

Looking back on 80 years of gardening in Finchley and the troubled year ahead

In 2020 the Allotments at Gordon Road, Brent Way and Nethercourt Avenue enter their 80th year. Read about our story inside.....

As I write this the response to the Coronavirus pandemic COVID-19 is dominating life in the UK and especially in London. The advice from the Government, as you all know, is not to have any unnecessary social gatherings and this means that many of our plans for the year will have to be cancelled, postponed or altered. Please adhere to the new advice in my recent email (1/4/20) so that the Allotments can remain open and we can all stay safe.

The first Community Meeting of the year was planned for April 26th but this will not now take place. I hope that we can have one in the late summer or early autumn.

The Plant Sale was due to be held on Sunday 17th May and then again on the following Sunday. It will not go ahead in its usual sociable format, however, we hope to find a way to supply plants to our members whilst keeping to social distancing rules. We are not growing any more seeds now as the future is so uncertain. We have some flowers to sell but no vegetables except chillis, peppers and leeks. Vegetables are sown later than the flowers and so are victims of the situation. Please keep reading our Mailchimp emails for further information.

Our Summer Outing to Sissinghurst and Merriment Gardens on 27th June has also been cancelled. Refunds will be made to those who booked. We expect to run it next year.

On 17th March we held our 79th AGM at the Finchley Lawn Tennis Club. It was necessarily a much reduced affair, as we cancelled the Garden Lecture and the Social. Nonetheless we were able to attend to the business of the AGM. I, Jo Cuttell, was elected Chair of the Society, Catherine Schmitt remains our President and members of the General Committee and the Allotment Committee were elected. Documents relating to the AGM are on the website. I am delighted to become Chair of this amazing society and I hope I can do as good a job as Claudine Fear, who has been Chair for the last six years. As a token of our thanks we sent Claudine a John Lewis voucher, so she can buy something she really wants. Taking on this role means that I would like to offer the opportunity of editing the Grapevine to someone else! There is no obligation for the newsletter to continue in its current form. Please let me know if you are interested.



This year we celebrate 80 years of gardening

Finchley Horticultural Society was founded in 1940 as The West Finchley (Wartime) Allotments Association, part of the 'Dig for Victory' campaign. The 'Dig for Victory' campaign was set up during WWII by the British Ministry of Agriculture. Men and women across the country were encouraged to grow their own food in times of rationing. Open spaces everywhere were transformed into allotments, from domestic gardens to public parks – even the lawns outside the Tower of London were turned into vegetable patches. Posters, such as the one shown here, were part of a massive propaganda campaign aiming both to ensure that people had enough to eat, and that morale was kept high.



In 1948 the wartime restrictions were lifted and the amount of land requisitioned for food growing dropped dramatically, but at Gordon Road and Nethercourt Avenue it was retained as statutory allotment land, leased to the Society by Finchley Urban District Council. Over the following years home gardeners were also welcomed to the Society and 'West' was removed from the title. In 1967 Finchley Horticultural Society became our official name. A new constitution was adopted in 2011. Brent Way allotments came under the management of the Society in 2013.

The Society held its first show in 1940, in a war time shelter on one trestle table at Windsor Open Space. Shows went on to become a very important activity for the Society and in 1973 there were 578 entries. Support gradually dwindled and the FHS show ceased in 2000. Interest in growing large or strangely shaped vegetables seems to have been superseded by a concern for the environment - composting, biodiversity, bee keeping and organic gardening.

In 1973 the Society hosted the 1,082nd edition of the BBC's Gardener's Question Time. It was held at Moss Hall School.

The first Plant Sale was held in 1980 in order to fund the garage trading hut.

Bulk horticultural supplies for resale to members and plot holders were bought by the Society from the beginning. A trading hut was run from an Anderson shelter in Gordon Road soon after the war. In 1980 a garage, and in 1984 a substantial hut were erected and are still in use today! A hut for Nethercourt was purchased in 1972, which also sold supplies until 1980 when the volunteers running it were unable to do so any longer. June and Helen have handed over the running of the trading hut to Tuuli and Munira after many years of dedication. We're very grateful to them for their hard work in supporting members to buy supplies on site. Good luck to Tuuli and Munira, who have been spring cleaning the shop.

A newsletter has been produced by the Society for many years and this edition, the earliest I could find was produced in Summer 2005 edited by Helen Green. The first edition of the four page version was produced in Spring 2011.



Sixteen raised beds for disabled gardeners and schools were opened at Gordon Road by the Mayor of Barnet in 2012.

From 2013 our allotment sites were leased from Barnet Council on a self-management basis for a 38 year period.

The Finchley Horticultural Society is affiliated to the Royal Horticultural Society, The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardens, The Federation of Middlesex Horticultural and Allotment Societies and the Barnet Allotment Federation.

Composting

Now is the perfect time to start your own compost heap especially as Barnet Council is deferring green waste collections until further notice.

