



A NATIONWIDE SUPPORT ORGANISATION FOR ALLOTMENT HOLDERS AND GARDENERS

www.swcaa.co.uk

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NEWSLETTER



Welcome to our **Summer newsletter** and warm welcome to all our new members. I just wanted to use this opportunity once again to say a big thank you to all of you who have sent me messages of support whilst I have been going through treatment following my breast cancer diagnosis. I have been generally overwhelmed by your support and kind words and by those of you have been regularly checking to see how I'm doing.

I am still recovering from radiotherapy which has set me back a bit and still have some treatment left to get through for the rest of this year but happily I am able to see a positive future ahead. I feel that I know many of you personally as you have been members of SWCAA for many years and that has enabled me to be up front about what I have been going through and removed the worry that I would be letting you down as a result of the time off I have had to take. I would like to thank you for being part of our growing community and for continuing to support our organisation. Summer is nearly in full swing, and allotments are bursting with growth, with no doubt the occasional runaway courgette! This month's newsletter is here to help plot holders old and new stay on top of watering, weeding, harvesting and planning ahead, without feeling overwhelmed.

Ayesha Hooper, Director/CEO.



Summer Plot Checklist

Water deeply: Water early in the morning or late evening, aiming for fewer, deeper soaks rather than light daily sprinkles. **Harvest little and often:** Pick courgettes, beans, peas, salad leaves and cucumbers regularly to keep plants producing. **Keep hoeing:** A quick pass with the hoe on dry days stops young weeds before they compete for moisture and nutrients. **Mulch thirsty crops:** Add compost, grass clippings in thin layers, leaf mould or well-rotted manure around tomatoes, beans, courgettes and squash. **Watch for pests and disease:** Check brassicas for caterpillars, tomatoes and potatoes for blight, and greenhouse plants for aphids or red spider mite. **Sow for autumn:** Try small batches of lettuce, rocket, beetroot, turnips, spring onions, pak choi or winter salads to keep harvests coming.



Summer Plot Rescue - Has your allotment got ahead of you? Here are some practical, tips to bring paths, beds and growing areas back under control and a simple maintenance routine you can realistically keep up with. Start by clearing one safe path

so the plot feels manageable, then rescue any crops that are still productive by watering deeply and removing weeds from around their roots. Cut tall weeds back before digging out roots and cover unused ground with cardboard, mulch or weed membrane. Try and focus on one small area at a time. A simple two-week plan can turn an overwhelming plot back into a productive, manageable space.

Radish Pods

Radish pods are fully edible, crunchy seed pods that form when a radish plant bolts (goes to flower). Instead of a gardening failure, letting your radishes bolt yields a massive bonus harvest of pods that taste like a cross between a sugar snap pea and a mild, peppery radish. Well I never knew that!! **Pick them green:** Harvest when the pods are plump, crisp, and bright green. **Avoid brown pods:** If they turn yellow, woody, or brown, they are too tough to eat (save these for seed instead). **Keep them cold:** Store unwashed pods in a sealed container in the fridge for up to a week. **Culinary Uses** Eat them straight out of the garden, dip them in hummus, or serve them on a crudité platter. Toss them whole into green salads to add a zesty, juicy crunch. Sauté them in oil for 2-4 minutes until lightly charred, then finish with sea salt or soy sauce. They make an excellent substitute for sugar snap peas or bean sprouts. In Indian cuisine, radish pods are known as Moongre and are traditionally stir-fried with potatoes, turmeric, and garam masala. Pack them into jars with a hot vinegar, sugar, and salt brine to make tangy, peppery pickles that pair perfectly with sandwiches or cheese boards.





Summer is the peak season for allotment gardening, which means abundant harvests of fruits and vegetables alongside critical maintenance tasks like watering, weeding, and succession sowing. Managing a plot during these warm months especially if there is a shortage of rain requires a careful balance.

