

ARDS ALLOTMENTS



DAIRY FOR 2011

PLOT NO.1.

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INTRODUCTION

The allotment has been my second home for the last few years, and I could not think of a nicer place to spend my spare time.

Good sunny days, a cup of tea, what else could a person wish for than the peace and quiet of the area, or meeting the original allotment holders for a chat. Some new people have come down this year to the allotments, and have asked my advice already, and I have been willing to help if I can.

One or two of the original plotters have left. But hopefully they will still drop by, then the world can be put to rights, like we always discussed in the past.

Now the hard work begins for 2011. At the end of the this year let's hope I can say,

IT WAS WORTH IT

JANUARY

The year started off really bad with the deep snow, icy winds and gusting rain. The best part about the elements was looking out the living room window, watching it in the warm.

Going down to the allotment I started to tidy up the areas which will be worked later on, also put up some netting to help protect the growing plants.



The ground was quite hard to turn over the first time after the hard winter but as you can see it looks quite good, and will soon be ready for the next turn over, the beds will then be ready for planting. Turned over the 1st compost bin and added Garotte to help break down contents.

The weather has not let up, and I do not remember such a cold, wet and windy winter.

FEBRUARY

Went down to the allotment, and tried to salvage some of the net that I had put up earlier. The winds have been so strong it was a wonder that the fence was still standing. A couple of the large poles had come loose, but Maurice came down and he soon had them sorted. The right tools make it easy.



Went to the garden centre, got a bag of fertilizer which contained seaweed to help break down and nurture the soil. This must be used very sparingly. Only the stalwarts have been down on the plots. Cleaned canes ready for the peas and beans to be sown later, also re-laid a couple of flags in front of the cabin. Hope by March the weather will improve, if not, I cannot see much work being done. The weather is no better towards the end of the month so only able to tidy up, and turn over soil. Bit disheartening.

MARCH

The sleet and rain has defiantly taken its toll over the two months, so not able to do much at the start of this month. The soil needs to dry out and warm up as much as possible, so only managed to rake over the first bed ready for planting at the beginning of the second week. It was cold, but the sun came out a few times, and I tried to make the most of the dry days.

March has been very much the same as last year, so not starting to plant until later in the month. If the weather is really bad there is no point in planting, its best to leave for another couple of weeks hoping the winds and rain will let up, this will take me into April. The high winds and driving rain are back again with a vengeance, and looking back on my previous dairy from last year, I planted out to early and lost the first set of onions and potatoes. This was very disheartening.

**The third week of this month I bought potato sets. These were brought back and layered out to chit a decent length, so easier to plant, all chits except one, were knocked off before planting.
Sorted out seeds to be bought.**

Hoping for a better month.

APRIL

At long last I have been able to get working on the allotment. The weather has been kind for a few days and it has made a great difference to the soil, drying it out. I have managed to plant all the potato and onion sets. I marked the rows, as this shows what ground has been used.

It has been nice to get the jumper off and feel the sun on the old back again. A lot of the plotters have been down; all are really busy, with work which could not have been done earlier. It's nearly Easter and looking back on last years dairy the ground is in the same state.



It is the end of the month and it has been good for work, and the plants are now starting to grow.

Hurray

MAY

A vast improvement all around to last month. Been able to improve the ground with fertilizer ready for planting the rest of produce, i.e. peas, sweet corn etc.. The nice weather has meant going down more often to water, it has been hot, but not complaining. Worked plenty of hours this month, tidied, weeded, and checked the compost bins, to make sure there was a nice mixture, as this will be used to put back into the soil at a later date.



The middle of the month has been really good for growing, but soon the gales, rain, and even hail, were back, no work was done. Let's hope this changes soon; otherwise we will all lose our produce. The few days of fine weather, I finished staking out peas, sprayed liquid Derris, and re-planted peas in gaps, spread growmore between rows, raked in, and watered. Windy but thankfully dry. Fairly good month.

JUNE

It is the first day of June and guess what, the sun came out. Worked a few hours hoping to catch up on jobs not able to do last month, put up more canes, and checked produce is growing and no pests. Raked in some more Growmore, and fed some plants with Chempac liquid feed. Sprayed peas, again, and planted the sweet corn, hope all the seeds take, then raked ground ready to plant carrots and beetroot. This June has been so cold, but managed to get quite a lot of work done.



All the plants are growing well, as the picture shows, but after all the rain it is still very dry on the top. A lot of weeding was done this month, and general working to keep on top of jobs. Thunder at the end of the month.

Good month for work.

JULY

The month started well. After the 8th back came the rain so any dry spells have been weeding. There seems to be a lot of chickweed in between the potatoes this year, but with a little hard work manages to keep it down.



I thought I had blight, on potatoes, but did not. I treated with Epsom salts, which is good and specially formulated for gardening. There has been a few potatoes and carrots, pulled or dug up, but not by the allotment holders. It could be a fox, or badger, but they don't pull up whole stems. I did a general tidy up and got ready for the Allotments Open Day in August. Brilliant month.

