

Kimpton Parish Council  
Hall Lane Allotments

Message from Lewis Hawke, Allotment Representative

**1. Our Allotments**

Welcome on being an allotment holder. Please remember an allotment should be a pleasure – you run it, not it runs you as I have found out to my cost in the past.

There are very few black and white decisions – generally its trial and error in growing. What goes well this year may not be as good the next year.

These notes are based on practical experience, talking to other plot holders, and sometimes gleaned from books or articles.

If you have young children do try to involve them, possibly give them a patch of their own.

Talking to other plot holders can be very rewarding, and you can learn a great deal from their experiences.

**2. Intro**

If you are taking on an allotment from scratch it can seem a daunting task. So divide it up into smaller manageable chunks. When you have cleared the allotted chunk it will have actually accomplished something. Dig well, dig deep, and remove as many weeds as you can. If you cover the rest with matting or polythene it will help kill or weaken the plants underneath and look better.

When you are ready you can peel back the covering and dig another chunk. Should you wish you can weed killer the ground before you cover and this will help to get rid of most weeds.

Prepare a list of the essential tools you will need. If you haven't got them already buy the best you can afford.

This list is just a suggestion for starters.

- Fork
- Spade
- Rake
- Hoe
- Trowel
- Dibber
- Watering Can

There are other items that can make life easier such as a wheelbarrow, gloves, secateurs.

You will discover that short and regular stints are better than long and occasional ones.

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### **3. Soil**

The soil varies from one allotment to another or even on the same allotment. This means that some crops grow better than others. Ask your neighbour what they find grows well.

I seem to be able to grow onion's, beetroot, potatoes, beans and weeds well but am not so successful with peas, carrots, parsnips and swedes. Others have different experiences.

However, you can do something about this by manuring or composting, planting green manure or adding fertilizer.

De stoning the soil as you dig it will make future working easier but takes time.

### **4. Manuring and Composting**

Well worth the effort, you can either make compost bins from palettes or purchase them. It is useful to have two so one can be composting whilst you fill the other. There are compost enhancers available, which will speed up the process.

All vegetable waste from home can be used as well as that from the allotments. I also use leaves (except Rhubarb leaves which are poisonous), ash and sawdust. Do not put any meat, fish or similar substance in as it does not rot quickly and attracts rats.

If you are going to grow runner beans you can put vegetable waste into the prepared trench or add other compost. A useful tip is to also lay down some newspaper or thin cardboard as they retain moisture.

By far the best though is rotted manure although this is not always easy to come by. You can buy bags but is quite expensive.

Planting green manure and digging it in before it flowers is very beneficial and helps break up the soil.

There are also a wide range of fertilizers available which can be useful for specific purposes.

You can make your own liquid manure in a large container from comfrey, which grows like a weed along the hedge at the back of the allotments. Just add bunches of comfrey to a container of water – stir and leave for a couple of months – then use as liquid manure.

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Leaf compost is also beneficial. Collect leaves in the autumn and either put in piles or into large bags. Keep for a few months until they compost down. You can put leaves directly into the bean trench.

## 5. Pests

- Again each year varies. If we don't have a really cold winter then lots of the pests are not killed off and will try and play havoc the following summer.
- Slugs and snails can decimate some crops – there are a number of ways of deterring them including slug barriers, beer traps and so on or using slug pellets – all with varying degrees of success.
- Then there are caterpillars and cabbage whites. Netting all brassicas can help although butterflies seem to find a way through. Netting will also stop squirrels, muntjack and other pests. Brassicas need to be netted to avoid decimation by pigeons and other birds.
- Whilst the allotments are next to the open fields there is the possibility of rabbits. Although we have only had two bad years in the last 15 – mainly because rabbits nested under one of the sheds on an allotment that was not being tended. Chicken wire round beds stopped this.
- Squirrels particularly, but also rats and mice will attack some crops – these are more difficult to deal with but putting poison down can help. Be extremely careful with poison however so that other animals can't get to it.
- Muntjacks may attack young broad beans.
- One way to deterring mice from digging up and eating peas and beans is to soak them in white spirit/turps before planting.

## 6. Crops

- **Runner Beans**

Dig a trench and put manure in.

One of the allotment judges said he planted his runner beans at the end of April in the greenhouse and also outside in situ at the same time. This gives two chances and also varies the time of growth. When the beans reach a good height pinch out the top to encourage growth of beans rather than greenery.

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- **Broad Beans**

Similar to runner Beans pinch out the tops when they reach a reasonable height. This helps stop the invasion of black fly. Broad bean pods can also be chewed by Muntjac. Broad beans can be planted in September/October to deter black fly.

- **Fruit**

I grow very little other than raspberries/strawberries. I do have blue berries in pots as they need a totally different soil to the allotments (Ericaceous). For other information on fruit best bet is to ask the other allotment holders.

- **Strawberries**

A great delicacy for squirrels – netting is advisable. Try growing in raised beds which helps to keep the weeds down whilst controlling the spread of strawberries all over the allotment

- **Raspberries**

You can grow early raspberries and they should be netted to save them from the early birds. Later varieties don't get eaten as much. When they are finished you can prune them down to a couple of inches above the ground. Cover with manure as this is good for the next year's growth.

- **Tomatoes**

The best thing is to grow them in the greenhouse. Do pinch the little shoots out or you will end up with a jungle and not such big fruit. Feeding them is also helpful.

