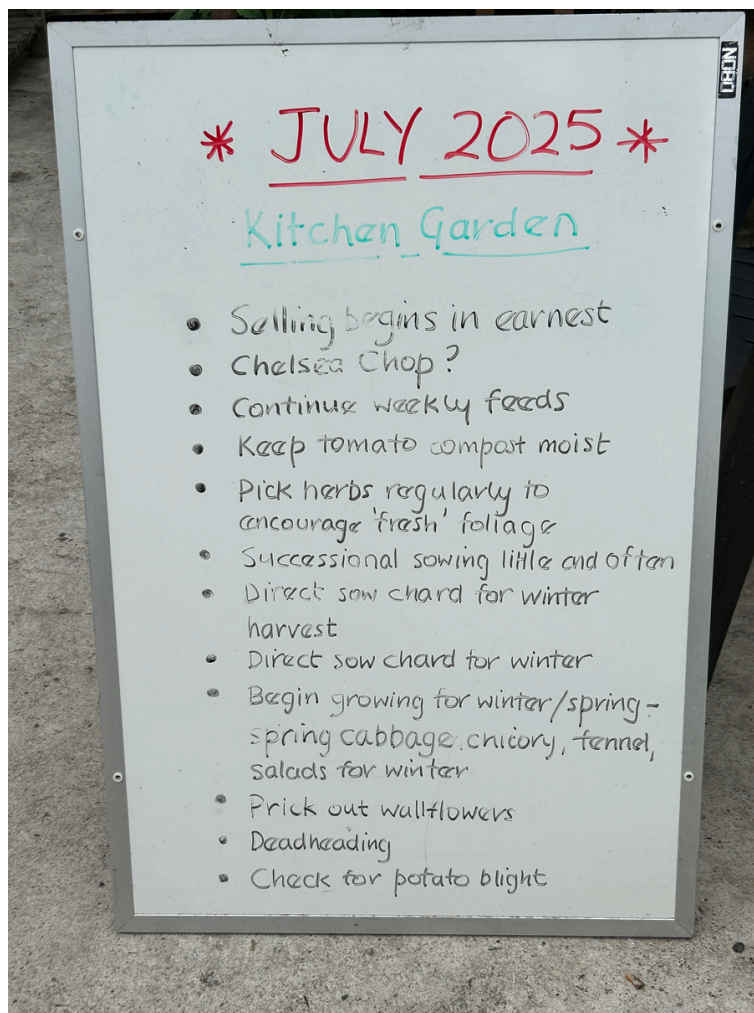
Also this month- a big thanks to Mike Whalley who has recently cut back a lot of overgrowing weeds on pathways and the Community Plot. Thank you for your community spirit, Mike!

Jobs for July



HANDY REMINDERS

July is the peak of the year; produce carries on giving, and the sunshine makes those days on the allotment that bit more enjoyable! It's easy to get overwhelmed though, as produce ripens, grassed areas need strimming, and those darn weeds just keep on growing. So with that in mind, here's a handy list of important tasks to be getting on with (courtesy of the kitchen garden team at Lytham Hall!)



Defence Mechanism!



CUTE? NO- AND HERE'S WHY

OK so it's a photo of rabbits (guesses welcome as to which one is Peter!), but this month we're focussing on defending against the animals and birds that can feast like Kings on our plots. I'm sure we have all had at least one trip down to the site, only to find that the produce we've been lovingly tending to for months has suddenly been chomped to bits.

Well, there are a few things we can do to help protect our goodies. Here are our best tips!

- Use netting over beds and borders to keep larger feasters out- it will work well for most birds/animals, but **DO ENSURE YOU SECURE IT PROPERLY**. Any loose netting risks animals or birds getting stuck. If you do need to overlap netting, tie them together at small intervals to avoid even the smallest birds being able to get through
- Fruit cages can be built fairly easily, from larger bamboo canes, spare timber, or even large branches left over from any cut back trees. We've even seen old gazebo frames used to create cages! These frames can be covered with suitable netting (remember the above note about securing it properly!)
- Use spare chicken wire to create a boundary around beds/borders - this works well for crops like corn where you would benefit from it being open to the elements properly in order for pollination to occur.
- Try hanging old CD's around fruit trees and bushes (birds don't like the sun glaring off the metal)
- Secure boundaries well- you can dig fences down into the ground to help avoid animals tunnelling under them to gain entry. Chicken wire can be secured on entrance gates.
- **DO NOT** add meat, fish, dairy products, fats, or bones to your compost. These can all attract rats.
- Rabbit guards can be used on trees to avoid bark being stripped off
- Try to get down to your plot regularly, to deter animals. Keep your plot tidy, and don't leave rubbish/spare items piled up where animals can use them for shelter
- Finally- don't be afraid to ask other tenants for their tried and tested methods. We're all a community and happy to share our thoughts with you! Remember that our longer standing tenants have an absolute wealth of experience and will know what works well

Monthly Makes



ENGLISH MEADOW COCKTAIL

This month's recipe is adapted from the *English Meadow cocktail* recipe in **Evergreen** by Lydia Millen, and makes a wonderful, seasonal cocktail to enjoy after a hard days' graft on your plot! As an extra touch, the decorated ice cubes add to the summery feel!