This advice comes from the RHS website and is very clear and concise.

Home composting is the most environmentally-friendly way of dealing with kitchen and garden waste, plus it produces compost that can be used as an excellent soil improver. It's a better way to recycle your waste than using the heavy council lorries and it's free. Eric Hess at Gordon Road is our resident compost expert and he's always happy to talk to members about this subject so dear to his heart.

How to Compost

The site and container

It is important that the site is not subjected to extremes of temperature and moisture, as the micro-organisms (bacteria and fungi) that convert the waste to compost work best in constant conditions. Position the bin in light shade or shade; it is often more convenient to use a shady area of the garden or allotment.

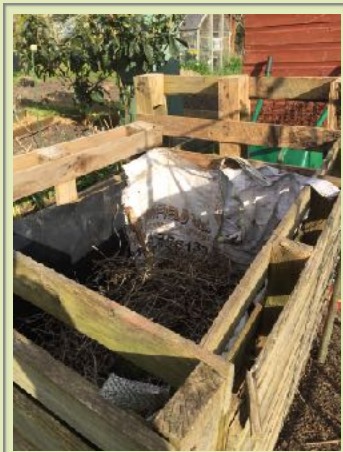
An earth base allows drainage and access to soil organisms, but if you have to compost on a hard surface, then add a spadeful of soil to the compost bin. Bins retain some warmth and moisture and make even better compost more quickly, but even an open heap (not enclosed in a bin) will compost eventually. Any of the compost bins on the market should produce



Enclosed bin

compost as long as they exclude rain, retain some warmth, allow drainage and let in air. Bins less than 1 cubic metre in size are less effective than larger ones.

Open heap



Getting the right balance of composting materials

- Aim for between 25 and 50 percent soft green materials (eg grass clippings, annual weeds, vegetable garden wast, or manure) to feed the micro-organisms
- The remainder should be woody brown material (eg pruning, wood clippings, paper, cardboard, straw or dead leaves)

The bacteria and micro-organisms that produce the compost function best when the balance of green and brown materials is correct. Avoid letting one material dominate the heap. Kitchen waste and grass clippings are best mixed with brown woody material, as they tend to be wet and easily compacted, excluding air.

Some common composting materials

Green - grass clippings, soft leafy plants, fruit and vegetables, selected pet waste/bedding

Brown - pruning and hedge trimmings (ideally shredded) woodchip, leaves, paper and card (torn up or shredded), straw, plant stems.

When is the compost ready?

Garden compost can take between six months and two years to reach maturity. Mature compost will be dark brown, with a crumbly soil-like structure and a smell resembling damp woodland. It is unlikely that all the material in the heap will be like this, but any remaining unrotted material can be added to the next batch of composting materials.

Have a look at this video:

[RHS video: making compost](#)



Catherine and Christine will have perennials for sale when the restrictions are lifted and they offer a wealth of knowledge to help you choose the right plant for your garden or plant pot.

The Finchley Horticultural Society

34 Elm Park Road, Finchley, N3 1EB

www.finchleyhorticulturalsociety.org.uk

twitter.com/finchleyhort

www.facebook.com/FinchleyHS

For all Finchley gardeners and for plot holders at Gordon Road, Nethercourt Avenue and Brent Way

President

Catherine Schmitt

Chairman and FHS Enquiries

Jo Cuttell 020 8922 0241

Allotments Secretaries

Gordon Road: June Brookes 020 8349 2253

Nethercourt Avenue:

Penny Igoe 07871 846496

Brent Way: Elaine Wright 020 8346 9975

Treasurer

Chris Ouseley: 020 8346 1205

Membership

Christine Williams: 07984 935668

Trading Hut

June Brookes: 020 8349 2253

Website

Judy Woollett: 020 8346 5107

Allotments Security & Break-ins

Tony Ingram 020 8349 1265
or 07967 274739

Newsletter Editor

Jo Cuttell 020 8922 0241

To contact any committee member by email please use this address and mark it for the attention of the person you want to contact:
finchleyhorticulturalsociety@gmail.com

Member of the Barnet Federation of Allotment and Horticultural Societies

Affiliated to the
Royal Horticultural Society



Newsletter

If you received a paper copy of this newsletter and are now able to receive it by e-mail, please inform Christine Williams,

finchleyhorticulturalsociety@gmail.com

This saves us time and money.

Events Diary

May 2020

FHS Plant Sale cancelled
Read our emails for further information



Most RHS Shows have been cancelled due to the Coronavirus pandemic, however the RHS is hoping to hold some later in the year. Check their website for details.



Pussy willow and primroses in the Totteridge Valley



Finchley Nurseries are closed but now offer a collection service at their gate for more information phone 020 8959 2124 or email them:

finchleynursery@btconnect.com



Winkworth

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

T: 020 8349 3388 www.winkworth.co.uk