



# NEWSLETTER

THE LATEST NEWS FROM YORK ALLOTMENTS



## WILDLIFE FRIENDLY ALLOTMENTS

Allotments can be a haven for wildlife, but are we doing all we can? Wildlife is under pressure as never before from climate change and human use of land and chemicals. Wildlife has a value to us in its own right. A diversity of plants, animals and insects can increase our joy. A healthy eco-system supports effective growing. Fewer chemicals in our environment is good for our health as well as that of wildlife. For these reasons, we think YACIO should be

putting more attention on wildlife and the environment on allotments.



To help us in thinking about this, **we would like to hear your ideas on how the allotments could be improved with wildlife in mind.** Where do you think our focus should be? For example, do you think we should do more to encourage organic techniques? Or do you feel each site should have wildlife areas? Or perhaps you think we should be offering information on how growing can be carried out with wildlife in mind. We think YACIO might be encouraging and supporting action at the plot-holder level, site level or even more widely - coordinating with other organisations and land owners in our area. You might have other ideas. **On our survey form, (see overleaf) we ask you to tell us about what your thoughts are.** We will read your ideas and use them to help us to create a path forward on this subject. (Continues over page).

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We would also like to gather together a group of allotment holders who are particularly interested in these issues. You might be able to offer your enthusiasm, some graft if it is needed, or you might have specific expertise that you are prepared to share with us. If you are willing to contribute, please use the survey to tell us more. We look forward to hearing from you!

**TAKE THE SURVEY** ➤

<https://bit.ly/3cJsMVo>



As a wildlife biologist who has been running a hedgehog rescue centre in York for the past 32 years, I wanted to highlight the issue of strimmers. Undeniably a useful tool for us, but every year many hedgehogs are accidentally injured by them.

Unfortunately it is often assumed that hedgehogs will run away when they hear the sound of a strimmer approaching them. Sadly this is not the case. They are highly unlikely to move away from the source of the noise. Instead a hedgehog will typically hunker down and wait for the perceived danger to pass. This invariably results in serious injuries, many of which are fatal. Those hedgehogs that survive often have life changing injuries whereby a leg has been severed or damaged and has to be removed.

So, what can we do? There is actually a very simple way of addressing this. The recommended method for strimming safely is to start from the top of an area of vegetation and slowly work down giving you a clear view of the ground and ensuring that no animal, such as a hedgehog or frog, is present. This will save many hedgehogs, a species that is critically endangered in the UK.

**Dr Toni Bunnell**

**Join Toni at York  
Railway Bowls Club for  
an illustrated talk on  
Wildlife on Allotments  
October 23rd, 2-3pm  
Tickets £5 All proceeds  
to Bowls Club**

## FRUIT TREES ON YOUR PLOT



Thinking of growing some fruit trees on the plot? If so here are some tips to avoid ending up with large and unruly trees that overshadow other crops and are a struggle to pick and prune.

First of all, what fruit is likely to be worthwhile? Cherries, for example, will be plundered by birds unless netted. Plums, especially gages, can be delectable but often crop irregularly. And compared with apples and pears they've a short season and don't store unless processed.

Perhaps more importantly do you really need an actual 'tree'? Most fruit trees can be grown in 'restricted' form, that is trained and pruned to remain relatively compact. Apples and pears, for example, can be 'espaliers' (with horizontal arms) or 'cordons' (angled at 45°, usually on one trunk), while plums are more suited to a 'fan' shape.

If you grow trained trees it may be possible to have quite a few rather than just one or two. This'll provide both more variety and, potentially, fruit over a longer season.

And that brings us to another consideration – varieties. Don't go for those familiar from the supermarket. Pink Lady won't like Yorkshire weather. There are hundreds of apple varieties available and loads of pears and plums. Many are 'heritage' types, but don't dismiss some newer ones which can have better disease resistance.

Then there's rootstock. Fruit trees are grafted onto roots that control their vigour and ultimate size. It's important to get this right for the shape and size of tree you want. Don't buy if the rootstock isn't known!

For apples grown in restricted form a moderately vigorous rootstock like M26 is suitable for most situations. (Continues over page).

Yet another consideration is pollination. Some fruit, especially apples, need pollen from a different variety flowering at the same time to set fruit. While this may not be a problem if there are lots of trees around it can be an issue for a lonesome tree.

