

SWAY ALLOTMENTS

Newsletter #6, September 2022



In these disturbing and volatile times, it is reassuring to know that we at the Allotments Committee continue to produce a newsletter guaranteed to get you to sleep.

Whilst there were funny growing conditions this summer, we were fortunate not to be hit with a hosepipe ban and plottolders have once again grown some lovely produce and shared surplus with the Lymington Food Bank. Thank you.

Unfortunately, we have again experienced thefts of tools, material and produce and the site's well-fed rats have tucked into to various plottolders' crops which must be soul destroying. Any ideas of how to deal with both pests would be welcome.

In this degrading issue we take a look into the benefits of composting, how to get rid of your personal waste and the not so fantastic, plastic.

Bob also points us in the right direction to make the most of our plots over the darkening days of autumn and winter.

Happy Christmas!
Your Allotment Committee

AGM: 6th Oct, 7pm, Jubilee Field Pavilion



SWAY ASSOCIATION OF ALLOTMENT HOLDERS

Chairman: Brent Knox ~ Treasurer: Henryk Andruszko
Committee: Ian Stone, Derek Elkins, Pam Capon, Mike Green, Tony Wade

Parish Clerk: Katie Walding

Dealing with allotment green waste

Composting should be your first choice for all green plant waste.

Once composted, it provides a nutrient-rich material that can improve your soil's fertility. Compost production works best when there are at least a couple of heaps on the go at the same time; the first is this season's new heap, beginning to rot down, and the second contains last year's waste material which should be ready to be used.

Make the individual heaps about 1yd/metre square by a 1yd/metre high. A compost heap needs a balance of carbon, nitrogen, water and air to produce the black, friable organic material that can be dug back into the soil or just placed on top as part of a no dig approach.

To create good compost, you should mix the carbon-based waste half and half by volume with the nitrogen-based plant remains. The woodier carbon material helps to provide structure, creating an air flow through the heap whilst the soft green material provides the nitrogen and moisture.

All of the materials will compost more effectively if they are cut up or shredded before thoroughly mixing them together. It is always best to stack the different types of material to one side before making the compost heap. Avoid allowing any one material to dominate the heap. If this isn't possible then add the waste in layers to avoid them clumping together. Turn the compost heap at least once a year (at Sway we advise twice per year, and regular forking and prodding to stop the rats setting up home) by throwing all of the partially broken organic material out of the container and the throwing it back in – this will help speed up the composting process.

Cover your heap to keep the moisture and heat in, but don't let it dry out too much; water it occasionally in long dry spells. However, if your compost does become very wet and smelly, add more woody materials to it as it helps to increase the air flow and dry the heap out. Most efficient heaps will produce good compost in 9-12 months; the longer compost is left the better it will be.



Carbon is found in: shredded newspaper, torn up cardboard (not too heavily printed), sawdust, wood chips, vegetable/flower leaves and waste root vegetables, and straw. Don't use carpet, as the chemicals can leech out and many carpets have plastics that break down into the soil.

we COMPOSTING

Nitrogen is found in: grass cuttings, soft prunings, old plants and flowers, uncooked vegetable peelings, coffee grounds. Most tea bags still contain plastic and should not be used but PG Tips are plastic free and are good for composting.

Neutral: egg shells.

Do not add: cooked or raw meat, bones, fish, bread, human or pet faeces, glass, plastic, metal, printer paper (it is likely to have been coated so will not break down), coal ash, infected and diseased live plants or perennial weeds.

Turn your compost heap regularly and disturb it each week, this is very important if we are to tackle the problem of rats at the allotment and it will help the materials to breakdown.

Once you have created good compost, dig it into your soil to help improve its structure and nutrients or just spread the compost on the top of the soil and allow the worms etc to take the compost into the soil.



This is often regarded as the best method as it does not break down the soil structure and beneficial life in the soil; it also forms a mulch to stop weeds.

We have had major problems with RATS ruining crops. Rats often live in un-managed compost heaps, so it is imperative that you constantly turn and disturb your compost heap.

We have inspected the site in the last few weeks and identified some problem compost areas. We'll notify individual plot holders who need to take urgent action.

Please see the noticeboard for the latest information. If you have an email address but did not receive this newsletter electronically, please notify the Parish Clerk at clerk@sway-pc.gov.uk to be added to the mailing list.

BOB'S JOBS

SEPTEMBER

What needs doing, and when...

Return of the rain in September means weeds will start to germinate again so hoe them off before they become established.



You can plant out any strawberry runners and spring cabbage and finish lifting main crop potatoes.

OCTOBER

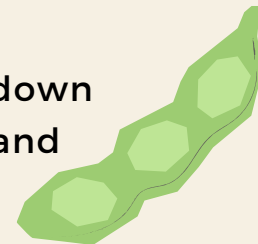


Start planting garlic and sow sweet peas - but keep them protected.

It is the ideal time to clear plots and start spreading manure.

NOVEMBER

Dig in your manure and compost which will break down further over the winter and promote soil structure and fertility.



You can sow broad beans but these should be planted six inches deep to defeat the mice and birds.

DECEMBER

Time to get your shallots out and plant them in the soil. Once done put up your feet and scan catalogues for gardening-based Christmas presents.



