



Edition Five – March 2021

Welcome to the Slopefield Sunflower, the newsletter from Slopefield Allotment Association.

Covid-19

Unfortunately another growing season and the Corona virus is still here. There is optimism for the future with the vaccine and I'm sure some of our more mature allotmenters will have had their first jab by now. Even though infections are reducing and the vaccine is being rolled out we would kindly ask all plotters to continue to respect social distancing and ensure that they continue to take all necessary precautions like hand sanitizing after opening and closing the site gate. Please do not visit Slopefield if you think you have any symptoms of Covid-19.

Reminder - Annual General Meeting, Thursday 4 March 2021

The Slopefield Allotment Association Annual General meeting will be held on Thursday 4 March 2021 between 7pm and 9pm. For the first time the AGM will be held virtually so please join us on your computer, smartphone or tablet and meet fellow plotters, helping to shape the future of our site with your ideas and suggestions. It's not too late to register and you can do so by e-mailing slopefieldallotments@gmail.com with your name and plot number.

Green Flag Award

Following judging being delayed by the pandemic we are pleased to say that Slopefield was again awarded another Green Flag for 2020/21. This is the second year they have received the award and our flag will shortly be flying proudly above the site again. Thank you to all our volunteers who even though this year there have been no community events have continued to maintain the site.

The Allotment Market Stall (TAMS)

It was not all bad news during 2020 and The Allotment Market Stall (TAMS) had one of its most successful years ever collecting 2539kg of fruit and vegetables which was sold at Duthie, Seaton and Victoria Parks earning an income of £5462. We are proud to say that Slopefield was the biggest contributor across the eighteen allotment sites earning the Association a massive dividend of £498.12 to go towards the upkeep of our site. The Association would like to thank all the plotters who's generosity in contributing their excess fruit, veg and flowers helped bring income to Slopefield. Give yourself a big pat on the back and lets see if we can beat that total this year. TAMS collections will start again in July.

It's Your Neighbourhood Theme

The theme for this years Keep Scotland Beautiful "It's Your Neighbourhood" Campaign is Climate and Nature Friendly. Slopefield has again registered to take part and we will be assessed (should restrictions allow) by way of a site visit between May and September. If you have any ideas we can focus on around the theme of Climate and Nature Friendly then please let us know by e-mail slopefieldallotments@gmail.com or speak (socially distanced of course) to one of the row reps or committee members on site. If you are unsure who they are then further details can be found on the noticeboard at the parking area at the bottom of the site.

Plant Sale

It is planned to have another plant sale during May. Last years sales raised over £360 for Slopefield. If you are dividing any perennials just now or wish to donate any other plants then please leave them (with label) on Plot 41 or e-mail Martin on anaberdeenallotment@gmail.com



Website (www.slopefieldallotments.org)

We have a new webmaster at Slopefield – April Shelbert, who over the last few weeks has been giving the website a slight revamp. We would like to thank our retiring (to his potting shed) webmaster Sandy Menzies for all his work in setting up and managing the website over the past few years. If you haven't visited the website yet please do so and come back on a regular basis for the latest news and information about our site. Oh and there are some great recipes and growing guides there too! If you have any ideas, recipes, guides or pictures that would be good for the website then please e-mail slopefieldallotments@gmail.com

One Seed Forward

With all the garden centres being closed at the moment it is not so easy to get hold of your seed potatoes. Community initiative One Seed Forward have partnered with Bonnymuir Green Community Trust to host a Potato Day at Bonnymuir Green on Saturday 20 March between 10.30am and 1.30pm. Attendance is free however please see www.oneseedforward.co.uk or the Bonnymuir Green Facebook page for further details on registering to ensure the event remains covid safe. Alternatively if you can't make it along One Seed Forward have a limited number of free seed potatoes so please contact Bob Donald on oneseedforward@gmail.com

Hutton Hut

You may have noticed in Autumn last year that the community plot was closed off for safety reasons. Unfortunately the decking at the front of the Hutton Hut had rotted and became a health and safety hazard. It was originally planned not to replace the decking for financial reasons however after the healthy dividend from the TAMS contribution we are now able to replace like for like. Watch out for the new decking taking shape over the coming months. If you are able to assist with this task then please speak to Terry Stott, Site Manager or e-mail slopefieldallotments@gmail.com

Discount Seeds Scheme

Last year there was some discussion around participation in a discount seeds scheme. This is used by other allotment sites in the city and some of the major seed supplier offers this for allotment associations. Is this something that plotters on site would be interested in or do you prefer to support the local garden centres by buying your seeds there (when they are open of course!)? If someone is interested in taking this forward or you have any comments then please let a committee member or your row rep know. Alternatively e-mail us at slopefieldallotments@gmail.com

Community Facilities 2021

Unfortunately due to the ongoing pandemic the communal tool shed and polytunnel will remain unavailable to plotters on site. However the community greenhouse (next to plot 86) is available for plotters to use to start seedlings or grow on crops. Please ensure that any seed trays and pots are labeled with your plot number. Plotters are responsible for the watering and maintenance of their on plants. Any plants found to be affected by pests or disease will be removed immediately to prevent cross infection.