This is just a quick overview. There's lots more information online. A good starting point is Allotment Fruit Trees at:

[www.orangepippintrees.co.uk/articles/fruit-tree-advice/allotment-fruit-trees](http://www.orangepippintrees.co.uk/articles/fruit-tree-advice/allotment-fruit-trees)

## PRUNING WORKSHOPS



### Do you want to know more about pruning?

We are planning a series of pruning workshops in early December / Mid January and are trying gauge interest amongst tenants. If you are interested in signing up for a pruning session on your site, perhaps on your plot or in a communal growing area, please email us at:

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

in collaboration with  
Abundance, York

## NEW YACIO SECRETARY



As one of the original YACIO trustees, Colin Smith has held responsibility for both the maintenance of our allotments and the secretary role. As the tree management programme continues a pace, Colin will be stepping down as Secretary to concentrate on our allotment maintenance. We thank him for his fantastic work over many years covering both roles and welcome the new Secretary, Helen Butt.

## MAINTENANCE UPDATE



You won't have seen quite so much of our contractors cutting the grass this summer due to the long hot spell. However, I'm sure you will have noticed that there is a good deal of growth alongside pathways with hedges and brambles reaching out to snag anyone who walks past them.

September will see the start of major hedge trimming to free up these pathways, and later in the autumn, the contractors will be focusing on the higher hedges along the boundaries of our sites.

On the subject of hedges, you will all be aware that one of YACIO's objectives is to see hedge heights gradually reducing to a maximum of 1.5 meters. Great progress has already been made on a number of sites improving wildlife habitat and security, while allowing increased hours of sunlight onto plots. YACIO is still keen to support anyone who is struggling with unmanageably high hedges so, please let your site secretary know if you would like some help.

Our handymen, Dave and Rich, have continued to dispose of unrecyclable rubbish keeping the sites as neat and tidy as possible.

As always we are interested to hear the views of tenants regarding our maintenance provision, so please do get in touch if you have any thoughts you would like to share.

**Colin Smith, Trustee with responsibility for site maintenance.**



Do you have an event or piece of allotment news you'd like to share? Let us know by 1st December and we'll publicise it here.



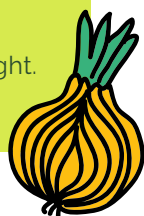
## IN MEMORY

**Jack Dobson**  
A man who knew his onions



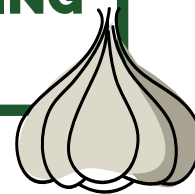
The recent loss of veteran gardener Jack Dobson from Green Lane Allotments not only sees the passing of a familiar figure always ready to share a joke or pass on a wealth of gardening knowledge, but also a slice of history that adds to the joy of allotmenteeing in knowing that the ground we work has been visited so many times in the past, often by people whose very lives depended upon the food they produced.

My favourite story of Jack's is the one where he tells of his father working the very same plot back in 1934 when Jack himself was just a lad. At that time the family kept pigs on the plot and Jack would walk the streets with a barrow collecting food scraps for the pigs' feed. Interestingly, he also remembered a shared well on an adjacent plot (now filled in) where everyone collected their water. Maybe there's a lesson here for us in these days of drought.



**TRY ME!**

## OVER-WINTERING GARLIC



There aren't many crops that benefit from over-wintering, but garlic is definitely one of them. Even after a cold winter garlic started in autumn should produce bigger and better bulbs than that started in spring.

Don't be in too much haste to plant though, late October or early November is about right. It's often suggested that supermarket garlic can be used for planting instead of the more expensive 'seed' garlic available from garden centres or online. However, varieties sold for the kitchen may have come from warmer climes and not take kindly to a Yorkshire winter. Better to buy named types adapted to cooler weather. Lots are available, including varieties with the Solent prefix bred in the Isle of Wight.

To plant, break up seed garlic bulbs into individual cloves disregarding any of the smaller ones from the centre. Don't surface plant the cloves with the tops showing like onion sets but bury so the tip is several cm. below soil level. If growing in a row set out at 20 cm. apart.

Beware if you have white rot on your plot. Garlic is especially susceptible, more so than onions. Should you have this fungal disease consider growing in deep pots using a bought in compost.

## CONTACTING US



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



0808 281 2642 (answering service)

York Allotments, Popeshead Court Offices,  
Peter Lane, York, YO1 8SU



@yorkallotments



York\_Allotments

Charity registration: 1174306