

GreenFingers

Updates about Farnham allotments.

Winter 2025

Time to close down!



John Ely A Shepherd and Flock Allotment holder and, along with Pam Bonsor, 2025 winner of the Best Allotment Plot Overall has come up with a list of jobs to do before Christmas.

- Plant garlic in a well-prepared bed, twice the depth of a single clove and 20cms apart.
- Plant onions, peas and broad beans, choosing frost tolerant varieties. If, however, your plot is in a frost pocket like mine, then you may prefer to plant these up in late February.
- Turn your compost heap over to aerate it.
- Give your beds a final weed and mulch them with compost or last year's leaf mulch. Leaves you have collected this year, provided you have shredded them first by running a lawn mower over them, can also be spread over the bed. Earthworms will draw the mulch down into the soil over the

winter months. What's left on top can be raked and used as a base for a new compost heap in the spring.

- An alternative to mulching, particularly if you have a very weedy bed, is to cover them with a tarpaulin or landscape fabric.
- I like to harvest my leeks during November before the really hard frosts come.
- Parsnips can be harvested over the winter. I know supermarkets sell them at a silly price just before Christmas, but home-grown always taste better!
- Clean all tools and tidy up sheds. I am loathe to throw away anything "just in case" but NOW is the time to be ruthless.

- Check all your seed packets – if out of date – throw them away. Lettuce seeds have 500+ seeds in a packet and you are never going to use them all in your lifetime!
- Over a glass of your favourite tipple, work out what has been a success or a failure and then decide what you want to plant, and where, next year by browsing the seed catalogues.
- Prune summer raspberries, removing this year's fruiting canes, leaving four or five strong canes for next year. Autumn fruiting raspberries can be cut down to the ground after Christmas.
- Blackcurrants, redcurrants etc. can be pruned in February. Remove dead and weak branches to leave an open structure to the bush.
- Although less likely these days, fruit cages with a soft net roof can be destroyed by a heavy snowfall, so best to remove it and put it in store.

A final "push" now is so rewarding and you can "hibernate" with a clear conscience.

Share your tips! <

Every allotment holder has their own way of preparing for winter. What's yours?

We'd love to hear your ideas so we can share them with the wider allotment community. Let's start the conversation with your ideas of how to store produce.

The Wildlife Corner: Share your space with nature

Nature

Farnham's allotments support biodiversity by providing havens for our wildlife. As the growing season winds down, allotments become a vital refuge for wildlife preparing for winter. Hedges, compost heaps, and even untidy corners provide safe passage and shelter for hedgehogs, frogs, and insects, forming part of a network of 'green highways' across Farnham and beyond.



Homemade bug hotel



Homemade bug hotel

- Leave some seed heads standing for finches and sparrows to feast on.
- Build a log or leaf pile to offer shelter for hibernating hedgehogs and beetles.
- Avoid cutting everything back; a little untidiness provides warmth and cover.
- Add a shallow dish of water and check it regularly through frosty weather.
- If you're digging beds, set aside a quiet corner where wildlife can rest undisturbed.

By leaving space for nature this autumn, you'll attract helpful pollinators, natural pest controllers, and soil-enriching creatures which will help your plot to be healthier and more productive.

Still growing: a new way to garden



If your allotment is starting to feel like too much to manage, don't hang up your gardening gloves just yet. There's another way to stay green-fingered while easing the workload and that is by joining a 'Friends of ...' gardening group.

These friendly volunteer groups help care for Farnham's parks, open spaces and cemeteries by planting, weeding, and keeping the areas looking their best for everyone to enjoy. There's also a Bloomin' Friends' group which helps with potting on plug plants, planting up the planters and containers in the town centre, makes hanging baskets and helps with weeding. Volunteering to be a Friend is lighter work than an allotment but still offers the satisfaction of nurturing plants and seeing nature thrive.

