

Winchester New Allotment Holders Society Ltd

# WNAHS newsletter

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## Update from the Chair

As you are all aware, following the driest Spring for a hundred years, river levels are critically low within the principal catchment areas from which Winchester draws its water.

As a result of this, with effect from Monday, 21st July, Southern Water implemented a general hosepipe ban across a substantial part of Hampshire. This ban includes the watering of domestic gardens.

Southern Water did, however, provide an exemption for “watering food crops at domestic premises or private allotments, if not feasible by watering can”.

After much discussion, we decided that we should ban the use of hosepipes across our allotments, though we will, of course, respect the general exemption given to any member who is a Blue Badge holder or on Southern Water's Priority Services Register for medical or mobility reasons.

There are a number of reasons why we have taken this position:

- Water is, increasingly, a scarce resource. We are part of a larger and wider community and, as such, it is only right that we should play our part in minimising water usage across our 12 sites, particularly as no-one knows when this very dry spell will end;
- Despite all of our best intentions, the use of a hose pipe inevitably leads to a more liberal use of water than would normally be the case using watering cans. During the summer months, we are very heavy users of water. Our water usage in June was 2.8 x the amount used in June 2022, when we last had a hosepipe ban that August. For the three months to the end of June, our usage was +68% higher than in the three months to end of June 2022. When we look at the average water usage per day or by plot, it appears to be substantially in excess of what is strictly necessary;
- Our sites have a reasonable distribution of taps to enable the use of watering cans;
- Finally, water is also now an expensive commodity, with our water charges having increased substantially over the last 12 months.

In implementing a hosepipe ban across our sites, we appreciate that we will be causing some inconvenience to those members who have previously been using hosepipes. For that I apologise, but hope that all members will understand the context in which this decision was made.

Enjoy the rest of your summer.

**Chris Pearce**

## Reminders

**Bonfires permitted from October to end of April (March at Park Road).**

Please only burn dry matter when the wind is blowing away from any neighbouring houses.

**WNAHS: AGM, 7pm on Thursday 20th November, 2025**

## From the Editor

I have absolutely no understanding of time. I don't know what five minutes is, or how long it will take to produce an allotment newsletter. Everything I do happens in an ethereal palace, a place between reality and fiction, where my relentless mind-chatter eventually forms into something that can be seen by others. This has always been the case, my life marked out by dream-long-time, not deadlines. My approach to the allotment is the same, I sow and reap at the wrong times, but stuff grows, just as in my life, small seeds grow into things I could never imagine.

When I was small, I had friends with dimples on their hands, chubby faces and dirty knees. We lived in the moment, never imagining a life that would change. Now I see those friends, and it is strange to remember how we were and what motivated us at five, eleven and seventeen – when we could never keep still – compared to sixty, when a calmness and silence has grown around us like the deep cloak of the night sky, holding us to our history, our community and the earth. Gone from us is the wild and untampered freedom of childhood, to be replaced with rituals, a wealth of memories and new knowledge. When we now meet up, we discuss the problems of growing vegetables in a drought (how time consuming is the extra watering!) and what is growing

well this year, and we silently bring with us the knowledge of our friendship and all those conversations and days spent on doing nothing measurable.

This got me thinking about the allotment season and whether anything we do is ever wasted? In the words of the Little Prince, "It is the time you have wasted for your rose that makes your rose so important." – Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.

Philosophically speaking, my relationship with my friends and my plot are, in some ways, similar, they're both a work in progress, they change only in long-time and, they carry with them all my life experience and knowledge, all my daydreams and whimsy. I only see my friends a couple of times a year, but our relationship still grows. Every time we meet, we learn new things and revisit old histories, catch up on family news and look beyond the horizon towards new ideas and concepts. In much the same way, my allotment has changed over years, as my understanding of the principles and benefits of gardening has changed. Now I focus my time on growing food my family will eat and that I can preserve.

And so it is thus on my allotment, when I'm living too much in the dream-world the weeds and wildflowers in my mind cascade over onto my plot, taking over

small parcels of land and giving something back to nature. The insects hum, the birds busy themselves amongst the grasses and there is a restfulness and calm that is soothing, until the seasons minute hand ticks closer to month end and I remember to rush to weed, plant, water and feed. Those little parcels of wildflowers, real and imaginary, sow both chaos and life, worry plot convenors, remind me that my life is only measurable by the season's, and that all the little cultivations that I have made in my life slip through time in the knowledge that nothing is wasted.

