



Welcome

On behalf of the Woodley Allotments Tenants' Association (WATA) Committee, a very warm welcome to our newly redesigned allotment newsletter!

Many of you will remember our previous newsletter, and we're delighted to bring it back with a fresh new look for Spring 2026. This redesign has been led by our newly appointed Newsletter Editor and Committee member, Hannah Varley-Thompson, who has put in a huge amount of time and care over the past few months to create something we can all enjoy.

You'll find many of the familiar favourites from earlier editions, along with some new features such as Site Recycling and Volunteer Groups. We hope there's something here for everyone.

This newsletter is for all of us, and we'd love it to reflect the life of our allotment community. If you have an idea for a story, some gardening tips to share, photos from your plot, or would like to contribute a one-off piece or a regular column, please do get in touch via our usual email: readingroadplots@woodley-allotments.org.uk.

So put the kettle on, take a few minutes to relax, and enjoy your newsletter – we hope it feels like it belongs to you.

Many thanks and kind regards,

Mike McNamara
Chair - WATA Committee

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Weeding out the waste

Waste management might not be the most glamorous part of allotment life, but it's one of the most important. With recent efforts to clear up the site, free up much-needed plots, and introduce new waste and recycling initiatives, the committee has been working behind the scenes to make our allotments tidier, greener and more accessible for everyone.

We have all seen news articles about allotment land being sold to make way for developers in the news. Now more than ever, we want to show to the council how important our allotments are to the local community and that means making sure as many plots as possible are occupied and productive.

Work has been taking place across the site to clean up and clear unoccupied plots, making them more attractive to newcomers and help current plot owners clear unwanted waste and make more growing space.

Since the start of this year, 40 plots have been made available available and are being shown to people on the waiting list. The committee has worked to clear many of these plots to make them easier for new owners to manage and get started quickly!



Rubbish cleared by the committee from a vacant plot.

Thank you to all of the committee for all their work in setting up these initiatives. Special thanks to Sylwester for his efforts in strimming many of these plots.

Read more about the new recycling initiatives on the next page.



Recycling bays have been created on the gravel base next to the main gate. Plot tenants can deposit unwanted metal, hard plastic and glass here from their plots.

Please make sure you only put the correct type of waste in each bay. Each one is clearly labelled as shown. These schemes are strictly for waste disposal from the site. Items must not be brought on to the site. CCTV is in operation in these areas.

Please help us to keep the allotment site clear and tidy.

The Committee will be making further arrangements for dealing with soft plastic such as plastic sheeting, hose pipes etc, soon.



Photos to the left from top to bottom: metal recycling bay, hard plastic recycling bay and glass recycling container.



Hot stuff!

Add your wood to the designated pile and the committee will schedule and manage the burn safely.

The Committee have been undertaking a number of 'managed' bonfires. These are helpful for those with smaller plots and no room for bonfires and also help reduce the number of bonfires on site which is better for our neighbours.

The piles have been high and so has the heat! The current pile is located by the back gate by M row. Please add your wood to the pile but no useable pallets, metal or or green waste.

In accordance with council policies, bonfires, including committee-managed bonfires, must stop at the end of April. Until then, please help us clear the site and bring your unwanted wood along.



Thank you to the committee and volunteers who have given up their time (and eyebrows!).



Spades at the ready... Volunteers wanted!

Do you want to use your growing experience to help others? Would you like an excuse to spend extra time at the allotments and help support a charity? We need you!



Whether you can spare an occasional hour or make more of a commitment, the LaunchPad site would welcome your support. Volunteers are needed to help keep it running.

All food produced on these plots goes directly to support Readifood, the local food bank in the Reading area. We also welcome any donations of surplus food you may have from your own plot.

To get involved contact: teresa.buley@woodley-allotments.org.uk.

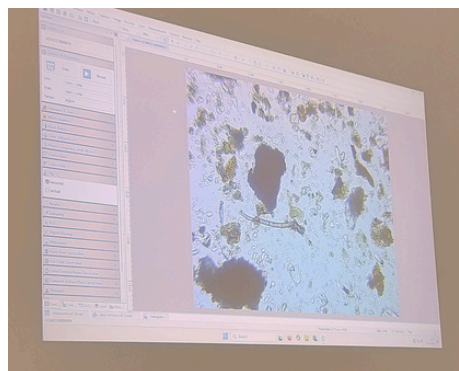


Upcoming events

All plot tenants are welcome to attend the Tenants' Association general meetings.

Meetings are held between 7:30pm - 9:00pm on the third Monday of each month in the Carnival Hall at The Oakwood Centre, Headley Road, Woodley.

