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# The FHS Grapevine

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Newsletter of the Finchley Horticultural Society

Spring 2016

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## Committee News

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Thanks to all those who attended the Finchley Horticultural Society AGM earlier in April. We elected new committees and congratulated the many winners of the Barnet wide Allotment competition.

The Trading Hut is now open every Sunday morning at Gordon Road Allotments and has a good range of garden necessities at very competitive prices. All members of the FHS are entitled to use this facility.

Anyone who can help with the Plant Sale, please see June or Claudine.

## Annual Plant Sale

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**22nd May 2016**  
**10.00am to 1.00pm**

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**29th May 2016**  
**10.30am to 1.00pm**

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vegetables

flowers - annuals and  
perennials

herbs

honey from our own hives

refreshments served from our  
new tea hut

free entry

## Get outside!

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It's time to get outside into our gardens and allotments and get sowing and planting as spring is here and summer is on it's way.

Preparations are in full swing for the Annual Plant Sale. Seeds have been sown and watered, plants potted on and hardened off and the polytunnels are full to bursting. Our lovely, healthy plants are sold at very reasonable prices and there is usually someone on hand to give advice about where to plant and what the plant looks like.

We don't know what the weather holds for us this summer, but we do know that we will need to do some watering. Eric Hess has written an interesting article on the drip irrigation system that he installed on the raised beds. He is very keen that we conserve water and make the most of this precious resource, not least because water is metered on all the allotment sites and we pay for every drop we use. He asks raised bed gardeners to turn off their taps when they have finished watering and this year plot holders must use a hand held hosepipe with a gun on the end.



## Free Compost

London Waste have opened an EcoPark Compost Hub at the Alara Whole Foods factory in Camden. Compost is free to collect. You will need to take bags and possibly check with them as to availability. The Hub is open all year. Google for details.

## RHS advice for May Summer's on its way

As bulbs fade and herbaceous borders grow in leaps and bounds, it is now clear that summer is approaching. Sowing and planting out bedding can begin, depending on regional weather variations, and you can take softwood cuttings. It's also time to get back into the lawn mowing regime, as the lawn will be loving the warmer temperatures this month brings.

### Top Ten jobs this month

1. Watch out for late frosts. Protect tender plants
2. Earth up potatoes, and promptly plant any still remaining
3. Plant out summer bedding at the end of the month
4. Collect rainwater and investigate ways to recycle water for irrigation
5. Regularly hoe off weeds
6. Open greenhouse vents and doors on warm days
7. Mow lawns weekly
8. Check for nesting birds before clipping hedges
9. Lift and divide overcrowded clumps of daffodils and other spring flowering bulbs
10. Watch out for viburnum beetle and lily beetle grubs

## RHS Grow Your Own Guidance caring for your fruit and veg

### Fruit

- Pull off suckers appearing around the base of fruit trees
- Liquid feed fruit trees growing in pots with a balanced feed every fortnight
- Deblossom strawberry runners planted since September
- Water blueberries, cranberries and lingonberries when needed with rainwater, but use tap water when butts are empty
- Remove any winter protection from figs and carry out pruning
- Move growing-bags into the greenhouse to warm up two weeks before planting indoor melons, and water well two days before planting.
- Gently run your hand over indoor grape vine flowers to pollinate them
- Make sure fruit isn't drought stressed, especially those in containers, against a wall or newly planted
- Make sure bees can access caged and cloched fruit flowers to ensure pollination
- Keep a check on late frost forecasts and protect blossom as necessary

### Vegetables

- Earth up potatoes when the shoots are 23cm (9in) high, in order to prevent the new tubers going green. Earthing-up is the drawing up of soil around the stems of the plants, leaving just 5cm (2in) of shoot uncovered so that the plant has enough foliage to continue growing
- Start to remove sideshoots from cordon tomatoes as you see them. The sideshoots develop in the leaf axils (i.e. between the stem and leaf), and if allowed to develop will sap the energy of the plant and reduce the quality of the yield
- Strings stretched along the tops of broad bean plants can support them, and prevent them flopping once pods develop
- Peas need staking with pea sticks, netting, or pruned twigs from the garden

## The secrets of Drip Irrigation Revealed by Eric Hess

The reason for writing this article is to dispel some of the myths about the drip irrigation system on the allotment site, in particular the erroneous belief that it wastes a large amount of water. The reality is quite the opposite.