Emma McMullan

Editor  
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# From the Membership Department

It is the time of year when we prepare for New Season Renewals. The first step is asking convenors to cross check and identify vacant, free, and unusable plots. Convenors are required to confirm which plot holders on their site wish to renew. It is important that as a plot holder, if you are considering not renewing your plot, or wish to downsize, that you speak to your site convenor before the end of this month at the latest, informing them of your intentions.

Once I have the new season check list, I am able to prepare and print out the renewal letters ready to send out to plot holders on the 1st September. Plot holders, if they still wish to renew, then have the whole of September to pay their subscriptions. As you can see from the records below, we are a sizeable organisation with 466 plot holders, and it is beneficial to myself and the Treasurer that WNAHS subscriptions are paid on time. I know that the overwhelming majority of you do, so thank you in advance.

In order to ensure a smooth and efficient process it is most important that when paying by Bank Transfer that you write the bill and reference number for 2025/2026 I know some write a name or use an old reference number relating to past years, this creates confusion, results in delay and adds to the work.

Enjoy the rest of the Summer.

Mike Moore  
Membership Secretary

SITE SUMMARY August 2022						
Sites	Plots	Taken	Vacant	Rods	Waiting List	Waiting Times (months)
Park Road	267	263	0	1411	155	19
Edington Road	160	157	2	668	149	24
Cromwell Road West	21	21	0	93	27	7
Kingsley Place	28	24	4	123	11	9
Lisle Court	11	11	0	54	13	6
Paulet Place North	23	21	1	82	11	17
Paulet Place South	29	29	0	91	13	20
The Valley	34	33	3	148	25	11
Princes Place	13	12	1	57	12	4
Greenhill Avenue	12	12	0	52	50	29
Trussell Crescent	12	12	0	52	29	15
Firmstone Road	6	6	0	18	37	21
Totals	616	601	11	2849	532	



# Trading Shed Matters

Thank you to all our volunteers in the shed and with deliveries – it's a lovely community feeling with everyone helping out.

## Watering wisely

It's been very dry this year, and as water is a precious resource we need to use it to most benefit for the plants. The best for plants, and best for you (as less effort), is watering less often but thoroughly. With temperatures over 25 degrees, I water my plot twice a week.

It's important to water each plant thoroughly at the roots and not a light sprinkling spray that evaporates quickly, therefore I never use a spray attachment. Water with a watering can (or two for balance when carrying), as it's quicker than a hose and ensures you direct sufficient quantity of water to the right place. You can also easily add the feed to the can and do two jobs at once.

One of the top tips is to place an upturned water bottle (two litre) next to a plant such as tomato, cucumber, courgette or squash. The bottle can be slightly buried in the soil secured with a stick down the neck. This method not only recycles plastic bottles, it ensures a sufficient quantity of water directed to the roots. For thorough watering of these big plants – it's ½ a watering can (five litres), per plant, not just filling the bottle. For watering smaller plants such as lettuce, think of a litre per plant.



## Mulch

Mulching the soil will aid in retaining water as well as reducing weeds. Sowing a green manure, is particularly good on the plot after lifting potatoes, or use compost or a 2cm layer of dried grass clipping to improve organic matter as well combatting weeds. Matting, such as mypex is useful around sprawling plants such as squash and courgettes.

Park Road plotholder Brian Bougard recently passed away. He was one of the Trading Shed volunteers when I first started working in the shop, made me feel welcome and always lent a hand with the deliveries. Even though he was not a young man, he could lift the 80 litre compost bags with ease. When he eventually 'retired' from the deliveries he would still pop in and finish any meeting with the phrase 'Thank you for all that you do'. Another treasured memory is when helping him and Sue with pruning their orchard, Brian would tease me and state any branch I was going to cut was his favourite branch. It always made me do a double take to confirm to myself that I was pruning the right branch.

In the Trading Shed, September is when Autumn planting onions, shallots and Autumn planting flower bulbs become available. The garlic and elephant garlic arrives in October. An announcement will be on the website as soon as they are in.

Potato order forms will be available in November.

