

March 2021

Dear Tenants,

What are the challenges facing YACIO in looking after allotments in York? You might say keeping the rents down. Or perhaps you might say improving sites to provide, for example better security or more frequent grass cutting. Many would also add caring for allotments in an environmentally friendly way to enhance their wildlife value. These are important issues for those of us fortunate enough to have an allotment and ones that YACIO has prioritised over the last few years. In particular, we've not increased rents and, as is outlined further in this newsletter, we're looking for ideas on how we can improve sites.

There's another issue though and that's the allotment waiting list. This has mushroomed over the last year. It now stands at over one thousand – there's not far short of as many applicants on the list as we have total plots (that's a bit over 1,400 in case you're wondering). Although it's possible to meet some of this demand by letting half or smaller plots where this is practical and wanted by new tenants, in a way this just disguises the big issue: there simply aren't enough allotments to meet demand.

This is an issue where YACIO will need help. In many ways it's a matter for the City Council but we all need to think about how we can begin to build an understanding and case for the provision of more allotment sites. If you have any ideas or suggestions we'd like to hear them. It's also an issue for the in person YACIO open meeting we hope to have later this year. This will be a follow on from the formal online Zoom AGM we're holding at the end of April.

-Tony Chalcraft – Chair of Trustees

tony.chalcraft@yorkallotments.org



AGM

The YACIO AGM 2021 will take place online on **27th April 2021 at 7pm.**

This meeting will deal with the formal business of the AGM only as we hope to be able to hold an in person meeting with tenants for open discussions in the Autumn.

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Site Development

You will all already appreciate that the trustees of YACIO have successfully managed to avoid a rent rise for the fourth year running and they are now pleased to announce that there is small but significant amount of funding available for site developments. The trustees are already hearing about a number of ideas for development such as notice boards, bicycle racks and tree planting but, they would like all tenants to have an opportunity to put suggestions forward.

Ideally, suggestions will benefit all tenants or specific small groups who may struggle, for whatever reason, to access the full benefits of allotmenting. Ideas might include (but are not restricted to) social or community projects, development of unused areas of the site, wildlife habitat development, improved site security and maybe even assistance with overgrown and unmanageable hedges. The trustees are looking for suggestions from individual tenants, site secretaries and associations. Associations, for example, may have projects in hand that just need that little bit of extra funding in order to complete. So, have a look around your site for inspiration and then share any ideas with the trustees. All submissions will be given full consideration. You can expect a shortlist to be published in the summer newsletter.

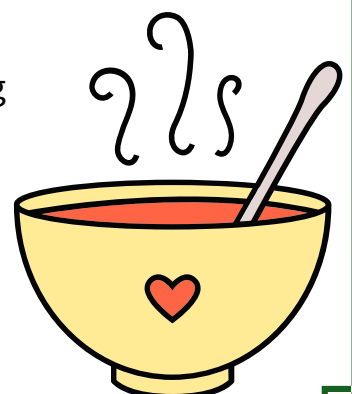
Please forward ideas to; contact@yorkallotments.org to be received by 1st May 2021.

Meet The Trustees: Adam Myers

I am a trustee with an allotment on Low Moor. I joined the committee with a particular interest in supporting community initiatives and biodiversity and wildlife on allotments. We have not had much slack to put our attention on these things yet.

I have appreciated having my allotment even more during the various lockdowns. It is a haven. Working on the allotment is a covid-free zone - what I am doing has nothing to do with the pandemic it is just seasonal activity. My allotment has slowly changed from 'shameful' to 'could do better' and there is some limited joy in that. However, my biggest pleasure comes from growing soft fruit- relatively low maintenance, very productive (if the bushes are netted) and in the middle of winter I can feel immensely rich as I add the unfrozen berries to my muesli or porridge. Another joy of the allotment is the company I keep - the blackbirds and robins who feed at my feet; the passing tits and summer visitors popping by, as well the cheerful greetings from other tenants over the allotment hedge.

It is the most exciting time of year- as I write buds are breaking on the raspberries and gooseberries, the cycle is turning and here we go again!



Crown Prince and Golden Nugget

Do you grow pumpkins and squashes? If you do perhaps it's a few large orange pumpkins for carving at Halloween. Or maybe you try butternut squashes, hoping for a warm summer to give a worthwhile crop.

