

Leicester's Growing Spaces Gazette

Penny Grimley - Editor & Leicester's Growing Spaces Co-ordinator.

Editor's Column

WELCOME to the first edition of the Leicester's Growing Spaces Gazette.

So why are you receiving this?

The answer is that you are now part of a new family of gardeners across the City who love to grow food.

Leicester's Growing Spaces Gazette will keep you in touch with news across the City, and be filled with real life stories and growing successes.

Within the gazette over the coming months, we will be highlighting your achievements, courses, funding opportunities, competitions, events, open days, plus articles on the mental and physical health benefits of growing food and being outdoors.

You will also be able to visit our new Facebook page and website. The links will be listed below when they are launched.

If you are growing weird and wonderful vegetables or unusual fruit, have gardening tips, people to thank or memories you would like to share, I would love to hear from you!

You can also promote your open days and events here and on our new Facebook page.

Why not receive this newsletter directly via email? Please send an email request to the email below and I'll add you to the mailing list!

I will also be visiting all growing sites across Leicester this summer and if we haven't already met, I look forward to meeting you soon.

For support, advice and to send Gazette articles;

Penny.grimley@leicester.gov.uk or call

0116 454 4473 to reach me.



Belgrave Community Garden Project

Penny Grimley

Leicester's Growing Spaces!

The rise in popularity of growing your own food.

Traditionally, community growing food and allotments have been considered the perfect match.

During the pandemic, outdoor activities and exercise were safe ways to enjoy company and the subsequent rise in the cost of living has reignited the passion and interest of growing food for both new and experienced gardeners alike.

This has created a huge demand on available land in Leicester, with waiting lists for allotments rocketing, as some allotment societies reduce the size of their plots to accommodate new plot holders.

As a result, new community gardening hubs have been springing up around the city.

Leicester City Council is, with partners, developing a new Growing Spaces Strategy that sets out a vision for community food growing across the city.

Gardeners are on one of 43 allotment plots across the City or growing food at the community growing hubs, some of which are in schools, libraries, community centres and museums or on previously derelict land.

Community is at the heart of food growing; camaraderie, sharing knowledge, giving support to fellow growers and sharing bountiful harvests.

Together, let's safeguard all of our growing spaces for the next generation and encourage the younger generation to get stuck in!

Mares Tail

Top tips

Paul Howgill - Leicester Allotments Garden Council

An ancient plant that thrives on more acidic soils is difficult to contain once established. Weaken the weed by changing the PH level of your soil to alkaline by adding lime. Then bruise the plant and spray with a systemic herbicide. This will kill the whole plant.



Plants on a diet!

Top tips

Penny Grimley

Like us, plants can't live on water alone. Without food, they will struggle to grow and have less crops. Feed them regularly, so they can grow healthily and be resistant to pests and diseases. Tomato food is a good, cheap around summer liquid feed to add when watering.

Paul Howgill

Best Kept Allotment Plot awards

The Leicester Allotment Gardeners Council (LAGC) is a local branch of the National Allotment Society, set up to support the allotment societies in Leicester.

Helping with the judging of the Best Kept Allotment Plot in Leicester over the last 30 years has been one of the most interesting days of my year. Seeing so many excellent plots on the 43 sites in Leicester has been a real treat.

My own society of Rowley Fields, over the years, has provided the winner on a number of occasions. Two names that repeatedly are in the top three are Marilyn Ketnor and Alan Dawson.

Marilyn, with husband John, have won Rowley Fields competition over 14 times whilst Alan has won 8 times.

Both Marilyn and Alan have also won the citywide competition, the Albert Thornhill Memorial Trophy, presented by Leicester Allotments and Gardens Council.

The two gardens are quite different. Marilyn's has a cottage garden feel, whilst Alan's crops are excellent. The irony is that Rowley Fields has over 300 plots but Marilyn's plot is number 8 and Alan's is number 9!

They both are still gardening their plots to a very high standard.

Paul Howgill, Rowley Fields secretary
1994 to 2021

Citywide Best Kept Allotment Plot 2024

Judging of the Best Kept Allotment Plot will take place on Monday 8th July.

Please send your entries as soon as possible to allotmentbaron@aol.com. The maximum is 3 entries per allotment site.

A list of the criteria has been sent via email, so that every officer knows.

Judging will be carried out by Mr Bob Mullins, Leicester City Council.



Marilyn receiving the RFAS winner's trophy 2015.



Easy gardening area at Stokes Wood Allotment.

Diane Rodriguez

Why we grow our own food.

