

The Grapevine

Newsletter of the Finchley Horticultural Society

SUMMER 2022

Yes. I remember Adlestrop—
The name, because one afternoon
Of heat the express-train drew up there
Unwontedly. It was late June.

The steam hissed. Someone cleared his throat.
No one left and no one came
On the bare platform. What I saw
Was Adlestrop—only the name

And willows, willow-herb, and grass,
And meadowsweet, and haycocks dry,
No whit less still and lonely fair
Than the high cloudlets in the sky.

And for that minute a blackbird sang
Close by, and round him, mistier,
Farther and farther, all the birds
Of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.



Adlestrop by Edward Thomas

This Summer issue of the Grapevine coincides with a very hot spell – we are currently basking (I might prefer to call it ‘roasting’) in 30+ degrees Celsius. This means the speeding up of growth, of berries, vegetables and fruit – and weeds! It also means round-the-clock watering. Plus all the gorgeous allotment produce needs to be quickly harvested – if left on the vine, in the bed or on the bush, it simply wilts, bolts or shrivels dry. In short, this is a very busy time, with plenty to think about and do. But it is also a lovely time to enjoy the balmy evenings, attend summer BBQs (including our own FHS one) and savour the fruits of your labour (but be careful if you are having a BBQ on your plot - as sparks from them can cause a fire. Have a bucket of water ready!)

Obituary – Claudine Fear

It is with great sadness that we have said goodbye to one of the FHS stalwarts – Claudine Fear, who passed away on 9 June after a long battle with cancer.

Everyone at the FHS remembers Claudine as a lovely person, kind and generous, full of enthusiasm for the Society. She was a great conversationalist, with a sparkling sense of humour, always ready to engage with new members and offer advice.

One of Claudine’s oldest friends June Brookes had this to say of her:

“Claudine and Michael were married in August 1986 and moved to Finchley the same year. She was determined to get an allotment as soon as possible and unlike many allotment enthusiasts had the same plot at Gordon Road the entire time.

“Claudine began work as a scientist at Guy’s Hospital where she stayed all her working life, only retiring in 2009.

“She was very artistic and took up many courses – knitting, embroidery, sculpture, and drawing, even trying to learn to play the piano. She had an exhibition of her very modern paintings in Hampstead. She also loved the ballet.

“Claudine became a reluctant FHS Chairman but stayed in the role for 6 years and as with everything she did, made a great success of it. In 2013 our Allotments became self-managing and Claudine played a vital role in enabling that transition, taking on the challenge of self-management and ensuring that FHS is well run, properly conducted and fulfilled the legal requirements. She helped to make the Plant Sale the huge social and financial success that it is now. Her spreadsheet for the Plant Sale is used to this day.

“Her one obsession was to spend Sunday afternoons pulling up weeds but of course by the following week they had all come up again!

“We shall all miss Claudine and the work she did for the FHS”.



Oak Processionary Moth (OMP) Caterpillars

(info from the DEFRA website)

Our Gordon Road site has received a report of a very likely (although not confirmed by Barnet arboriculturists) exposure to the OMP by one of the raised bed plot holders. In case such exposures happen again, here is useful information about the OMP and action to be taken after contact.

The Forestry Commission issues annual alerts about toxic oak processionary moth caterpillars in London - but what are they? And how have they made their way into the city's green spaces?



The caterpillars causing alarm are oak processionary moths (OPM), *Thaumetopoea*

proccessionea. They have been spotted all over Greater London, and gardeners have been reporting allergic reactions after touching them.

According to the Forestry Commission, the hair from these caterpillars can cause rashes, asthma attacks, and throat irritations, and the organisation has warned the public to stay away from them.

What do oak processionary caterpillars look like?

When freshly hatched, oak processionary caterpillars are orange with black heads. As they grow, they turn a whitish colour and sport long white hairs, with a black head and black stripe on their backs. The hairs contain **thaumetopoein**, a substance that can irritate skin, airways and eyes.

When are you likely to come into contact with the OPM caterpillars?

Oak processionary caterpillars can be spotted between April and July, but you're most likely to see them between May and June. They'll move down the trees as they get older and bigger, and build nests. They usually move nose-to-tail in a procession, hence their name.

