

Plot updates - Movers and newcomers

Naomi Walker has moved to Plot 15 and has plans to develop to a proper allotment and grow some vegetable in it. Annette Morgan has taken over plot 11A and Frank McMahon has taken on 17B. Both are experienced allotment-eers and I am sure will add to our community. Welcome.

SUMMER TO DO LIST

Water wisely

Prioritise early morning or late evening watering to reduce evaporation.

Keep on top of weeds

Regular hoeing when it's dry will stop weeds taking hold.

Harvest little and often

Harvest runner beans and courgettes when young for best flavour.

Support and prune

Tie in tomatoes and pinch out side shoots. Prune fruit bushes and thin apples and pears to improve air circulation.

Check for pests

Look out for cabbage white butterfly eggs on brassicas. Pick off slugs and snails in the evening. Use netting to protect vulnerable crops

Enjoy the space

Sit down with a beverage and admire your handiwork. Note what's working (and what's not) for next year's plan.

SUMMER PLANTING

Quick growers for a fast harvest

Lettuce – choose heat-tolerant varieties, sow every 2–3 weeks

Radish – fast and easy, ready in under a month

Rocket and salad mixes – bolt-resistant varieties work best now

Spinach (New Zealand or perpetual) – more tolerant of heat than regular spinach

Crops for autumn harvest

Beetroot – sow now for a small autumn crop

Carrots – choose fast-maturing varieties like 'Nantes'

French beans – sow until late July for a September crop

Spring onions – slow to grow, but great for autumn salads

Plant out seedlings

Winter brassicas – kale, cabbage, sprouting broccoli (if you've raised them earlier)

Leeks – transplant now for a winter crop

Swedes and turnips – sow direct in July/August for late autumn roots



JULY by John Clare

— Save that to the earnest eye

The restless heat seems twittering bye

Noon swoons beneath the heat it made

And flowers een whither in the shade

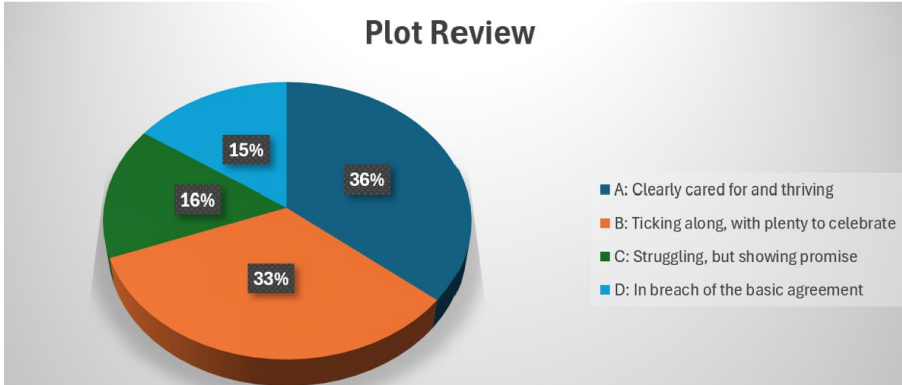
Until the sun slopes in the west

Like weary traveller glad to rest...

Summer Issue 2025

Plots, custodianship and our patch of Eden

by Sue Whittles



A high-level update on where we are, what's working, and what needs a nudge.

Tucked away behind the trees and fences, our little collection of plots feels like another world — and in many ways, it is. A world of soil and stories, bindweed and beans, laughter, compost, and quiet. It's also a world that increasingly needs a little more care.

As we carry out this summer's informal plot review, we wanted to share a few reflections.

A rare opportunity

For the very modest fees, it's quite possibly the best value in the county. For many of us, it feeds us (and others) for months. But it's not just about veg. This is a space for peace, for purpose, for connection. And as guardians of this bit of Eden, we have a collective duty to look after it — for ourselves, and for those who will come after us.

What's the review about?

