

Winter 2025



# NEWSLETTER

THE LATEST NEWS FROM YORK ALLOTMENTS



## Date for your diary

The YACIO AGM will be held on 28th March at Clements Hall, YO23 1BW 10:00am - 12:00pm

## SPOTLIGHT ON SITE SECURITY

Security on allotment sites across York has become a growing concern, and the trustees would like to update all tenants on the actions taken so far and the challenges we continue to face. Incidents fall broadly into two types. The first involves youths, a new cohort each year - usually in their early to mid-teens, who engage in low-level but disruptive behaviour such as breaking into sheds, scattering items and causing a general nuisance. The second is far less common but more serious: organised intrusions by adults, sometimes

arriving by vehicle, with the clear intention of theft. There have also been occasional episodes involving arson and extensive damage caused by groups of youths.

### YACIO's response

To address these issues, trustees have worked closely with partner agencies who share responsibility for community safety and child welfare. This has meant attending multi-agency meetings, carrying out inspections with the police, and consulting with Youth Justice and Restorative Justice Services. Thanks to tenants' rent contributions, YACIO has made significant improvements to site boundaries, including replacing

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and erecting fencing, repairing damage, fitting secure gates and replacing locks where necessary.

Despite these efforts, determined individuals - particularly younger ones - often bypass physical barriers by climbing over them, and some sites have public rights of way or no perimeter fencing at all.

### Reporting: Why It Matters

One of the strongest messages from the police is that they cannot act without evidence. They do not accept third-party reports from YACIO or Site Secretaries, so incidents must be reported directly by the victim to count towards police action or resource allocation.

Evidence such as phone or CCTV video, witness accounts, or anything forensic is extremely valuable, and every incident, however small, should be logged via the 101 service. Site Secretaries are also encouraged to inform YACIO of all incidents so that YACIO can respond appropriately and advocate more effectively.

### Recent Community Meeting (Micklegate Ward)

A recent well-attended meeting in the Micklegate Ward brought together councillors, neighbourhood policing teams, Youth Justice and Restorative Justice Services, alongside over a hundred local residents and tenants. Councillor Jonny Crawshaw spoke about the young people involved in the recent spate of vandalism, noting that many are known to agencies and have experienced neglect or trauma. Understanding these backgrounds is not intended to excuse the behaviour, but may help inform approaches that reduce harm and improve safety for the whole community.

### Deterrents the Police Recommend

In addition to CCTV, the police highlight two practical deterrents that may help reduce intrusions: improved lighting on sites and the lowering of hedges and fences to increase visibility, both of which can discourage

opportunistic behaviour. Youth Justice and Restorative Justice teams also emphasised their strong success rates with young offenders, although they can only become involved when a young person has been referred through the courts.

### Where This Leaves Us

The trustees will continue to strengthen site boundaries where feasible, explore options for lighting and support tenants with hedge management where needed. CCTV has been debated many times, but the consensus remains that it is expensive, raises privacy concerns and rarely provides the level of evidence the police require. The trustees, as always, welcome new ideas from tenants and encourage anyone with suggestions to contact us at [contact@yorkallotments.org](mailto:contact@yorkallotments.org).

### A Final Word on Shed Security

Finally, we urge tenants to think carefully about what they leave in sheds. The strongest advice is to avoid leaving anything valuable on site, and to remove all tools, equipment and flammable materials. Anecdotal reports suggest that locked sheds are often targeted first, while unlocked sheds are frequently left untouched.



## 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.

## OVERWINTERING HEDGEROWS



Some allotments are lucky enough to have hedges either forming part of the site boundaries or even along individual plots. I say lucky because I believe allotments give us space to produce food whilst also allowing us to connect with nature. Hedges are an important part of this picture, providing some privacy for us and homes and habitat for birds, small mammals and other creatures. Maintaining hedges well is important to ensuring these benefits can be achieved. Hedges can also be a benefit to security. No one wants to fight through thorns, even bad guys!

Our allotment tenancy requires that all hedges should be trimmed to 1.5m in height at least once a year. This helps ensure some visibility across plots for security. It also keeps hedges at a manageable height that won't overwhelm growing areas with shade during summer months. It's important to consider how deep a hedge is too, especially where this may extend into a shared pathway. There is also new legislation to consider. It is against the law to cut hedges on allotments from 1 March – 31 August (have a look at the detail: [Hedgerow management rules: cutting and trimming - GOV.UK](#)). The law helps to ensure that we aren't disturbing breeding birds, almost all of which continue to be steeply declining in numbers. We can go even further to help wildlife if we delay our annual cut until the end of winter – January or February is ideal. This gives wildlife the maximum opportunity to make use of the shelter and any food which can help birds and small mammals survive the winter. There is a lot of information online about managing hedges.

