

GIPSY LANE ALLOTMENTS SITE MANAGEMENT PLAN INCORPORATING CONSERVATION, SUSTAINABILITY AND WILDLIFE



Introduction

Gipsy Lane is a well-established allotment site provided and managed by Wokingham Town Council. There are currently 79 plots of varying sizes and all are rented. This management plan has been introduced to balance the sometimes competing, sometimes complimentary requirements of tenants, neighbours and wildlife.

Maintenance schedules

The car-park, covered with scalplings at the site entrance to be kept weed-free. The entry path from the car-park to the site, again scalplings based, to be kept weed free, usually by hand-weeding.

The main grassed thoroughfares are mown by the appointed contractor twelve times during the March to October period. The resultant grass cuttings are composted by various allotment tenants. See the attached site plan for exact locations.

The grassed paths between plots are to be kept short by the adjacent allotment tenants. Drainage ditches are cleared out by offenders serving community payback orders under the auspices of Thames Valley Probation Service twice per annum. The spoil is used to reinforce the banks as required.

Not maintained

Banks and verges to the main north-south and east-west drainage ditches to be allowed to grow untended until the vegetation dies back each autumn. This is an important habitat for ladybird aphids, lacewings, damsel flies, numerous species of beetles including chafer and stag, small mammals including field mice, shrews and moles, reptiles including frogs, toads, sloe worms and grass snakes, and birds including blackbirds, robins, wrens, thrushes and barn owls.

Plants on the banks and verges include: nettles, rosebay, willow herbs, dandelions, campion, oxeye daisies, celandine, early flowering wild garlic, fat hen, ragged robin, green alkanet et al. All of these attract thousands of insects, including honey, mason bees, white-tailed bumblebees, tree bumblebees, damsel flies and giant craneflies which help create a healthier environment for allotment gardens and particularly help with pollination.

Hedgerows which form the boundary to the plots are not cut back until the autumn once nesting birds have fledged, and then only at the specific request of tenants and neighbours.



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Community orchard

Seven fruit trees were introduced in March 2013 and an additional seven were planted in March 2014. They are long-established heritage varieties which are local to Berkshire or neighbouring counties (see attached notes about each variety).

The grass in the orchard isn't cut and is allowed to die back each autumn. However, in order for it to be kept under control and not to swamp the trees some strimming may be required in the autumn. The grass holds borage, green alkanet, comfrey, thistles, calendula, poppies et al. These attract insects and bees which aid pollination and attract aphids. It is planned to sow a variety of wildflower seeds in the grass later in 2014. 4



Allotment plots

Each plot is subject to a detailed signed and endorsed agreement between the tenant and the Town Council (a copy is attached). Compliance with the conditions of the agreements by the tenants is monitored, and where necessary, enforced.

Each plot is visited by a Town Council officer at once every three weeks over the March to November period to check cultivation efforts on each plot. Where plots are not being properly cultivated the tenant is contacted directly by the officer. This ensures that weeds are not allowed to thrive through neglect and spread to neighbouring plots.

Tenants are encouraged to plant to attract honey bees and bumblebees.

Use of systemic insecticides and commercially produced weedkillers is strongly discouraged.

All tenants are encouraged to compost 'green' waste on their plot.

All tenants are encouraged to install rainwater capture gutters and butts on their sheds.

All new requests to install sheds are only acceded to providing rainwater capture systems are attached.

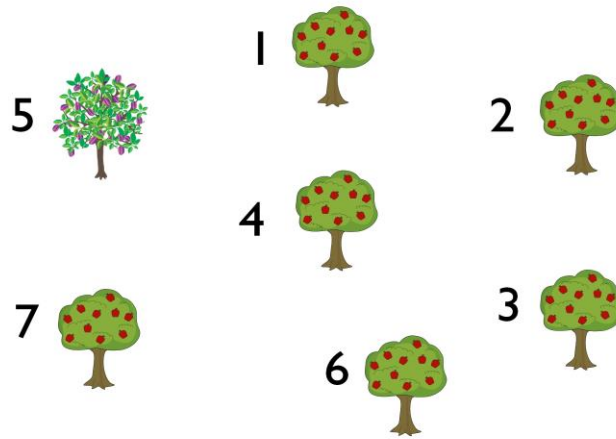
There are several nesting boxes and 'bug' houses on tenants' sheds.

Several deciduous logs have been placed at the foot of the hedge by the left-hand entrance to provide a habitat for insects.

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**GIPSY LANE COMMUNITY ORCHARD
PLOT 1 - MARCH 2013**



1. Morgan Sweet Apple
2. Blenheim Orange Apple
3. Winston Apple
4. Rev.W.Wilkes Apple
5. Victoria Plum
6. Peasgood Nonsuch Apple
7. Charles Ross Apple

Extension to Gipsy Lane orchard March 2014

Pears

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(2) Conference- Long, narrow yellow-green fruits, juicy and sweet. Introduced in Hertfordshire 1885. Good source of nectar, attractive to bees and other beneficial insects.