Becoming a Friend is also a wonderful way to meet new people, share gardening knowledge, and stay active outdoors. Even a few hours a month can make a real difference and you'll still get your gardening fix without the full commitment of a plot!

Interested?

Contact us to find out how to get involved.

If you are struggling to maintain your allotment or you've noticed that a neighbour hasn't visited for a while and their plot is overgrown, please let us know so we can help get things back under control.

Plot marker signs



As part of your tenancy agreement, it is necessary to display your plot number in a prominent position on your plot. To help you with this we have pulled together some ideas of how you can display your plot number.

Ideas for plot markers



Bin stickers on your shed/ water butt/ greenhouse: cheap, cheerful, and

probably the quickest solution. Grab some bin stickers next time you are at a shop, you might even be able to donate the numbers you don't need to a neighbour.

Wooden sign:

use some reclaimed wood to display your plot number on. You could use paint, or give pyrography (wood burning) a go. Give it a varnish afterwards to help seal it.



Mosaic on a baking tray:

this plot holder has integrated

their plot number into a mosaic, mounted onto a baking tray. Whilst this is more work it is very eye catching and unique.



Recycle old items:

get arty by reclaiming old items to

upcycle into plot markers. This plot holder spray painted an old spade, and propped it up in some pipe. This can be a quick simple project to do, and is a great way to reuse things that would otherwise be thrown away.

Know your Site Rep



Site Reps act as the vital link between plot holders and Farnham Town Council, helping to share information, raise issues, and represent their site at Allotment Liaison Group meetings.

To find out more contact

Mo Ashdown by emailing allotments@farnham.gov.uk

Alderley Farm:

Pete Crouch (AF16A)

Farnham Road:

Michael Nicholls (FR20)

Morley Road:

David Dearsley (MR2A)

Shepherd and Flock:

David Wheeler (SF03)

Six Bells:

Sonia Pursley (SB29B)

West Street:

Steve Kibble (WS02B)

West Street (extension):

Vanora Davies
(WSE12B/23A)

Wrecclesham:

Peter Dawes (W08A)

> Gardeners' Questions: Top tips from the experts

This summer, John Ely from the Shepherd & Flock allotments, gardening expert John Negus - described by *Amateur Gardening* as a true legend - and naturalist Jeanette Hatto took to the stage for our lively Gardeners' Questions event.

For an hour, the panel fielded questions from the audience, shared their experience, and swapped plenty of down-to-earth advice. Their top tips for allotment holders this year included:

- Grow only what you'll eat – it saves time, space, and effort.
- Mulch now with compost or last year's leaf mould so worms can pull the goodness into the soil over winter, improving its structure naturally.
- And from David Wheeler at the Shepherd & Flock site: "Little and often" – the golden rule for keeping on top of your plot without feeling overwhelmed.

A fun, practical session full of inspiration for every gardener.



Bonfire season



It's bonfire season again which means allotment holders are welcome to have a bonfire on their plot but please wait until after dusk before lighting it.

To help protect hedgehogs and other wildlife, always build your bonfire on the day you plan to light it. Avoid stacking it in advance or on top of piles of leaves, as these make tempting hiding places for small creatures.

Choose a clear patch of ground, keep a bucket of water nearby, and never leave your fire unattended. Stay safe this season.

Farnham reaps a golden harvest at the In Bloom Awards



Insert caption here

- Gold and Best in Category – Farnham Town Centre
- Gold and Best in Category – Hale Cemetery
- Gold and Champion of Champions – Badshot Lea Cemetery
- Gold – Gostrey Meadow
- Gold – West Street Cemetery

In addition, Badshot Lea Bloomers, The Bourne Conservation Group, and space2grow were recognised as Outstanding in the It's Your Neighbourhood category. Led by Farnham Town Council and

Farnham in Bloom has enjoyed a bumper crop of success at this year's South & South East in Bloom Awards, held at RHS Wisley. The town brought home five golds, including:

supported by volunteers, schools, and local groups, Farnham in Bloom continues to promote environmental care, wildlife-friendly planting, and community pride.