You may be able to see them on all parts of the tree - on the trunk, branches and leaves, and occasionally on the ground. Nests are usually found in early

summer, in the trunks and branches of oak trees. They are typically dome or teardrop-shaped, and range from the size of a golf ball to a rugby ball. When fresh, the nests are white with white silken trails made by the caterpillars along the branches and leaves. But the nests soon become discoloured and brown, making them harder to spot. Nests stay attached to the tree for many months after the adult moths have emerged. From late June to early August, the caterpillars retreat into the nests and form a pupa (cocoon). The pupae remain in the nests until they emerge as adult moths.



A close-up view of the hairy oak processionary caterpillar. Image by regani via Wikimedia.

Forestry Commission advice on toxic caterpillars

People in the affected areas can take simple precautions to minimise the health risks to themselves and their pets and livestock:

- Do not touch or approach nests or caterpillars or try removing nests or caterpillars yourself.
- Pets should also be restrained if hairy caterpillars are discovered, as dogs in particular come into contact with them.



OPM Nest

What to do if you see oak processionary caterpillars

Any sightings should be reported to the Forestry Commission via the Tree Alert online form. Alternatively, people can email opm@forestrycommission.gov.uk or call 0300 067 4442.

Nests need to be removed by a trained arborist who has the correct equipment. Do not try to remove or stamp on caterpillars yourself as you may put yourself at risk or damage other harmless species.

Consult a doctor or vet if you suspect you or your pets have developed an allergic reaction from the caterpillars.

Important advice on watering your vegetables (from Rocket Gardens)

Making sure your plants are well watered will make the world of difference to your crops when you harvest them. “Well watered” doesn’t just mean “watered a lot” though. As a general rule, veggies find large differences between very wet and dry soil stressful. They much prefer having access to consistently moist soil. Ensuring that they have this will save you a lot of apparent crop failures and diseases, such as:

- Blossom end rot on tomatoes and squashes
- Split carrots/split tomatoes
- Fungal diseases
- Canker in parsnips
- Smaller than usual celeriac
- Bolting brassicas and salads
- Leaf curl on tomatoes
- Wilting leaves and poor crops



Aim to follow the following 5 rules until you have gained enough gardening experience to just “know” when you need to water.

- 1) When you first plant your veg, soak the roots before you plant them, water them in on planting and then water them every morning for a week (unless it rains).
- 2) Once plants are established, water them every 2-3 days (unless it rains) or every day if it is hot like last summer.
- 3) Water in the mornings if you can, but if you see a plant is wilting during the day don’t be afraid to water it in the midday sun!
- 4) Always aim for soil that is moist but not waterlogged (open a bag of compost and this is the kind of moisture level that most plants love).
- 5) Check moisture levels below the surface. The soil may appear moist on the surface, but a couple of cm below it is totally dry. Prod a finger into the soil, or loosen it with a trowel to check, and give more water if necessary.



Finchley Horticultural Society visit to Wisley, Friday 24th June *by Judy Woollett*

It was a slightly cloudy day but this didn't deter our group of 35 FHS members and friends from visiting the wonderful RHS Garden at Wisley.

We walked through the *Rose Garden*, which was ablaze with colour; the *Cottage Garden* filled with perennials such as vivid blue salvia interspersed with pale pink delphiniums, geraniums and much more; the *Wellbeing Garden*, *Wildlife Garden* and many more.

New to me (although it is some years since I last visited) was *RHS Hilltop*, previously known as the *Centre for Horticultural Science and Learning* which houses three research laboratories, equipped with state-of-the-art facilities for collaborative research. The building is now home to a team of about 70 advisors, scientists and PhD students, all focusing on finding solutions to the key environmental challenges gardeners face.



The site is divided into small gardens, each with its own distinctive planting.



Our group spent a long time in the stunning Glass House. Entering it is like walking into a jungle, with tree ferns, tall palms, lush leaved creepers, and dazzling flower displays. As you follow the path, the environment and climate changes gradually with three climate zones: tropical, moist temperate and dry temperate.



