

STAA Newsletter June 2022

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Hello all Sheet and Tilmore Allotmenters,

Feel free to share your own personal allotment experiences on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/374794504338386> or on the website

<http://sheetandtilmore.weebly.com/>

SHEET ALLOTMENTS INSPECTION

The Sheet Representative Steve Elliot accompanies SPC on their inspections and reported that on the whole the plots are in really good order with a few letters going out to people who seem to be struggling.

TILMORE FRUIT CAGES UPDATE

PTC revised their restriction on the size of fruit cages and will assess each individually. There is a 6ft height limit.

TILMORE BOUNDARY FENCES

PTC have plans to fix the gaps and problems with the boundary fences. In particular the large gap at the bottom left hand corner onto the lane.

USE of PESTCIDES

PTC need to be informed prior to any Pesticides use. All health and safety regulations must be adhered to, and a 'non windy day' date arranged.

TILMORE PLANT SWAP



The Plant swap at Tilmore at the end of May was a great success with many plants finding new homes. Thanks to Julie and Georgie for the wonderful home made cake and cookies.



Any time you have spare plants you can leave them either at the gate or on the table just outside – they will always be used. Please label them.

SHED NEWS from Abi

The Trading Shed has had its best year ever, thank you to all our customers, both new and returning. According to our happy shoppers, our appeal is due to the fact that we sell all our stock at just above cost price, making it considerably cheaper than garden centres and DIY stores.

Of course, Steve and I like to think it is because you like to see our happy smiling faces on Sunday mornings....

The shed is officially closed for the season but we do have some 8 foot canes, wooden stakes, and a few other bits and pieces left. If there is something that you see on the stock list which is on the Trading Page of the STAA website please drop us an email and we will help if we can. Hope all have a good growing season and we will see you again in 2023!

A full list of our stock including prices is available on the Sheet and Tilmore Association Website. <http://sheetandtilmore.weebly.com/>

ALLOTMENT COMPETITION

This year **every** plot will be judged for the £50 cash first prize.

The 2nd and 3rd prizes (£20 & £10 shed vouchers) can only be won by STAA members. So, as you are all going to be judged, make sure you can claim your prize by joining the Sheet & Tilmore Allotment Association. It's only £5 and has many benefits.

The competition judging will be done some time in July – so make sure you are ready.

Information about how and what we judge is on **Page 5**

ANNUAL STAA BBQ

For Covid reasons , this will be the first BBQ to be held since 2019.

**Sunday AUGUST 14th from MIDDAY onwards
at SHEET Allotments.**

Free hotdog/burger and drink to everyone.

BRING A CHAIR!

You do need to be an STAA member but you can join on the day.

Do bring your own food and drinks if you want to.

STAA COMMITTEE

Chair	Margaret Davis	Sheet 75		Margaret.davis101@gmail.com
Secretary	Georgie Thurlby	Tilmore 26A	07856 910123	georgina.thurlby@hotmail.co.uk
Treasurer	Alison Carling	Tilmore 15a	07890 266986	alison.bazley@wsnorman.co.uk
Membership Secretary	David Mogg	Sheet 88		Membership.staa@gmail.com
Trading Secretary	Abi Grute	Tilmore 40	07428 661416	abigrute@hotmail.com
Website	David Mogg	Sheet 88		Membership.staa@gmail.com
Sheet Representative	Steve Elliot	Sheet 93/94		Stevee14@googlemail.com
Tilmore Representative				

STAA membership provides you with all the stock available from Abi at the Shed on Mill Lane, half price seeds from Kings in November; 10% discount from Southern Fruit Trees; public liability for your plot and other wonderful things – all for only £5 a year. See website for details.

<http://sheetandtilmore.weebly.com/>

Thanks of course to David who maintains the Website and Facebook for us all and liaises constantly with Kings Seeds to keep their STAA membership list updated.

Tilmore Representative Position Vacancy

Sadly, Jerry & Slaney have both had to step down from the committee. So, if you are someone who likes to welcome newcomers to the allotments, keep in touch with all allotment holders and help to sort out any problems or issues then please do get in touch.

PLOT NUMBERING



As part of the agreement we sign with PTC at Tilmore and SPC at Sheet, we are obliged to number our plots CLEARLY.

The easiest thing is to paint your number on the side of your shed, polytunnel or greenhouse with a nice big brush.

JUST MAKE SURE IT IS CLEARLY VISIBLE!

Competition Scoring Criteria

Contrary to popular belief, the judging of the allotments is not just based on us standing, pointing and saying “Ooooh, isn’t that a great plot, let’s give it a prize.”

We do have categories with specific maximum marks for each.