The review isn't about policing or perfection. It's about showing signs of care. Of nurturing. Of showing up and giving it a go. It's going well but there is room for improvement

We've graded plots A to D this summer:

A: 14 plots — clearly cared for and thriving

B: 13 plots — ticking along, plenty to celebrate

C: 6 plots — struggling, but showing promise

D: 6 plots — in breach of the basic agreement

No names. No shame. But if you think you might be a D... you probably are.

A gentle ask

If you're struggling — please tell us. Life can throw curveballs, and we get it. Illness, grief, upheaval — all have their seasons. We want to support, not scold. If you're aware your plot is slipping and you're doing your best, that's okay. But radio silence followed by a carpet of couch grass is harder to justify.

So if you do need a hand, say so. If you're done, say that too. Either is fine. But let's keep the conversation open.

The bigger picture

Our allotments used to support the almshouses with additional funds. Now, the almshouses support us — absorbing the cost of admin, insurance, and legal expenses etc. In other words: if we don't look after the plots, we risk losing them altogether.

Looking forward

This is a community. And communities need light and shade. People who need a bit of space, a bit of encouragement, or simply to know they're welcome.

We'll be reviewing again in August. Just a quiet walk around and a shared sense of what's fair. And if you're not sure what's expected, just ask. We're all still learning.

In the meantime

Let's:

- Keep the spirit light, but the standards reasonable
- Encourage new starters and celebrate old hands
- Offer help where it's wanted, and gently challenge where it's needed
- Keep caring - for our plots, for each other, and for this patch of paradise we're lucky to share

*Yours in mud and neighbourliness,
Sue Whittles, Allotment Manager*

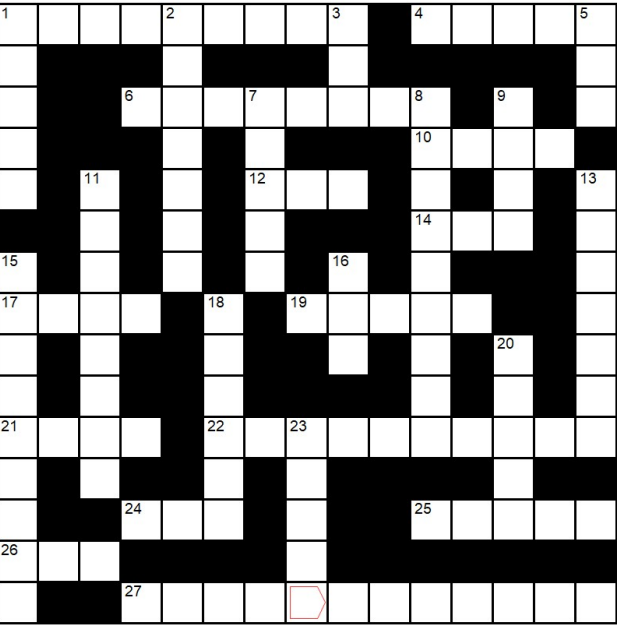
Mid-year site tidy-up, Sunday 20th July, from

10am - the chance to tend to those shared spaces, trim back hedges etc, ready for...

BLA Open Afternoon, Sunday 27th July, 2-5pm

- a chance to show off our much-loved allotments and share with our community. And raise funds for projects and equipment. We'll definitely need help with this please.

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1. Fly agaric or deathcap e.g. (9)
4. Collective term for a group of goldfinches (5)
6. Genus of flowering shrubs including tea plant (8)
10. Loves to eat your hostas and cucumbers (4)
12. Unwelcome furry visitor (3)
14. Small piercing tool (3)
17. Needs constant priming (4)
19. '_____' coins have been found on the plot (5)
21. What's in a name? That which we call a '_____' (4)
22. Bird food recommended for goldfinches (5,5)
24. Lettuce's famous sandwich (1,1,1)
25. The fruit in a famous liqueur from Amalfi (5)
26. The first potatoes of the season (3)
27. Shrubby plant from Himalayas covered in showy flowers (12)