Smart Watering

Water the soil: Apply water directly to the base of plants rather than wetting leaves. Damp foliage wastes water through evaporation and increases the risk of fungal diseases. **Sink watering reservoirs:** Bury plastic pots or upside down plastic bottles with the bottoms cut

off next to thirsty crops like tomatoes, squashes, and courgettes. Pouring water directly into these tubes delivers moisture straight to the deep root zones. **Prioritize critical crops:** Focus your limited water supply on crops currently flowering or setting fruit, such as beans, tomatoes, sweetcorn, and courgettes. Established root vegetables and brassicas can tolerate dry spells much better. **Check soil depth:** Push a finger or a trowel into the dirt to ensure water has penetrated at least 5 to 10 centimetres down. Shallow watering only encourages roots to grow upward toward the surface, making them more vulnerable to heat.

Apply thick mulch: Laying 5 to 8 centimetre layer of organic matter like compost, well-rotted manure, or clean straw over damp soil acts as a physical barrier that will significantly down surface evaporation.

Hoe to create a dust mulch: Use a Dutch hoe to break up the very top layer of bare soil on dry days. This will break narrow soil capillaries, sealing moisture into the ground below while simultaneously killing water-competing weeds.

Add water-retaining organic matter: Work generous amounts of well-rotted manure or compost into your beds before planting to permanently improve the soil's natural water-holding capacity.

Allotment Essentials

Water Butts: Maximize water collection in winter and spring by installing a high-capacity water butt on every shed or greenhouse roof structure.

Horticultural Straw Mulch: Excellent for covering large vegetable beds to reflect sunlight and lock in ground moisture. **Shade Netting:** Lightweight mesh that blocks harsh UV rays while allowing airflow to keep crop beds cool.

Shading Erect temporary shade cloths: Use netting, old bedsheets, or a horticultural shade cloth draped over bamboo canes to shelter delicate leafy greens like lettuce, spinach, and radishes from intense afternoon sun. This stops them from bolting immediately. **Create windbreaks:** Set up mesh barriers around exposed plots to block dry, hot winds, which rapidly strip moisture from plant leaves through transpiration.

Dealing with a hosepipe ban, with all the hot weather we are currently having there is already talk of hosepipe bans. General rules and allotment exemptions:

Mains water restriction: You cannot connect a hose to a mains-fed tap to water your plot, wash cars, or fill structures. **Edible crop exemption:** Most water companies explicitly exempt the watering of food crops grown on allotments or private gardens, meaning you can still use a hose for vegetables, though they highly discourage it.

Watering cans and buckets: You are fully permitted to fill watering cans or buckets directly from a mains tap to water any plants.

Alternative water sources: You can freely use a hosepipe if it is connected to a water butt, siphon, pump, or private borehole, as long as the water does not come from the mains. **Blue Badge holder exemption:** Registered disabled individuals with a Blue Badge are typically granted an automatic exemption from the ban to use a hosepipe for health and mobility reasons. **Check local supplier terms:** Double-check your exact postcode rules on the Water UK Postcode Checker to ensure your specific provider includes the allotment food crop exemption.

Current regional status as of July 2026 Water restrictions are changing rapidly across the UK due to the series of consecutive heatwaves.

South East water - active ban in place since 3rd of July in the Kent area.

Southern Water - active ban coming into force on the 10th of July for Hampshire and the Isle of White

Anglian water - no active ban yet but restrictions are under consideration for the East of England.

South West water - no plan for a ban in Devon, Cornwall or Dorset customers are just being asked to use water wisely.

Excellent Epsom Salts... Not only are they good for us but good for plants too! Rich in magnesium Epsom salts encourage healthy crops and strong leafy growth and also prevent yellowing of the leaves, it's fantastic for your brassicas and other leafy crops as well as tomatoes and fruit trees. Before applying Epsom salt, however, it's a good idea to test your soil to determine whether it's deficient of magnesium. Also be aware that many plants, like beans and leafy vegetables, will happily grow and produce in soils with low levels of magnesium. Plants like roses, tomatoes and peppers, on the other hand, require lots of magnesium, and therefore, are more commonly watered with Epsom salts.

HAPPINESS IS...



seeing a bee
on the flower you planted



A guide to Growing Oriental Leaves - Oriental salad leaves are fast-growing, highly productive, and thrive in cooler weather, making them the perfect crops to sow in late summer for an abundant autumn and winter harvest. Because they belong to the brassica family, they have a natural peppery or mustard-like crunch and grow exceptionally well in the UK climate.

