



# Your allotment

advice and tips for sustainable gardening 2021

It's been wonderful to see the allotments over summer. Stunning flowers, bumper vegetables, and the smiles on plot holders faces as they work the land of our wonderful space in nature. Everybody will be aware of the personal benefits of allotment gardening - relaxation, gentle exercise, creativity - to name a few, and, as Hexham Town Council is supporting the country's drive to be carbon-neutral by 2030 we should also highlight the benefits of allotment gardening for our planet

Allotments are good for the environment because growing your own food reduces your personal carbon footprint compared to solely shop-bought alternatives; less packaging will be used; less driving to supermarkets for a bag of potatoes, punnet of raspberries or a dozen eggs. Below are suggestions on how you can help reduce our carbon footprint here in Hexham

## **Some suggestions to help reduce our carbon footprint in Hexham.**

Produced by Hexham Town Council, this guide includes ways that you and your allotment neighbours can help to improve biodiversity in Hexham and make our town's green growing spaces more sustainable and productive. For those who are already organic gardeners, get in touch with Councillors with your own tips and let us know any concerns about allotment management by contacting: [clerk@hexhamtowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@hexhamtowncouncil.gov.uk)

### **Encourage pollinators**

We need insects to pollinate our crops, to recycle dung and leaves, to keep the soil healthy, to control pests, and much more – but birds, fish and frogs rely on insects for food too. There has been a 75% decline in insect numbers in the last 50 years due to climate change, pollution and pressures on habitat. Your allotment plot is a vital space where a diverse range of insects can thrive.

- Plant a portion of your plot with nectar-rich flowers (Welsh Onions, Chives); aim for something flowering each month of the year.
- Plant flowering herbs in small spaces around the plot
- Build a bug hotel. Find out how to build a bug hotel through the Royal Horticultural Society website at <https://bit.ly/3bnqlml>
- Don't use insecticides. Left alone, nature will find a balance

### **Grow some wildflowers**

Comfrey can be used as a nitrogen-rich plant food, whose long tap roots reach deep into the earth bringing up minerals and nutrients into the leaves. It is an almost perfect plant food when chopped up and placed in water for several weeks. Water your plot with the rich liquid produced.

Nettles can be left to grow in a small area for butterflies to breed on, then can be added to your compost heap or bin.

Borage will increase the nitrogen content of your allotment when dug back into the earth. It is also an important source of nectar for bees and other pollinators.

Foxgloves will encourage bees as well as a wide range of insect predators such as ladybirds that will help control aphid populations on your allotment.

***more advice & tips overleaf***

## Create space for wildlife

The hedgehog, the UK's favourite mammal, is sadly in decline. Their preferred diet is slugs, and they need an unkempt corner and shelter – an old watering can under a hedge will do. Slug pellets will kill hedgehogs and birds too, please don't use them.

Frogs and toads are also great devourers of slugs. They need a ground-level 'pond': dig a small hole in your allotment big enough to place a trug or planter into it filled with rainwater. Lean a plank into the water to help hedgehogs escape should they fall in. The pond will also attract useful insects. Offer a sheltered, muddy spot nearby for toads.

Birds will visit if given some water, and will devour slugs and insects.

Ground beetles live on or in the soil laying their eggs in leaf material, and will happily eat slugs and other pests.

## Green manures & composting

Overwintering green manures such as rye grass and field beans can prevent soil erosion, carbon leaching from bare soil and loss of nutrients.

Don't buy compost which contains peat. Hexham's garden centres and nurseries now stock a good choice of peat-free composts. Peat is best left undisturbed in peat bogs sequestering (i.e. holding onto) carbon.

It's far better to make your own compost. A good compost bin is the engine room of your allotment, breaking down waste material and biomass and turning it into rich compost that will benefit your soil by adding nutrients and improving structure. It is the classic 'closed circle' of sustainable living – taking waste and turning it into gold!

Fallen leaves can be composted separately and used as a mulch.

## Try 'Companion planting'

Companion planting is a natural way of pest control, thereby reducing crop damage. Carrot fly are attracted to the smell of carrots so interplant them with smelly crops like garlic or onions.

Yarrow planted with broccoli will attract aphid-eating insects, thereby protecting the broccoli. Beans planted with cabbages reduces the incidence of cabbage aphid and cabbage root fly. Flowering herbs planted alongside courgettes will attract pollinators such as bumble bees.

Garlic and marigolds are useful in exuding chemicals that suppress pests. The bright blooms of marigolds attract beneficial insects.

## Avoid using artificial pesticides

such as Roundup (Glyphosate)

Hexham Town Council strongly advises against use of pesticides and will be consulting with allotment holders and others during 2021/2022 to work out the most sustainable way to manage HTC allotments in the future. To find out more about how to garden sustainably, check out the allotment notice board as the year goes by, as well as the RSPB, Buglife, local Wildlife Trusts and RHS websites.

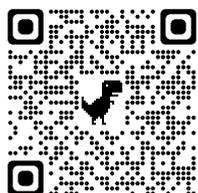
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