

The Plot Thickens...



JULY ON THE PLOT

Welcome to July! This is one of the most rewarding months on the allotment. The hungry gap is behind us, beds are beginning to fill with colour, and many of us are finally enjoying the fruits (and vegetables!) of all those spring sowings.

It's also the month when the allotment seems to grow by the hour. A couple of warm days can turn tiny weeds into forests and courgettes into marrows before you've had chance to blink! Little and often is definitely the key this month.

With that in mind, this issue is going to focus on a few key things relevant to this busy part of the season. We hope you find it useful, and welcome any feedback!

This Month:

- Important Notice
- Focus On.... Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?!
- Jobs for July
- Defence Mechanism....Slugs & Snails
- Seasonal Recipe: Spring Onion & Asparagus Tart
- Useful Resource: ALAN TITCHMARSH Youtube channel
- July Challenges

SITE

ANNOUNCEMENTS

As we reach the time of year when evenings are long and people are tending to their plots more often - please ensure you **CLOSE** the gate **AT ALL TIMES** when entering and leaving the site. This helps keep us secure.

FACEBOOK SITE- Recently there have been a couple of incidents where spam posts have appeared on the page. To safeguard security, we are reviewing our admin functions to ensure we are able to remove any spam posts quickly- but please let us know if you spot anything before we do!

And as always, if anybody wants to join the Facebook group they should email chairman@moss-lane.co.uk

Photo credits: Me this month!

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!

IMPORTANT NOTICE

ROAD REPAIRS

At our AGM this year, we proposed a site maintenance levy which was intended to fund the road repairs that are necessary throughout the year.

Unfortunately, those plans have been somewhat derailed by the water bill we received from Sefton Council in May 2026.

Sefton Council state that they have not read our water meter for years, and after their meter reading in March, our water bill arrived at an eye watering £3500. For context, our annual water bill has usually been around £1000 pa.

We have very little headroom for site work within the fees charged each year, and this bill has to be funded from somewhere so as a one off, we have taken the difficult decision to subsidise the bill from levy funds.

Our plan is still to repair the road this year, but our plans to repair it twice this year now sadly look unlikely.

We want to ensure that all plot holders are aware of this situation, and thank you for your understanding.

Best Regards,

Adrian Shandley, Chairman

FOCUS ON....

WHO'S AFRAID OF THE BIG BAD WOLF

Answer? WEEDS ARE!!!

Adrian (you know Adrian, Chairman, Pear Tree Drive) told me recently that he was walking past a plot and saw someone using a tool he hadn't seen before.

The tool in question was a Wolf!! To give it the proper title, it was a Wolf Garten DAS Multi Change Soil Tiller (try saying that after a few Elderflower spritzes!!).

The Multi tiller is a tool with four spiked wheels at the front, which loosen weeds, with a bar at the back that follows and scuffles them out. Ingenious!! (Of course, you must ensure your plants are perfectly spaced to allow for it to work in between them).

If you haven't already heard of Wolf Garten tools, they are actually incredible. I own some myself and highly recommend them. The concept is really simple- buy one handle, and use interchangeable tool heads so that you save space, and save money on buying full size tools.

I thoroughly rate them for the allotment- the concept means that you would take up very little storage space, and depending on your preference, you can get the larger extendable handles, digging tool handles, or the smaller hand tool sized handles, meaning they work for every situation. Every tool you can imagine is covered in the range including hand forks, trowels, hoes of all kinds, digging tools, weeding tools, and even apple pruning baskets, pruning saws etc.

Currently, there is a sale on the Wolf Garten site, so well worth a look if you are in the market for some new tools.

They are also readily available on Amazon (although cost a bit more), and if you want an alternative, Gardena also do an equivalent range which are available in garden centres etc. (I can confirm that the Southport branch of Dobbies has a decent range of Gardena handles and tool attachments in stock).

Have you tried Wolf tools? Let us know what you think of them...



Jobs for July



HANDY REMINDERS

July is all about keeping the momentum going. We're nearly at Show season and are already at the time of year when our harvests are a plenty!

Harvest regularly

- Pick courgettes while they're still small and tender.
- Continue lifting first and second early potatoes.
- Harvest beetroot, carrots, peas, broad beans and salads.
- Keep picking beans to encourage more flowers.