Jo Townsend and Janet Thornton





# Edington Road News

First I'd like to do a couple of plugs: for the Edington Road WhatsApp group and for the Incredible Edibles allotment group.

1. If you know someone who already has a plot on Edington Road and is not on the WhatsApp group could you please tell them about it? It is a very efficient vehicle for sharing information, eg people can:

- quickly liaise and organise to buy things in bulk like farmyard manure, wood chip, etc;
- share information if there is a problem;
- notify others if they want to share their abundance (plants, equipment, etc);
- seed swap (or could we set up a seed bank?);
- organise occasional work parties ;
- share good news (local plant sales/swaps, horticultural talks).

2. The Incredible Edibles allotment group has about 30 friendly, welcoming members (about half of whom are very regularly attendees). We have two plots on the Edington Road site. We meet every Tuesday and Saturday morning. We share all the work and the harvest. And then (terribly important!!) we have coffee afterwards.

New members are always welcome and we would be happy to be joined – temporarily or otherwise

– by people from the waiting list until they get their own plot.

For this issue, I thought I'd talk about some of the more common weeds we find on our plots. In my experience it's hard to identify many plants from photos. I find I need to actually see the plant before I'm confident I can identify it. So I'm sticking to very common ones that everyone will have found in their plot.

## ***Stinging nettles (Urtica dioica) and Comfrey (Symphytum officinale)***

I'm sure no-one will have any problems identifying these and probably knowing their benefits. You can make a fertilizer 'tea' with both. Just chop them down, put them in a bucket of water, weigh them down and leave to stink for a few weeks. Nettle tea will be ready in a couple of weeks; comfrey tea takes about six weeks.

Nettles are a superfood, excellent source of iron, some B vitamins, A, C and K and all the amino acids.

Use the young tips of the nettles to make a tea to drink yourself. Add it to soups. Make pesto.

Comfrey is so obliging. Scrounge a clump from your neighbour. Plonk it in a corner. When it flowers, make your tea!

## ***Dandelion (taraxacum officinale)***

Of course you all know the name is a corruption of the French 'dents de lion' – lion's teeth. Alternative French name: 'pissenlit', loosely translated as 'pee the bed'. You have been warned!

Well, you name it, dandelions will do it. Dandelion leaves are high in inulin. Inulin is a starchy carbohydrate that provides food to our gut flora. Consuming inulin regularly can help foster and diversify healthy gut bacteria.

Every bit of this plant is edible – leaves, flowers, roots. Use young and tender plants. Deep fry the flowers in batter. Add the leaves to your salads. Make a herbal infusion. Or a pesto. Here's a recipe: *Half a cup of pine nuts, 3 finely chopped garlic cloves, 2 cups of freshly chopped dandelion leaves, loosely packed, 1 tbsp lemon juice, 1 tbsp lemon zest, half a cup of EVOO, half a tsp each of salt and pepper, 1 tsp of turmeric powder, quarter cup freshly grated Parmesan. Blitz everything except the Parmesan to a smooth paste. If it's too thick, gradually add a little bit more oil. Add the Parmesan and continue to blend until it has a good consistency. Refrigerate. Eat it within three days.*

You can make a coffee from dandelion root. But, really, would you?

But here's a warning: the sap from the stems will stain permanently.

## Edington Road News cont.

### **Chickweed (*stellaria media*)**

**Startwort, stitchwort, chickenwort, winterweed, birdweed, Mischievous Jack**

Even if you don't know any Latin you will probably know that this means 'star in the middle'. It has a pretty little white starry flower.

It has a mild flavour. You can add it to salads, sandwiches or use it as a garnish.

Or give it to your chickens because that's where the name chickweed comes from!

### **Fat hen (*chenopodium album*)**

**lamb's quarters, goosefoot, garden orache**

High in protein and fibre. The leaves can be cooked like spinach or added to salads. It is said to have a mild, slightly earthy flavour with a subtle bread-like taste. The unopened flowers can be cooked like broccoli. The seeds can be used in soups, stews or sprouted for salad. They are similar to quinoa but contain saponins which can be bitter and should be removed by soaking and rinsing before eating.

This year, as an experiment, IEW members are growing some quinoa (also part of the chenopodium album family). I'm not planning to collect the seeds as I think it's going to be very hard work. But do come and see us and find out how some other brave member has fared.

