

Winter 2024



NEWSLETTER

THE LATEST NEWS FROM YORK ALLOTMENTS



Date for your diary

The YACIO AGM will be held on 22nd March at Clements Hall, YO23 1BW 9:30am - 12:30pm

PLOT PROBLEMS? LET YACIO KNOW

We all know that feeling - it's a lazy sunny day in early spring and it feels good surveying the plot and planning which crop is going to go where. With seedlings overflowing in the greenhouse or on window sills, it's a real joy to see the first bed all ready for planting up with a promise of wonderful produce to come. However, sometimes life can get very busy, or there's just not the energy, or perhaps ill health. What should you do? We know there's nothing like being in the open air to lift the

spirits and bring back enthusiasm so, getting outside is often the best option. Tidying up and preparing a plot can be far less daunting than we might imagine. However, if there are other priorities or a change of circumstances (whether permanent or temporary), winter is a good time to consider whether or how to continue your allotment adventure.

We are very aware that there are times when maintaining an allotment can be challenging. If you are having difficulties we will support you where possible. However, for this to happen, we need to know you have a problem. If you need to take a break from the plot, perhaps due to illness or some

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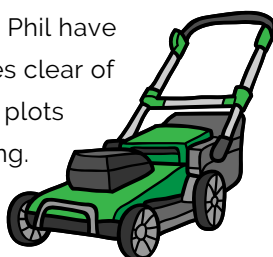
other life issue, why not ask for a short period of time off? While it may not be possible to allow your plot to lay fallow for an entire year we might, for example, suggest you vacate your plot and offer to keep your name at the top of the waiting list so, when you're ready, you can step back in on a new plot and start afresh.

YACIO would always prefer to avoid sending out warning emails about lack of cultivation and possible eviction where a tenant is struggling. However, we do have a duty to make sure plots are looked after and used. So, if you are having difficulties keeping on top of your allotment please do let your Site Secretary know or inform YACIO through contact@yorkallotments.org, and we'll see if it's possible to help. Alternatively, if you feel the time has come to give up your plot altogether please let your Site Secretary or YACIO know as soon as possible. Providing your plot is left in reasonable condition, you'll be eligible to have your deposit returned.

MAINTENANCE REPORT

Maintenance of all 16 sites across York is a huge responsibility, having cut our teeth over the first seven year lease, we are now looking forward to what could be the next ninety-nine years as the trustees re-negotiate a new lease with the City of York Council.

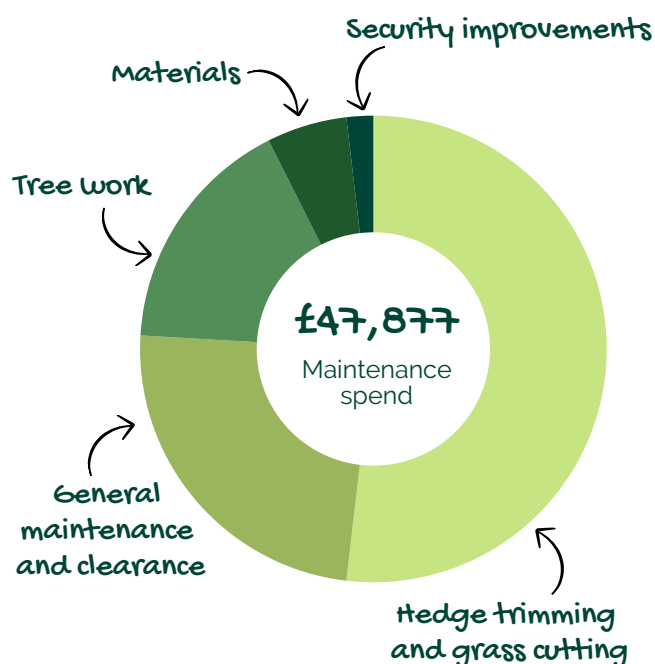
Let me start by thanking all of our contractors who have helped us to keep the sites in good working condition over the past year. Aspects Horticulture are responsible for our grass cutting and hedge trimming and I have been getting some very good feedback about their attention to detail. Dave and Phil have continued to work hard keeping our sites clear of waste materials, cleaning up neglected plots and seeing to any repairs that need doing.



It's been a great pleasure to have been working with James Bedford (Arborist) over the past twelve months. He has helped manage some of our tree stock and also lent a hand where we have received requests for help with hedge management. Adam Myers will be taking over responsibility for developing a tree management plan from January 2025.

Maintenance spend 2024

Our biggest bill was for grass cutting and hedge trimming and this amounted to 28% of YACIO's income. Our second biggest cost was for general maintenance and clearance which came in at 13%. Next comes tree work at 9%. Finally, 1% was spent on improvements to security. The figures presented here do not necessarily include materials used and it is likely that this element may have eaten away at a further 3% of income. These amount to a total of £47,877, some 54% of YACIO's annual income. While we are expecting costs to increase next year, the trustees are confident that maintenance expenses can be contained within the current budget.