Mizuna: Feathery green leaves with a mild, dynamic peppery flavour. It is incredibly cold-hardy and acts as an excellent "cut-and-come-again" salad crop.

Pak Choi: Thick, crunchy white or green stems with spoon-shaped leaves. Perfect for quick summer stir-fries or eating young in salads.

Mustard Greens Red Giant: Large, vibrant purple-red leaves that deliver a fiery, horseradish-like kick. The spice mellows significantly when cooked. **Mibuna:** Long, narrow, leaves with a subtle, clean mustard flavour that is milder than Mizuna. **Tatsoi:** Forms a low-growing, tight rosette of dark green, spoon-shaped leaves that can withstand severe winter frosts.

Peak sowing (July to September): The absolute best window to sow. Decreasing daylight hours and cooler soil encourage lush leaf production rather than flowering. **Spacing:** Sow seeds 1 centimetre deep in rows 15 centimetres apart for young salad leaves, or 30 centimetres apart if you want to grow full-sized plants.

Watering: Keep the soil consistently moist. If the ground dries out completely, the plants will bolt instantly, turning the leaves tough and bitter.

Shading: Protect late-summer sowings from harsh, direct sunlight using mesh or a lightweight shade cloth to keep the soil cool.

Feeding: These leaves are fast growers and rarely need heavy feeding if grown in compost-rich soil. A light nitrogen-rich organic liquid feed helps mid-winter crops.

Pests

Flea Beetles: These tiny insects can be a right pain and can decimate your crops. They chew hundreds of pin prick holes in the leaves. Prevent them entirely by covering the beds with a fine horticultural fleece or insect mesh immediately after sowing.

Slugs and Snails: Slugs love the tender young seedlings. Use beer traps, or organic iron-phosphate slug pellets to safeguard your rows.

Cut-and-come-again: Use sharp scissors to snip off the outer leaves when they reach 5 to 10 centimetres tall. Leave the central growing point intact to generate multiple new flushes of leaves.

Why own an allotment? - Owning an allotment offers a unique blend of physical, mental and social benefits and can significantly improve your well being. Whether you are looking to grow your own food or escape the monotony of daily life, renting an allotment plot can be a very rewarding and productive hobby.

Health and Nutrition

Fresh produce: Access to organic, nutrient-dense fruits and vegetables.

Regular exercise: Natural workout through digging, weeding, and lifting.

Better diet: Increased daily consumption of fresh greens. **Vitamin D:** Healthy sun exposure from working outdoors.

Stress Relief and Mental Well-being

Stress reduction: Spending time in nature lowers cortisol levels. **Mindfulness:** Focus on repetitive gardening tasks calms the mind. **Sense of achievement:** Pride from harvesting and sharing crops you grew yourself.

Screen time: Disconnect from digital devices and modern distractions.

Environmental and Community impact.

Social connection: Sharing tips, seeds, and chat with fellow plot-holders. **Eco-friendly:** Reduces food miles and carbon footprint. **Wildlife support:** Creates habitats for bees, birds, and beneficial insects. **Cost savings:** Lowers grocery bills by producing high-yield crops.

The emotional reality of allotment ownership. The **Quiet Solitude:** This never gets old. Escaping to the allotment in the early morning with a flask of hot tea. **Mindful Focus:** Losing yourself completely in the rhythm of weeding, feeling the therapeutic touch of soil between your fingers and realising your brain has been quiet for hours. **The Wonderment of Nature:** Watching that tiny seed you planted transform into food.

Immense Pride: Carrying home a heavy basket of your fabulous, homegrown produce.

Humbling Patience: Having to accept that the weather, slugs, and seasons dictate the rules, and being ok with it.

Overwhelming Responsibility: Staring down a sudden jungle of weeds after a down pour of rain and knowing you can't possibly leave them.

Belonging: Having a sense of community, sharing produce, making new friends and learning new things.

Owning an allotment feels like stepping into a different rhythm of life, where the pressures of the modern world are replaced by the simple, grounding tasks of working the earth. It is a deeply rewarding mix of hard physical effort, quiet sanctuary, and humbling lessons from nature.





