



# Welcome

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

This edition includes information about the planned refurbishment of the on-site shed. The date for the work has now been set for Friday 3rd July. This first phase will involve the removal of the old asbestos roof and its replacement with a modern metal roof. Once this phase has been completed, we will be able to proceed with the installation of solar panels to provide power to the shed, along with internal refurbishment works, including painting, fitting out the interior, and installing a new entrance door.

We hope to have the shed ready towards the end of August, when it can be brought back into use as a fully functioning community hub for all allotment tenants to enjoy. Please keep an eye on the website and Facebook page for further updates.

Finally, 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 article or a regular column to the newsletter, please do get in touch via our usual email address: [readingroadplots@woodley-allotments.org.uk](mailto:readingroadplots@woodley-allotments.org.uk).

Please enjoy this Summer newsletter and happy reading.

Many thanks and kind regards

**Mike McNamara**  
Chair - WATA Committee

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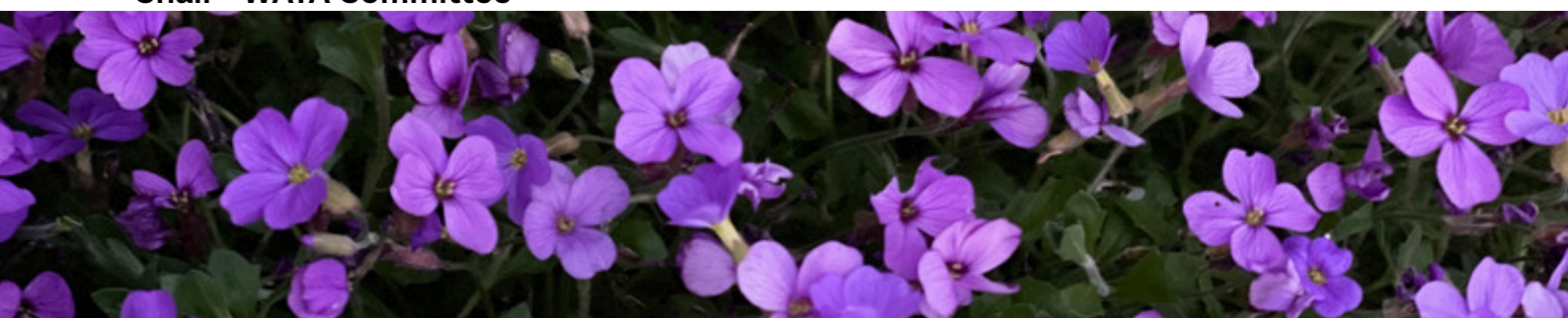
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Summer 2026

# Wildlife watch: Looking out for hedgehogs on site

Our allotments are more than a place to grow fruit and vegetables; they're home to a rich variety of wildlife too. Following the rescue of an injured hedgehog on site, here's a timely reminder to slow down, stay alert, and help keep our smallest residents safe.





A plot tenant recently spotted two hedgehogs crossing the road near a water trough in row G. While it was encouraging to see wildlife thriving on the site, it quickly became apparent that one of the hedgehogs had suffered an injury to its leg. Thankfully, the animal was taken to a local veterinary practice where it could receive appropriate care.

While we do not know how the injury occurred, the incident serves as an important reminder that our allotment site is home to a wide range of wildlife. Hedgehogs, frogs, birds, and other small creatures often shelter in long grass, compost heaps, hedgerows, and undergrowth. Many are particularly active during the evening and at night.

We ask all plot holders and visitors to remain vigilant when driving around the site and to be mindful of wildlife that may be crossing roads or moving between plots. Please also take extra care when strimming, mowing, or clearing overgrown areas, checking first for any animals that may be sheltering there.

**Please remember that the speed limit on site is 5mph.** This limit is in place for everyone's safety, including fellow plot holders, visitors, children, and the wildlife that shares our allotments. Driving slowly gives you more time to react and helps reduce the risk of accidents.

Thank you to the plot holder who stopped to help the injured hedgehog, and thank you to everyone for helping to keep our allotment a safe and welcoming environment for both people and wildlife.



## Launchpad charity plots

**Our on-site charity plots are looked after by the WATA committee. Teresa Buley, who leads the scheme, tells us more about how it works.**

Launchpad is Reading's leading homelessness charity providing a holistic service for anyone in Reading who is at risk of becoming homeless. They hold three plots on our site and all food produced goes to ReadiFood (FAITH) Foodbank.

The committee purchase and start plants on behalf of Launchpad. When the plants are ready to go in the ground, we either plant them ourselves or it is done by corporate volunteers.