Keep watering wisely

- Water deeply rather than little and often.
- Water early morning or late evening where possible (although I will say, I watched an Alan Titchmarsh youtube video recently where he told viewers that if plants need watering, do it whenever, so if that's what Alan says is OK, then I'm going with that!!)

Feed hungry crops

Tomatoes, cucumbers, pumpkins and squash will all appreciate a weekly high-potash feed once fruits begin forming. In general though, keep up the regular feeds and remember LESS IS MORE- you can do more harm than good by over feeding plants.

Support tall crops - Tie in any stems before any random strong winds do it for you- the weather is unpredictable these days!

Keep weeding - A quick 10-minute weed every visit saves hours later.

Succession sowing - longer growing seasons these days mean it's not too late to get a final sowing in of some of the quicker turnaround crops

Watch for bolting - Warm weather can send lettuce, spinach and coriander into flower quickly. Pick regularly and sow replacements.

Keep harvesting herbs- Cut herbs regularly before they flower to encourage fresh growth.

Defence Mechanism!



SLUGS AND SNAILS

I'm sorry, please forgive the cartoon but I just cannot bring myself to put up pictures of the real thing, they make me feel nauseous! Warm, damp evenings create perfect conditions for slugs and snails, particularly after rain.

Signs to look for

- Ragged holes in leaves
- Missing seedlings overnight
- Silvery slime trails
- Damaged strawberries or host plants

What works?

- ✓ Remove hiding places such as old pots and piles of weeds.
 - ✓ Water in the morning rather than late evening so the soil surface dries before nightfall.
 - ✓ Go out after dark with a torch for a surprisingly effective slug patrol.
 - ✓ Encourage natural predators:
 - Frogs
 - Toads
 - Hedgehogs
 - Ground beetles
 - Thrushes
 - ✓ Beer traps can help monitor numbers, although encouraging wildlife usually provides better long-term control.
- Remember—slugs aren't all bad! Many species feed on decaying plant material and play an important role in the garden ecosystem.

REMEMBER:

I cannot stress this enough- most of us here like to follow an organic approach where possible and although I appreciate sometimes people look for alternatives, I would just say that I am absolutely not preaching, but I would urge anyone NOT to use chemical controls for slugs and snails around your food products. The last thing you want is to be ingesting pesticides when they have come into contact with your food plants. Nor do we really want any of that stuff harming other wildlife on the site (no matter how much of a nuisance some of them can be).

Alternative controls are biological- these are completely safe to use around food products, and they will not harm any other wildlife. Biological controls in this instance would be Nematodes, which are basically microscopic worms which ONLY attack the desired pest- so you get them for slugs, or for vine weevil, leatherjackets etc.

BUT there are some rules that are essential to follow when using nematodes:

1. They MUST be used at the correct time of year (instructions should be given on packets). Soil usually needs to be at least 5 degrees in order for the nematodes to work correctly.
2. You MUST use them within the specified timeframe of buying them (usually two weeks, and you are usually advised to keep them refrigerated if you aren't using them straight away).
3. You MUST keep the soil moist for around 2 weeks after application to allow the nematodes to swim to where they are needed. If you let the soil dry out, they will simply not work.

Monthly Makes



Courgette, Pea & Mint Frittata

Perfect for using up those first courgettes and fresh peas.

Ingredients

- 6 eggs
- 2 small courgettes, sliced
- 150g fresh peas
- Small handful of chopped mint
- 75g feta (optional)
- Salt and pepper
- Olive oil

Method

1. Gently fry the courgettes until softened.
2. Add peas for 2 minutes.
3. Beat eggs with seasoning and mint.
4. Pour into the pan and sprinkle over feta.
5. Cook gently until nearly set before finishing under the grill.
6. Serve warm or cold with salad and crusty bread.

Perfect for picnics, lunchboxes or an easy evening meal after a day on the plot.

USEFUL RESOURCE



Gardening With Alan Titchmarsh ✓

@GardeningWithAlanTitchmarsh • 170k subscribers • 398 videos

My name's Alan Titchmarsh, and I'm absolutely delighted to welcome you to my official YouTube channel. ...more

gardeningwithalantitchmarsh.com and 4 more links

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My first memory of Alan was of watching Gardeners World in the late 90's, creating something wonderful for the garden with a discarded toilet ballcock in an area lined with pleached trees. (Yes, I know, how random!) I was thinking about this recently, and actually convinced myself that it was such a strange recollection that it was probably one of those “mandala effect” memories and I actually had to google it to see if it really happened. I'm delighted- and somewhat relieved for my memory- to say it is absolutely true!!!

