

December 2022



NEWSLETTER

THE LATEST NEWS FROM YORK ALLOTMENTS



AGM

25th March
Clements Hall,
9:30am - 12:30pm

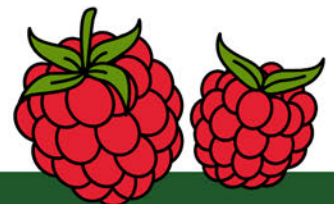
GETTING AHEAD IN WINTER

Are you one of those gardeners who retreat indoors over the winter, hibernating until a sunny spring day tempts you back to the plot? If so, is it time to think again? There are lots of jobs that are best done during the darker months. What's more, getting on top of them now will mean you're all set up for spring and summer.

If you're a digging gardener, especially if the plot is clayey, getting it turned over in winter should give frost time to break up clods so the ground breaks

easily to that treasured fine 'tilth' in spring. It also provides an opportunity to better incorporate compost, and manure if you can get it, into the soil.

Winter is the best time to tackle any fruit trees and bushes that need pruning. Go easy though. Drastic pruning on fruit trees can lead to a rash of whippy new growth in summer. Soft fruit (berries) can also be winter pruned. Remember, blackcurrants fruit best on younger wood so don't snip this off! And only cut autumn fruiting raspberries to the ground. On summer fruiting types leave the new (un-fruited) canes otherwise you'll have no fruit.



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It's not just fruiting plants that should be pruned. What about hedges or other trees and vegetation on or around the plot? Hedges should not exceed 1.5 metres in height and are best trimmed just before the nesting season starts in February.

Weedy or messy areas are also best dealt with in winter. Dig out or cover over patches of perennial weeds before regrowth starts. Clear non-vegetative clutter, recycling rather than burning. Repair sheds or other structures such as fences and clean greenhouses and polytunnels inside and out.



Don't forget too to look after any crops that'll continue to provide a harvest.

Sprouts, kale and purple sprouting broccoli are all vulnerable to wood pigeon attack, especially in freezing weather. Also watch out for rodents nibbling on roots like parsnips. If you haven't any winter veg have a look at what others are growing. Having fresh produce to pick in winter is one of the biggest benefits of having an allotment – plan to have some next year.



MAINTENANCE UPDATE

As we draw closer to the end of another busy year, we get an opportunity to reflect on how well we have managed to keep our sites in good order. This year YACIO's spending on maintenance amounted to around 43% of the income received from your rents. This included the cost of our main contractor who manages our grass cutting and hedges, plot clearance, general maintenance and repairs by Dave and his trusty team and some major tree work carried out on Scarcroft and Low Moor Sites.

I think it's fair to say that while we have received some positive reports regarding the grass cutting, it is clear that there is room for improvement. For reasons beyond his control the current contractor has not been able to fulfil his commitments this year and so the trustees have decided to try another

company. Aspects Horticultural Services will begin work on the backlog of perimeter hedges during January and February.

In terms of general maintenance and repair, Dave, our second contractor, has made good progress with respect to clearance of derelict plots, removal of non-compostable waste to James Street recycling centre, general repairs to gates and fences, notice boards, woodchip bays and standpipes.

As you are all aware, the cost of goods and services is soaring and so YACIO is having to make sure that maintenance costs do not soar out of control during 2023. We hope to continue our good record of derelict plot clearances (which in the long run will see an increase in income) and there will be a full review of all water standpipes and associated water butt provision following a preliminary risk assessment during the closing months of this year.

Budget allowing, there will be further tree work carried out with a focus on maintaining our beautiful collection of trees, dealing with health and safety issues and ensuring plots benefit from maximum sunlight.

Finally, with your assistance, our maintenance teams will continue to progress YACIO's gradual aim of lowering all internal hedges to a maximum height of 1.5 meters. Those who wish to take advantage of some assistance in reducing their hedges, can apply to YACIO for support by contacting our administrator at contact@yorkallotments.org.

As always, the trustees look forward to any feedback from tenants and so, if you would like us to hear your views please contact us.

