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MONTHLY ROUNDUP

BDAC

Serving Birmingham's Allotments

Birmingham & District Allotment Cooperative : 2026 January Issue 10

A warm welcome to all our readers, especially if you are a new tenant on one of the sites around Birmingham. We would like to hear about and see pictures of how you are getting on and what would be helpful.

On The Plot

If you are a member of our Facebook group you will already seen this picture from Ian Gaitskell at Chester Road Allotments. If you have any pictures would be willing to share email them to webmaster@bdacallotments.co.uk or share via Facebook. Committees can exercise their discretion to tenants who flood regularly and who have spoilt crops. The recent spell of rain has been an excellent time to work on water harvesting because no doubt we will have a drought later in the year and sites will be forced to introduce restrictions on access to running water if they are to stay within budget.

Looking forward to the sunny weather we might have in March …

March is the month when your allotment truly comes back to life. With longer days and warming soil, there's plenty to be getting on with. Whether you're a seasoned grower or a first-year plot holder, here are some suggestion of what you can be doing.

Getting Your Soil Ready

If your soil is no longer waterlogged you can:

Fork over compacted beds and work in well-rotted manure or garden compost to improve structure and fertility
Rake to a fine tilth where you plan to direct sow — the finer the surface, the better the germination
Remove weeds while they're small and manageable; hoe on a dry day so they shrivel on the surface
Spread a general fertiliser like Growmore or blood, fish and bone across beds a week or two before sowing

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Sowing Outdoors

Hardy crops can go directly into the soil from mid-March. Cover with cloches or fleece if cold snaps are forecast.

Broad beans — if not already sown in autumn, now is the time

Peas — choose an early variety like *Kelvedon Wonder* and support with sticks or netting

Parsnips — sow as early as you can; they take weeks to germinate, so be patient

Carrots — sow thinly in rows and cover with fleece to keep carrot fly at bay

Beetroot — soak seeds overnight before sowing to encourage faster germination

Radishes — fast-growing and perfect for filling gaps between slower crops

Lettuce, spinach, and rocket — sow little and often every two to three weeks for a continuous harvest

Spring onions — quick and easy; ready in about eight weeks

Sowing Under Cover

A greenhouse, cold frame, or even a bright windowsill gives tender crops the warmth they need to get started.

Crop	Temperature Needed	Notes
Tomatoes	18–21°C	Sow into small pots; don't rush these
Peppers & chillies	18–25°C	Slow growers — sow early in the month

Aubergines	20–25°C	Treat like peppers
Leeks	12–15°C	Sow in trays; transplant in early summer
Celery	15–18°C	Surface sow — needs light to germinate
Courgettes	18–21°C	Late March at the earliest
Sweet peas	10–15°C	Beautiful and great for attracting pollinators

Planting Out

Potatoes 🥔

One of the highlights of the March allotment calendar.

Set **first early** seed potatoes in trenches from mid-March. Plant 10–15cm deep, 30cm apart, in rows 60cm apart. Earth up shoots as they appear to protect from frost and encourage more tubers. Alternatively put some old compost in a bucket, add a handful of potato fertiliser, drop in a couple of spuds and cover to near the top then add a layer of mulch to stop evaporation.

Onion Sets & Shallots 🧅

Push sets gently into prepared soil with the tip just visible.Space 10cm apart in rows 25–30cm apart

Firm in well — birds love pulling them out so cover with low hoops and some netting for a few weeks.

Garlic

If you missed the autumn planting, early March is your final opportunity.to plant individual cloves pointed end up, 15cm apart, 5cm deep

Other Planting

Asparagus crowns — March is the ideal month to start a new asparagus bed

Rhubarb — plant new crowns or divide established clumps

Jerusalem artichokes — plant tubers 30cm apart in a sunny spot

Bare-root fruit trees and bushes — get them in before they start leafing out

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Fruit Jobs

✂️ **Complete winter pruning** of apple and pear trees before bud break

Cut **autumn-fruiting raspberry** canes to ground level

Mulch heavily around all fruit bushes with compost or well-rotted manure

Remove dead foliage from **strawberry plants** and firm any crowns loosened by frost

Feed established fruit with a high-potash fertiliser to encourage blossom

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Plot Maintenance & Repairs

Now is the time to get your infrastructure in order before the busy months arrive.