VARIETY OF PRODUCE {max 12 marks} Half a mark is given for every different thing that is being grown. Remember that potatoes are potatoes – you will only ever get half a mark for potatoes, regardless of how many different types you have. Similarly, squash is squash, beans are beans, fruit trees are fruit trees. If you really do have something extraordinary then just drop us a message to tell us – you can always point things out in case they might be missed because they look like something else. You could also LABEL things.

QUALITY OF PRODUCE (max 20 marks) - Size, lushness, full rows.

PLAN (max 10 marks) You do need a rotation plan: potatoes, alliums, brassicas are the main ones which could end up with disease if always planted in the same place. The Judges will look to see if plants in these categories are grouped together and are being rotated.

COMPOST HEAPS (max 10 marks) You need 3 compost heaps for max marks here. One currently being used, one ‘cooking’ and one being used for compost. Covering the one that’s cooking is a good idea – or grow a squash or courgette in it.

CLEANLINESS (max 20 marks) A high scoring category because it really is important to keep your plot clear of weeds that rob your produce of nutrients and will seed onto other people’s plots.

This can be a tricky one – because ‘what is a weed?’ - companion planting can be so beneficial. So if you are growing clover or nasturtiums round your brassicas to confuse the cabbage white butterfly, you still need to make sure there are no other random weeds in there.

PATHS (max 10 marks) We all have edges that need to be kept under control and defined, and if you have paths on your plot then they also need to be weed free.

WILDLIFE AREA (max 10 marks) Pollinating flowers (not random weeds) and in a clearly defined area. You will also get marks for being Pesticides Free, for bird feeders, insect houses, a pond and/or water for hedgehogs & insects, comfrey and/or comfrey feed.

A few cheeky ploholders, on receiving a letter from the council/parish suggesting they may benefit from tidying their plot a bit, claimed it was a wildlife area. Full marks for effort but sadly non cultivation is not what we are encouraging on your allotment.

GOOD LUCK EVERYONE !

Water use on allotments

It's raining as I am writing this, but if last year was anything to go by we are likely to have long dry periods again during the coming summer.

Water is so necessary for growth but you can water things too much. Some things don't need much water at all. If you water your carrots too much then they will stay on the surface – you really need them to go down in search of water.

When you sow seed I am told that you should water every day until the little plants appear. After that, if you start by watering every day then you will have to continue doing just that. Your plants become lazy and it is better to make them develop a strong root system searching around for water.

It can also affect the taste of things. I did extensive 'research' one year on strawberries around the allotments and found that although the ones watered a lot were larger, they simply didn't compare in taste to the ones watered only when necessary.

We are so lucky to have a mains water supply. Water is a vital ingredient for us and it should be used in a sensible and considerate manner by all. Where possible we should have water butts to harvest any rain that does fall. This is vital when the plot has a greenhouse or polytunnel as this significantly increases watering requirements.

The best time to water your crops is in the evening or very early morning, using a watering can and aiming at the roots not the foliage.

Water thoroughly on a weekly basis and soak the soil, this encourages the roots to go deeper in search of moisture.

Water appropriately to the crop, plants also need different amounts of water at varying stages of growth and too much water can affect yield and taste.

Cucurbits Squash can survive and produce fruits from minimal watering but courgette plants need to be kept constantly moist.

Fruiting crops Aubergines, cucumbers, sweet corn and tomatoes need constant water throughout their growing period.

Leafy vegetables and salad crops Crops such as cabbages, chard and spinach along with salad crops need water at every stage of growth.

Legumes Avoid watering peas and broad beans when young but they will need water at flowering time and about 2 weeks later. Runner beans need constant moisture but French beans can cope with dryer conditions.

Onions etc Water to establish and then only in dry spells.

Potatoes Water regularly from 6-10 weeks after planting when they start to produce tubers.

Root crops Carrots and parsnips will split if watered irregularly, water before dry conditions develop.

Stem vegetables Celery, celeriac and Florence Fennel need copious amounts of water to develop and will be damaged by drought conditions.

Planting out - When planting out young plants it is always recommended that you water the hole or trench very well, before putting in your seedlings. This means the root system of your young plant will have instant access to water, also encouraging them to grow downwards to seek new water supplies.

Mulching - a 2 to 3 inch layer of mulch over the soil will help to retain moisture in the summer, suppress weeds, improve soil texture and release nutrients. Apply when the soil is wet and warm in autumn or spring and take care not to pile up against plants stems as it will cause them to rot. Compost companies offer a vast choice of ready-made products containing bark, seaweed, bracken etc. Alternatively can use your own allotment compost or materials such as well-rotted manure, leaf mould, spent mushroom compost, bark or grass clippings.

