

ROYAL PADDOCKS ALLOTMENTS



HAMPTON
WICK

ROYAL PADDOCKS ALLOTMENTS NEWSLETTER

No 31 Spring 2009

THE PLOTHOLDER

www.paddocks-allotments.org.uk

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COMING SOON!

SEEDLING SALE

**SUNDAY
17th MAY
11am – 1pm**

Bring your spare seedlings for sale. Location to be confirmed – look out for posters on the shed near the main gate.

All profits to site improvements

PRODUCE SHOW

Planned for late summer – watch out for details

FIRE!



THE FIRE which destroyed four-fifths of the main stable building in the early hours of 11 March was arson, the police and fire brigade believe, since the doors had been jemmied open. The fire was spotted by a police helicopter that happened to be flying over the park.

The police called me at 4am and by the time I got down to the allotments 15 minutes later the fire brigade had put out the flames. The fire engine had gone round to the cricket club side of the wall and they believe they were just in time to prevent the pavilion from catching fire.

We have made the building as safe as possible by removing loose bricks, tiles, etc and knocking down a part of the wall that was obviously unstable. However, the building is still potentially dangerous, so please don't cross the tape around the site and please make sure that your children stay away.

We are currently pursuing insurance claims – we need to see how much we'll get, if anything, before going any further. Our NFU policy gives us £5,000-worth of contents insurance and we are now putting together a claim.

The situation with the buildings insurance is more uncertain: although Richmond council included the Royal Paddocks Allotments under their borough-wide buildings insurance, the deductible per claim is £100,000. A rebuild would cost

less than that, so it doesn't look as if we will get anything from this policy. Cllr James Mumford, who is chair of the RPA management committee, is negotiating with council officers to see whether the council itself can give us some money. There is a chance that we may get a few thousand pounds from them.

However, we mustn't give up in the face of these problems. Once we know how much money we're going to get, we can start planning for the future. There's no shortage of bricks, most of which are re-usable, and if we can get some money from the insurance and the Council we should be able to buy sufficient materials to build a replacement for the café that would double as a meeting room.

Of course this would depend on us doing most of the work ourselves. Please could you let me or any other member of the committee know if you would be willing to help, and in particular if you have any building skills such as bricklaying and carpentry – we will need someone with the right skills to supervise the volunteers.

I can be contacted on chairman@paddocks-allotments.org.uk or (020) 8241 6062. Alternatively, you can post a note in the shed letterbox by the gate.

The committee will let you know of further developments – keep your eyes open for new messages by the gate. The fire has been a real blow, but if we work together we won't let it defeat us.

David Harnden, Chairman, Plotolders' Committee

Submit items for the next newsletter – contact jenbourne@btinternet.com

News from your Committee

THE OFFICE

The office has moved from its old, burnt-out location, and is now based in the shed at the main gate. A committee member is available on site every Sunday between 11am and midday to deal with queries.

WELCOME TO NEW PLOTHOLDERS

Carol Ager, 4; Philippa Wren, 10f; Chris Nix, 12f; Paul Winder, 13f; Nicholas Hembury and Julian Temblett 14f; Julie Lloyd-Davies, 86b; Dominic Ellmers 106; Brenda van der Kooy 126b.

BONFIRES and rubbish burning

The bonfire ban came into effect on 1 April. The incinerator is also unsafe to use at present, but if you have dry, organic rubbish to burn please leave it next to the incinerator.

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS with gardening expertise

A local charity is asking if anyone is willing to give an hour a week sharing gardening and veg growing knowledge with the King's Field Youth Café Project as they start a gardening project. Contact Vilita Emsley on 07794 362 076, or visit the King's Field café in Church Grove next to our site.

THE PLOTHOLDERS' COMMITTEE

David Harnden, Chair, Plot 152
Marguerite Pocock, Secretary, Plot 55, 62b
Gavin Collins, Treasurer, Plot 163
Jenny Bourne, Social Secretary, Plot 27f, 28b
Ashley Catto, Plots A, H
John Greenhalgh, Plot 120
Lorraine Groves, Plot 27b
John Hawkins, Plot 79
Shirley Murray, Plot 3
Chris Pocock, Plots 55, 62b
Bob Trevillion, Plot 137
Barbara Wood, Plots 182, 183, 184

THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Councillors: James Mumford (Chair),
Gareth Evans, Jonathan Cardy, Jerry Elloy.
Tenants: Chris Pocock, David Harnden,
Bob Trevillion (Deputy Chair), John Greenhalgh
Susan Saunders (Secretary)

FIRST AID

THERE IS A FIRST AID BOX IN THE SHED BY THE MAIN GATE.

FIRST AIDERS Mary Newing, Plot 53
Lorraine Groves, Plot 27b
John Greaves, Plot 111f

If anyone has First Aid training and could add their names to the list, please let someone on the committee know.

Allotment related blogs

www.mytinypplot.co.uk
www.anythingbutsprouts.blogspot.com
www.cc.calendula.blogspot.com
www.carrotsandkids.com
www.clairesgarden.blogspot.com
www.hoehoehoe.blogspot.com
www.perroneblogs.com/horticultural
www.plotblog-lilymarlene.blogspot.com
www.tinyfarmblog.com
www.allotment.humanlint.com

Monthly Workdays

There will be a workday on the first Sunday of each month between now and the autumn. We need your help to sink pumps, repair roads, manage wildlife areas and other communal tasks. Meet at 11am on the lawn by the compost toilet. If you're late, don't worry – you'll be able to spot or hear the various working groups.