AUGUST

At long last I have been able to start harvesting. The potatoes and beetroot are looking good, and the peas are nice and full. The first lot of chutney has been made and I had a taste after a day down on the plot (lovely). The open day was a great success and quite a few people tasted the beetroot/carrot, and mixed peppers chutney which Maggie took down. Quite a few asked for recipes, which were later passed on.



A lot of the produce has been lifted, brought home, weighed and stored. The storms are back again and to be honest it is disheartening not to be able to do the work needed to keep on top of everything.

Fairly good month for work.

SEPTEMBER

The start of this month started out really nice so had time to bring back the last of the peas, shell and freeze for the winter. The onions are nearly ready to be lifted, and so is the beetroot. A few more days and most of the produce will be off the allotment for this year.



It's the third week, and a couple of the walking group stopped by, but there was nothing to show them as most of the onions, beetroot, and potatoes had been lifted.

It has started to go cooler, so no shirt off, I will have to wait till next year hoping we get a good summer, to make up for the one we did not have this year.

Happy with work done this month.

OCTOBER

The weather has really gone from bad to worse, only managed a few days working down on the plot this month, but as the photo shows nearly all produce has been taken off. The last lot of onions have been brought home and hung up, and the potatoes have been stored in boxes with hessian in between the layers, this will stop any bad potatoes affecting others nearby, and are easily removed.



The diary is nearly finished for this year, and it has been nice to look back on the last few months and see what work was done to the plot.

All three compost bins have been turned over and are now ready for next year.

Hard work pays off.

NOVEMBER

November has not been a good month for the allotments. One or two plotters have left, which is a pity, but the hard work that needs to be done is sometimes too much for some. Here is hoping that the winter is cold and frosty. Double digging will be done over the next three months to get the soil ready for next year.



Got a soil testing kit, from Walkers (the four phials kit is the best, as most plots are in a three year cycle) this will be used at the beginning of the year. The kits are easy to use and will show, if anything, needs to be added to the soil to make it rich enough for the produce to be grown next year. Last big tidy up and turned out the three compost bins, ready for next year. Good work done this month.

DECEMBER AND WINTER MONTHS

I have started turning over the ground as the start of the month has been good. Will carry on now until the New Year.

Over the winter months if you are not doing work on the plot the scenery around is great. The walk on the Tide Bank is great for relaxing, and this photo shows the airfield in Newtownards overlooking Scabo tower. The planes and helicopters are taking off all the time on good days, so never a dull moment.



This was taken on a lovely dry, and warm sunny afternoon.

DECEMBER

This photo was taken on the same afternoon as the previous one, and is also from the Tide Bank, looking towards Portaferry Road, it is of the Brent Geese before they migrate for the winter.

The scenery around the Lough changes all the time, Winter through to all the seasons. If you have a plot or just visiting, take some time to appreciate the views.



Looking over the sea can be relaxing.

2 TOTAL OF HOURS WORKED

MONTHS	HOURS	TOTAL
JANUARY	26 $\frac{1}{4}$	26 $\frac{1}{4}$
FEBRUARY	19 $\frac{3}{4}$	46
MARCH	32 $\frac{1}{4}$	78 $\frac{1}{4}$
APRIL	71 $\frac{1}{2}$	149 $\frac{3}{4}$
MAY	52 $\frac{3}{4}$	202 $\frac{1}{2}$
JUNE	75 $\frac{3}{4}$	278 $\frac{1}{4}$
JULY	85 $\frac{3}{4}$	363
AUGUST	88 $\frac{3}{4}$	451 $\frac{3}{4}$
SEPTEMBER	37	488 $\frac{3}{4}$
OCTOBER	37 $\frac{1}{4}$	526
NOVEMBER	53	579
DECEMBER	21 approx	600

3. OUTLAY ON ALOTMENT

Keeping a check on expenses are a must, so that you know how much you have spent against what has been gained over the year with allotment produce.

Beans Runner	(Hestia Dwarf)	2.25
Beetroot	(Detroit Crimson)	2.50
Carrots	(Autumn King)	2.30
Chemical Fertilizer	(Pure Green)	16.25
Dithane (Fertilizer)		24.00
Onion Sets	(Stutgate)	5.00
Onion Sets	(special offer)	1.00
Onion Sets	(Silverskin) Pk	1.00
Peas	(Feltham First)	3.85
Seed Potatoes	(Red Cara)	5.00
Seed Potatoes		1.50
Sweet corn	(FI Tuxedo)	5.00
Shears sharpened	x 2	5.00
Epsom Salts	x 2	6.00
		7.50
Odds and ends		20.00

4. INFORMATION AND TIPS

Have you ever wondered why you get told that some fruits and vegetables can put on weight. Some fruits and vegetables are high in sugar content, so not as healthy as first thought. Some fruits/vegetables are listed below with sugar, fat, and vitamin values.

