



Allotment Newsletter

Roding Road Allotment & Leisure Gardens Association

Issue 17

March 2010

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2010.

AGM

Many thanks to the plot-holders who took the time to attend a lively meeting. The committee were re-elected with Alec Brown—Plot 35b—voted on as a new Committee Member.

Note from the Chairman

The new draft Constitution is enclosed with this Newsletter. If you require a copy of the existing Constitution and/or an amended copy of the rules please contact the Secretary.

Rent due—Garage openings

If you don't wish to post your rent to the Secretary you can pay on site at the Garage on two Sunday mornings in April.

Check your rent notices for the dates.

Committee Members:

Chairman:	Eddie Boatman
Vice Chairman:	Dave Robinson
Secretary:	Maureen Boatman
Treasurer:	Ros Smith
Lettings Officer:	Ann Andrews
Equipment Officer:	Dave Robinson
Publicity Officer:	Ann Andrews
Members:	Alec Brown
	Bob Crout
	Pat Crout
	Yvonne Robinson
	Diane Tong

e-mail address: rodingroadallotments@btinternet.com

Web site: www.rodingroadallotments.co.uk

Advice on the site!

Paths

Another very wet winter. Please park at the bottom of the allotment site and walk up to your plot. The paths, always a concern, are taking a real battering again.

Where deep ruts are appearing could plot-holders fill these with unwanted stones from your own plots please.

Volunteers

Bags of stones will be ordered to fill in the ruts. Please volunteer to help with this. We all use the paths and the old adage of 'Many hands make light work' is very true. A dozen people will see the job done in about half an hour.



Barbeque/Garden Party

Unfortunately a large amount of people that promised to attend last year's BBQ failed to turn up for a variety of reasons. Fortunately, as some of the food was still frozen, the Association was only charged for the actual food used but a decision has been taken not to hold the event this summer. The Committee will be re-thinking this event for 2011.

Allotment Lettings

As at the 1st March we have 30 people on the waiting list for a plot or half plot.

If you are having trouble cultivating all your plot please consider whether or not to renew a whole plot for the coming rent year. A half plot may be much easier for you to manage.

Intercropping General Principles

Every year I grow parsnips, usually sowing the seed late in March. The first roots (I am talking about roots for the kitchen not the show bench) are lifted in October or November, the last in March. The ground will have been occupied with parsnips for at least six months, or even for a whole year. If I did not intercrop the parsnips I would get only one crop from all that space and all that time. You will often see it suggested that radish seed is sown with parsnips - the radishes germinate quickly to mark the rows and are pulled quickly to allow the parsnips to develop.

As an idea this is fine. But I grow five rows of parsnips each 25 ft (7½ m) long. Could I eat that amount of radishes before they bolted? No!

So I sow beetroot in trays in a cold greenhouse in April (sown earlier it would be likely to bolt). When the plants are about 1 in (2½ cm) high I transplant them between the rows of parsnips, which are 9 in (18 cm) apart, and between the parsnips in the rows, which were sown at 6 in (15 cm) stations. The beetroot are ready to harvest from early July onwards and, as they are removed, leave the parsnips ample room to develop.

Or if I do not want that amount of beetroot I would set out kohlrabi or sow salad onions. Both would mature just after midsummer. I have tried carrots but they are not successful - perhaps because the foliage is not able to push through the parsnip leaves.

Most of my onions I grow from sets. Between each row of sets I sow radishes. Starting in March a 10 ft (3 m) row of radish is sown each week between rows of autumn planted onion sets, garlic or shallots. Later the spring planted sets are also intercropped with radish. I find the most satisfactory cultivars for this are the round rooted ones such as 'Cherry Belle', 'Ribella' and 'Saxa' and they are pulled early before the leaves get large enough to interfere with the onions. I continue sowing these summer radishes until mid June. Then from late July onwards I start to sow winter radishes, my favourite being 'Round Black Spanish' - but 'Rose China' is also good. The onion bulbs are lifted carefully to avoid disturbing the radishes!

My last example would be interplanting sprouts - like parsnips these take a lot of space for a long time, but I do need a lot.

Depending upon how far apart I am spacing the sprouts, which depends upon the cultivar, I set two or three 'Little Gem' or 'Tom Thumb' lettuces between the rows and between the plants in each row. Or I would put out three, four, or even five, beetroot or kohlrabi. Or maybe one, possibly two if the sprouts are wide spaced, calabrese, cauliflower or large cos or crisphead lettuce such as 'Winter Density' or 'Saladin'.

With many thanks to the National Vegetable Society website, in particular to Richard Bailey, who wrote this. There are two more pieces by Richard on Intercropping and Catch Cropping. Visit www.nvsuk.org.uk/vegetable_growing_1.php to read more.