

# April Newsletter

It's great to see so many more of you down at the plots now that May is here and Spring has sprung! Many of us have already put in potatoes, onions, broad beans and various other seeds.

Some committee members have seeds that they're very happy to share if asked. Spare packets that are not needed will be left in the hut. Please leave any there if you have any to share.

The growing season is upon us and now the fun begins! If any plot holders need help or advice, please talk to us, we'll help if we can or point you in the right direction.

Please carry on using social distancing and taking hygiene precautions when visiting the site and touching communal surfaces.

## Biodiversity

We've attached here a document on watering and compost that may be useful to some of you

Can we please remind everyone that fires need to be in a bin after dusk and monitored. Please refrain from burning plastics. Fires actually damage the soil killing the microbes and fungi

Happy growing Everyone, Have a great May!

Alison



### **WHEN TO WATER AND HOW**

Watering your vegetable garden seems simple enough: if it's dry, water it. But how much water is enough - and how much is too much? What time of day is best to water? When are the critical times to water to ensure a successful crop?

### **How Much Water Does My Allotment Need?**

The rule of thumb is to make sure your allotment gets at least 2.5 cm (1 inch) of water weekly. Use a rain gauge, a tin can, or other straight-sided container in the garden to keep track of rainfall and provide additional water as needed.

Some crops can get by on less than 2.5 cm of water per week, but this is a good general guideline. Aside from rainfall, many other factors come into play when determining how much water is needed. If it's cloudy, you can reduce watering, as there's less evaporation. When it's hot and dry, you'll need to water more.

The roots of a mature tree have already spread out, so it doesn't need as much attention. Plan to water mature trees 1-2 times a month. Based on the amount

of rain and heat levels in your area, this may vary.

Once you've got the minimum watering needs of your allotment taken care of, consider the needs of individual vegetables. 2.5 cm of water is fine for brassicas, sweet corn, lettuce, potatoes, radishes and spinach. Some crops need more. For optimal growth. Beans, beetroot, carrots, cucumbers, peas, peppers and summer squash do best when watered deeper than this.

To meet the watering needs of all the plants in your garden without wasting water, you may want to use a combination of watering devices.

### **Too Much Water**

While lack of water isn't good, neither is too much water. Over watering can promote disease and encourage slugs and snails. It can also compact soil and wash away minerals. Too-frequent watering promotes shallow roots, making plants less drought-resistant. Deep roots seek out water during dry spells and are more resilient. One sign that your plants are getting too much water is yellowing and droopy leaves.

### **Time of Day to Water?**

The best time to water is early morning. This is especially good in warm weather as it protects the plants from drying mid-day sun and keeps them from wilting. If you can't water in the morning, the next-best choice is late afternoon, so that plant foliage can dry out before sunset. Wet foliage overnight encourages fungal disease, a risk, especially in damp climates. Don't water in the middle of the day when the sun is the hottest. This not only wastes water due to rapid evaporation, but hot sun on wet plants can damage leaves and fruit.

### **How Often to Water?**

Water deeply and less often, rather than watering a little more frequently. One suggestion is to water an established garden every six to ten days, watering 15-30 cm (6-12 inches) deep, in the absence of adequate rainfall.

The best way to determine if water is needed: use a trowel and dig into the soil. If the soil is dry to a depth of 15-30 cm (6-12 inches), it's time to water. Water to the depth of the plants' roots, as outlined above.

Drooping plants are an obvious sign it's time to water. If your plants are wilting, you've waited too long - a wilting plant is under stress. But drooping leaves may also be a sign of insect infestation or disease. If your plants are still drooping after a good soaking, lack of moisture may not be the problem.

### **Watering by Stages of Growth**

Seeds and seedlings need diligent watering. Newly seeded beds should be moist but not soggy. Water with a fine mist to avoid washing away seeds. Transplants should be watered thoroughly after planting, especially important during dry weather. Plants can experience shock due to root damage when transplanting: a good watering helps them adjust.

Many vegetables need special attention to watering during two periods: when they're flowering and when fruiting. A critical time for watering legumes, sweet potatoes and sweet corn is when plants are flowering (in the case of corn that means when the tassels and ears are forming). A critical time for watering tomatoes and squash is when their fruit is developing. When peas and beans are forming pods and sweet corn ears are filling out, they need attention to watering as well. Leafy greens and roots require steady watering throughout their growth.

With root crops, be careful not to give them too much water, which promotes leaf growth but hinders root growth and can also cause roots to split.

Vegetables that produce edible fruit, pods and seeds also shouldn't get too much water before they flower. This results in lots of leaves and shoots, but fewer flowers and consequently, lower yields.

### **Conserving Moisture**

Conserving water is not only good for saving money, but also for the environment and saves time spent watering. One way to conserve moisture is by using mulch. A layer of compost, well-rotted manure, shredded leaves, lawn clippings or water-permeable fabric mulch will prevent water loss. If high winds are a problem, a windbreak can be a good idea: drying winds can cause moisture loss. Frequent weeding also reduces competition for water.

Happy watering!  
Alison

## Compost article by Dorothy



We all use it in some form or other

**Fact** Destroying peat bogs contributes to climate change so how can we be "peat free?"

**Fact** Peat free composts perform as well as peat based and are not necessarily a lot more expensive.

### 1 Hopefully we are all making our own compost



### 2 Home made compost may not be best for seed sowing

so use a peat free alternative for this. Use the right type of compost for the job. Check the wording on the bags that it specifically says peat free.

If we all do our bit we can enjoy our crops and help the environment as well

[www.rhs.org.uk](http://www.rhs.org.uk) has a lot of good

MCHS trading hut is now open and products. Get advice as well for £6 website for opening times



advice

stock peat free membership fee. See [www.mchs.org.uk](http://www.mchs.org.uk)

**Jim has asked, please be careful when removing your hose-pipe from the taps. We have had a couple of broken taps recently.**

### Site Security Report

Theft, vandalism and unknown vehicles entering the site have been reduced since the gates have been regularly locked. Keys to the padlock have been available since last summer. To ensure you are neither locked in nor out, please see Jim Hunt to purchase a key for £5. This will be returned to you when you return the key at the end of your tenancy.

It is important that good security is maintained at all times. When members leave the site, whether they are the LAST person to leave or not, they must ensure the gates are LOCKED. Please see Members Handbook 2018.

Sean McCormack  
Security Officer

There will be a metal collection truck at the allotments at 10am on Saturday 8th May to collect any unwanted metal. Please stack carefully next to the noticeboard, but not before Friday 7th.  
Jim Hunt

**Please remember, it is the responsibility of every plot holder to clearly display the plot number of their site.**



Welcome to our new plot holders!  
Jane on 8b  
And Andy on 27a

Please say "Hi" and introduce yourselves.

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