If you find butternuts tricky, how about trying other types with similar qualities? One alternative is the pumpkin Crown Prince. Its fruit is larger, averaging three to four kilos. On the outside it isn't the prettiest with dull steely grey skin. Inside, however, it has striking bright orange flesh. Cooked, especially roasted, this has a smooth, nutty, flavour akin to a butternut. And it's good for you. A 100 gram serving contains twice the recommended daily intake of vitamin A and has double the fibre content of a butternut.

What's more, Crown Prince is one of the best pumpkins for storing. Harvested when fully ripe in autumn it can be kept until April or May the following year.

A drawback of Crown Prince is that it takes up a fair bit of space. A sprawling plant, shoots can romp off three metres or more. If this is a problem there are a number of non-trailing pumpkins and squashes that make compact 'bush' plants like a courgette. One of the best is the squash Gold Nugget. Much smaller than Crown Prince, fruits average five to ten centimetres in diameter and have orange skin and flesh. Each plant can produce four or more that'll keep for several months once picked.

Both Crown Prince and Gold Nugget seed is readily available. Best started indoors in late April, young plants can be put outside from the very end of May. Gold Nugget should bear edible fruit from August, Crown Prince from mid-September.

Bonfires

YACIO receives frequent complaints from properties surrounding allotment sites regarding smoke from nuisance bonfires. We would like to remind all tenants to be mindful of what you are putting on bonfires and not to burn anything that could cause excessive smoke such as green or wet materials. If there is heavy black smoke **STOP** and let the materials dry out or consider alternative means of disposal. The effect on air quality for residents is a persistent nuisance and negatively affects the reputation of all allotment holders. YACIO does not wish to put limits on bonfires as other sites do but this is something that may have to be investigated if persistent offenders continue to cause problems for our neighbours.

Putting up a shed or keeping livestock?

- You need to fill out a form for permission to put up a structure or keep livestock on all of our sites.
- You will also need to pay a fee each year if you are keeping livestock and there are limits to how many poultry you can keep.
- You can see the Guidelines for structures on our website. You should check these before submitting any application.
- If you have any queries please contact the Administrator or have a chat with your Site Secretary.

Compost, compost and more compost!

You can never have enough of it says Glenn Fletcher from Green Lane

The boxes are two metres long and were initially built using old doors. The compost heap is built in the right hand box and when 'cooked' and cooled is turned into the left hand box for finishing. The heap is built in one go by mixing all the accumulated compostable rubbish from the allotment and kitchen waste, in layers with hedge clippings (such as privet) and/or fresh manure. The heap is always built up to the top of the box and is covered with old compost sacks and layers of re-cycled solid building insulation. The position of the front face of the heap is determined by the amount of compostable material available. It is blocked with a board or a piece of building insulation to keep it all in place.



The layers of building insulation usually ensure that the heap heats up to about 60 degrees Celsius. After heating the volume will have reduced by half. At this point the heap is turned into the left hand bay for finishing. This is done by chopping 150mm layers of compost off the front, thus cutting up any part composted items such as raspberry stems. At this stage the worms will find the heap and do their work.

Allotment Associations

Across the city we allotment holders are lucky enough to have several sites which have active Associations. Associations are run independently of YACIO, however they often have close contact and work to build a good working relationship to best benefit the allotment sites. These vary from informal groups of volunteers who carry out tasks on their sites, such as taking care of communal areas such as flowerbeds or helping tenants which may be struggling with their plot, to more formal setups, often with shops where you can buy seeds, compost and other gardening items. Below is a list of associations currently in operation around the city:

Association Name	Contact
Bootham Stray Allotment Association	Facebook Page
Carr, Ostman Road	
Green Lane	https://www.greenlanegrowers.com/
Glen	Facebook Page
Hempland Lane	http://www.hempland-lane-allotments.co.uk/
Holgate	https://holgateallotmentsassociation.org/about-us/
Low Moor	https://www.lowmoorallotments.co.uk/
Scarcroft	http://scarcroftanddistrictallotments.blogspot.com/

If you are thinking of setting up an association on another site, you could get in touch with any of these groups who could help you set up or just you some pointers. YACIO trustees welcome sites to have an association as it can really draw a site together as a community.

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.