To get involved in Farnham in Bloom 2026, email bloom@farnham.gov.uk.

Reminder to allotment holders: Dogs are not permitted on the allotments unless you have written permission from the Town Clerk. Please respect this rule to ensure safety and enjoyment for all.

➤ Prize-winning plots!

The Farnham in Bloom Community Awards took place at the end of October and were a celebration of horticultural achievement. In the allotment category the standard was particularly high with the following prizes being awarded:

Best Plots on each site

Farnborough Road - David Boakes
 Morley Road - Liz Clifford
 Shepherd & Flock - Jon Ely
 Six Bells - Brett King
 Wreclesham - Susan Mcdermott
 West Street - Sue Ware
 West Street Extension - Penny Simmons
 Alderley Farm - Joan Jack
 Overall Winner – John Ely
 (Pictured below)



➤ Newcomer Awards

Farnborough Road - Howard Kaye Wreclesham - Steve & Octavia Bell
West St Extension - Luke Burton
Alderley Farm - Warren & Alisa Lindsey
Overall Winner - Howard Kaye
Best Allotment Plot Overall - John Ely & Pam Bonsor, Plot 10 Shepherd & Flock
Best Newcomer Allotment Plot Overall - Howard Kaye, Plot 18 Farnborough Road

Congratulations to everybody who took part and thank you to the sponsors which include Gold sponsors The Patio Black Spot Removal Company Ltd, BBS for Magimix, Cala and Squire's Garden Centres.

Let's look after our bees!

By Juliet from Hive Helpers

Hive Helpers is based at Farnham Community Farm which runs a veg bag scheme. Our honey bees help pollinate the farm's veg, but we're not just about honey bees!

We work to raise awareness of all pollinators through beekeeping and nature conservation. Did you know there's just one species of honey bee in the UK, but 26 bumblebees and over 250 solitary bees, and many of them will be helping to pollinate our fruit and veg?

Honey bees are very efficient pollinators, and whilst they are generalist feeders (meaning they can forage on a wide range of plants), they like to forage on a single species at a time. They can fly relatively long distances to access a single crop, such as oilseed rape. They collect nectar to turn into honey stores to sustain the colony over winter, and pollen to feed their brood which they collect in 'pollen baskets' on their legs.

Bumblebees have much smaller colonies than honey bees, and do not make honey stores because their nests normally die out over winter, with a new queen emerging from hibernation in spring. They still collect nectar to feed themselves and pollen for their offspring, which they pack into their pollen baskets, like honey bees. They can pollinate a wide variety of flowers because they have different tongue lengths – short tongued bumblebees forage on open flowers with easily available nectaries such as courgettes, whilst long-tongued bumbles can access tubular flowers like foxglove and honeysuckle. Bumblebees are brilliant at pollinating tomatoes (in fact, they're the only pollinator to do so) using a technique called 'buzz pollination'.



Buff-tailed bumblebee

Solitary bees do not have the range of honey bees, meaning they stay closer to home where there are nesting sites and forage. As their name implies, solitary bees do not live in colonies, but lay their eggs in a single 'nest' which could be a tunnel dug in bare earth (mining bee), a hollow stick (mason bee), or a cavity in rotten wood (carpenter bee). Eggs are provisioned with pollen - to feed the growing larvae once they hatch – then left to their own devices, to pupate, wait out winter, and emerge in the spring. Solitary bees are very good pollinators - they do not have singular, tidy pollen baskets, but collect pollen on hairy body parts, dusting it everywhere in the process, which allows them to pollinate some crops very efficiently!

Most honey bees live in hives managed by beekeepers. Bumblebees and solitary bees are wild pollinators so have to manage by themselves, and, like many insects they are in serious decline. Habitat loss, pesticide use and climate change are the main factors causing this decline.

