

July 2020

Dear Tenants,

When YACIO took over the allotments from the City Council we tried to think about the issues that might crop up. As you might imagine, responding to a global disease pandemic wasn't one of them!

Once the lockdown was announced, our priority was to make sure all those still able to work their plot could do so in a safe way. For those unable to go to the allotment we introduced temporary measures, such as halting plot inspections. At the same time we made sure that necessary maintenance, like grass cutting, continued.

Now that the Covid restrictions have been eased allotment life can start to return to 'normal'. You'll see elsewhere that Site Inspections will resume in August. The Covid crisis has increased demand for plots. Although we'll do everything we can to support tenants having difficulties maintaining their allotment, we do need to ensure, in fairness to those on the waiting list, that let plots aren't neglected.

Alongside the pandemic we've also had some rather challenging weather. The deluges of winter were followed by two months of drought. This has led us to think further about water use – there's some useful advice included here we hope all tenants will follow. Let's hope the weather will also turn more 'normal' and that, despite it all, 2020 will be a year of bountiful harvests.

-Tony Chalcraft – Chair of Trustees

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REMEMBER!

Covid-19 is still a threat so please keep washing your hands and remember to keep your distance from others on the allotments. Please follow all current government guidelines. Together we can help to keep all of our members safe!

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Water and Allotments – How to reduce your use.

Water can be a key issue for allotment holders, especially in dry weather. Watering can be hard work and time consuming. It is also important that water is used sensibly and fairly. When watering please always consider whether you are using it appropriately and in a way that doesn't restrict access to fellow tenants. YACIO wants to keep the use of water down, mostly because water costs a lot (about 10% of the money YACIO receives in rent goes on water bills) but also because we want to act in an environmentally responsible way. So here are some tips to reduce your need for water and how make the most effective use of the water you do use.

Reduce water loss.

- If your soil is rich in organic matter it will hold more water so add lots of manure and compost
- Work the soil less (dig it over less often) particularly in late spring/ early summer.
- Turning the soil in dry conditions is a major cause of water loss. Mulch around crop plants.
- Mulch materials can be a layer of compost, cardboard or woven mulching matting: in fact, anything that covers the ground.
- Mulching also has the added benefit of suppressing weed growth.

Make most effective of water you do use.

- If you water in the middle of a sunny day much of the water you use will simply evaporate. You are wasting your time and energy and pushing up YACIO's water bill.
- Water early in the morning or even better in the evening, when the soil is cool and there is a chance for the water to penetrate deeper before it evaporates.
- Water the base of the plant that you want to water, it is astonishing how many people water whole areas of soil, or the foliage (the leaves).
- When sowing seed do so in a rill (a slight long depression), so that any water you do apply gathers around the seedlings. Similarly when you are planting out crops, place each plant in a slight depression so that when it comes to watering the water runs towards the crop .
- Weed around your crops, weeds will also be taking up water and will be competing for limited resources.

Harvest your own water.

If you have any structures on your allotment like a shed or greenhouse you can collect rain into a water-butt. This will give you ready access to water on your plot and save you work and wastage.

More information on good water management can be found in the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners' leaflet on their website.

Site Inspections

In response to the Covid-19 crisis YACIO suspended all formal site inspections so that tenants would not feel pressured to take any risks they were not comfortable with. Given that the restrictions are now easing YACIO will be resuming these inspections and will be checking all plots to make sure that they meet our cultivation standards. If you have not notified us that you are shielding and are unable to garden then you may receive a formal notice letter if your plot does not meet our standards. Inspections will resume from **1st August** to enable tenants who have not yet made a start to make progress before their plot is inspected. YACIO expects to see that the majority of a plot is under cultivation and that any weeds are being kept under control. Further details of our standards for cultivation can be found in our new Tenant Handbook available on our website.

Community Plots

York is fortunate in having a reasonably healthy number of Community Plots. They are used by local schools, various ability groups and by other specific groups or organisations. Part of YACIO's constitution is that facilities are provided for all individuals and groups within our area, the trustees are pleased to announce the introduction of a policy that both protects allocated space and encourages expansion. At their June meeting, the general principles of a new policy were agreed which will be put in place on 1st January 2021. YACIO will continue to encourage and support Associations or Clubs who are currently supporting a community group and/or who wish to assist in the development of new community plots, with concessions available on application.

Waste Disposal

Tenants are reminded that YACIO is no longer able to supply skips due to changes in the waste disposal regulations. Tenants are responsible for disposing of any rubbish that they bring on to site and should carefully consider how this will be done before bringing things to site. All organic waste should be composted on site wherever possible. It is even possible to compost perennial weeds if done properly. A quick internet search will show you many suggestions.

If you have any thoughts on this issue we are keen to hear from you.

Please send your comments to contact@yorkallotments.org

Think you can help?

As things return to normal YACIO would like to add more Trustees to help make decisions about the running of the allotments. If you are interested, get in touch to find out more about the role.

Low Moor Community Kids' Allotment

Since "Lockdown," Low Moor Community Kids' Allotment has had to change its usual weekly 2 hour session for all 12 members. Now each family group (parent and child/ren), is booked in for a 1.5 hour session each weekend. The children are asked to wear gloves and where possible bring their own tools (but tools are available and can be used, with appropriate precautions). Angela, lead organiser, has circulated a list of tasks and activities for each session. On arrival the equipment and seeds that will be needed are all set out ready for participants. Over then to parents and children to get on with the work. And they do – brilliantly!

All of us, volunteer organisers, parents, helpers and children miss the social side of the Kids' Allotment, but the Allotment is running, the beds are all planted up and produce is flourishing. To date we have shared and enjoyed harvests of rhubarb, purple sprouting broccoli, radish, broad beans, lettuce, strawberries and gooseberries. Next week, Session 15, we shall harvest our potatoes.

And what are the views of parents and children? "As a parent I've learned so many new skills and it's got us excited about starting to grow our own fruit and veg at home, which we love." "It's great family time together and it gives us a distraction from what's happening in the world. It's amazing to see how well the vegetables are growing and the kids love the fact that the club is still running even in a different format." "Allotment club is the highlight of our week. It's exciting to see what's changed and how nature continues regardless of lockdowns.

Despite not being able to do this together we still enjoy sharing our photos, joys and experiences afterwards." Visit -

<https://www.lowmoorallotments.co.uk/kids-club>



If you would like to put up a shed or keep livestock on your plot just ask your site secretary for a permission form and they will be able to advise you on what is permitted.

Keep In Touch!

If you change your contact details please don't forget to let us know! Just drop us a quick note and we can update your records so that we don't lose touch.

If you didn't receive any emails from us this year, then we do not have your email address on file, so let us know so we can keep you up to date with important notices throughout the year.