They can be grown outside but experience shows that around the beginning of September the cold wind on the allotment kills them off just as they were getting pick able.

- **Rhubarb**

Rhubarb crowns grow very successfully.

For the first year you should not pick the stalks but let them die down in the October/November. Then cover the roots with compost or manure if you can. It is also suggested that you split the roots every 3 to 4 years. Do not put rhubarb leaves in your compost - they are poisonous.

- **Onions**

Do seem to grow well but some years they get badly eaten and also the stalks go brown. This doesn't effect the onions but stops growth. There have been great years for red and white onions. Also shallots. Salad/spring onions are best grown over the spring with a couple of weeks between them. They can be grown in the same rows as beetroot. They are picked first and then the beetroot can grow through.

Leeks are a great winter crop and easy to manage. Sow a row of seeds and then transplant where you want when they get big enough. Try to transplant them before July.

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- **Garlic**

Same experience on allotments as the onions. Can be planted in September/October as well as early spring. You don't need special cloves as ones that have sprouted at home can be used. Brought cloves usually give a better crop.

- **Horseradish**

Root is very hot and great to use but beware they spread like mad and are very hard to dig up as they get older.

- **Marrow, Courgettes, Squash**

Another fairly successful crop – good in raised beds. Can spread a lot.

- **Chillies**

Best in the greenhouse or covered on the allotment. Huge variety and strength of taste.

- **Cucumbers**

Normal cucumbers are great in between the tomatoes in the greenhouse. But ridge cucumbers are very successful outside

- **Sweet corn**

Best started in the greenhouse under cover and then planted out. Squirrels and possibly rats can take the cobs and plants if not protected.

- **Brassicas**

They grow well. At the risk of boring you they do need netting as the pigeons love them. Brussels are successful but be sure to heel the plants in well as it seems to keep the brussels tighter. The brussel tops are also great.

- **Asparagus**

Great crop to eat but takes up quite a lot of space and can only be picked for about 6/8 weeks. If you over pick them then they can 'bleed' the crowns. Needs regular weeding but be gentle not to upset the roots.

- **Artichokes**

Not every ones favorite but a delicious different crop. If you don't pick them when they are ready they give a wonderful display of blue thistles which can be used for floral arrangements.

- **Root Vegetable**

With all root vegetables remember that if the soil is very stoney they will grow in weird and wonderful ways.

- **Carrots**

They have not always been as successful as I would have liked. But I have had much more success putting them in raised beds and using seeded pellets.

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- **Parsnips**

I have had similar experiences to carrots but when they grow well they are brilliant. Don't forget you should not pick them until after the first frost.

- **Celeriac**

Another different crop which I have found easier than growing celery but having the same flavor.

- **Potatoes**

Most varieties grow well. My favorite are the salad potatoes. Linzer delikatess which I order on bulk for many plot holders and friends around October, delivered in Feb to be planted in Feb/March. Ready by June.

If you do wish to plant main crop bear in mind how much space they require and that they are usually relatively cheap in the shops.

## 7. Sheds and Greenhouse

Some allotment holders find a small shed very useful for storage and it can save having to take all your tools up and down to the plot. It can also be useful for raising seedlings and sheltering from the rain!

Sheds can be vandalized and few years ago we had a spate of break-ins but, touch wood, we haven't had problems of late.

Another useful addition is the greenhouse or poly tunnel. Great for growing seedlings etc. Also good for bringing on very early salad crops.

In the winter you should fumigate it to clean out any of the bugs. You can buy a smoke bomb from Garden Centres.

Poly tunnels can also be useful but are subject much more to the elements and ripping or tearing.

## 8. General Tips

**Raised beds** – very useful. You can improve the ground by filling with good soil, compost or manure – this provides a better growing condition. A raised bed has other advantages – easier to weed, protection against the winds and gives a defined boundary for crops that might spread.

### **A plot**

They are of a specific size – full, ½ or ¼. The later having been recently introduce to encourage people.

You can grow what you like to eat, or flowers if that's what you want.

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You should cut your paths and trim the edges. This will also make your plot look good.

Taped seeds are great as they space out the seeds evenly. Not so much waste or loads of plants in the same place.

Talking to other plot holders will be of great value and provide invaluable information or advice.

Plug plants are now available for many veg. These can be obtained from a number of suppliers including Kings.

Kings provide a beginner's seed pack for new allotment holders. They also offer a special discount to allotment groups and for the past few years I have distributed catalogues and collated orders around Sept/October. This benefits everyone by saving them roughly 40/50% on seeds. If any one is interested please let me know and I will get you a catalogue.

### **Specific conditions relating to Kimpton**

1. The only trees allowed are fruit trees and there is a maximum height of 6ft.
2. Paths are the responsibility of the allotment holder but should be 3ft minimum width.
3. If you wish to erect a building i.e. shed or greenhouse the Parish Council requires a £100 refundable deposit. This is because if things go pear shaped they will have to pay to take it down.
4. Allotments not kept up to the required standard may not be offered a renewable option the next year.
5. Carpeting to cover the ground is also discouraged, as it's a synthetic material.
6. Whilst you are allowed to keep chicken/ducks etc. the Council does not allow bees.
7. Produce from the allotment is not allowed to be sold but there are many deserving residents who can benefit from excess crops.

### **Finally**

I am the allotment rep but accept no responsibility for the results of the information contained in this leaflet.

If you have any comments, tips or additions that you think should be included in future editions please let me know.

Enjoy your allotment.

Dig for Britain!!