We can help them by providing shelter, nesting opportunities such as hollow tubes and bare patches of earth, and a wide variety of plants for forage. By encouraging a wide range of pollinators onto your allotment, you will ensure better pollination and higher yields.

Other news from Farnham Town Council

Farnham Christmas Market



Sunday 14 December, 10am - 4pm

Farnham's annual Christmas Market will take place in the town centre, featuring over 140 stalls offering handmade gifts, seasonal food, and festive drinks.

The event includes live music and a variety of activities for all ages. Visitors are encouraged to leave their cars at home and use the **free hoppa shuttle bus** service running to and from the market throughout the day.

Laithwaites Wine is the Principal sponsor of the Christmas Market. Gold sponsors include Kidd Rapinet Solicitors and Family Vets.

Calling all budding authors!

Think you've got a novel idea worth sharing? Enter the Farnham Literary Festival's First Five Pages Writing Competition and put your story to the test!

Entrants are invited to submit the first five pages of their novel, along with a 250-word synopsis. The winner will receive the prestigious PARIS PRIZE FOR FICTION, which includes £1,000 and a professional critique from literary agent Katie Fulford of Bell Lomax Moreton.

The first prize money is generously provided by B.A. Paris, New York Times and Sunday Times best-selling author, who will also serve as one of the judges.

The deadline for entries is 31 December 2025.
For details visit:
farnhamliteraryfestival.co.uk



Music in the Vineyard

Farnham Town Council's *Music in the Vineyard* returns in January and offers free monthly concerts to bring the community together through the winter.

The concerts take place on the last Sunday of January, February and March from 3-5pm at The Vineyard Centre, Union Road. They feature a variety of live music including jazz, folk, pop, and brass bands. Music in the Vineyard is free to attend. You can enjoy homemade treats and warming drinks from the charity refreshment stand or you can bring your own.

> New notable names plaque goes on show

A plaque honouring renowned dendrologist Alan Fyson Mitchell VMA (1922–1995) has been added to Farnham's Notable Names wall in South Street.

Described as one of Britain's most remarkable naturalists, Mitchell's pioneering research on trees and creation of the Tree Register transformed understanding of Britain's tree heritage and continues to support conservation today.

To find out more

To find out more about the people who feature on the Notable Names wall, visit www.farnham.gov.uk/notablenames.

> Join Farnham's team of litter pickers



During our recent community litter pick, volunteers collected around 26 sacks of rubbish.

Get in touch if you would like to volunteer for future events or borrow our litter picking equipment for a one-off clean-up.

New flower beds bring sense of calm outside Central Surgery



A vibrant transformation has taken place outside Central Surgery in Farnham with freshly planted flower beds now welcoming patients and passers-by.

Farnham Town Council worked with the surgery to breathe new life into the neglected flowerbeds which were heavily overgrown with alkanet, bindweed and thistle.

Explaining the inspiration for the project, Dr Martin Ballard said: "Inside the surgery, we have a variety of easy-to-clean and low-maintenance houseplants, which have attracted many positive comments from patients. We wanted to ensure the outside space was just as welcoming.

Councillor Mat Brown, Lead Member for Environment says: "We were delighted to help Central

Surgery with this project and in just four days, the space was totally revitalised. The garden will be maintained by a Friends group from the surgery and is an excellent example of the partnerships that make Farnham in Bloom such a success. I'm really looking forward to seeing the flowers bloom – it will make for a stunning display as you come into Farnham."

If you know of a business in Farnham that is looking for team volunteering opportunities, please encourage them to contact Farnham Town Council.



Further **GreenFingers** information
at www.farnham.gov.uk/allotments
www.farnham.gov.uk/bloom

Published by: Farnham Town Council, Town Hall, South Street, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 7RN
Telephone: 01252 712667 | **Email:** customer.services@farnham.gov.uk
Web: www.farnham.gov.uk | Follow @FarnhamOfficial on Instagram and Facebook
Town Clerk: Iain Lynch | **Mayor of Farnham:** Councillor George Murray