### **Ground Elder (*Aegopodium podagraria*) gutweed, bishops' weed, ache weed**

What did the Romans ever do for us? Brought us ground elder! They put it in their soup allegedly. Good source of vitamin C. It is supposed to taste a bit like parsley. Use it in fish dishes or cook it like spinach. Traditionally it was used to treat arthritis and rheumatism.

I managed to virtually eradicate it from a client's garden over three or four years when I was young and fit.

### **Hairy Bittercress (*Cadamina hirsuta*)**

I need to pause to regain my composure before I talk about this little terrorist.

The leaves have a peppery, cress-like flavour and make a good addition to salads. But and here's where the terrorist bit comes in touch it and it explodes its seeds all over the place. Even when you think it's not even ready to drop its seeds POW, they're everywhere.

So eat as much as you can before it grows even to a couple of inches!





***Cleaver, (gallium aparine) sticky willy, goose grass, sticky weed***

A cleansing tonic. Pick it before the seeds form and it gets tough or wait till it's older. Let the seeds dry and use them as a substitute for coffee. Yeah, right.

***Brambles (Rubus fruticosus)***

Everybody knows what to do with them, so here's a Woodland Trust recipe for bramble whisky.

*Blackberries, sugar, not- too-expensive whisky. Place the blackberries in a sealable jar (or several jars!) with about a tenth of their volume in granulated sugar. Leave it in your wine cellar for six months. Plebs can put it under the stairs. Mark it in your diary! Give it a shake now and again. Strain the liquid from the blackberries through a piece of muslin or an old white pillowcase. (Hold onto the solids.)*

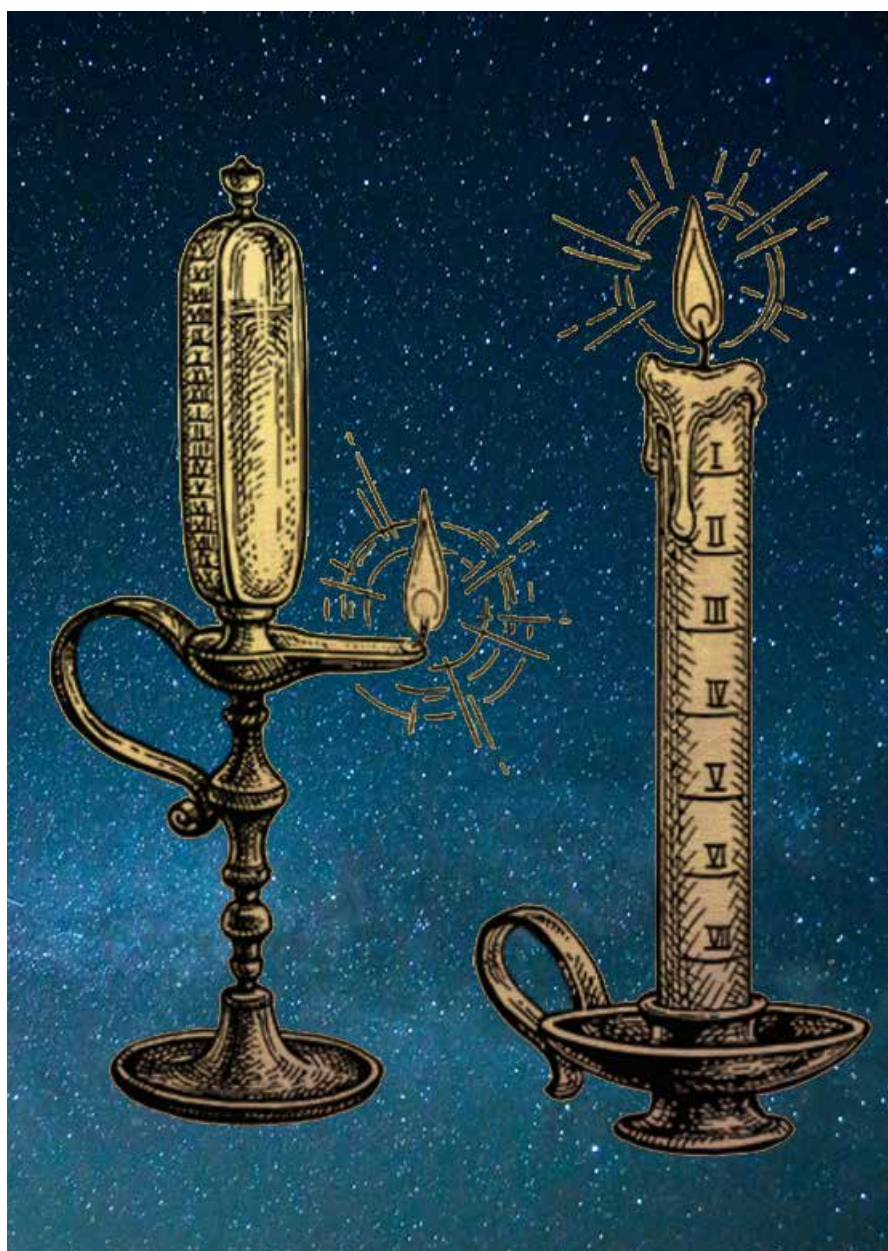
*Have a taste. Add more sugar if required. Bottle your concoction. Enjoy at your leisure.*