Volunteers from a variety of companies come and work on the plots to help produce the food that goes to ReadiFood. The companies whose staff volunteer pay a fee which goes to support Launchpad and provides some income for the allotments too. This enables us to buy much-needed equipment for the allotments.

Last year, volunteer groups visited from April through to October and the Launchpad site produced 92 containers of food for the food bank. This scheme couldn't operate without the support of volunteers from the committee and tenants. Many thanks goes to all who help including: Teresa, Jim, Andy, Peter W, Caroline, Debbie and Mike.



We are always looking for anyone who can spare some time to help support this great cause. If you are interested in getting involved, please email: [teresa.buley@woodley-allotments.org.uk](mailto:teresa.buley@woodley-allotments.org.uk).

## Best in row awards

Plot inspections took place in May and one plot from each row was awarded the accolade **Best in Row!** Well done to the following plots:

A14	B25a	C25	D11	E30	F22
G32	H15	J26a	K17	L13	M35a



On the next few pages, you can see pictures of just some of the winning plots. Visit in person to see the full list in all their glory!

Criteria for plot inspections can be found in the policy on the Woodley Town Council website:

[www.woodley.gov.uk/council-services/allotments/plot-inspections-policy](http://www.woodley.gov.uk/council-services/allotments/plot-inspections-policy)







# Could your plot be this year's best?

Months of sowing, weeding and nurturing are beginning to pay off across the site. If you're proud of what you've created, why not enter this year's Best Plot Competition? All plot holders are welcome to take part, with the exception of the committee. To enter, please email [readingroadplots@woodley-allotments.org.uk](mailto:readingroadplots@woodley-allotments.org.uk) before the 25th of July.



Judging will take place on the 1st August with prizes being awarded by the Mayor of Woodley at the Summer BBQ on the 8th August on the Memorial Plot (F30).



Last year's Best Plot winner: B24 – Ruth Wilson

# From garden waste to garden gold



Our monthly general meetings are open to all plot tenants. We recently had a presentation on Sustainable Growing by Krishna Neupane from Integrated Research and Development Centre (IRDC) in Berkshire. The IRDC work in partnership with the University of Reading investigating how to grow produce sustainably.

Krishna talked about the research undertaken by the IRDC and shared top tips for composting (see below). A full write up including Krishna's presentation and more detailed composting information can be found on the WATA website here: <https://woodley-allotments.org.uk/2026/05/10/wata-general-meeting-20th-april-2026-minutes-speaker-notes>

## How to make high-quality compost

1. Create a fast, hot compost pile (in a bin or on the ground) and add all the composting ingredients at once. If you manage your compost pile well you can have a finished compost in 2- 8 weeks.
2. Fill your compost bin or, build the pile by layering equal amount of brown and green ingredients. The pile should not be bigger than 3 foot cube since you will need to be able to turn it off. If you are composting outside the bin, in a windy area, you should go up to a 4 foot size to retain the heat better with this fast process you will need to watch the balance of brown and green ingredients as the composting goes along, and be prepared to supplement with more 'brown' or 'green' of the pile develops problems.
3. Speed up the decomposition process by using small pieces of ingredients (shredded leaves, not whole leaves for instance), don't use branches in a fast compost piles because they take longer to breakdown.
4. Spray water on each layer. Kick off the speed in the pile by adding compost ingredients and spraying water on the pile. Keep the pile as moist as a wrung out sponge at all times.
5. Be careful when you touch the pile because it will be hot using this composting technique. Turn the pile every three days with a digging fork or compost aerator tool.

## Cultivating community

Following a suggestion at the AGM, our most recent general monthly meeting was held on site. Tenants met at the main gate and did a walk and talk around the site, visiting plots where tenants had questions or wanted to share ideas and experiences.

We visited the 'best in row' winning plots and finished at the Launchpad plots with tea, coffee and biscuits.

This was a great opportunity to meet other plot holders and share information.

Look out for upcoming events like the Summer BBQ (details below) and a bonfire planned for Halloween.

Thank you to everyone who came along and shared their knowledge and experiences.



## Summer BBQ

8 August  
Memorial Plot (F30)

Come and join us to meet other plot holders, enjoy some food and hopefully the weather! We will also be announcing the winner of the Best Plot Competition.

Everyone welcome!

# Your newsletter needs you!

**Great allotments are built by communities, and great newsletters are too. We'd love to hear your stories, see your photos, and share your ideas with fellow plot holders.**

Have you grown a record-breaking pumpkin? Discovered a useful gardening tip? Captured a beautiful wildlife photo? Built an ingenious plot feature? Or simply have a story from allotment life that would make others smile?