A few years ago I was asked by Andrew Brown, who had been responsible for the construction and ongoing maintenance of the raised beds, to lay drip irrigation. His thinking was that it would ease the strain of lifting watering cans for people with disabilities and it would conserve water as it reduces evaporation and deep drainage. He was aware of my past history of living on a Kibbutz in Israel where I spent many years in agriculture and drip irrigation extensively.

I was involved in the extensive testing of drip irrigation with researchers from Tel Aviv University who used one of our younger orchards. A variety of different sprinkler systems were laid such as: landscape sprinklers, micro sprinklers and drip irrigation. In all the final results, where harvest, water conservation and health of trees were tested the drip irrigation system proved a resounding success.

Drip irrigation works by allowing water to drip slowly to the roots of the plants. The water flows through a network of valves, pipes, tubing and emitters or drippers. The system has a series of chambers which break down the amount of water emitted by each individual dripper. Each dripper will give out the same amount of water to each plant.

### Newsletter

If you received a paper copy of this newsletter and are now able to receive it by e-mail, please inform Christine Williams, [chrysw@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:chrysw@hotmail.co.uk). This saves us time and money.

First of all the water will sink straight down and then it will spread out in ever widening circles. Extras can be added to the system, such as fertilisers, tanks, filters and pressure valves.

### On Gordon Road allotments

When I laid the system on the raised beds on the Gordon Road allotments, I encountered an unexpected problem: a huge build up of pressure in the pipes kept causing them to burst. I could have improved this by installing pressure valves on all the pipes, however, this would have meant an additional and rather expensive outlay, so we went for the cheaper option, which is clips. These have not always proved foolproof as they can sometimes become loose.

At Andrew's request I also used cheaper piping and connections to the taps. This too can sometimes be the cause of a sudden disconnection as the pipes expand in hot weather.

If you have a raised bed on the allotments, please remember to give only a quarter turn to when putting the system on. The water will not come out immediately as the pipes need to fill up. Please disconnect the tap as soon as you have finished watering so that we do not waste water. Try not to bend the piping as this can distort them and prevents the flow of the water. If you have any problems I am onsite most days or you can email me for help at: [arid.hess@outlook.com](mailto:arid.hess@outlook.com).

For more information on drip irrigation take a look at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/-Drip\\_irrigation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/-Drip_irrigation).

This issue of the Grapevine has been generously sponsored by Winkworth Estate Agents.

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## The Finchley Horticultural Society

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[www.finchleyhorticulturalsociety.org.uk](http://www.finchleyhorticulturalsociety.org.uk)

For all Finchley gardeners and for plot holders at  
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Member of the  
Barnet Federation of Allotment  
and Horticultural Societies

## Events Diary

### 30 April 2016

RHS on Tour at Parliament Hill  
Farmers' Market

William Ellis School 10am - 2.00pm Free  
The RHS is hitting the road and teaming up  
with London Farmers' Markets to hold a  
number of events in 2016. Visitors can expect  
to find stands offering gardening advice,  
quality plants and informative talks all mixed  
in with local, independent food producers in a  
bustling market atmosphere. Also on tour -  
**19 June** at Columbia Road Flower Market  
**11 September** at Marylebone Farmers' Market



### 24 - 28 May 2016

RHS Chelsea Flower Show  
Royal Hospital Chelsea, SW3 4SL  
Tuesday - Friday 8.00am until 8.00pm  
tickets are selling fast,



### 3 - 4 June 2016

RHS London Rose Show  
RHS Lawrence Hall, SW1P 2QD  
Curated by TV gardener Rachel de Thame  
There will be a programme of talks, advice  
and inspiration from nurseries.



### 5 - 10 July 2016

RHS Hampton Court Palace  
Flower Show 10.00am  
until 7.30pm  
Stunning show gardens, butterfly dome and  
floral marquee



**To book tickets to RHS shows, visit**  
[rhs.org.uk/shows](http://rhs.org.uk/shows) or call 0844 338 7539

### 22nd and 29th May 2016

#### FHS Plant Sale

Sunday 22nd May from 10.00 am to 1.00pm  
Sunday 29th May from 10.30 am to 1.00pm

### Finchley Nurseries Garden Centre

Finchley Nurseries Garden Centre offers a 10%  
discount on plants to all Finchley Horticultural  
Society members. It now has a new tea room  
which is open from 9.00 to 5.30 on Mondays to  
Saturdays and 10.30 to 4.30 on Sundays.

**Next Grapevine July 2016**