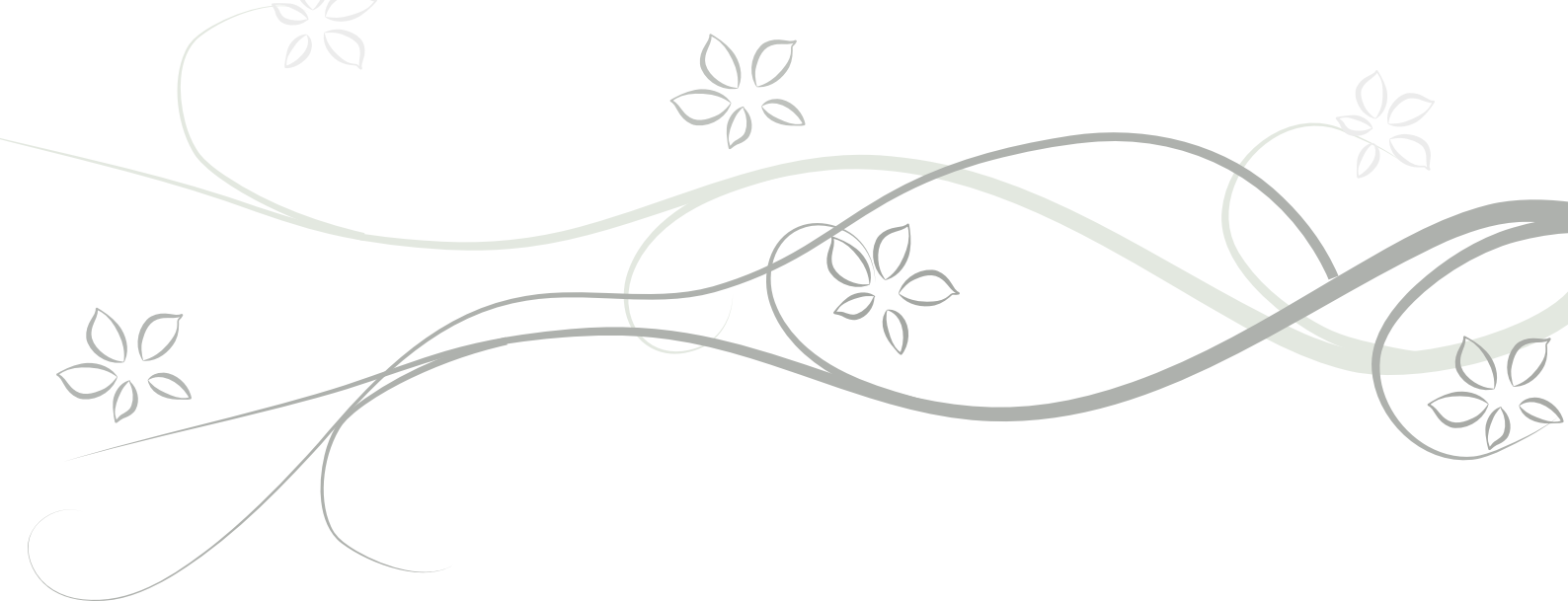
You can fold the strained blackberries into oatmeal to make cranachan, a traditional Scottish dessert. Or add them to ice cream or yoghurt. Probably other things that good cooks would know about. But not me.