**Best wishes for the New Year,
Colin Smith.**

**Date for
your diary**

**The YACIO AGM will be held on 25th March at Clements Hall, YO23 1BW
9:30am - 12:30pm**



SLOW WORM SPOTTING



I work for YACIO maintenance, my name is Dave and my assistant is Phil. We were strimming and clearing plot 26a on Holgate allotments on 24th August when we came across a slow worm which was hiding under some blue plastic rubble bags filled with soil. Slow worms are a protected species so we re-located the slow worm on an adjacent plot under some landscape membrane so it would be safe from predators. There have been other sightings of slow worms on Holgate allotments in the past and I hope they thrive there for the foreseeable future.

If you spot a slow worm on your plot, you can report it on the [record pool website](https://www.recordpool.org.uk) ([recordpool.org.uk](https://www.recordpool.org.uk)) You can also look at their interactive map and see where there have been other sightings in the UK. There's only one recorded in York so far.



WILDLIFE AND ALLOTMENTS

Thank you to all who responded to our survey on Allotments and Wildlife. It's not too late to add your voice to the survey, and offer to help think about wildlife and the environment on allotment sites. You can take the survey and sign up to help by following this link: <https://bit.ly/3cJSMVO>

The majority of those who responded were keen to support the idea of promoting wildlife, some were also keen on promoting organic growing. There were also several reminders that gardening for wildlife should not be used as an excuse not to work your plot. We are aware of this issue and are thinking about how to promote wildlife whilst not losing sight of the primary purpose of allotments - food production.

The responses have encouraged the group to keep going with exploring this area of managing the sites and finding ways of supporting allotment holders.

We already have a few people who want to be actively involved, offering a wide range of skills and we will be in touch with those in the coming weeks. We are keen to have even more people on board so if you are interested in wildlife and the environment on allotments and want to join us please do [complete the survey](#).

PRUNING WORKSHOPS



The first fruit tree pruning workshop is scheduled for Saturday, 21st January. We'll be in touch with details of the time and venue in the New Year.

SAFE BONFIRES

We've written before about bonfires, but given the time of year and with a slightly different emphasis, we'd like to make the following suggestions when considering a fire.

Start on this basis; where possible, do not have a bonfire.

Consider what you are burning and why? If it is compostable material, then compost it. If the material is very woody it can be piled up neatly at the bottom of your plot, making everything from a temporary bug hotel to a residence for small mammals including hedgehogs, why disturb them?

If you must burn it, turn it. This will allow you to shake all the bugs out and check for other residents including hedgehogs. It will also allow some air into that bottom, damp layer, allowing it to dry out more thoroughly.

Once turned and completely dry, then think about the wider environment. Unless your bonfire is absolutely dry, there will be smoke and other unseen



pollutants. Heavy black smoke is not healthy, in breach of your tenancy and generally an environmental nuisance. The best way to prevent it, is by not having a bonfire.



Do you have an event or piece of allotment news you'd like to share? Let us know by 15th February and we'll publicise it here.



ROAST SPROUTS WITH PRESERVED LEMON & PAPRIKA



500g brussels sprouts, trimmed
1 small to medium-sized preserved lemon, quartered, flesh discarded and rind sliced into thin strips
2 sprigs rosemary
2 tender sprigs thyme, leaves stripped
2 garlic cloves, bashed but with skin on
2 tsp sweet smoked paprika
2 tsp runny honey
2 tbsp olive oil
Salt and black pepper
1 large handful parsley leaves, chopped
1 knob butter (about 25g)

Heat the oven to 210C (190C fan)/gas 6½. Halve the larger sprouts, but leave any smaller ones whole. Put them into a large roasting tin, and scatter over the preserved lemon strips, the rosemary, thyme and garlic cloves. Sprinkle over the smoked paprika and trickle over the honey and olive oil. Season everything generously and tumble together well. Roast for about 25 minutes, stirring once or twice, then remove from the oven and stir in the parsley and butter. Add more salt and pepper if needed, then serve.

© Gill Meller, [Time: A Year & A Day in the Kitchen](#)

CONTACTING US



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