Stokes Wood Allotment Society

Ask people why they have an allotment, and the answers would be many and varied. For myself, I wanted somewhere to go that would ensure I got a good amount of physical exercise. For others they find it a calm oasis in an otherwise chaotic life. Others may be lonely. It no doubt gives benefits both physically and mentally while supplying us with lots of good healthy food. It is a win-win really and nothing beats seeing those first seeds germinate and another season of growing begin.

Our allotment is lucky enough to have a great Composting Site and an expert running it. We also have volunteers to help with maintenance and the upkeep of the drive and gardens. In recent years we have realised the importance of the social aspect of gardening and with that in mind we have been organising social meetings where plot holders can get together share their knowledge and take part in seeds swaps, amongst other things. Later this month we will be organising a plant swap ... did I mention cake!

Penny Grimley

Star gardeners! Rowley Fields Allotment

Peering over the fence I can see a beautiful, long established allotment garden.

Marilyn on plot 8, (and her husband John) are one of the lucky few who still have access to their allotment plot through a gate at the bottom of their garden.

Marilyn has won the accolade of Best Kept Allotment Plot fifteen times and it is easy to see why.

This established growing space is immaculately kept and also features a wildlife pond. The bees have beaten the birds to it this year and taken residence in the bird box. At least they will help with pollination!

It's a lovely plot, well done.

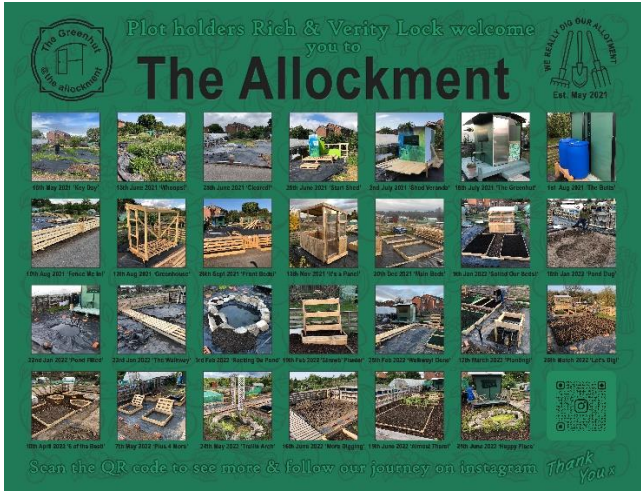


The delightful allotment plot 8.

Richard & Verity Lock

The Allockment

Rancliffe Crescent Allotments



The Allockment Journey board showing the site transformation.

May 2021 was the first time we laid eyes on our blank plot which was soon to become 'The Allockment'.

Throughout our journey with the allotment, we have always been very conscious of our costs. Not just money, but also the cost to the planet. We have always strived to reduce our carbon footprint with a target of 85% recycled, reused or upcycled.

This means that the cost to create our allotment has been very minimal due to our hard work and creativity, but not just that, it means that everything we grow has cost us next to nothing.

We are in our third year now and not everything we have grown has worked, but we adapt and go again. Even though we may not be the biggest plot, we were proud to say that we came 14th last year in the 'Best Kept Plot in Leicester'.

So if you would like to see more of what we are doing and get some ideas then please visit us on Instagram @theallockment



Penny Grimley

National Allotment Week 2024

12th - 18th August

Stokes Wood Allotment Society are supporting the National Allotment Week this year with an Open Day on the Saturday and their Annual Horticultural Show on Sunday. For details contact stokeswoodallotmentscomms@gmail.com

The Rowley Fields Allotment Society are also holding an open day to mark the occasion. Why not hold your open day? There is support from me with publicity on our Facebook page and in the Gazette.



Stokes Wood Allotment Society, Horticultural Show 2023



Looking after newly planted shrubs, runner beans, tomatoes and fruit trees at the Beaumont Leys Library.

Elaine Grainger-Jarvis

New pottager garden is taking shape.

Beaumont Leys Library

In the volunteer's own words.... "I wanted to give back to the community by improving the environment and provide examples of growing fruit and vegetables that hopefully can be harvested and eaten. I also find that doing something other than my usual activities which helps others, has improved my outlook and mental health. I enjoy seeing the improvements that we are making in an area that needed care and knowing from feedback from passers-by that it is appreciated and noticed. I would recommend that anyone who can spare time gets involved and gives back as it can have benefits on your health and wellbeing."

