

March 2022



# NEWSLETTER

THE LATEST NEWS FROM YORK ALLOTMENTS



## MEMBERS DAY AND AGM

Our 2022 Members' Day and AGM will take place on **Saturday 26th March 10-12 at Clements Hall**, Nunthorpe Road (just off Blossom Street). We're pleased to at last be able to go ahead with an in-person get together, the previous two having been held online due to the pandemic.

The meeting will be in two parts; our formal Annual General Meeting which should take no more than 30-40 minutes and which will be followed by

refreshments and an 'open forum'. This is an opportunity for you to ask questions, make suggestions, learn about what's happening on other sites or simply meet and talk to trustees and other ploholders. In particular, trustees would like to hear ideas on how the allotments can be improved.

You are welcome to ask questions or make suggestions during the open forum or submit them in advance by emailing [contact@yorkallotments.org](mailto:contact@yorkallotments.org). We're also happy to receive email questions or suggestions if you're unable to attend the meeting.

Tony Chalcroft  
**Chair YACIO Trustees**

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## TACKLING AN OVERGROWN PLOT

Taking on a new plot can be daunting, especially if it's been neglected. When it comes to clearing the first thing to do is consider the type of vegetation. If there are brambles or other woody material, cut as close to the ground as possible. Ideally, take the cut material to a green recycling facility. If that's not possible consider burning, but you must follow YACIO's guidance on bonfires.

Once the woodiest growth is cleared, the best option is to gradually start digging out weeds. Use a fork, unless there are woody stumps where a spade will be necessary. Tease out carefully making sure roots as well as foliage are removed. This is especially important where perennial weeds are present such as couch grass, docks, bindweed, buttercups, and dandelions (this list is not exclusive – other weeds are available!). Where there are perennial weeds do not use a rotavator. This will chop roots into tiny pieces from which most perennial weeds, especially couch grass and bindweed, will quickly sprout new top growth. Be methodical. Start in one place and gradually extend over a wider area. Do not burn weeds and their roots. Non-perennial weeds can be composted while most perennials, if stacked with some soil and covered to exclude light for at least a year, will also rot down to a compost-like material.



Should clearing a plot by hand seem too time-consuming another option is to cover the ground with light excluding material. This will only work if left in place for a number of months during the growing season (covering in the winter will have little affect). One of the best materials to use is thick black plastic. Another option is cardboard but this must be weighed down. Any material used

must exclude as much light as possible. The bigger the sheet the better: small sheets must be well overlapped. Whichever type of covering is used it can only remain in place for six months or so. Another alternative is to use herbicides. This is not an approach YACIO recommends, but if you do resort to a weed killer it must be one approved for amateur use and applied carefully to avoid damage to boundary vegetation or neighbouring plots.

## RHUBARB COLESLAW



Serves 2

**Juice of 1 lemon**

**2 tsp caster sugar**

**Salt and freshly ground black pepper**

**1 fennel bulb, trimmed, outer stalks removed**

**150g rhubarb**

**150g radishes**

**2 tbsp mild olive oil**

**300g mackerel fillets**

**2 brioche buns, sliced in half**

**1** Mix the lemon juice with the sugar, some salt and pepper in a medium bowl. Trim the fennel and remove the tough outer stalks. Reserve the fennel fronds.

**2** Slice the rhubarb, radishes and fennel as thinly as you possibly can. Immediately toss them in the seasoned lemon juice to avoid oxidation and to pickle them slightly. Add the fennel fronds and set aside.

**3** Heat the oil in a large frying pan. Season the mackerel fillets and pan fry them skin-side down first for 2 minutes over a medium heat. Carefully flip the fillets over with a spatula and cook for another minute.

**4** Stuff the buns with the mackerel and the rhubarb coleslaw and enjoy!

## WELCOME TO A NEW TRUSTEE



Hi, I'm Helen, I've worked an allotment at Holgate for around 12 years and I'm hoping to be voted onto the YACIO board at the AGM in March.

My interest in growing produce started as a child as my family always allocated a large patch of our own garden to fruit and vegetables, but I started my allotment with a lot to learn. I was struck by the kindness of my neighbours, who starting me off with donated plants, loaned equipment and advice on how to spot the most dreaded of weed roots.

