

# JAA NEWSLETTER

September 2016

## **Quirky / Large Veg Competition**

**Sunday 9 October**

This is a chance for us to have fun displaying the 'curious & amusing' vegetables we find growing on our plots.

The event committee are arranging for the usual comestibles – tea/ coffee and cake/biscuits. Also a small selection of cakes etc for sale – donations welcome.

See you there!

## **Maintenance Days**

**Sunday 25 September**

**Sunday 30 October**

Also see Facebook for these.

Dates for the season's remaining Maintenance Days; come and use the equipment to mow and clear paths etc around your plot in preparation for winter.

## **Autumn Jobs**

Here are some essential autumn jobs to ensure the veg patch is fit for purpose next spring:

### **Cover Bare Beds**

Use an old tarpaulin or weed control fabric and lay over uncultivated areas. This will stop weeds in their tracks and help prevent nutrients washing out of the soil. Or, consider sowing a hardy green manure – there's just time to sow field beans for a winter covering.

## **Tend To Your Compost Heap**

Many of us load up our heaps in autumn, and then just leave it at that, in the hope that perfectly brown, crumbly compost will develop come spring – it won't. Turn full heaps over once every month to ensure all parts spend at least some time in the middle of the pile, where it gets hottest. This will ensure full and even decomposition.

## **Rake Up Deciduous Leaves**

To make leafmould: Raise your mower to the highest setting and mow the leaves up (even if you rake them up elsewhere then scatter them on the lawn). This chops them up and adds a few grass clippings, which speeds up rotting. Put the whole lot in plastic sacks pierced a few times with a fork and leave them somewhere out of sight. Open in a year's time to discover crumbly 'leafmould', which is great for potting composts and for use as a low-nutrient mulch.

## **Tidy Your Grass Edges**

Many of us have grassy paths and these will encroach onto beds when you turn your back. Now's the time to cut the bed to size and either sink a board between the earth and grass, or by excavating a small 10cm deep trench between the two.

## **Start Digging**

Digging the soil in autumn, before it freezes solid, exposes soil pests to foraging birds, and disturbs weed growth.

## **Keep On Top Of Weeds**

Where the soil is warm enough, these nuisances will carry on growing. If nothing more, cut off seed heads and burn them. Ideally, work over your plot and uproot weeds now, especially perennials, or spread a 3"/ 8 cm deep mulch over annuals to smother them.

## **Net Brassicas**

Essential for those of us with winter cabbages, broccoli, etc; pigeons flock together during the leaner months and they'll strip them bare in no time. Although on our site this applies all year round. Make sure netting is well tied down.

## **Straw Up Root Crops**

Maincrop carrots, parsnips and Jerusalem artichokes are impossible to lift from frozen soil, so mulch them to insulate. The simplest way is to place a tunnel cloche over your row and pack it with straw.

## **Stolen Veg**

An email that was received at our committee email address concerning vegetables being taken from a plot. Needless to say we were all shocked to hear of this happening on our site.

It's difficult to think that any member of JAA would descend to this and goes without saying that this behaviour is not acceptable. We ask plot holders to report any suspicious behaviour.