DOWN

1. Useful on the plot. Used to tie up runner bean canes. (5)
2. Bird whose species include house and tree (7)
3. Allotment giggle, abbreviated (1.1.1.)
5. You need one of these when you have a brew in the shed (3)
7. She is our mother (5)
8. Edible plant also known as sparrowgrass (9)
9. Jethro '_____' - agriculturalist who invented the seed drill (4)
11. Evening '_____' - a pretty yellow summer flower (8)
13. They brighten the beds and bring in the bees (7)
15. Fresh flavour for Pimm's or a mojito (9)
16. We use this to deal with our weeds (3)
18. A name for the nut of the hazel (6)
20. Goes with strawberries on centre court (5)
23. Natural fertiliser from bats or birds (5)

ALLOTMENT ALMANAC

St Swithin's Day: Weather on this day predicts the rest of summer

Mid-year site tidy-up

BLA Open Afternoon

Autumn Equinox: Day and night are approximately equal in length

Early autumn site clear-up

Allotment Holders' meeting

Winter Solstice carols: The shortest day. Marks the return of the sun.

Tuesday 15th July

Sunday 20th July, 10am

Sunday 27th July, 2-5pm

Sunday 21st Sept

Sunday 5th October, 10am

Wednesday 15th October, 7pm

Sunday 21st December 21st

Email: info@bartonlaneallotments.org
www.bartonlaneallotments.org



BARTON LANE ALLOTMENTS

The Plotter's Gazette

The wild orchard

by Tom and Katherine



When Katherine and I took on plot 7B, we became custodians of the neighbouring mini wild area, better known as “Barbara’s plot.” Home to a huge dead eucalyptus tree, hawthorn, blackthorn, and bramble. Our initial aim was just to limit its height and spread. Last year Humphrey felled the eucalyptus and trimmed the hawthorns to a manageable height. And at the clear up day last autumn volunteers cut the remaining shrubs to the ground. Which led to the question what should this area be used for? Should it be cultivated or remain wild? At the allotment open meeting in

October we discussed several options. Trying to turn it back into a regular plot would be costly and challenging. We would need a mechanical digger just to tackle the massive tree roots! Option two was to simply let it regrow as it had for many years. However, a third ‘middle way’ was supported by plot holders at the meeting and later St John’s Hospital Trust - to preserve the area as semi-wild, but also plant and encourage the growth of fruit trees for everyone to share future harvests. A wild community orchard providing both a haven for wildlife and (hopefully) fruit for allotment plottolders. So I sought advice from Gloucestershire Orchard Trust (GOT) on suitable trees. Gloucestershire is renowned for its plums, but tree numbers are dwindling, so this seemed like a great choice. With a budget of £100, half paid from allotment funds, we bought a mixture of plum, damson, and greengage bare-root trees. We sourced four trees from Walcot Organic Nursery, which stocks Gloucestershire varieties that GOT had commissioned. The varieties

we chose were: **Blaisdon Red** - Plum originating from Blaisdon village near Gloucester. Eaters but also ideal for jam making. **Sweet Damson** - Small sweet damson fruit - grown much along the lower Severn in the recent past. **Grove’s Late Victoria** - A relation to the popular Victoria plum but the fruit matures later in the season - sweet and can be eaten from the tree or used for cooking. **Golden Transparent** - A very sweet and juicy greengage. All of these varieties are self-fertile and semi-dwarfing rootstocks, which will ensure the trees don’t become too large. The plums and damson are all native to Gloucestershire. Over the winter, we cleared four areas and planted the trees. Although they were well-watered and mulched, we waited anxiously in the spring for the first buds to appear. The trees are growing well so far and it will be exciting to watch their progress. We are also looking forward to the first fruit in later years. Thanks to all involved for your help, advice and support in making this idea become a reality!