### ... and other jobs to do this winter

- 1 **Mulch, mulch, mulch. Protect your soil by covering with a layer of leaves, cardboard, well-rotted manure or all three!**
- 2 **Now is the best time to prune apple and pear trees as well as fruit bushes like currants and gooseberries.**

- 3 **Winter is a tough time for songbirds. Help them stay well-fed and watered by putting out good quality fat balls and a clean dish of water. When it's freezing, place a small ball in the dish to help prevent the water icing over.**
- 4 **Spend a cold, rainy afternoon sorting through your seed collection. Is the open packet of lettuce seeds from 2019 really worth hanging on to?**
- 5 **Sow onion seeds. Boxing day is traditionally the day for this, but no-one is going to judge you if you're a bit late. Try Onion Galacticus for huge, good flavoured bulbs.**

## LAYING A NEW DRAIN ON HOWE HILL

While James Bedford, our contractor, did a magnificent job excavating a collapsed drain on Howe Hill Allotments, special thanks has to go to Dean Fawcett (Site Secretary) for giving up his time voluntarily to complete the task of relaying a new pipe line. A blockage in the old clay pipe caused by tree root intrusion resulted in extensive flooding on plots on the lower end of the site. Hopefully, the new installation will resolve the problem but we can be rest assured, Dean will be keeping his eye on it.



Dean in action!

## ALLOTMENT READING



### The Self-Sufficiency Garden

A very practical and accessible guide for getting the most from limited space. With clear advice on seasonal sowing, bed planning and year-round growing, it's ideal for allotment holders keen to boost yields and make better use of their plots.

### RHS Waterwise Garden: Sustain Your Garden Through Drought and Flood

Timely and highly relevant as weather becomes more unpredictable. This book offers clear guidance on managing water on your plot - improving soil resilience, coping with drought and handling heavy rain - making it a useful reference for sustainable allotment growing.

### Orchard: A Year in England's Eden

A beautifully observed journey through the orchard year, following fruit growing from winter pruning to harvest. Particularly relevant for plot-holders with fruit trees or soft fruit, it celebrates seasonal rhythms, biodiversity and traditional varieties in shared growing spaces.

### A Green and Pleasant Land: How England's Gardeners Fought the Second World War

A fascinating look at how ordinary gardeners turned small plots into vital food producers during wartime. For allotment holders, it's both history and inspiration - a reminder of the resilience, ingenuity and community spirit that our plots embody, especially in times of uncertainty.

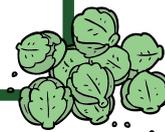


**We may need to contact you**  
Have you moved house, changed your email or phone number? Please let us know.

### The Running Hare: The Secret Life of Farmland

In this beautifully written book, John Lewis-Stempel tells the story of how he turned a single field into productive farmland rich in wildlife. He shows how food production and nature can thrive side by side - a perspective that will resonate with allotment holders thinking about biodiversity on their plots.

## ARE SPROUTS TOO DIFFICULT?



Not everyone likes Brussel sprouts. Perhaps this is the reason they're no longer grown on most allotments. Another reason may be that sprouts are either seen as 'difficult' or have been tried with little or no success.

There's no point in pretending Brussels are an easy crop. They need a long season. If growing from seed sowing needs to be no later than April. Starting outside can be tricky. Greenhouse raising is best. Plants can be bought but the quality is often poor. Once growing on the plot all the usual brassica pests need to be fended off: wood pigeons, caterpillars, aphids, whitefly (although the last is almost impossible to avoid). Then there's diseases like clubroot that can cripple young plants.

However, one of the reasons that sprouts often don't perform is that they're not grown 'properly'. For a start, sprouts won't do well in soils that aren't kept fertile. Then the plants must be given plenty of room. Spacing any closer than 60cm is too dense. Crowding will produce straggly plants with tiny sprout buttons. Seedlings must be planted firmly and may need staking to avoid toppling in windy spots. Plants loosened at the roots tend to have blowy buttons. Finally, the F1 varieties of sprouts, even though a lot more expensive as seed, will give far better results than the open pollinated 'traditional' varieties. And if clubroot could be a problem, the F1 variety Crispus is highly resistant.

## CONTACTING US

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

 07887 529 195

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

 @yorkallotments

 York\_Allotments

Charity registration: 1174306