And don't forget what I said up at the top, folks.

Claire Cafrine  
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August 2025









# Park Road News

Considering the difficult weather from spring's constant rain to the long heatwave this summer, it is surprising that most plots look so good. Established plants will thrive with occasional watering, so a hosepipe ban at this time should not be disastrous. Carrying two watering cans at a time isn't difficult, or you can load a wheelbarrow with three or four, if you don't like lugging them. Before using your hose next year, please check that the connectors to tap and spray head are in good condition, as I have seen water wasted through ill-fitting equipment, and particularly leaky hoses.

One positive from this long dry spell is that the grass has been slow to grow, and a quick strim or mow to deal with the inevitable weeds is all that's needed, but not too often. There haven't been many plot changes of late but recently two large plots came up, both in need of a fair bit of work. The people I contacted were both enthusiastic on the phone and just wanted to see the plots, without a long list of questions. In spite of having five children under 10 years old between them, they said yes immediately and scarcely two months later, both plots look fantastic and are a credit to their hard work, involving the children – who will one day look back on growing their first carrots, as they contemplate starting a garden or allotment of their own.

In contrast, I and other convenors, occasionally come across someone waiting for a plot who is not so easy to deal with. Being obsessed with a plot of a certain size, being picky about the look of the shed that might be there, or unwilling to take on anything other than a perfect plot, will not result in getting a plot very quickly. Allotments are not Tesco or Amazon where you can pick a size 10 or a dozen bottles of something special. We are all volunteers, and while keen to help those who genuinely want to grow, don't have time to do multiple viewings until Mr or Mrs Hard-to-Please is suited.

Recently several ploholders appeared with injuries sustained outside our site. Two broken wrists – cycling and football – a seriously broken shoulder due to tripping on uneven pavement, and another hurt shoulder from a fall from a bicycle. It's worth being aware that the allotment can also be the source of injury. In my time, I have seen broken bones requiring surgery, pronged feet, bad cuts from falling on the track which required stitches, tick bites which resulted in Lyme disease and injuries from broken glass and brambles. We take risks every day and weigh them up against the enjoyment obtained from sport or hobbies, but please be careful and aware when working on your plot.

We were sad when Bryan Bougard died earlier this year, having been suffering ill health for some months. He had been a ploholder for very many years, and did a tremendous amount to help people, never accepting thanks or praise, but instead always thanking others. He is much missed.

It is a good thing that the average age of ploholders is going down, but of course younger families do not always have time during the week. If you are able to spare time helping out with occasional projects at Park Road, or unloading the pallets which come to the trading shed, please let me know, and I can keep a list for the future.

Thank you for continuing to recycle unwanted but useful items by the trading shed, and removing them if not grabbed within a week. This seems to work well. I hope to arrange an uplift of unwanted metal, plastic and glass as usual from outside the gates in November, courtesy of WCC.

Let's hope the rest of the summer has balanced sunshine and rain so that we can keep on growing till the frosts appear.

Maria Keniston 07769 562493  
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# Stanmore News

We finally have a new entrance path at Kingsley Place. This has really made the path more mobility scooter as well as pedestrian friendly. Our contractor managed to use recycled materials so the only costs were labour. The path is now one metre wide.



*Facing into the site from the gate*



*Looking back to the gate*



*Where path meets the grass path*



*From just inside the gate*

Paul, our contractor, completed the job in a day (in this evil heat!). Gaps between slabs will be filled with unwanted loose soil.

On a completely different subject ... one afternoon recently, I burnt my finger on my tin mug after brewing a much needed cup of tea in my shed. It was rather painful and I sought relief by pressing a lavender flower against the area. This was something I had read somewhere and lavender was confirmed as a minor burn remedy by another plot holder. Apart from the usual dock leaves for stinging nettle stings, can any of our plot holders think of safe remedies which may be growing on our sites. Perhaps we could get a list together in the next newsletter?

People must be aware of potential allergies and if concerned, not try out anything they are unsure of. We are adults and should be responsible for our personal safety

Chris Bullen  
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