Dessert, picking time early October; Quince A

(4) Beurre Hardy- Soft flesh, fragrant, faintly rosy scent. Originally a French breed from early 1800s. Dessert, picking time mid-September; Quince A

Apples

(3) Irish Peach- Small yellow fruit with red flush and a slight perfume; best eaten straight from the tree in August. Raised in Sligo around 1819. Dessert, picking time early August; Bush, M106, rootstock

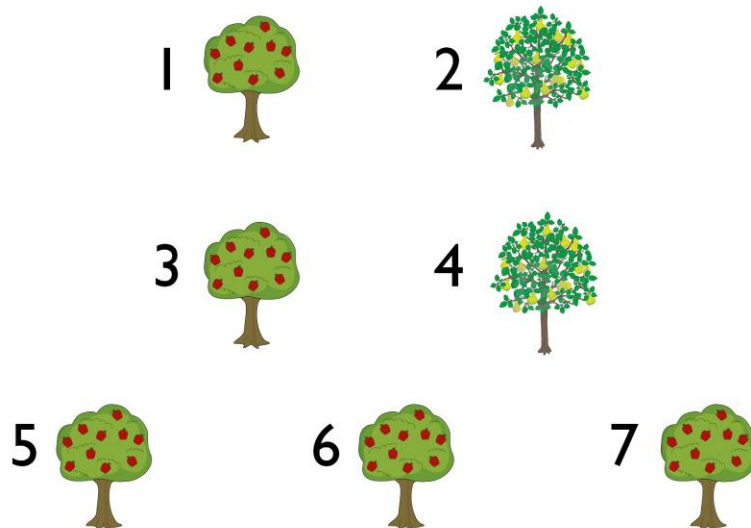
(1) Lane's Prince Albert- Berkhamstead, Hertfordshire. 1850. Developed by Messrs H. Lane & Son. Good for cooking and cider-making. Dessert and culinary, picking time late October; Bush, M106, rootstock

(5) Queen Cox- Fruit has a red/ orange flush with some russetting. Sweet tasting, good for cider. Dessert and culinary, picking time early October; Bush, M106, rootstock

(6) Cox's Orange Pippin- First grown at Colnbrook, Buckinghamshire in 1830 by Richard Cox. Excellent flavour, orange/ red in colour. Fine-grained flesh, crisp and very juicy. Dual purpose, picking late September; Bush, M106, rootstock

(7) John Standish- raised by John Standish of Ascot around 1873. Round to conical in shape. Pale green, flushed to bright red. Dessert, picking time mid-October; M106, rootstock

**GIPSY LANE COMMUNITY ORCHARD
PLOT 2 - MARCH 2014**



1. Irish Peach Apple
2. Conference Pear
3. Lane's Prince Albert Apple
4. Beurre Hardy Pear
5. Queen Cox Apple
6. Cox's Orange Pippin Apple
7. John Standish Apple

Authors: Nigel Jeffery and Nicola Sparkes
April 2014



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SAVE WATER – SAVE MONEY

Water covers three quarters of the world's surface. It is classified as either hard or soft:

- hard water contains many minerals especially calcium
- soft water is lacking in minerals contained in hard water

Wokingham Town Council (WTC) provides water from the mains supply for use by allotment tenants. The taps are fitted with non-return valves to reduce the likelihood of contaminating the supply through backflow. The cost of the water is absorbed in the annual plot rents – a separate charge isn't levied. WTC will pay in excess of £1,400 for water in 2016/17. Therefore, WTC requires all tenants to use the supplied water reasonably and sensibly. For this reason the use of hosepipes to water plants is banned. However, hosepipes can be used to fill water butts. In times of shortage water companies issue 'drought orders' which will ban the use of hosepipes entirely. All tenants who have a suitable structure on their plot(s) are encouraged to install gutters, downpipes and water butts to capture rainwater.

SAVE TIME AND EFFORT – water your plants as effectively as possible

We are all aware that water is becoming a scarcer, and certainly a more expensive, resource for all of us.

Experienced allotment gardeners offer the following advice to help you water your allotments and gardens as efficiently as possible...saving time, your back and water!

- note the weather forecast, no need to water if imminent, persistent rain is forecast
- water to the roots of your plants - watering the leaves and foliage, in most instances does little good. The surface of the soil may be wet but if the water doesn't penetrate to the roots your effort will be wasted
- if you water the roots well, once per week is usually often enough
- to help with this consider inserting a plastic bottle or container into the ground around your plant. The cut base will protrude from the earth and act as a funnel for your water
- and/or build up a moat with earth around your plant to prevent run-off which just drains away
- water in the early morning or in the evening when the heat of the day is less intense. Water evaporates in sunshine and can scorch the foliage
- regular hoeing mulches the soil and kills competing 'thirsty' weeds
- do remember that plants once they are established need much less water