FRUIT

<u>Per 100g</u>	<u>Sugars</u>	<u>Fat</u>	<u>Vitamin</u>
Apples	10.39g	0.17g	C
Banana	12.23g	0.33g	C
Blackberries	Trace	Trace	C
Blueberries	0.2g	Trace	C
Cherries	11.5g	0.1g	C
Pears	9.80g	0.12g	C
Raspberries	4.6g	0.3g	C
Strawberries	6.0g	Nil	C

VEGETABLES

<u>Per 100g</u>	<u>Sugars</u>	<u>Fat</u>	<u>Vitamin</u>
Beetroot	Trace	Nil	A-C
Cabbage	Trace	Nil	C
Carrots	Trace	Nil	A-C
Cauliflower	Trace	Trace	C-B1-B2
Corn	0.5g	Trace	C
Potatoes	4.6g	Trace	C-B1-B2

Beetroot

Beetroot is fat free and a good source of fiber, and is a dieters must have. Fresh beetroot has a wonderfully sweet and earthy flavor. Can be cooked in several ways. Roasted, boiled and pickled. Very easy to grow. There are different colours, like purple, red and also yellow, all look inviting on a plate. Try them.

Carrots

These are an everyday item, but some super food fans claim that these help to reduce heart disease and diabetes, as well as providing vitamins that nourish the skin, and also help protect from sun damage. Sow in well-drained, stone free soil. Don't feed them, as this will encourage greenery at the expense of root growth.

Cranberries

Cranberries score high on novelty value, impress your friends at Christmas with your home made cranberry jelly.

Cranberries insist on an acidic soil, if your soil is not buy some ericaceous compost (buy from garden shops) and grow in a large pot. They should crop between September to mid-October depending on where you live. Easy to grow.

Drought Gardening / Top resistant flowering plants Good for small Gardens

These plants need little water

1. Sempervirens - good for - small spaces (patios)
2. Lavender - good for - fragrance
3. Rosemary - good for - cooking
4. Buddleia - good for - attracting butterfly's
5. Begonias - good for - shade and dry areas

HIT or MISS

Slugs

Sink beer traps into the ground to get rid of slugs.

MISS. It doesn't work. You might get a few shell-suited legless boozers, no different to a Friday night!! Slug pellets are fairly effective when it's dry, but only micro-organisms nematodes really do the trick. (See your nearest garden centre they will give you more information.)

Fertilizer

The more fertilise you use, the better your plants.

MISS. You may harm them by giving them an overdose of the fertilizer.

Always follow the pack instructions.

Organic Foods

Organic vegetables are produced without using chemicals.

MISS. It's often a ruse through clever marketing to suggest just that. A whole load of chemicals are permitted to be used on vegetables which end up being labelled "organic" in shops. Rotenone (used to kill greenfly) has been known to kill our fast declining bee population and also used as a fish poison. Some chemicals are alright. Always check.

Potatoes

Are they good for you

HIT. - Nutrient rich, contains Magnesium, zinc & copper, B6, Vit.C, Vit.B1, and folic acid, fibre, iron, virtually fat free, containing no cholesterol, and served in their skins are a great source of fibre. 115 calories per medium potato (175g) Good for a healthy balanced diet. Sweet potatoes are particularly good.

Watering

Don't water plants if they are in hot sunshine.

They don't really care. Shade is preferable, but if plants need a drink give them one. Have one yourself whilst you're at it.

5. SUPERMARKET PRICES

<u>PRODUCT</u>	<u>Bag/Fresh/Frozen</u>
Beans x 200kg	£1.50
Beans Dwarf x 200kg	£1.27
Beetroot x 6 fresh	£2.69
Onions silverskin (bottle)	£0.72
Onions x 3 fresh	£0.97
Peas 500kg bag	£2.00
Potatoes x 55kg	£2.80
Sweet corn x 4 fresh	£1.00
Tomatoes x 6 fresh	£0.95

6. YIELD FROM ALLOTMENT

Beans	3 ½ lbs
Dwarf Beans	2 ½ lbs
Beetroot	25 ¾ lbs
Carrots	20 ½ lbs
Onions	36 ¾ lbs
Peas	41 lbs
Potatoes	300 lbs
Sweet corn	Lost the lot
Silver skin onions	6 ½ lbs

Tomatoes were grown at home, and we only got 4 lbs off the vine, which did not ripen. These were made into green chutney.

7. SUMMING UP

Looking back over the year I can say that the allotment has come out tops again for quality, quantity and taste.

Even if some of the produce did not grow it was defiantly cheaper than buying from the Supermarkets.

Let us hope that next year, with the same amount of effort; the Allotment will bring the same rewards as the previous years.

I CAN SAFELY SAY

THE HARD WORK PAID OFF

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