ASBESTOS



Tenants are drawing our attention to finds of asbestos (some large, some small) on their plots. We have managed this up to now with help from the City of York Council. However, from 2025 it is hoped there will be an annual collection of asbestos every April by a contractor appointed by the Council. I would like to take this opportunity to ask all tenants finding asbestos to report their finding to their site secretary. If the pieces of asbestos are large and safely in situ (for example as part of a fence), please don't move them. They will be harmless if left untouched. Report it to the site secretary who will then inform me of its location. A list of all locations will then be provided for the contractor. Smaller pieces of asbestos can be carefully placed in rubble bags and taken to a designated area on site ready for collection in April. There is no need for concern about placing small pieces in a bag, but do not break them up any smaller and I would recommend wearing gloves. One day, we might see the end of asbestos on our sites!

INSURANCE

YACIO has a duty under our lease to take out Public Liability Insurance. We do this every year. This covers general members of the public who may bring a claim against YACIO. However please note that you as a Tenant are not covered. This means neither you nor anything on your plot is covered for any harm or damage or any costs incurred by charges brought against you relating to error or negligence. If you are concerned about this, it is possible for you to obtain insurance yourself. The National Allotment Society provides cover to its members. You can have individual membership or you may be a member through an Allotment Association. Check with your Association if you have one.



KALETTES

If you're looking for a different vegetable to grow how about trying kalettes? Sometimes known as 'flower sprouts', the name preferred by supermarkets, or more pretentiously 'petit posy', this is a new vegetable developed by the UK seed company Tozer using traditional plant breeding techniques and introduced as recently as 2010. As the two names suggest, kalettes are part kale and part sprout. In appearance the plants resemble tallish kale growing up to a metre in height and with crinkly blueish green leaves. As the plants mature in winter 'sprouts' appear on the stems. These are carried much like Brussel sprouts but are more open in habit with loose, frilly, edges.

When it comes to growing, kalettes are a bit harder than kale, but a lot easier than Brussel sprouts. If sown from seed early May is soon enough to start. Some garden centres do now sell plants so raising your own may not be necessary. This can either be done in an outdoor seedbed or in pots under cover. Plant out from early June spacing about half a metre apart. Do not overcrowd. Denser planting will give puny plants that'll produce tiny sprouts. Like all brassicas kalettes may be attacked by cabbage white caterpillars and wood pigeons so netting is advisable. White fly and cabbage aphid can also be a problem.

It won't be until late autumn that the first kalettes reach reasonable size. These can then be picked off in the same way as sprouts. Cropping can continue into late winter and early spring. It's also possible to eat the leaves although these can get a bit bedraggled and tend to be tough when large.

As for taste, kalettes are less bitter than sprouts and not as chewy as kale, pluses that may appeal to any reluctant brassica eaters in your life. If that's not reason enough to grow them, kalettes are a healthy 'superfood', being rich in vitamins C and K plus lots of other goodies.



WASSAILING

*"Wassaile the trees, that they may beare
You many a Plum and many a Peare:
For more or lesse fruits they will bring,
As you do give them Wassailing."*

There are plenty of orchards around York so plenty of opportunity to join or initiate a Wassailing this midwinter. 'Wa...what?' Wassailing is an old, old tradition, particularly in apple growing areas like Herefordshire and the south-west and south east, but the organisation Commonground, who has done so much to reinvigorate orchards, have played a big part in making the practice popular again. It's counter to the digital, the virtual, the online and the socially mediated world; it's a way to celebrate apple growing and eating, the thousands of varieties there are, and to encourage the health of the trees which bring such vitality to us as growers and eaters, and provide wonderful habitat for lichens, insects and birds.

You can of course make up your own ceremony; there is always an element of anarchy and wildness to wassailing! But here are some of the key traditions associated with it. The traditional date was the old calendar epiphany in mid January, but it's basically a midwinter festival that brings people together with light and jollity in the darkest evenings. Solstice dusk always seems like a good time. The trees must be protected and bad spirits driven away, so a lot of banging and shouting is required – people bring pots and pans or drums, as well as candles or lanterns. Then the trees must be thanked, and blessed, and encouraged to be fruitful (not forgetting that this is now pruning season which helps production too!). So they are toasted with cider or warm apple juice and libations dropped around their trunks and the earth. Recognising the trees' allies, a piece of toast is dunked in the juice and put high in the oldest tree for the robins to enjoy.



Then comes a dancing procession through, around, beneath the trees, led by the youngest person, singing some version of the wassail song, until we are exhausted.

Correction

Kevin Holland from Hempland Allotments won Best Established Plot North in the YACIO best plot competition. Sorry for leaving you out, Kevin.

ADMIN REPORT

Our first three months at YACIO have been full and interesting ones! Some of our tasks have been:

- Preparation of the necessary paperwork for 70 new tenancies.
- Administering 45 plot changes or terminations.
- Processing applications for our waiting lists at each of our 16 Allotment sites
- Recording applications for structures on plots such as sheds and ponds.
- Supporting Trustees and Site Secretaries with administrative functions such as attending meetings and producing monthly tenancy reports for each site.
- Being the first point of contact for email queries and telephone calls.

Please let us know if your contact details have changed. Equally, if there is a co-worker on your plot, please let us know by completing the [co-tenancy form](#).

Don't miss out on hearing from us
Have you moved house, changed your email or phone number? Please let us know.

CONTACTING US

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