At Leicester City Libraries and Community Centre's we have given as much of our grounds over to growing fruit and vegetables as we can. We have a range of opportunities that you can get involved in from the larger award-winning projects at Belgrave Library to watering pots at Knighton. If you have a wealth of experience and want to pass this on or it is your first time wanting to learn more, we welcome everyone's input. You could support libraries and growing by sticking our Seed Library packets, you do not even have to get your hands dirty.

To join in contact Elaine.Grainger-Jarvis@leicester.gov.uk

Penny Grimley

Funding Opportunities

Community Ward Funding

If you are looking for help with finding funding for your growing projects, take a look here and get in touch for my support.

Each edition will focus on one or two funders and give hints and tips of how to submit a successful application.

In this edition we are highlighting the Community Ward Funding.

This year, Leicester City Council has set aside £18,000, which can be used to support activities, events and projects that bring benefits to the communities within each ward.

All applications can take 6 - 8 weeks to complete. This allows sufficient time for elected members to fully review them and ask any additional questions.

If the amount you are requesting is under £500, the application can be fast tracked.

Applications for funding over £500 are reviewed during budget meetings held on 31st January, 31st May and 30th September.

Applicants are then contacted to let them know if they have been successful or not. Sometimes the application is partially supported, which means a smaller amount of funding is awarded than requested.

Before submitting your application, always read the guidelines in full. Take a look at the funding criteria, check that your project is suitably matched and that you can meet more than one criteria point.

Also check what they don't fund.

In general, with all applications where possible, find notable *buzz words* in their guidance and use them in your application.

It helps to make a list of what funders are looking for in applications and link them to as many elements of your project as possible. See below for funders details.

<https://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council/decisions-meetings-and-minutes/community-meetings/>



Community hubs at Beaumont Lodge and Featherstone Drive.

Daxa Ralhan (LCC Public Health) & Kay Thompson, Gurpreet Kaur (TCV)

Get Growing / Free Workshops

Supporting Growing Spaces across the City

The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) are funded by Leicester City Council to support new growing groups and provide workshops that are suitable for everyone. Courses will begin again in September, after the summer holidays.

If you would like more information about future courses please contact kay.thompson@tcv.org.uk



Penny Grimley

Site security

Leicestershire Police

Leicester's Growing Spaces are working closely with the Leicestershire Police service to give support to allotments and growing hubs, who are concerned about the security of their site.

PCSO's visit allotments and growing spaces regularly. To find out which officers are in your area, visit <https://www.leics.police.uk/area/your-area/> for details.

Details of a joint security workshop will be available soon.



Reservoir Allotment perimeter fencing.



Eco Schools.

Eco Schools & the Sustainable Schools Team.

Laura Barke



Leicester City Council has a dedicated Sustainable Schools team, based in Sustainability, who provide support to schools to help them become more sustainable in all that they do.

Within the Eco-Schools topics, various growing activities are encouraged and supported in schools. For example, schools look to develop allotment spaces in their grounds, or will take on a plot at a local allotment space, encouraging students to grow their own food. It's a fantastic way for students to learn more about where their food comes from and take ownership of a space within their grounds. This learning is also taken back home, encouraging further engagement with growing across Leicester!

As well as one-to-one support and environmentally linked projects, schools can engage through #EcoTeachMeets, staff training, workshops, assemblies, conferences & celebration events. We also have dedicated social media, monthly eBulletins and termly newsletters. Schools are actively encouraged to achieve recognition through the Eco-Schools award scheme.

Since 1994, the Eco-Schools Programme has provided a simple **seven-step** framework that empowers young people to deliver impactful environmental actions in their school and local community. Schools choose **three of the ten** topics to focus on for an academic year before working through the different stages. Having completed the seven steps, schools can then apply for an **Eco-Schools Green Flag**, which recognises and celebrates their achievements.

Gardening Questions

Do you have a burning question to ask about growing vegetables and fruit?

Please send your questions and any images to the editor's email penny.grimley@leicester.gov.uk and we will answer them in future editions. Thank you.

National Allotment Week

Please let us know if you are supporting this year.

A colorful poster for the Red Hill Allotment Site Open Day. The background is green with a pattern of colorful bunting flags. At the top, it says 'RED HILL ALLOTMENT SITE' in red. Below that, 'OPEN DAY' is written in large, bold, yellow letters. A yellow banner on the left says 'FREE entry'. A purple banner on the right says 'Saturday 17th August 2024 12:00-16:00'. At the bottom, it says 'A fun event for all the family with home-made produce and allotment-grown fruit, veg and plants for sale' and 'Tea, coffee, homemade cakes and savoury food available'.