Summer recipe: Cassis

It has been a fantastic year for blackcurrants! Here is an idea for the surplus... It's excellent for summer — a splash in fizz, tonic, or just neat over ice

Ingredients:
1 kg blackcurrants
500 g sugar
700 ml red wine (a fruity, full-bodied one)
200–300 ml gin (instead of brandy)

Method:
1. Crush the blackcurrants and soak in wine for 3–7 days (maceration).
2. Strain and simmer gently with sugar until dissolved (5–10 mins).
3. Cool completely.
4. Add gin or brandy to taste — 200 ml will keep it light, 300 ml adds punch.
5. Bottle in sterilised jars.

Flavour profile:
With brandy: Rich, warm, round.
With gin: Fresh, aromatic, with a subtle herbal undertone.



This month’s human interest spotlight: Dave Whittles and the equipment shed
If you’ve ever seen a strimmer magically rise from the dead so you can buzz your weeds into submission, or wondered who lays hands on the temperamental chipper to bring it back from the dead — meet Dave. Dave quietly keeps the mower blades spinning, strimmer cables replaced, fuel checked, and small engines soothed back into life. He’s the man behind the equipment maintenance, doing what needs doing so the rest of us can just sign the book, fuel up, and get cutting and trimming. “Keeping our shared kit going isn’t free. Mower and strimmer hire fees help — they’re supposed to cover servicing and fuel — but they fall short. That’s where the annual Open Day comes in. A good chunk of those takings goes directly into spares (think broken cables, fuel pipe, and the odd wayward blade) and servicing costs. So if you ever wondered “Where does the money go?” now you know. A good proportion of it goes into keeping things running.”

Dave Whittles Master of the equipment

Our collective responsibilities when using the equipment:

- **Sign the book each time you take a machine out** - It’s in the shed, along with the manual. Note your plot number, date, payment, and importantly please **tick the health & safety box**. Health and safety documents are in the manuals folder
- **The price for using communal equipment is £4 per session** Place your money in the tin or pay online www.bartonlaneallotments.org
- **Fuel fairies don’t exist** - When you use equipment, top up the fuel cans - **take money from the tin**, refill at the petrol station, and return the can to the shed.
- **Two-stroke vs four-stroke** - The strimmer uses two-stroke (mixed) fuel. Mix for 2 Stroke fuel is 100 ml oil in 5 litre can, written on the can and clearly labelled.

Looking to the future

Things are changing. Fewer people are using the communal mowers. Some prefer their own lightweight kit. Others can’t manage the heavier machines. So a few ideas are bubbling:

- **A communal electric mower?** Lighter and easier to use. But who charges the battery? Who keeps the charger in the shed? These are the thorny human truths behind shiny new ideas.
- **Bring your own battery?** If we standardise on one system (Bosch? Aldi?), plot holders could invest in their own batteries and share the tools.
- **Or... we go leaner** A radical option: stop providing communal kit and encourage plot-level responsibility. Discuss. We don’t want to boil the ocean, but we *do* want your ideas. If you’ve got thoughts, practical offers, or spare electric tools, email info@bartonlaneallotments.org Cash donations are also welcome via the website.

And to Dave... -

Who bends over engines, untangles cables, sharpens blades and arranges servicing. Thanks — we salute you.

Heatwave nature help: small acts, big difference



When the sun scorches the soil and everything feels a bit too dry and brittle — it’s not just our plants that suffer. The whole plot, from the tiniest worm to the thirsty blackbird, feels the heat. But there *are* small, easy things we can all do to give nature a helping hand through the hottest months. Here are some practical ways to turn your plot into a heatwave haven:

1. **Leave water out – For All Creatures Great and Small** A simple dish of water can be life-saving.
2. **Mulch, mulch, mulch** Nature’s answer to heat stress. Mulch holds in moisture, keeps roots cool, and protects the hidden world of worms, beetles, and fungi beneath the soil.
3. **Water wisely** Water early in the morning or late in the evening to reduce evaporation.
4. **Make shade** Not everything needs full sun all day.