If you have managed to make elderflower cordial already, then use that, or if you've missed the boat for this year, then, in the words of the wonderful Barefoot Contessa herself, Ina Garten- "*store bought is fine*"

Makes 1 cocktail

4tsp elderflower cordial

25ml good quality gin

120ml English sparkling wine (prosecco or champagne are fine here too)

1 ribbon of cucumber, or 1 thin lemon slice if preferred

2 mint leaves

1 strawberry

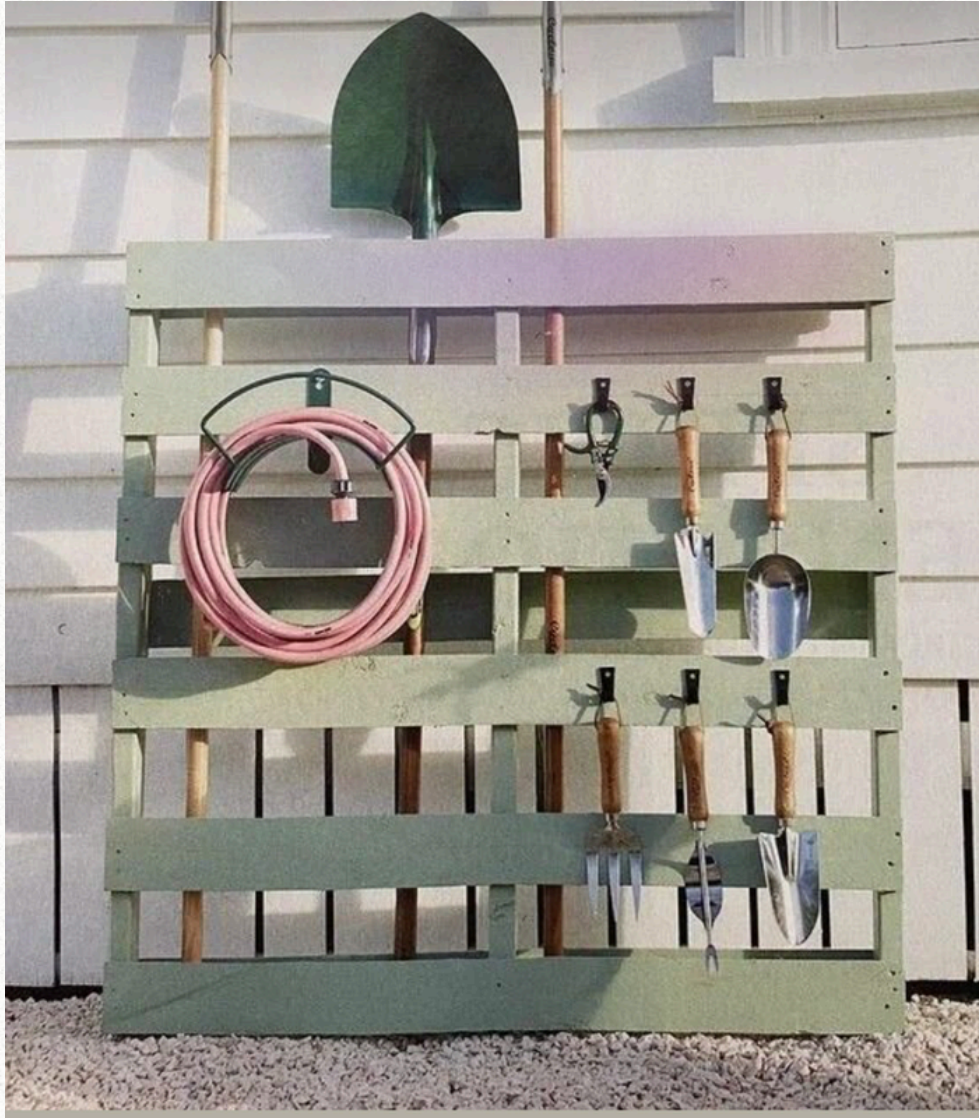
Edible flowers, mint leaves or berry slices for ice cubes

Directions:

1. Add edible flowers, mint leaves or berry slices into ice cube trays and freeze ahead.
2. Pour all liquids into a glass and stir vigorously.
3. Using a vegetable peeler, peel a cucumber lengthways to create ribbons (or if using lemon, slice thinly)
4. Add one cucumber ribbon/lemon slice to your glass, along with mint leaves and strawberry
5. Top up with decorated ice cubes, and enjoy!

**Remember- Please drink responsibly!*

DIY Project



DIY TOOL STORE

If, (like me!), you like your storage neat and tidy, this may be the project for you. We've mentioned before that pallets are usually quite easy to come by, and this project uses up one in a really handy way. Just to note, please make sure you only leave this **INSIDE** your shed for obvious reasons!

It really couldn't be easier to recreate this on your plot. All you will need is one pallet, a bunch of wood screws, and a variety of tool hooks.

It may be best to lightly sand the pallet if it is quite rough, just to avoid risk of splinters when using. Or, using your preferred wood paints, paint the pallet (a nice task to involve the kids in!).

Next, simply decide where you want your tools, and attach hooks accordingly. You should then secure the pallet to a shed wall for safety. Then, voila! Your very own useful tool store that doesn't take up much space at all but has everything you need available at a glance.

And if you have any ingenious allotment DIY projects that you've carried out- please let us know so that we can feature them in future issues!

Useful Resources

WWW.SUNCALC.ORG

This is another super useful website. When you are planning your plot layout, you'll need to know where the sunniest and shadiest spots are, in order to plant the right crops in the right places. Leafy greens in particular will thrive in slightly shadier conditions, and crops like spinach and lettuce won't bolt as quickly if you keep them in a bit of a shadier spot.

Navigate to www.suncalc.org, and in the location box (circled in red), type in the address for the Allotments (or use the postcode, which is PR9 8AE). Click on the little icon on the top right of the map (circled in green) and choose the option **ESRI SATELLITE**. You'll then see the bottom image and be able to zoom in until you find where your plot is located. Directly underneath the address box you will be able to change the date and time, to see the sun pattern at different times of year. Across the top of the screen, you'll see there are time blocks from midnight through to 11pm- you can scroll along these to see the sun movement at different times of the day.