My allotment has given me much pleasure, exercise, fresh air and slightly oddly shaped vegetables over the years and I love it. I think everyone should have the ability to grow their own food and allotments play a central role in enabling people who live in cities and who perhaps don't have much outside space at home to have a go.

As a YACIO trustee I want to ensure the continuation of allotments in York which give so much pleasure to hundreds of people across the city.



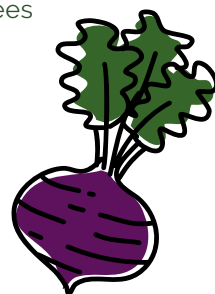
## BETTER BEETROOT

Beetroot are one of the easiest vegetables to grow. With a bit of planning it's possible to harvest them fresh from early summer until winter. The key is to make several sowings. That way it's possible to enjoy a succession of smallish, sweet roots rather than swollen monsters that are tough and earthy tasting.

Unless the soil is very cold or wet the first sowing can be made in early April. Always use a variety adapted to early cropping to avoid the risk of bolting (producing a seed head rather than a root). Boltardy is the usual choice. It's also possible to sow in pots (or buy seedlings from garden centres) and plant out, but take care as beetroot resent root disturbance. The first sowing should be ready in early July. Further sowings can be made at intervals through the spring and summer until late June. These can be harvested as required into the autumn and early winter.

Beetroot is one of the simplest seeds to sow as it's relatively large. Space the seeds a centimetre or so apart if growing in a line. Once a few leaves have formed thin to about five centimetres between plants. Other than weeding and watering in very dry conditions no other attention is usually necessary.

For the adventurous there are lots of different varieties of beetroot to try. As well as many standard red globe varieties like Boltardy, there are long rooted types such as Cyndria, those with yellow or orange skin such as Burpees Golden and, perhaps most novel of all, the Italian favourite Chioggia with its concentric rings of pinkish-red and white flesh.





## SITE MAINTENANCE

YACIO have been managing 16 allotment sites in York for just over four years and we have been pleased with the positive feedback we've received regarding our efforts to improve previous levels of site maintenance. This year sees the beginning of a second phase of site rejuvenation with a three year plan designed to bring all of the sites closer to a state where safe access and sunlight is restored to as many plots as possible. YACIO is encouraging plot holders to reduce all hedge heights to 1.5 meters and a programme of reduction will begin this year. It is appreciated that, in some cases hedges have become so tall, plot holders may need some assistance in bringing them down to a reasonable height. Please contact YACIO if you would like some help. Whilst YACIO is keen not to lose mature trees we have also begun to assess which trees need management or felling. The plan is to carry out this work over the three year period with priority given to trees presenting a health and safety issue. YACIO will also look to see if there are places trees can be planted that will enhance the biodiversity and beauty of sites without creating issues for plot holders.

We have recently appointed a new contractor, All Aspects Gardening, to take care of our hedges and pathways and over the coming weeks, you will see the team at work. Tony, the boss, has visited all of the sites and met with most of the site secretaries so, he has a good idea of what is needed. We are pleased to be retaining the services of Dave and Rich who will continue to get rid of historical rubbish, mending fences and gates, fixing leaking taps, clearing neglected plots and restoring pathways. This is an exciting programme of work and we are hopeful that we will all notice a real difference in three years.

**Tony also runs  
Rufforth Plants Nursery.  
Find them just off the  
B1224 near Rufforth or  
check out their website:  
[rufforthplants.co.uk](http://rufforthplants.co.uk)**



## COMMUNITY ORCHARD UPDATE

Good news from Holgate Allotment. The allotment association has been awarded a grant from the National Lottery to continue work on their Community Orchard and Apiary.



A working group of allotment holders and GoodGym runners have managed to dig over the orchard area removing countless bramble and bindweed roots. Chris Rivers a landscape gardener who lives in Holgate, volunteered his time and digger driving skills to level the site by spreading an impressive 20 tonnes of top soil. The site will now be covered for the duration of the growing season before planting of the fruit trees begins in earnest in Autumn.



## CONTACTING US



[contact@yorkallotments.org](mailto:contact@yorkallotments.org)



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