We have been joined by some brilliant guest speakers in the past including: Wokingham Beekeepers Association, the Soil Ecology Laboratory and Launchpad. The Committee also share regular updates on allotment business.



Top: Daniel Tyrkiel from Soil Ecology Laboratory explains soil make up at microscopic level. **Left:** A close up of plot holder's soil under the microscope.

Upcoming meeting dates are as follows:

- 20th April
- 18th May
- 15th June
- 20th July
- 17th August
- 21st September
- 19th October
- 16th November
- 21st December

Next meeting:

Monday 20th April, 7:30pm
The Oakwood Centre,
Headley Road
Woodley
Berkshire
RG5 4JZ

Everyone welcome!

Jobs for Spring

Spring is a busy and exciting time on the allotment. As the days lengthen and the soil begins to warm, it's time to prepare beds, sow seeds, and get the plot ready for the growing season ahead.

Tidy up and prepare

- Clear away winter debris, old crops, and rubbish
- Repair raised beds, paths, netting, and fences
- Clean and organise tools, pots, and sheds
- Check compost bins and turn compost if workable
- Finalise your planting plans and crop rotation

Prepare the soil

- Dig or no-dig prepare beds when soil is not waterlogged
- Add compost or well-rotted manure
- Rake beds level and remove stones and weeds
- Cover beds with fleece or cloches to warm the soil





What to sow and plant (March–April)

- Direct sow broad beans, peas, carrots, parsnips, beetroot
- Sow salad leaves, spinach, spring onions, radish
- Plant onion sets, shallots, and early potatoes
- Start tender crops indoors or under cover (tomatoes, courgettes, squash, cucumbers)
- Plant bare-root fruit bushes and strawberries

What to sow and plant (April–May)

- Continue sowing salads, chard, beetroot, and herbs
- Plant maincrop potatoes
- Transplant brassicas (cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli)
- Sow sweetcorn under cover or outdoors later in May
- Harden off and plant out seedlings once frost risk has passed

Care and maintenance

- Weed regularly while weeds are small
- Water seedlings during dry spells
- Mulch beds to retain moisture and suppress weeds
- Protect young plants from slugs, pigeons, and late frosts
- Support peas and beans as they grow

Fruit and perennials

- Prune raspberries (depending on variety)
- Feed fruit trees and bushes
- Mulch around fruit plants to retain moisture
- Keep an eye on blossom during late frosts

Wildlife and the wider plot

- Plant flowers and herbs to support pollinators
- Leave some areas undisturbed for beneficial insects
- Provide water for birds and wildlife





News round up

Plot inspections begin in May

The Committee will begin the next round of plot inspections in May. To make sure your plot passes, ensure your plot is tidy. Remember to make use of the new recycling and waste schemes. Plot numbers should also be clearly displayed. Read more about plot inspection criteria here: [Plot inspections: What are the criteria?](#)

Site entrance project

A working party is progressing on improving the entrance area by the front gate. Clearing of the area has begun and work will continue along the existing plots situated in the area. The council will be providing woodchip and the committee will be buying a bench for the area with planters attached to bring some colour to the main entrance. The aim is to improve the appearance of the site and provide a welcoming entrance.

Rotavators for hire

Two rotavators are available for hire. Tenants must complete a short agreement form and read the relevant risk assessments before hiring. Hire is available for half a day, full day or a week. Full details will be added to the website soon. Please email readingroadplots@woodley-allotments.org.uk if you wish to hire now.

Shed renovations planned

The communal shed on site is in need of repair and renovations are planned for this year. The roof will be replaced and solar panels added to power lighting and some small appliances. The refurbished shed will be used as a community hub with coffee mornings, storage for deliveries of supplies which can then be sold onto tenants and provide an area for seed swaps. Work is due to begin in the next month.





Stay connected

Our allotments belong to everyone in the community and we want to hear from you. Please contact us if you have any queries, ideas or want to get involved with the committee's work to improve the site.

Your committee

Chair: Mike McNamara (F12)

Vice-Chair: Teresa Buley (E18)

Treasurer: Geoff Wilson (M10)

Secretary: Wendy Wilkinson (J23)

Peter Buley (E18)

Debbie Ballard (K25a)

Caroline Chaytor (K25a)

Hannah Varley-Thompson (L18c)



Don't forget to opt-in to our mailing list. Sign up here: [Woodley Allotments opt-in form](#)



Join the Facebook group here: [Woodley Allotments Tenants Association at Reading Road](#)

If you have any ideas or would like to contribute to the next newsletter, please contact the committee by emailing:

readingroadplots@woodley-allotments.org.uk

