

Hope allotments blog – July 2021

The drought-like conditions of June ended after a couple of weeks although the month remained fairly dry. July has been warm and wet so far with perfect growing conditions for both crops and weeds. The plots had a profusion of poppies this month, alive with the buzzing of bees industriously collecting nectar to make honey. It is encouraging to see so many bees on the site with all the alarming news that pesticide sprays used in industrial farming are depleting their numbers.



Our onions are coming along nicely and should be ready for harvesting in late August. Onions can be planted as seeds or more commonly these days as onion sets in March/April and are mature when the foliage turns brown and topples over. They are left for about two weeks and are then lifted and either used straight away or dried for between seven and twenty one days depending on the size of the bulb and the weather conditions.

Elsewhere on the site, the new therapy area is gradually getting cleared and we will begin marking out the plots for horticultural therapy and a large grassy circle where users can practice yoga, meditation and anything else that we can think of.

Sonia has been putting out fliers for our gardening club and we have had some responses already which is great news.



Our mascot 'Hopey' the Hope gnome (with his new hairstyle) next to the Wasabi plant.

Looking forward to August we can expect to carry on harvesting tomatoes, cucumbers, courgettes, French beans and salad crops like lettuces.

This is the month when blight can hit tomatoes and those grown outside can be devastated by this disease which is endemic although glasshouse tomatoes are usually pretty safe. The treatment for blight used to be a preventative spraying with Bordeaux mixture (basically a blend of copper sulphate) but as with so many things it was overused and the copper content ended up poisoning the soil so it was banned. Now the allotment has no chemical treatment for blight and can only hope for the best when the weather is warm and wet as it has been for the past few weeks.

A reminder too that Hope is part of the wider network of community gardens in this area: [West Northants Community Growers](#). Great to work alongside others!

Finally,

There's a free 2 hour 'Grow your own' voucher for the first person to correctly guess the colour of Robin's (our CEO) huge red Dahlia/Triffid. (see photo below)



D'oh!

Have a happy gardening month and see you in August.

Joe - the Hope gardener