The swap/spares area is also still available and located in the bottom car park as you come on to the site. If you have any spare plants, seeds or equipment in good condition that you no longer require place them in the swap/spares area for fellow plotters. Please label all plants so we know what we are planting! Any loose or perishable items (pots, seed packets, etc. - not plants!) should be placed in the storage box. **Please no rubbish or broken items and if you have left something in the swap/spares area and it is still there after two weeks then please remove and dispose of at the local recycling centre.**



Water

The site water supply will be switched on again during the third week of April. This is at the instruction of Aberdeen City Council.

Terry's Tips

We've had a very cold, wet and frosty winter particular from late December through to mid February. Whilst the frost will have helped kill off some of the pests some of us may be behind with our preparations for the coming growing season so take advantage of any nice weather to get a head start.

Although the weather may have improved don't be fooled by a few days of sunshine as snow and frost can easily return soon enough. The earth will also still be cold and wet so don't be too keen to put any seeds or plants in the ground yet as they may rot. Wait until the ground conditions have improved.

Warming the Ground

You can help warm the ground by placing black plastic over your beds. The thick heavy duty woven ground control fabric that can go by the trade name of Mypex is ideal and taken care of can be used year after. The woven membrane mean that that any rain still gets through and can keep the ground nice and moist for sowing and the black colour ensures that any warmth from the sun is captured and transferred through to the soil. You can also use any clear plastic such as a tunnel cloche however this could cause weeds to germinate. If you are looking for a more environmentally method of warming your soil then large sheets of cardboard can be used and disposed off on the compost heap when it come to planting time.

Bare-root Bushes

This time of year is also an ideal time to plant bare-rooted fruit bushes as the soil begins to warm up however I would do so before the end of March before the plants start into growth. If you look online many suppliers will have bargains as they try to get rid of end of season stock. When your bushes arrive it is important to unpack them as soon as possible. Re-hydrate the roots by giving them a good soak in a bucket for a couple of hours. If you are unable to plant them into their allocated space immediately then you can "heel them in" on a patch of soil. This will keep the roots moist and hydrated however please remember to plant them by the end of the month. Do not plant your bushes if the ground is frozen or waterlogged.

Onion Sets

As well as tattie tubers, onion sets are a popular purchase at this time of year. These are basically immature onions grown last year and then dried off ready to start into growth the following season. The ground is to cold and wet at the moment to plant sets direct however if you have a coldframe or a greenhouse then you can plant your sets in seed tray modules of multipurpose compost to give them a head start. Once the temperature has warmed up in April the by now rooted sets in their plug of compost can be planted direct in the ground.

Leeks

You can also start leeks off in the greenhouse or coldframe rather than sowing directly in the ground. Again start by sowing one seed per plug of multi-purpose compost. Alternatively take a deep pot and scatter the seed on the surface covering with a thin layer of compost. Once the leeks are pencil thick they can be planted out.



Autumn Raspberries

If you have not pruned your Autumn Raspberries do so as quickly as possible before new shoots appear. Cut the canes right down to the ground. Alternatively only cut down half the canes to the ground leaving the others to bear fruit early in the season

Hoe, Hoe, Hoe

Weeds will be popping up on the plot soon enough so ensure you keep on top of them by hoeing your beds regularly. It's a job made much easier if you keep the blade of your hoe nice and sharp

Overwintered Veg

As the day length extends and temperatures warm up any over winter veg such as carrots, parsnips, leeks and kale will send up flower spikes. The spikes make the vegetables inedible so ensure that you pick and use your crops as soon as possible.

Seed Sowing Preparation

Ensure you have plenty of seed and multi-purpose compost in preparation for seed sowing and potting on young plants. Keep your compost indoors such as in the greenhouse or at home to ensure it is warmed up. Also keep a full watering can indoors too as seeds and young plants don't like icy cold water.

If you would like specific gardening advice then you are welcome to contact Terry direct via e-mail on terry.stott@btinternet.com

Please Remember.....

Parking: Please park end on to maximize spaces and do not block the roadways with vehicles.

Watering: Hosepipes - max ten minutes use. Please refill the Water Butts if they are empty.

Grass Verges: Do not dump waste from your plot (especially stones) on the grass verges.

Paths: If you have a path between your plot you (and your plot neighbours) must maintain it.

Composting: Do not compost cooked food. It attracts rats!

Feedback/Suggestions/Volunteers

If you have any feedback or suggestions for the newsletter or are interested in volunteering at Slopefield to help maintain our site in the beautiful condition that it is then please e-mail or speak to one of the committee members or row reps on site. Details can be found on the noticeboard in the bottom car park or our website here: <https://www.slopefieldallotments.org/info> You can also keep up to date with the Committee minutes which appear on the noticeboard shortly after every meeting.

Best wishes

Slopefield Allotment Association