

# THE DROOPER



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[www.lansdowneallotmentassociation.co.uk](http://www.lansdowneallotmentassociation.co.uk)

The newsletter of the Lansdowne Allotment Association

@rugbyallotments

## And So it Begins

Welcome to the second edition of The Drooper and, on behalf of the committee, may I wish you all a very Happy New Year and hope you enjoy your new reduced cost plots.

You will have seen much activity on site over the past few weeks and there is much more happening as the Council fulfil their commitments to us as a part of the handover.

All of the rubbish is being collected by a lorry with grab – please ensure that any waste you have on your plots – metal, wood, carpet, plastics etc. etc. is placed on one of the many piles situated at the end of a number of plots on East or plot 16 on West as this collection is imminent and we will not be responsible for its removal after this collection.

There are some troughs being plumbed in by a number of the taps, to aid you in your watering, and prevent the water pressure loss that people experience when other plot holders are using the taps.

All of the disused plots (all plot holders responsible have already been given notice and keys returned) are being ploughed ready for re letting and we are subdividing these into quarters and halves so that new tenants stand a much better chance of keeping them maintained and you as existing plot holders experience less weed and seed issues – a perennial problem in the past!

We have secured an ongoing supply of woodchip from both RBC and a local tree company that is free of charge and will be available on both car parks. There is also a free supply of very fresh horse manure which again is to be found at the edge of the car parks.

On West there is a wildlife pond being dug and the plot adjacent to the car park is being levelled for the use of the equipment store, manure and woodchip.

We have organized to become members of Allotment Watch and have organized the first of a number of property marking events with Warwickshire Police. This is free of charge event and will take place on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> January at 1115 until 1pm approximately. Do come along and speak with our local PCSO's and get any items properly marked.

Our new database is currently being compiled and as soon as it is complete we will be submitting all details

through to the NAS so your membership will be activated shortly.

Do keep an eye on the notice boards and in the shop as we are planning a social event, to take place in May and will be announcing details soon.

We will also be in touch about the imminent lock and key change – there are a number of keys still in circulation that are not properly accounted for - and we wish to change them so that we know exactly who is coming onto site for your security. This is being paid for by RBC as originally negotiated.

We have, after much discussion with many existing plot holders and the NAS, decided to remove both the existing bay compost system and skip collection. Neither the skip or bay collection is a cost-effective option, nor is it recommended to have large piles of material on site for composting as they are not able to be policed and are universally recognized to be responsible for the spread of many diseases including club root, onion rot, powdery mildew, rust and blight to name a few. Also, it is all too easy for a large area to become contaminated with invasive weeds such as Japanese bindweed – obviously we cannot risk any of these things spreading across the whole site. With immediate effect, you as plot holders, are now responsible for disposal of organic waste on site. Obviously, the vast majority of things can be composted and with bindweed and couch grass simply leave them in a pile or submerge them in water for a month to rot them down and create a liquid fertilizer.

Advice on composting is readily available on site with our very own master composters John and Sandy Young able to come and advise you on how to manage your waste. John has written the first in a series of articles on page 2 of this newsletter.

We have secured a supply of free pallets for use as compost bins and these will be situated on both car parks – assistance can be given with construction if you are unsure of how to build one, but advice is also available on the website.

Good gardening

*Karl Hine*

Chairman

## An Introduction to Composting by John Young (Master Composter)

**Composting** makes the world go round. It recycles the nutrients that plants (and Animals) grow, feeds the bugs that keeps the soil healthy and is sustainable, a low cost way of dealing with rubbish that rots. And it can be fun too.

Thinking composting should be on our minds from the first day we take on an allotment. It starts when you clear your site and when you have waste material from your crop that you do not wish to eat. All that grows has a use and the shortest distance for carrying this material is within your plot. If you take it any where else you will most probably be taking away valuable top soil with nutrients and organisms that your next crop will rely upon.

**What to make Compost in.** There are a number of options but make it simple and to suit you and to make it manageable. Not in a great untidy heap like my grandfather did. It made good compost over time, but it was difficult to find it. Geoff Hamilton came up with a system which was a series of wood boxes each measuring 1m x 1m x 1m. A cubic meter allows the material to heat up and if you turn it from one box to the next a couple of times a year. You should have good compost to put on your plot. This could be ready in 12 to 18 months. Depending on the material you put in. It's worth waiting for. The box can be made out of discarded wood or the favourite is to use used Pallets. 4 pallets to make 1 box and 7 to make it 2 and so on.



Four pallets make up a single compost bin.

An alternative is the Black (Dalek) which is more for the household, but it is a good starter. These are available through Warwickshire Count Council at a subsidised price. The suitable size is a 330 litre. You do not turn the material, just feed it and occasionally use a fork in the top so it does not compact.

**Where to place the compost bins.** There is a logic to place them in the centre of your plots but this may not be best for your garden plan or the available area. We have placed ours on a site at the bottom of our plots as it was convenient for loading, harvesting and distributing the compost. They should be placed directly on to the bare ground so that the Brandling

worms and the bugs (which are part of the composting process) gain easy access the from the soil.

**What you put into the bins.** Try to get a mix of Greens (which composts quickly) only this gives a wet compost and Browns slower to rot (high fibre material) only this it will be too dry. The mix is ideal.

**Greens:** Vegetable peelings/scraps, Fruit scraps, Annual weeds (less seed heads) spent bedding plants, comfrey, nettles, grass cuttings etc.

**Browns:** crushed paper, garden pruning, straw, corn cob & stalks, manure from herbivores.

**What not to put into the bin;** Cooked food scraps, dog or cat faeces, pernicious weed roots (these can be processed by placing in a container of water for at least a month).

**What benefits does compost have:** It improves the soil, whatever type you have. It lightens a clay soil and gives more humus to a light one. It keeps the soil moist, so there is less need for watering. Compost fed soils tend to grow healthier crops and more resistance to pests and diseases.

**When to get started and follow up information.** The time to get started or check your bins is now. We will follow up with when and what to do in early Spring.

**John & Sandy** (plot 9) as Master Composters for Warwickshire are available for further advice either on your plot or by e-mail.

**Have a good composting and growing 2018**



Seven pallets make up a double compost bin but you can just keep adding.