Please forward or share with as many plotholders as possible.

View this email in your browser

MONTHLY ROUNDUP

Birmingham & District Allotment Confederation : 2024 Issue 2

Welcome

While I sit at the computer putting this month's Roundup together the rain is bouncing off the pavement outside. February was the wettest on record and March is doing its best to keep up, meaning that many of the sites in Birmingham are too wet to dig and even the "No-dig" advocates are finding it difficult to get crops in the ground. In this months' edition we take a look at the Executive proposal to restructure BDAC, to cope with the changes in local government, the best interests of associations and the advice from the National Allotment Society. The recent survey, probably the largest ever undertaken amongst plotholders, ranked the onion as the second most popular vegetable so we take a look at that and encourage you take the challenge of growing some for the Annual Show. Contact us at monthlyrounup@bdacallotments.co.uk

Exec' Update

It is over 2 years since the executive first advised associations that they should not sign the new agreement sent out by the council because it placed inappropriate accountability on the site officers and failed to meet the needs of plotholders. Since then consultation meetings have been held all over the city and talks have taken with the local council, and the National Allotment Society. Acting on the advice of the NAS the executive are now proposing a restructuring of BDAC. Building on the commitment and dedication of, the over 7000, plotholders, the structure emphasises the 113 local associations and will hopefully, enable a more efficient way of dealing with problems they face.

THE AGM IS OPEN TO ALL PLOTHOLDERS ON BIRMINGHAM COUNCIL ALLOTMENTS NOT JUST ASSOCIATION OFFICERS.

(From Confederation to Cooperative - read more here)

On the Plot

Growing onions, or any other vegetables for showing at national competition level requires time and dedication but selecting 5 of your best and presenting them at the Birmingham Annual Flower, Fruit and Vegetable Show could win you a £10 prize and cover your costs.

Over the next months we will be sharing some tips for competitors but why not start now. Onions do not have to be grown from seed but can be grown from sets (small bulbs), probably obtainable from a local site shop. A popular variety for the show bench is Kelsae. Onions like a well draining sunny spot, Often grown in raised beds enriched with well rotted manure and/or fertiliser. Avoid acid soils. They can be sown directly into the soil or brought on inside and hardened off later in the spring.

Photo: Image by user15285612 on Freepik

How To Make the Best French Onion Soup

Here is a vegan option, avoiding the use of beef stock and cheese.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 3 large white or yellow onions, sliced into thin half-moons
- 3 large fresh thyme sprigs (about 1 tbsp), leaves stripped, OR 1/2 teaspoon dried
- 4 cups (1 quart) vegetable stock/broth (no salt added), OR (if not vegan) beef broth or chicken broth)*
- 2 cups of filtered water
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 tablespoons good-quality aged balsamic vinegar
- 3 teaspoons sea salt, divided (plus more to taste if needed)
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Check out the details on Elizabeth Riders site

Tell us about your favourite fruit or vegetables and win an allotment voucher

NO MORE PESTICIDE SPRAYING

Well that's what I understand the Council have recently stated although it is rather unfortunate that they are having to make this decision for financial reasons, rather than for ecological or sustainability reasons. We have been trying, for ages, to get the Council to acknowledge the damage they are doing to our wildlife and to stop using sprays completely, so the announcement is very welcome.

We all know what honey bees are – well I hope you do. And we all know what they are good for – and not just for providing honey for your toast – they pollinate many of our trees, plants and crops. But they are not the only pollinators! Bumblebees, Solitary bees, Hoverflies, Butterflies, Moths (yes, there are many that fly in the daytime) and even Wasps and Hornets help with pollination by visiting lots of flowers and transferring the pollen from one plant of a species to another of the same species.

Honey bees and social Bumblebees live in colonies – some bigger than others. Honey bees typically have colonies of between 35,000 and 60,000 (in summer) but Bumblebees have much smaller nests with between 150 and 400 bees (depending on the species).

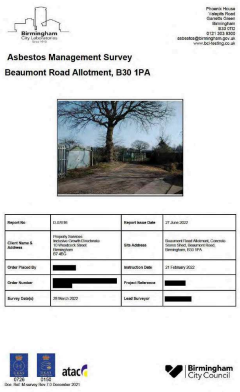
Having colonies to return to means that these insects need to navigate - to their forage, around the foraging area and more importantly back to their colony. This is how the food gets to the other bees that aren't yet flying, the developing larvae and their queens.