August is the absolute peak of the summer harvest. It is the best time to cook with vegetables that love the heat of a hot summer like tomatoes, courgettes, aubergines, and sweetcorn, which are bursting with natural sugars and flavour.

Harvest Ratatouille Orzo This recipe is a quick, one-pot meal designed to showcase August produce at its very best

Ingredients 1 large aubergine, diced, 2 medium courgettes, sliced into half-moons, 1 bell pepper (any colour), chopped.
4 large ripe tomatoes, roughly chopped, 1 cob of sweetcorn, kernels sliced off the husk, 3 cloves of garlic, minced 200g orzo pasta. 400ml vegetable stock. 2 tbsp olive oil. A handful of fresh basil leaves. Salt, pepper, and a splash of balsamic vinegar.

Method Heat the olive oil in a large, deep frying pan or casserole dish over medium-high heat. Add the diced aubergine, courgettes, and bell pepper. Sauté for 6–8 minutes until they start to soften and turn golden at the edges. Stir in the minced garlic and sweetcorn kernels. Cook for another 2 minutes until the garlic is fragrant. Toss in the chopped tomatoes. Pour in the splash of balsamic vinegar, using your spoon to scrape up any caramelised bits from the bottom of the pan. Pour the dry orzo pasta and the vegetable stock directly into the pan. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to a simmer. Cover and cook for 10–12 minutes, stirring occasionally so the pasta doesn't stick, until the orzo is tender and has absorbed most of the liquid. Remove from the heat. Season generously with salt and black pepper. Tear the fresh basil leaves over the top and stir them through right before serving



Selling Allotment Produce There is increasing interest in locally and naturally grown food. In urban areas especially, the most important sites for actual production of local natural food are allotment sites. By renting an allotment garden, people can get direct access to food without food miles by growing it themselves. The key legal restriction is contained in the Allotments Act 1922, whereby there is a general prohibition on any trade or business being conducted on the allotment garden or any part thereof. An allotment garden must, by definition, "be wholly or mainly cultivated for the production of vegetable or fruit crops for consumption by the occupier or his family". So allotment gardens can't operate as market

gardens, or nurseries. Furthermore, carrying out any form of trade, however small, on the allotment site could also be interpreted as being in breach of this law. There is however, no restriction on the distribution, by sale or otherwise, of a certain proportion of the plot holder's crop. It may depend on the rules of your site. The general rule on sites is that you could sell a percentage deemed to be your surplus crops. Produce for sale is allowed on allotment land with various rulings from 10% to 30% of output.

The Core Restrictions **No trade or business:** You are legally prohibited from turning your plot into a commercial market garden, nursery, or shop. **No personal profit:** You cannot use the land to generate a personal commercial income. **Tenancy rules:** Local authority guidelines, frequently list the outright prohibition of trade as a condition of keeping your plot.

The Exceptions: **Handling Surplus** Reinvesting in the plot: Guidance from the National Society indicates that plot holders can sell genuine seasonal surplus. Any money raised must go directly back into funding your plot, such as buying seeds, compost, or tools. **Charity and community events:** Many local councils permit the sale of excess fruit and vegetables if the proceeds are donated to charity or used for local fundraising. **Allotment associations:** On-site allotment shops can sell items to members, provided all profits are ploughed back into maintaining and improving the allotment site. **What About Selling Off-Site?** While you cannot trade directly on the allotment site, selling surplus crops at local car boots or farmers' markets is a grey area. If you occasionally sell excess vegetables away from the plot to cover your costs, it is generally accepted. However, if you sell regularly through markets or shops, the Food Standards Agency requires you to register as a food business and comply with local council trade regulations. In short there is no reason not to minimise waste and sell your produce from your plot as long as you don't build a commercial empire out of it!

Register your allotment site with SWCAA - Please register your allotment site and association with us and we will add you to our National register. This register is also a guide to the allotments in your area and contains information about the site and how to get in touch if you want a plot. We hope to build a comprehensive guide to all the allotment sites across the country. A registration form and full details can be found on our website <https://www.swcaa.co.uk/find-site> or just simply email us your details.



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