

January 2021

Dear Tenants,

With this newsletter you'll find this year's invoice for your plot. If possible please try and pay online. This is far easier for YACIO to process and helps minimise administrative costs.

2021 will be the fourth year YACIO has managed the allotments. As with the last three years we've again been able to avoid increasing rents. What's more, we've been able to set a budget that allocates a considerable sum for site improvements during the year. We'll be working with Site Secretaries and Associations on how best to spend this money, but if you have any ideas we'd be pleased to hear them. Be realistic though. We've not won the Lottery! It's small improvements we're looking at for now.

2020 saw a huge increase in demand for allotments. We now have nearly as many people on the waiting list as there are plots. In fairness to those waiting, we must ensure allotments are used properly. In this newsletter you'll find some information about Cultivation Standards. It's not our intention to be heavy-handed but, with waiting lists so long, we cannot allow plots to be neglected or underused for long periods of time. If you're struggling to keep on top of your plot, let us know. We're always willing to be flexible and help where possible.

-Tony Chalcraft – Chair of Trustees

tony.chalcraft@yorkallotments.org



REMEMBER!

Covid-19 is still an issue 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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Invoice Payments

We have made some changes to the way we collect invoice payments this year. Wherever possible please make payment of your rental invoice online at: <http://yorkallotments.org/pay-for-your-plot>

You can also send a cheque made payable to "York Allotments Charitable Incorporated Organisation" to our postal address. (Do not try to drop this off as our address is simply a PO Box and letters handed over at the door often do not reach us.) Please make sure you mark your site name and plot number clearly so we know which account to assign this to.

If you need to pay by cash we will be collecting cash payments in person as set out below. We are unable to send out any Post Office slips this year so if you are paying by cash you must do so in person.

If you are unable to make payment any other way please contact the Administrator, who will be able to call you to take payment over the telephone if you have a credit or debit card.

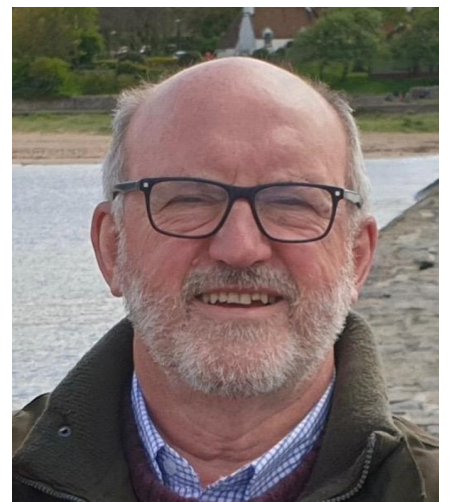
Last year there were a large number of outstanding invoices. We would like to remind tenants that invoices are payable within 30 days. As per the terms of the tenancy agreement, failure to pay your invoice within 40 days will result in one final payment reminder and your tenancy will then be terminated if we do not receive your payment within 7 days. If you are having difficulty paying your invoice please contact us as soon as possible.

Drop In Cash Sessions **Bootham Stray** - 10am-11am Saturday 30th January 2021
Hempland Lane - 1pm-2pm Saturday 30th January 2021
Green Lane - 10am-11am Sunday 31st January 2021
Low Moor - 1pm -2pm Sunday 31st January 2021

Meet The Trustees: Colin Smith

Having spent a busy working life as a children's' mental health nurse with very little experience of gardening, no-one was more surprised than me to find just how much I enjoy almost every aspect of allotment life.

I really love growing my own food, thoroughly enjoy being part of an active allotment association and also (despite occasionally feeling like I want to pull my hair out) get a lot of pleasure from promoting allotmenting and playing my part in maintaining and developing allotment sites in and around York in my role as a trustee of YACIO.



What I look forward to most: Making jam, chutneys and wine from produce grown on the allotment and our association get-togethers around a campfire (in safer times of course).



Pruning Blackcurrants

If you've got blackcurrant bushes on the plot winter is a good time to give them a prune. It's important to remember that blackcurrants require a different pruning method to other fruit bushes, such as redcurrants and gooseberries. Unlike these, which carry fruit on both old and new wood, blackcurrants mainly crop on younger wood. Therefore, on established bushes, the aim of pruning is to preserve and promote new growth. This is best done by removing up to a third of the older branches each year, cutting them out at ground level with loppers or a saw. Aim to take out the branches with the least new growth at the tops, being especially careful to preserve any young branches growing up from the ground. New growth is easily distinguished, having lighter brown colouring whereas older wood is dark greyish black. Pruned this way, rather than randomly hacked back all over, blackcurrants will remain fruitful for many years.



Help Hedgehogs On Your Plot

Records suggest that the number of hedgehogs across the country have declined by 73% in the last 20 years. If we do not reverse this trend, they could be missing from the UK as soon as 2025. Allotments could provide one of the best urban habitats for hedgehogs to thrive. They are generalist species, so the more you do to help them on your plot, the more you will also benefit other wildlife. Hedgehogs can also help you grow your crops, as they love to eat slugs and snails! See our top tips below and play your part in protecting and the hedgehog:

- Practice organic growing: avoid the use of pesticides & herbicides, including slug pellets!
- Create a log pile: this will offer shelter and food for hedgehogs
- Create hedgehog highways: by leaving a 13cm x 13cm gap in any fences
- Build a hedgehog house: look online for fun ideas to make one
- Ensure netting is packed away when not in use: it can easily trap hedgehogs
- Check compost heaps for hedgehogs before digging the fork in
- Carefully check your fire piles for hedgehogs before you light them
- Access out of water: ensure there is an easy route out of ponds & pools



Think you can help?

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.

Cultivation Standards

Last year was a difficult year for many, unfortunately this has resulted in a marked decline of cultivation standards across the city with many allotments looking abandoned or in a very poor state of cultivation.

At the same time the waiting lists for our allotment sites soared as people realised the very great benefits of having their own outside space to grow food. YACIO has a duty to ensure that plots are being fully utilised and not left to decline. Clearing abandoned plots so that they can be used again costs the charity a great deal.

This year YACIO is keen to ensure that standards are raised across the city. We need to see that you are growing crops on the majority of your allotment plot. Allotments should be kept tidy and well maintained, if you have grass on your plot this should be kept neat and weed free. Paths and recreation areas should only take up a proportional amount of your plot. We do not allow trampolines on our sites. If you have fruit trees and bushes the ground beneath these should be kept weed free and well managed. If you have covered over your plot for the winter to suppress weed growth we do not expect to see this still in place throughout the year. You can see what YACIO's expectations are in the Tenant Handbook, available on the website or by request to the Administrator.

If you are struggling to keep on top of your plot you may need to consider reducing the plot size (this is not always possible) or you can ask to give up the plot and be placed back on the waiting list to try again in a few years time when your personal circumstances may have changed. If we feel that we are not seeing the kind of activity that we need to on your plot and are concerned that you are not reaching the necessary standards then we may have to send you a formal warning letter. This letter will give you a set amount of time to make improvements, if you are unable to meet that deadline then your tenancy will be terminated. If there are extenuating circumstances that we need to take into account please get in touch as soon as possible.

We want to work together with all of our tenants to ensure that the allotments are the lively, active communities they should be. Taking on an allotment is not always easy but we expect our tenants to put in their best efforts to bring their plots up to a high standard of cultivation this year so that we can all enjoy these vibrant spaces together, whatever challenges are thrown at us this year.

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.