Remember always plant a little lower than the surrounding soil, in shallow trenches or bowl shaped depressions, so that water collects in the 'puddle' and actually sinks in. Potatoes can be earthed up to form an 'M' shape so watering just in the dip of the 'M' goes straight to the roots and keeps off the leaves reducing the risk of blight. Using a watering-can to fill up the trench or bowl ensures all your water goes to the plants. Using a hose wastes water, waters the weeds and takes a lot longer than getting say 10 litres directly into a depression where your plants are.

The RHS has a useful guide at <https://www.rhs.org.uk/vegetables/watering>

Comfrey Feed by Monty Don



Comfrey has very deep roots, which means it extracts large quantities of nutrients from far below the soil's surface, inaccessible to other plants. These nutrients are stored in its leaves. By harvesting the leaves and letting them break down, you'll have a rich, dark, nutrient-rich plant food to use around the garden. It's especially rich in potassium, making it the ideal feed to promote flowers and fruits in a range of plants, including tomatoes.

So don't buy tomato feed – Comfrey is as good if not better.

Important points:

- It is around now, July, that we need to start feeding our plants.
- Comfrey is high in Potassium which is good for flowers and fruit – tomatoes especially.
- No need to buy feeds – use Comfrey.
- Cut the plant right down and use the leaves – put the stems in the compost.
- Put leaves loosely in a bucket, top up with water and leave 3 weeks to brew.
- It will stink! So keep it covered.
- Use diluted 10 to 1
- Spare leaves can be put round your plants as a mulch – and they won't smell bad.

<https://www.gardenersworld.com/how-to/maintain-the-garden/how-to-make-comfrey-feed/#:~:text=Monty%20Don%20shows%20you%20how,of%20crops%20such%20as%20tomatoes>



Hello, I'm a Dandelion.

When you see me, remember that I'm the ONLY one who wants to and can grow in that particular spot.

Because:

- The soil is too compact/ hard/stomped and I want to loosen it with my roots.
- Or too little calcium in the soil - I will replenish that with my dying leaves.
- Or the soil is too acidic. But I will improve that if you give me the chance.
- Or a mixture of the above reasons, of course. 😊

Are you trying to remove me prematurely with my root? However meticulous you are, I will return 2x as strong! Just until your soil is improved.

I'm here because your soil needs my help so best you let me grow without disturbing me! When everything is fixed, I will disappear again, I promise!

You can even tell by my growth at which stage my help is at. If my leaves are flat on the ground then I'm far from ready but if they all reach up then I'm already a long way on my way.

My flowers are even delicious for you people by the way, did you know? I used to be called "honey (or gold) of the poor" because my flowers are so sweet in e.g. jam, sauce or salad! The internet is full of recipes - check them out. But wait until the end of May or later before you start picking and even then, don't pick everything yet! The biodiversity and bees will be very grateful!"

During the day when it's hot, I open my flowers but in the evening when it cools off I close them again quickly. In fact, if it's not hot enough during the day I won't open them at all !

Something completely different is that I am 1 of the first bloomers in spring so I will announce spring / summer for you.

My flowers are the first food for insects after hibernation and unlike most other plants, I have pollen AND nectar, not merely one OR the other! And I am generous with them! 😊😊