This newsletter is for everyone on the site, and we'd like future editions to reflect the knowledge, experiences and personalities that make our allotment community special.

We're always looking for contributions of anything you'd like to share such as:

- Photos from around the site
- Gardening tips and advice
- Plot projects and success stories
- Wildlife sightings
- Recipes using home-grown produce
- Historical memories of the site
- Ideas for future articles and features



Whether it's a single photograph, a short paragraph, or a full article, we'd be delighted to hear from you. Every contribution helps make the newsletter more interesting, informative and representative of our allotment community.

**If you'd like to contribute to a future edition, please get in touch with the committee: [readingroadplots@woodley-allotments.org.uk](mailto:readingroadplots@woodley-allotments.org.uk)**



# Good companions

Companion planting is a simple, organic way to improve the health and productivity of your plot by growing plants that benefit one another. The right combinations can attract pollinators, deter pests, improve flavour and growth, and make the most of your growing space.



Crop	Grows well with
Beans	Sunflowers, sweetcorn, cabbage, cucumbers, nasturtiums
Beetroot	Lettuce, onions, cabbages
Cabbage	Beetroot, celery, potatoes, garlic, onions
Carrots	Lettuce, peas, leeks, onions
Cauliflower	Celery, beetroot, onions
Leeks	Carrots, lettuce, beetroot, cabbages
Lettuce	Beans, radish, carrots
Peas	Carrots, beetroot, radish, beans
Spinach	Radish
Tomatoes	Basil, lettuce, onions, carrots, marigolds, aubergines

# Perfect partners: plant together

## Basil and tomatoes

Basil is one of the most popular companions for tomatoes. It attracts pollinators and may help improve tomato growth and flavour.



## Borage

Loved by bees and other pollinators. Its cucumber-flavoured flowers are edible too. Plant near: strawberries and tomatoes



## Garlic and leeks

Members of the onion family can help deter carrot root fly and other pests. Plant near: carrots, beans and peas



## Nasturtiums – the sacrificial plant

Nasturtiums attract aphids, caterpillars and white fly away from valuable crops, acting as a 'trap crop'. Its peppery leaves are also great in a salad! Plant near: brassicas, beans and cucumbers



## Calendula (Pot marigold)

A magnet for beneficial insects such as hoverflies and ladybirds, which help control aphids. Plant near: Beans, peas and other vegetables prone to aphids

# Problem pairings: what to avoid

Companion planting isn't just about finding good neighbours – it's also about avoiding bad ones. Some plants compete for nutrients, attract the same pests, or can even inhibit each other's growth.

**Beans and peas with garlic, leeks or onions:** Members of the onion family can slow the growth of beans and may reduce yields.

**Beetroot with French beans, runner beans or tomatoes:** These crops can compete for space and nutrients, leading to weaker growth.

**Carrots with strawberries, fennel or dill:** Fennel is known to inhibit the growth of many vegetables, while strawberries can compete with carrots for moisture and nutrients.

**Tomatoes with potatoes or brassicas:** Tomatoes and potatoes are closely related and susceptible to some of the same diseases, particularly blight while brassicas may compete for nutrients and growing space.



Companion planting is a useful guide rather than a strict rulebook. Soil type, weather, spacing and local pest pressures can all influence results. If you have a combination that works well on your plot, do keep experimenting, trust your own observations and please share what you've found works with us!



# Committee news

## Shed renovations scheduled

The communal shed on site has been in need of repair and the committee secured funding from The National Lottery to pay for this - thank you to Wendy who managed the application! The existing asbestos roof will be removed and replaced with 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. This is now scheduled to take place on Friday 3rd July.

Please check the special bulletin and notices on site regarding the closure of some areas near the shed on this day.

<https://woodley-allotments.org.uk/2026/06/21/wata-special-bulletin-112-on-site-shed-roof-refurbishment>

## Fruit bushes and seeds available to order

Our fruit bush and seed purchase schemes from Dobies will begin again soon. Fruit bush orders are due in by 30 September and seed orders by 30 November.

Look out for updates on when orders are live on the website bulletins and on-site noticeboard. All proceeds from these schemes go towards better security for the site.

## Clearing up the site and vacant plots

All on-site recycling has now finished. Thank you to all tenants who used the schemes to help clear up the allotment site.

Work continues to tidy up vacant plots and allow those to be given to people on the waiting list. Thank you for helping us look after our site and keep it productive.

**386**  
plots on site

**41**  
people on the  
waiting list

**232**  
passed plot  
inspections

**14**  
vacant  
plots

**24.4**  
acres





# 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.

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## 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)

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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](mailto:readingroadplots@woodley-allotments.org.uk)