Any by the way, if you're interested, it was filmed in the Gentleman's Cottage Garden at Barnsdale. Which reminds me, I must take a trip down there one day. I digress.....

Anyway, after all those years on Gardeners World and Love Your Garden etc, fast forward to 2025 and Alan created his very own YouTube channel.

The channel is everything you would expect of Alan- his usual inimitable style, gently teaching you about every aspect of gardening and giving that brilliant expertise about why this plant works, and that one doesn't, and how to create magic in your green space.

Whilst I know he focusses heavily on gardens, the main principles are always the same for produce- soil cultivation, mulching, plant maintenance, weeding effectively.

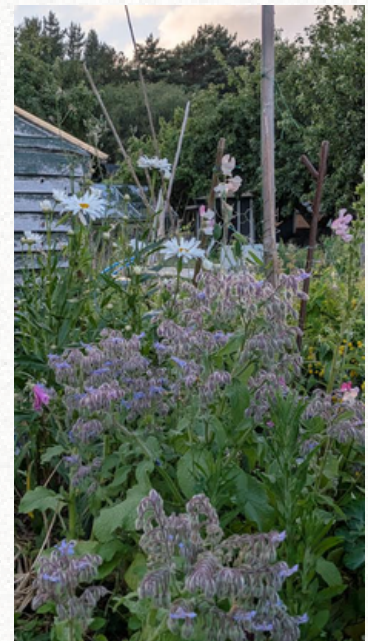
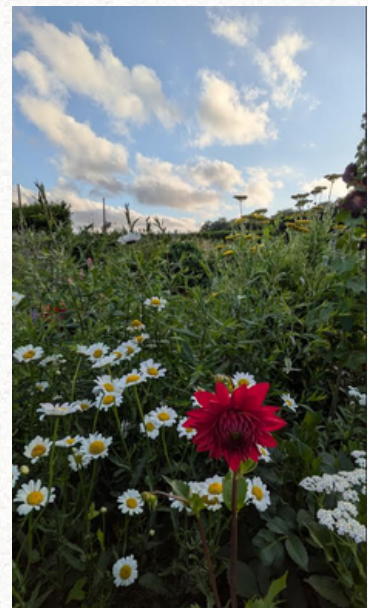
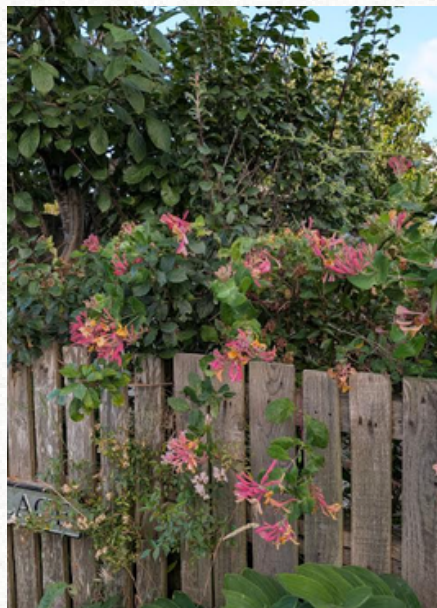
I am biased, because I have been a fan since the toilet ballcock creation of 1997- but I encourage you to take a look- “like and follow for more” as they say!!!

JULY CHALLENGE

I promised you some extras this month to make up for missing June's issue. So true to form, here are a couple of fun challenges for you this month.

SPOT THE PLOT

I have been on a little walkabout through the site- and may I say there are some really enviable plots at the moment! I would love you to take a look through these photos and see if you can spot which plot they are- do they belong to you?! Depending on feedback, I may do this regularly through the growing season in future, as I think it would be really nice to showcase some of the great plots we have here. I have certainly taken a lot of inspiration looking around the site, I am always impressed by some of the ingenuity on show!



JULY CHALLENGE



POLLINATOR COUNT

Take five minutes during your next visit and simply stop to watch your plot. How many different pollinators can you spot? This is a good game to involve children and grandchildren in too.

Can you identify:

- Honey bees
- Bumblebees
- Hoverflies
- Butterflies
- Solitary bees

Even adding a small patch of flowers such as calendula, cosmos, borage or nasturtiums can make a huge difference to the wildlife visiting your allotment.

And look out for more hints and tips in future issues!!