JANUARY

It's a happy new allotment year, which can start with some early sowing of onions from seed, more sweet peas if the weather permits, and digging some runner bean trenches before the spring rush.

Stay safe, and keep on gardening!
Bob Marsh

The Green Bag recycling scheme and bonfire area

We are fortunate at Sway Allotments to be able to offer both methods of dealing with allotment waste.

The **GREEN BAG** scheme has 10 green bags for the whole allotment site. It works on the basis that one bag is available for three allotment rows e.g. rows 1, 2, 3. and an allocated plothead holder is responsible for one bag for those three rows and allows plothead holders from the three rows to use the bag. The allocated bag holder puts out the bag every two weeks. The names of the persons who hold the bags is displayed on the notice board. No soil can be put in the bags and the bag must not be over 20kg.



The **BONFIRE** area is only for dry burnable waste. For example, dried green pruning's, dried spent plants, dried woody material. Fresh green waste and wet material should not be left, it should be dried on your plot before being moved to the bonfire area.

In the summer it has become increasingly difficult to have fires. Firstly because it could spread to the increasingly dry forest heath, a problem that may only get worse with climate change; and secondly the wind can take the smoke toward neighbouring houses which has led to complaints. If and when fires are not allowed, please do not leave material for burning.



PLASTIC FOOD FOR THOUGHT



I am sure some of us have spent many hours over time on our knees picking up scraps of decaying plastic and perhaps tufts of carpet from the soil and compost of our plots. It seems a wise thing to do.



Now Researchers in Germany are warning that the impact of microplastics in soils, sediments and freshwater could have a long-term negative effect on ecosystems. We have all undoubtedly seen David Attenborough's Blue Planet films highlighting the problems of plastics in the sea. But the research in Germany says land based microplastic pollution is much higher than marine microplastic pollution - estimated at 4 to 23 times higher, depending on the environment.



The study estimates that one third of all plastic waste ends up in soils or freshwater. Most of this plastic disintegrates into particles smaller than five millimetres, known as microplastics, and these break down further into nanoparticles (less than 0.1 micrometre in size). The problem is that these particles are entering the food chain! Microplastics can also interact with soil fauna, affecting their health and soil functions. “Earthworms, for example, make their burrows differently when microplastics are present in the soil, affecting the earthworm’s fitness and the soil condition,” says an article in Science Daily about the research. In 2020, the first-ever field study to explore how the presence of microplastics can affect soil fauna was published in the Proceedings of the Royal Society. The paper notes that soil based microplastic pollution has led to the decrease of species that live below the surface, such as mites, larvae and other tiny creatures that maintain the fertility of the land.

Chemical effects are especially problematic at the decomposition stage. Additives such as phthalates and Bisphenol A (widely known as BPA) leach out of plastic particles. These additives are known for their hormonal effects and can disrupt the hormone system of vertebrates and invertebrates alike. In addition, nano-sized particles may cause inflammation, traverse cellular barriers, and even cross highly selective membranes such as the blood-brain barrier or the placenta. How can plastic do this I hear you ask.

Research from the University of Massachusetts has shown that the plastics not only affect the soil borne organisms but can also be absorbed into the actual plant. The researchers point out that nanoplastic particles can be as small as a protein or a virus. Weathering and degradation change plastic’s physical and chemical properties making it possible for the plant to absorb the chemicals and studies have “demonstrated this from root to shoot.” According to the study “plant accumulation of nanoplastics can have both direct ecological effects and implications for agricultural sustainability and food safety.” Details are in Nature Nanotechnology.

So how does this affect me?

Well, it seems that the plastics do affect both the creatures in the soil, and, can be absorbed into the plants we grow and eat. Surely this cannot be a good thing.

Allotment holders, hopefully armed with this knowledge, will avoid a build-up of abandoned and decaying plastic and plastic fibres, not bring hessian backed synthetic carpets onto site and appreciate the fact all carpets are likely to contain toxic fire retardants that leach into the soil.



Ideally the information will encourage plot holders to be vigilant as nearly all plastics are affected over time by being exposed to the Ultra Violet content of sunlight. This typically causes the outer layer of plastic to weaken, become brittle and flake off thereby exposing fresh plastic underneath and so the process goes on. So, if you need to use plastic remember transparent and light-coloured plastics generally have the least resistance to the effects of UV. Dark colours are best.



Finally, if you want to look after the soil and the creatures that create its fertility you must be prepared to keep an eye out for evidence of the decay of all plastics on your plot over time.

Please **take any degrading plastic items home** and put them in a black bin liner for council collection, **take large items to the tip**, and ideally reduce the amount of plastic you use.



ECO SWAY presents...

ENERGY for EFFICIENT & GREENER HOMES



Fair & Information Day

Sunday 16th October 2022

10am - 4.30pm

Sway Village Hall

**Thermal Imaging • Green Energy
Insulation • Curtains • Glazing
Solar PV • Solar Thermal
Energy Storage • Draught Exclusion
Air Source Heat • Electric Bikes
Ground Source Heat
Electric Cars • Water • Finance**

Let us know if you have a green energy project you can share on the day

Contact: ecoswaynf@gmail.com

facebook: @EcoSwayNF

Web: www.sway-pc.gov.uk/ecosway