NATIONAL ALLOTMENT SOCIETY Jobs to Do		
July	August	September
<p>July is usually one of the driest months, so watering can be essential. To help with this, hoe regularly to break up the soil and remove weeds. Water in the cool of the morning or evening.</p> <p>Harvesting Keep up with the harvesting of all crops because the allotment is now in full production. Lift early potatoes and carry on earthing up the rows. Harvest garlic and shallots as the foliage begins to become yellow and strawy.</p> <p>Pick the first of the early tomatoes.</p> <p>July is the start of globe artichoke season. If your plant is into its second year then cut off the top bulb once big and swollen with a couple of inches of stem attached.</p> <p>Lift autumn planted onions for immediate use. Continue to pick rhubarb until the end of the month and begin to harvest the main crop of your strawberries.</p> <p>Start to pick plums, early pears and apples.</p> <p>Sowing and planting Start sowing the seeds of the overwintering crops of kales, spring cabbage, radicchio, chicory, spinach beet and a hardy type of onion to mature in the early summer of next year.</p>	<p>If you're on holiday during this month, it's worth asking a neighbouring plot holder to keep an eye on your patch, as no doubt everything will come into season all at once and need picking.</p> <p>Harvesting Continue with the harvesting of all vegetable crops and keep up with the picking of runner beans to maintain cropping well into the autumn. Continue with the lifting of potatoes. Prepare to lift onions towards the end of the month. Wait until the tops begin to fall over as this indicates that the bulb has stopped swelling. Dry them before 'stringing' and putting into store. These bulbs will then keep until next March.</p> <p>Start to thin apples and pears down to one or two fruits per cluster. The apples and pears will soon begin to colour up. The plums and damsons will be in full flow so harvest regularly.</p> <p>Harvest the earliest grapes such as 'Black Hamburg'. If not already done, carry out the last thinning of the bunches on late grapes.</p> <p>Harvest soft fruit. The late fruiting raspberries will be cropping well by now.</p> <p>Sowing and Planting Make the last of any outdoor sowings to provide a late harvest for this season, radishes and lettuce will still produce a crop.</p>	<p>In many ways this month can be regarded as the start of the new gardening year. Now is a good time to take stock of the successes and failures of this year and make plans to ensure that next year will be the best ever. Also, if you are starting out from scratch you will have plenty of time to prepare the ground whilst planning your dream allotment.</p> <p>Harvesting Top of the list has to be onions and potatoes they need to be got out of the soil before the cold, damp days of autumn arrive. They have completely the opposite storage requirements. Onions must to be kept in the light and potatoes need to be stored in the dark to prevent them from turning green, but both have to be stored somewhere that will keep the frost out.</p> <p>Harvest apples and pears as they become ready and pick the late season strawberries and raspberries to keep them producing fruit. They will keep cropping right up until the first frost.</p> <p>Cut courgettes and marrows regularly because they will be finished by the end of the month, as will outdoor tomatoes. Remove any green tomatoes and place them in a drawer or shoebox to ripen.</p> <p>Sowing and Planting Now we have shorter, cooler days it is the perfect time to sow the seed of the Oriental vegetables. They will germinate quickly and are hardy enough to withstand the cold of winter and will provide a</p>

<p>Now is the best time to sow the main crop of carrots to avoid attack from root fly.</p> <p>Continue with successional sowings of beetroot and lettuce. Follow the instructions on the back of the seed packet, and sow every 2 - 4 weeks for a continuous supply of crops.</p> <p>Plant out the last of your marrow, pumpkins, squashes, overwintering cabbages and leeks. Cover with netting to help protect them from the birds.</p> <p>General Aim to keep the hoe moving at every opportunity. Water all crops at least once a week. Start to draw the soil up around the base of Brussels sprouts and sweet corn plants to encourage extra roots.</p> <p>Pest and diseases This is the start of potato blight season, and if the weather is wet and humid in July then your crop is likely to be at risk. An infected plant will have a watery rot on its leaves, causing them to collapse – the infected matter should be binned or burned and not placed into your compost, as this will not kill the disease and it will reoccur the following year.</p> <p>The main pests are aphids, cabbage white butterfly caterpillars and pea moth.</p>	<p>General The end of this month signals the time to begin summer pruning your apples and pears (grown as cordons, espaliers or fans. For trees and bushes, leave these until the winter to prune). Start with the pears and then move on to apples. The purpose of summer pruning is to encourage the development of fruit buds for next summer.</p> <p>August is definitely the last month to prune stone fruit trees (plum, apricot, cherry and peach), complete the task as soon as possible. You want to aim for an open structure of branches and remove any that cross over so they don't damage each other.</p> <p>Trim any box hedging before the first of the frosts arrives. Remember, "Make the first cut after the last frost and the last cut before the first frost".</p> <p>Pest and diseases Blossom end rot can affect aubergines and tomatoes causing black sunken blotches on the skin of the fruit. Usually due to a lack of calcium, the disease can be stemmed by amending your watering habits to ensure the calcium found in the soil is fed through the water to the plant – so water regularly and don't allow the soil to dry out. (Discard any damaged fruit).</p>	<p>steady supply of fresh leaves well into the Spring of next year Also make a sowing of hardy winter lettuce and spinach. There is still time to sow an early variety of turnip to be able to use the tops as greens.</p> <p>Plant out earlier sown spring cabbage and protect with netting or fleece.</p> <p>General Complete the summer pruning of soft fruit bushes, apple and pear trees. Continue with their training and tying in.</p> <p>Feed all late crops with a general fertiliser such as pelleted chicken manure.</p> <p>Dig up and compost any plants that have finished their season.</p> <p>Clear the soil of spent crops and leave it rough dug over for the winter. It is also a good time to sow winter grazing rye as a green manure. It can be dug back into the soil as part of your spring preparations.</p> <p>Pest and diseases Wasps are attracted this time of year due to the ripening of your fruit. Hang wasp traps in fruit trees and protect any grapes from wasps with netting or mesh. But also remember that wasps are the gardener's friend because they are major predators of aphids and caterpillars at this time of the year.</p>
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Editors' Note: Lifted from <https://www.nsalg.org.uk/growing-advice/monthly-advice/july/> etc.