

Newsletter Winter 2017/18

Committee News

Plot rents 2018

Good news! Plot rents will not be going up this year, they will remain at £8.40 per rod. Site Supervisors will be sending out more information in January.

Status of Our Allotment Sites

Kingston Federation of Allotment Gardeners (K FAG) has been trying to find out which of Kingston's allotment sites have 'statutory' (permanent) status and which have 'temporary' status. The distinction is important as statutory sites have some protection under the allotments legislation but temporary ones do not. It appears that all but three of the Borough's sites are statutory and our Park Road site is one of the three temporary ones. K FAG are looking into getting the designation of the three temporary sites changed to statutory. In the meantime the committee is looking into registering the Park Road site as an Asset of Community Value.

Water Tanks

The water has been turned off for the winter. Please help us maintain the tanks in good working order by:

- washing soil off tools, vegetables and hands on your plot
- keeping soil away from the sides
- removing any sludge, stones or rubbish
- reporting any leaks or faults to the Site Supervisors.

AGM 2018

a date for your diary

We have started planning for the next Annual General Meeting which will be held on Friday 13 April. We hope as many of you as possible will attend, it is your opportunity to express your views on issues affecting the allotments and to take part in TAA decision making. The next committee meeting will be held in the second half of February.

Kingston Horticultural Society

KHS shops – reduced opening hours in winter

Until March, the Park Road shop will be open from 11.00 to 12.30 on Wednesdays and Sundays and the Wolsey Drive shop will be open from 11.00 to 12.30 on Sundays but closed for all of December and January.

Gardening Tips

Crops to Plant in the Winter Months

Plant new, bare-root fruit trees and bushes and canes during the winter months when they are dormant. When selecting fruit trees choose dwarf varieties to avoid encroaching on neighbouring plots. Prepare the ground in advance by clearing all the weeds and digging in well-rotted manure or compost. If it is very cold or wet keep the plants in a cool, sheltered, frost protected spot and wait for conditions to improve.

Rhubarb is also dormant now so it is a good time to plant new sets or divide and replant old crowns.

If you did not plant onion and garlic sets and broad beans in November it is probably better to wait until February.

In the new year buy your seed potatoes. When you get them home, spread them out in single layers in egg boxes or on newspaper in seed trays and store them somewhere cool and light. Within a few weeks the eyes will begin to sprout and form new shoots known as 'chits'.

Making Good Compost

Composting is the most environmentally-friendly way of dealing with unwanted plant material on your plot and the compost produced is a great soil improver. To get the best results it is important to:

- put the compost bin(s) in an appropriate spot
- use the right balance of composting materials
- turn the heap and keep it moist

Position the bin on an earth base, to allow drainage and access to worms and other soil organisms, in light shade or shade. The bacteria and fungi that convert the waste to compost work best when they have warmth and moisture but they do not like extremes of either.

Aim for between 25 and 50 percent soft green materials such as vegetable waste, annual weeds, grass clippings or manure. The rest should be brown materials such as prunings (chopped up), dead leaves, straw, paper and cardboard (torn or shredded). Avoid letting any one material dominate.

Turn the heap regularly to avoid compaction and to introduce air which is needed for composting to happen. Turning the heap will also enable you to check the moisture level and add water if necessary.

Garden compost generally takes between six months and two years to be ready to use. When it is ready it will be dark brown and have a crumbly soil-like texture.