Why am I telling you all this? Because, for years the science has been saying that pesticide sprays, as well as having a detrimental effect on us humans, also affect wildlife including our pollinators. Most councils that spray use a glyphosate based herbicide (GBH) and whilst this simply kills any plant that is sprayed with it, it will kill neighbouring plants unintentionally, mainly due to drifting, but it also kills pollinators directly (by coming into contact with the chemicals) and indirectly (by ingesting it and transferring it to the colony
and the developing larvae).
There have been numerous research projects into the effect of Glyphosate and GBHs on honey bees and bees in general and as recently as 2023 research by the Pesticide Action Network (PANe) concluded:
'Our research shows that the herbicide:
 disrupts the gut microbiome and makes the bees more susceptible to disease
 disturbs development of bee brood (the eggs, larvae and pupae of the bees)
 can negatively affect thermoregulation of the bumblebee colonies
 has a negative impact on the reproduction of wild bees and honeybees
 disrupts their foraging abilities and navigation
 has a negative impact on bees' learning ability and memory'

The net effect of all of the above is to weaken bee colonies and severely impact a colony's chance of survival. Similar findings have been reported over several years by many other research teams …. and it is not just GBHs that affect bees and other pollinators but this is the one used by councils, the agro-industry and the residential gardener – with Roundup being the best known one commercially available.
So it really is good to hear that the Council will no longer be spraying but my message to all is DO NOT USE SPRAYS if you want our pollinators to survive. They have enough other stresses to deal with!

Julian Caruana

Contribute to the Monthly Roundup and receive a £10 Voucher



Asbestos Survey

Asbestos reports now available for download.

Thanks to a Freedom of Information request by a member of the executive we are now able to share the Asbestos Survey undertaken at the request of the BCC and previously unavailable to sites.

Click here to find your site. If you are missing let us know.

IT TIP

Has your association setup an email account with a free service such as gmail? (e.g. exeterroad@gmail.com) Doing this means that when officers change the there is no urgent need to update details, simply pass the login details to the new secretary and they are up and running and emails will not go astray. You can either simply monitor the account or if you are more IT literate you can forward copies to your personal email. If you would like further help contact webmaster@bdacallotments.co.uk

---

Find out more on their website

RHS are planning to visit Birmingham

If you're not familiar with the RHS, it's the UK's leading gardening charity that's been going since 1804. It aims to enrich everyone's life through plants, and make the UK a greener and more beautiful place. Focussing on the science – including research - art and practice of horticulture, it is active in campaigns like Greening Great Britain and organises education and community programmes.

Every year a group from the RHS Fruit, Vegetable and Herb committee carry out some allotment visits. Last year it was Cardiff and Child's Hill Allotments in North London. This year they want to visit Birmingham and have asked the BDAC to help them find a selection of sites to visit from the **21st to the 23rd June (Friday to Sunday).**

The group is usually around 6 people consisting of committee members, members of staff and students who take a walk round sites with plotholders, answer questions and share experiences with their hosts. They usually split into groups so they can visit more sites. On the evening of Friday 21st and Saturday 22nd, they can hold Question and Answer sessions in the evening. In Birmingham, 2 of our sites with sizable meeting rooms will be able to host these – enabling many more people from sites that don't get a visit to be involved.

So if people on your site would like to meet face-to-face some of the leading lights in horticulture, this is your opportunity to quiz them about your plans, achievements and failures!

Of the RHS Fruit, Veg & Herb Committee group visiting us (David Allison, Jim Arbury, Vicki Cooke, Nick Dunn, Gerry Edwards and Barry Newman), they all have different areas of expertise and experience. For a start, 3 have allotments themselves. and all of them have expertise in growing fruit, vegetables and herbs. Three are specialists in growing and

advising on fruit, two are vegetable specialists who have also Chaired the National Vegetable Society. Two particularly advise on organic methods, two are exhibition gardeners, two are exhibition judges – one also being a Britain in Bloom judge - one is an apple expert and another is a beekeeper!
For more information, go to - https://www.rhs.org.uk/plants/plantsmanship/rhs-plant-committees

If you would like a visit click here

A BIG thank you to all who contributed to the "Allotment Survey" . Vouchers have gone out to 5 successful contributors who won £50 towards their next year rent and the others who won the various shop vouchers. Details are on our website and we are looking forward to hearing about the findings at our AGM. Thanks to the wonderful support of plotholders we think this is probably the biggest allotment survey undertaken. In addition the Secretaries survey is being scrutinised and used to set priorities for the executive. Click here

---

Copyright © 2024 Birmingham & District Allotment Association, All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can update your preferences or unsubscribe from this list.

INTUIT mailchimp