Of course, no visit to a garden can be complete without a visit to the shop and garden centre where we all purchased plants aiming to re-create the wonderful gardens we had just visited.



What a great day out!



Notes from the Pruning Workshop by Philip Cuttall

The workshop was held on 8 July. Those present included Lesley Wertheimer from London Orchard Project, and 11 plot holders who paid £5 contribution each for the London Orchard Project.

Tools

The tools used in the workshop were secateurs, bypass or anvil. Lesley also demonstrated powered secateurs. She also mentioned pruning saws which cut on the backward pull and the Fiskars telescopic pruner. For ease of access Lesley recommended the Henchman tripod ladder.

Tools should be cleaned between trees with Jeyes Fluid outdoor disinfectant, to avoid cross-infection.

Pruning time

You should prune pip trees in November, while stone fruit trees should be pruned in July, to reduce the risk of silver leaf fungus.

When pruning, one should make the cut at a 90-degree angle, and not at a slant as the latter creates a bigger surface area with a greater risk of infection. The cut should be 2cm from the main branch and be clean, without tearing the bark.

Begin pruning by first removing 3D's:

- Dead
- Diseased and
- Damaged, branches (which include crossing branches).



Next, you need to plan the prune for the tree in question by spending 20 minutes planning for each 10-minute cutting.

Aim to remove a maximum of 20% of fruiting buds per year.

As you prune, make a pile as you go, to enable you to estimate this 20%. Think: 'I'll do this much this year and next year I will do that'. Be prepared to sacrifice some of this year's fruit if necessary for the long term.

For large branches remove in stages to reduce risk of branch tearing under its own weight. Aim for a goblet shape to allow air and light.

The exception is pear trees which fruit on the vertical branches so they need a champagne flute shape.

Fruit trees are grown on rooting stock which determines the ultimate size of the tree. When planting, ensure the knuckle of the graft is above the soil to prevent shoots of the rooting stock developing. If planting a maiden which is a straight stick, prune back the top third to tell the tree to branch into a goblet shape.

Apple trees

The correct pruning technique depends on whether your tree is a tip fruiter or side fruiter.

You should take off 'water shoots' as they appear. Winter pruning is used to shape and restrict growth. Summer pruning – to remove shoots and increase fruit quality.

June drop is when tree sheds excess fruitlets. Also good to remove some fruitlets to encourage good sized remaining fruit.

A separate workshop will be held in winter to cover this properly.

Fire blight

Lesley remarked that the site has many affected trees. The affected branches look dead with brown leaves. They should be removed and burned as soon as one sees them, cutting back a foot into the living tree, and not waiting until the 'correct' time of year for pruning.

Fruit trees do not weep unless they have canker, which is a fungus/bacterium. Cut it out if possible.



Summer BBQ

Our summer BBQ was held again in person on Sunday 10 July. Despite scorching heat and the competing attraction of the Wimbledon Men's Final, it was very well attended and the food was delicious.



Special thanks to all the chefs and the splendid BBQ team.



A quiz to test your knowledge of our FHS allotments

by Felicity Nock

Try your hand at this fun quiz to win a free bag of compost.

1. Judy Woollett arranges for which of these charities to pick our fruit and veg:	North London Hospice / Charity Veggie Box / PDSA (please tick one)
2. How many weeks a year do Philip, Eric, and Chris reckon the grass paths need cutting? Nearest estimate.	
3. In which year did Barnet introduce Independent Allotments? Who was responsible for steering the FHS Committee at the time?	
4. Who came to open the new Tea Hut? In which year?	
5. Though disrupted by Lockdown, thinking through the year, how many community events do the Committees usually host? Can you name them?	
6. Which event is our biggest earner?	
7. During Lockdown our allotments stayed open as a solace to many plot-holders. Can you name the restrictions we introduced?	
8. This year Judy Woollett has arranged a coach to take us to which RHS garden on 24 June. Can you name any other garden visits?	
9. Elain and Penny represent which of our twin allotments?	
10. Eric alerted us to a leak in the water system this spring. How long did it take to mend?	
11. Which of these opt-in deliveries in 2021/22 is the odd one out?	chip / straw / horse manure / cow manure / recycled green waste (please tick one)