Fix raised beds — replace rotten boards and top up with fresh compost

Clean greenhouse glass inside and out to maximise light

Repair sheds, paths, and fences — much easier now than in the middle of summer

Sharpen spades, hoes, and secateurs — clean tools work better and last longer

Set up water butts if you haven't already; spring showers are free water

Lay fresh woodchip or bark on paths to prevent them turning into mud baths

Turn compost heaps to speed up decomposition

Pest & Frost Protection

The average last frost date for Birmingham is between April 21 - April 30

🧊 **Keep fleece and cloches on standby** for sudden frost — check the forecast nightly

🐌 **Begin slug control early** — set beer traps, apply nematodes

🕊️ **Net brassicas and peas** to stop pigeons stripping them bare

Inspect overwintered crops for aphid colonies and remove by hand or with a jet of water

Clear debris and hiding spots where pests overwinter — old pots, planks, and long grass

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Planning for the Season Ahead

📓 **Keep a plot diary** — note what you sow, when, and where for future reference

Plan your crop rotation — avoid growing the same plant families in the same spot as last year to reduce disease

Audit your seed tin — check dates, order replacements, and resist buying more than you need (good luck with that)

Visit your local seed swap or gardening club — March is peak season for events and shared knowledge

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Get out there and enjoy it. 🌿

Watch it on Youtube

Three years ago Mothin Ali was making videos for gardeners. Back in 2024 he had 50,000 followers This year he is too busy being deputy leader of the Green Party. Regardless of your politics there is some timeless advice for the allotment gardener.

Executive Feedback

The Executive are pleased to announce that things are being to get a little bit busier on the allotment sites around Birmingham.

Meetings about the new rules have begun. As expected the Council are reluctant to give way on many of the points covered.

The management agreement which expired a few years back and has been rolled over for a couple of years will continue. In the meantime BDAC will continue to argue for a different relationship that better suits the current situation and addresses the many issues raised by associations.

Following requests from the city legal department the Cooperative rules have been once more revised and resubmitted for approval by the FCA. The two week turn round appears to be a bit longer than anticipated.

Work has begun on the sites who successfully bid for money from the Flo Pickering Fund. Although the work has been plagued with delays and concerns about the results 3 sites have now had money spent on improving their roads and fences. As soon as the next tranche becomes available.

The 2026 Site and Plot competitions will be launched later this month. This year they will include the Robins Trophy for the most Improved Site, so we suggest you start grabbing a few pictures of how it is looking now (or if you have them last year) ready to prove that things have improved. This year there will be added interest in Water harvesting and any plot seen not complying with the BCC rules on hosepipes will be immediately disqualified. Entry will once again be via our website.

Training sessions are being introduced, probably in March and April. The target audience will be those on committees and equipping them for the post. Details are not yet finalised but the first session will be at Northleigh Road and will be a three hour session. There will be a probable cost of £15.

The next Executive meeting is on 14th March 2026 at Northleigh Road. The Meeting starts at 2.00pm Observers are welcome and there are opportunities to be co-opted if you think you have skills or interests that would help.

Site Competitions

Publication of this Monthly Roundup was delayed whilst the finishing touches were being applied to the Site and Plot Competitions for 2026. This year the Robins Trophy returns to the fixture list. The Trophy is for sites who feel thay are improving and doing better than last year. Very much part of the BDAC vision of returning Birmingham sites to its as standing as a beacon to other authorities, this Trophy celebrates the continuing desire to improve all Birmingham sites. To enter you do not need to feel you are the BEST but show a willingness to keep moving forward and improve what is on offer to members. Details of all the competitions can be found on our website (https://bdacallotments.co.uk/home/events-and-competitons/site-competitions-intro/) where together with details of the 4 trophies there are posters to help promote the campaigns.

BDAC are currently in talks with a number of associations regarding the possibility of the return of a less formal Flower, Fruit & Vegetable Show as part of already existing local shows. We would love to hear from

associations that hold site shows of any size so we can support, publicise and come along to this year's event. Get in touch via support@bdacallotments.co.uk

Funding Opportunities

Birmingham Open Spaces Forum have recently shared a list of possible funding sources for local groups. These are available for download from our website < click here >. In addition if you have planes flying over your site you might want to check out their Community Trust Fund.

Be Part of the Conversation

Join the BDAC Allotments Facebook group to discuss anything that are affects you and other plot holders

The Editor would like to apologise for the lateness of this issue this is due to spending too much time on his plot and having another holiday whilst the sun was shining. Plus the software I use deciding apparently I need AI to support me in what I though was a simple task.

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