

# On the plot

Get ready for an event-filled summer. Here are some dates for your calendar.

## Sunday 3rd July : Bake Off and Tea Party

Following on from last year's success we are holding another Bake-Off event from 2pm to 4pm on the communal plot. Please do come along and help us judge this year's entries and catch up on some gardening and allotment gossip. A special addition this year is a talk and demonstration by Jill on how to make herbal cordials and teas.

There will be two categories for cake baking:  
Juniors (under 14) and Adults.

Extra points will be awarded for ingredients grown on the site!

Please bring your entries to the communal plot by 1.45pm on Sunday 3rd and label ingredients clearly.



Image from <https://www.vecteezy.com/vector-art/2772032-cute-cake-fruits-cartoon>

## Thursday, 4th August Coach trip to RHS Hyde Hall Garden

Thanks to our RHS Affiliated Membership this year we are able to offer our members a trip to RHS Hyde Hall Garden near Chelmsford, Essex during this year's Flower Show. The (very attractive) ticket price of £15 p/p will include transport to and from the Show and entry to the garden. Pick-up, from 8 am, will be from the corner of Watson's Way and Seymour Road, and from outside Marshalswick Library on the Ridgeway. We shall leave Hyde Hall at 5 pm.

Sharing Hyde Hall with you



There is so much to enjoy and take inspiration from around Hyde Hall. If you're unable to visit, take a virtual trip to the garden.

In order for us to get an idea of numbers in the first instance, please express your interest by completing the Google form at the link below. There is also a link to the RHS website with further details about the garden.

To confirm your place, please pay for your ticket/s using one of the methods below and email David at [treasurer@sraa.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@sraa.org.uk) **by Friday 24th June:**

- By bank transfer to Sandridge Road Allotment Association,
- By cheque to Sandridge Road Allotment Association. Please write RHS Hyde Hall on the back of the cheque.



**Don't forget: Autumn Family event on Sunday, 25th September.**


**This year, we'll be having a competition for the best scarecrow on the site, so start designing!**








## On The Wild Side with Tricia


 Birds will be tempted by our soft fruits such as raspberries and gooseberries over the next few months so protect them with 4cm netting, but keep it taut as this reduces the chance of birds getting caught up in the net. Hanging up old cds will help to deter the birds too.

 Do take care when strimming or cutting the grass around your Plot. Hedgehogs and their young are very vulnerable at this time of year and strimmer accidents are very common. Tidy up any loose netting and string to avoid wildlife injuries too.

 If you have a pond on your plot do check that any thirsty visitors have a way of getting both in and out of the water.

 Why not try and find some space on your plot for some night scented annuals to encourage moths and bats such as nicotiana, stocks and evening primrose.

 There is a lot of competition for food as fledglings leave their nests at this time of year so try not to spray with harmful chemicals and pesticides as this will also kill ladybirds and other helpful insects. Greenfly and aphids can be washed off plants with a dilute solution of mild washing up liquid.

 May & June are our busiest time on the plot. It's important that we have our plots cultivated and ready for planting up.

PLANT UP these veg after risk of frosts pass – 3<sup>rd</sup> week in May.

- o Courgettes, squashes, pumpkins.
- o Tomatoes (blight resistant varieties are recommended if you are planting outside on site)
- o Corn (plant in a grid – rather than in a row, as they are wind pollinated)
- o Climbing, runner and French beans.



## Joy's jobs on the plot this summer

### SOW

- o Beans, corn and courgettes/ squashes can still be sown directly in the soil in May.
- o Successional sowings of lettuce, rash, spring onions and Florence fennel.



### PROTECT

- o Brassicas from pigeons (butterfly netting is fine)
- o Leeks from leek miner and

moth (again insect netting required )

- o Carrots from carrot root fly (insect netting required)



### WATER

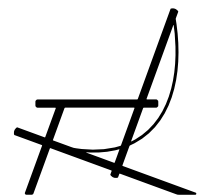
- o A decent water once or twice a week would be better than a quick water once a day, especially when the plants are newly planted.
- o You may use a hose to fill up your water butts on plots (when there are no other ploholders using the standpipe), but council rules state that you may not water your plot with the hosepipe.

### WEED

- o Hoe off any annual weeds on a dry day.

### ENJOY!

Sit and enjoy your plot. Get to know your allotment neighbours: maybe they will water your crops while you are away on holiday, and you can return the favour; also swap seedlings & crop surplus.





# Meet Your Neighbour

**R**obin Hamman is a relative newcomer to Sandridge Road, but he has achieved so much it is hard to believe that just three years ago his tool of choice was a pick axe,

needed to tackle the brambles covering his plot. In the autumn of 2019 when Robin took on the plot he knew he had to move fast if he was to get anything growing before winter set in so, whatever the weather, he could be seen clearing brambles and weeds and in no time had turned things around. Maybe Robin's quick success was due to his 'green genes' - although he has worked in journalism and PR Robin comes from an Illinois farming family and his grandfather was a very well respected horticulturist and teacher. (See photo below)



Robin has always enjoyed gardening but has found allotmenting rewarding in many different ways. During the first year of the pandemic the allotment was a valuable sanctuary for him and his family, somewhere they could be outside together doing something positive and healthy. They weeded and watered, planted and tended their vegetable and fruit beds and soon they were growing so much they could share their produce with neighbours too.

Robin's wife is from Poland and he always grows plenty of beetroot, cabbages and radishes which are turned into delicious traditional Polish dishes such as borscht. They love to make pickles and sauces too, particularly with his greenhouse tomatoes. Robin believes in gardening organically and working with nature rather than against it. He is currently experimenting with the Three Sisters method of growing sweetcorn, squash and beans and is trialling adding a fourth sister, the sunflower, too!

There have also been challenges, particularly after Storm Eunice destroyed both of Robin's greenhouses, one barely a year old and the other just gifted to him a week or two before the storm. Then last year a holiday accident left Robin with a particularly nasty broken wrist and struggling to tend his plot but, on both occasions, fellow plot holders were supportive and helped him out.

Rather unusually Robin grows his potatoes in tubs. This, he says, enables him to control the cropping period to some extent by moving them from light to shady spots and to also control how and where the soil is reused. For those interested in using solar energy on the plot Robin can provide guidance too - as both his greenhouse irrigation system and a Wi-Fi point allowing 'working from the Shed' are solar powered. For those interested in seeing some fabulous drone photographs of our site do check out Robin's Instagram account too - 'awholeplotofveg'.



'My Grandfather grew up on a farm and became a horticulture teacher. When I was a kid my grandparents taught me grafting, how to can vegetables, and to rotovate in their large kitchen garden. This school yearbook photo shows him teaching when in 1939. Our family still owns that farm in central Illinois, where the soil is black loam and corn grows as tall as an elephant.'



The May Plant Sale went down a storm. Hundreds of seedlings and plants ready to go in the ground were ready for sale on the day. Huge thanks are due to the volunteers and to the committee for giving up their time working so hard to provide the plants and run the sale. We took £600,



£550 after deductions for food on the day and for seeds and compost. Thanks to everyone for their support.