12. Which local garden centre offers 10% off for FHS members in their shop and for which items?	
13. Do you know what BAF stands for?	
14. When is the Barnet Allotment Competition taking place in 2022?	
15. Dr Philip Cuttall advises that the side effects of bonfire smoke are which of the following:	asthma / shortness of breath / eye irritation / global warming (please tick one)
16. According the FHS Handbook, you need approval for which of these?	shed / polytunnel / fence / fruit cage / composter (please tick one)
17. Which year did FHS invite bee-keepers to keep bees at Gordon Road ?	
18. How many bee keepers are there in 2022?	
19. Name 5 discount garden essentials items you can buy from our FHS shop, managed by Tuuli	
20. How many plots and sub-plots in total can Sylvia offer on behalf of the Committees at Gordon Road & Nethercourt? & Brent Way? (Closest guess-timate?)	
21. The Orchard Project, the Piggery Shelter, Green Waste skips are all ongoing projects on the Gordon Road site. Can you name the years the 3 phase Gordon Road Fence project was started and completed? Which grants helped to fund it?	
22. Ann Brown set aside a plot for Wildlife in 2010/11, Lesley Ludlow took it over in 2017. Who is responsible for the Wildlife Plot in 2022?	

Notices

PLANT SALE 2022

Our annual plant sale, open again to the public this year, was a huge success despite the rain and blustery wind on the day. The weather did not put people off and thanks to their enthusiasm and determination and the wonderful resilience of our Plant Sale teams we managed to raise £2,500, with further takings in subsequent weeks. Huge thanks to everyone who contributed on the day and in the weeks prior to and after the sale and a big round of applause to Catherine and Christine for their hard work through the year to raise and look after the Sale plants.

CARDBOARD FOR THE ORCHARD PROJECT

Gordon Road Allotment Committee need large sheets of cardboard to help them develop the area near Dollis Road into an orchard. The cardboard acts as a barrier to weeds and it is then covered with wood chip to make an amazing, free growing medium. Please leave any cardboard in the green room.

GORDON ROAD ALLOTMENTS BUG SAFARI AND CRAFTS

Are your children keen on bug hunting? Then bring them along to the Gordon Road Bug Safari on 31 July. There will be 3 sessions at 11am, 11.30am and 12. This is an adult-led activity which will include potting, catching (if possible) and identification of bugs using field guides and spy glasses/lenses. Places are limited. The price, which includes modelling a bug, is £1 for FHS members, £2 for non-members (exact cash please). Money raised goes towards maintaining the wildlife plot. Meet at the Cabin at the far end of Gordon Road Allotments.

Suitable for children 5 and over, who must be accompanied by a parent/carer.

Note: LONG SLEEVES, TROUSERS AND STOUT FOOTWEAR SHOULD BE WORN. The bug hunt will take place on the Wildlife Plot which has some nettles and brambles (and 2 ponds!)

If you would like more information or to pre-book a space contact Helen Skelton on helenskelton1964@gmail.com

GATE KEYS

Many thanks to John Scotchford for trying to sort out the major water leak in Gordon Road. He gave very generously of his time and energy. Unfortunately, the repair was a much bigger job than we originally thought, and we had to call in professional plumbers. The cost of the work, which took two days, was £1,500.

POLITE REMINDER

I would like to remind all plot holders that all FHS General Committee and Allotment Committee members and officers, are volunteers, who have generously agreed to take on their roles on top of their main jobs and other commitments and who do not get paid for this work. Although they are happy to fulfil their different roles and answer questions or queries, I would like members to bear this in mind and respect the Committee members' time as it may take them a while to respond to you.

Many thanks,
Jo Cuttell
FHS Chair

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Royal Horticultural Society

Events Diary

RHS SHOW DIARY:

RHS Flower Shows to enjoy in 2022:

3-7 August
RHS Garden Hyde Hall
Flower Show

19-21 August
RHS Garden Rosemoor
Flower Show

6-11 September
RHS Garden Wisley
Flower Show

Look out for on-sale dates in the members' e-
newsletter or visit rhs.org.uk/shows



Newsletter

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