We hope that by making this a regular date more people will turn up and we can get a lot accomplished this year. In particular, we would like to sink as many new pumps as possible. This needs six reasonably strong people to take turns ramming the pipe into the earth, so please turn up if you think you qualify. But there are jobs to do for everyone, regardless of levels of strength or fitness, so all are welcome.

The workdays at the end of March, the first of the year, were a great success and very enjoyable. A new pump was sunk and is now working; the damage to the lawn caused by the skip lorries was repaired; holes in the road were filled; and a lot of work was done on the fire-damaged stable building by burning timber, clearing up the rubble from a collapsed wall and cleaning bricks. Many thanks to all who took part.



The workdays are for the benefit of the allotments as a whole, so please do come along. Even if it's just for an hour or two, your help is needed. The reason we can keep the rents so low is that most of the communal work on the allotments is done by volunteers.

THE NEXT WORKDAY IS ON SUNDAY MAY 3RD – 11am on the lawn by the compost toilet.

Plotholders' Committee

The allotments under a blanket of snow, February



View towards the old office building, 2 February '09. Photo: Jenny Bourne

Site security

After the recent events on the site, we want to remind plotholders of the need to keep the site as secure as possible.

■ GATES

If you bring a vehicle onto the site, please close the gates on the vehicle cage immediately on entering or leaving the site and secure the bolts and lock from the inside unless there is another vehicle immediately following you – then please ensure the last driver in closes the gates. This is to deter thieves and also fly-tippers who could leave us with an expensive clear-up.

Please ensure that the pedestrian gate is closed after going in or leaving the site.

If you hold the door open for others who you do not recognise, please try and confirm them as plotholders by asking for their plot numbers.

■ BOUNDARY WALL/FENCE

Defensive Planting: growing holly, pyracanthus and mahonia against the boundary wall is a good deterrent to intruders and reduces their access and escape routes. *Gardeners' Question Time, 04/10/08, on www.bbc.co.uk*

■ PLOTS AND SHEDS

The Royal Paddocks Allotments has no insurance policy covering personal possessions on allotment sites. Please consider this when leaving items in your shed.

Please do not store fuel or fuel cans inside your sheds. Remember that locks have not in the past deterred intruders on the site.

■ VIGILANCE

Please check that people you do not recognise are plotholders by asking for their plot number.

■ HOLIDAYS

If you are going away on holiday or business and have asked friends to come in to water plants, pick crops, etc, please tell your neighbouring plotholders that there will be people they won't recognise on your plot.

■ REPORTING

If you are suspicious about anyone on the site, please report to a committee member at once (their plot numbers and contact details are on the notice board).

If you see people climbing on the wall, leaving the vehicle gate open or any other obvious wrongdoing, please report to a committee member ASAP giving as much detail as possible, particularly time and description of offender.

■ If a crime is being committed or you fear a confrontation may turn violent, phone the police from a safe place. If you see something you feel should be reported to the police but does not merit a 999 call, the non-emergency police number is **0300 123 1212**.

Thank you for your help in trying to keep our site secure.

Plotholders' Committee

CAFÉ NEWS!

The great news is that on Easter Sunday the café got up and running again with the approval of the Royal Paddocks' Committee and Richmond Environmental Health Department, with the support of both volunteers and customers old and new.

The café is in a temporary home in the shed by the main entrance. It will be open from 11.00 to 13.00 on Sunday mornings and will be serving a wide selection of home made cakes. In addition to the usual hot drinks, as the weather gets warmer it will also serve a selection of chilled cordials to quench the thirst of hard working allotment folk!



Temptations for café visitors on 12 April

My guide to success, by cup-winner George Loosemore

George writes – 'When I took over plot 75 in 1981, I started by strimming the top layer of the grass and I left it on top of the ground to dry. After it was dry I burned it and did the same thing with the couch grass. I burned the lot.

I raked over the ground and put in seeds. I did not have any manure or compost.

I still had some nice vegetables but as the years went by I started to put nets over some of the vegetables because of the birds at my vegetables. Still doing so now with the nets over the vegetables.

When I first put seed potatoes in I dug the potato trenches and put in the potatoes. I did not at the time put manure in the ground but I still had lots of potatoes, cabbages and other vegetables. But some years I did not do well on my plot 75. This year 2008 was a little better by keeping weeds down. It's nearly 3 years or more since I put any manure in my ground. I still got some good things out of my plot 75, and some fruit off my half plot 74b.

The only way for people to have good plots is to keep them clean and tidy, with good pathways with plot letters and numbers on the plots. Not too much grass. Keep paths cut. And to look after the plots do not let too many weeds or grass get too bad or high'.

George Loosemore, plots 75 and 74b.



George in the Xmas café

Life underground – get to know your earthworms!

Susan Saunders writes: 'The earthworm survey is part of a programme run by Open Air Laboratories (OPAL), and their website is www.OPALexplorenature.org

They will send you a workbook and laminated poster guide for the survey. There doesn't seem to be a time limit for supplying one's findings. The project involves digging a small pit (20cm x 20cm x 10cm deep) and checking all the earthworms one finds. Then to flush out any at a deeper level, there is a sachet of

mustard which is watered in – the mustard doesn't hurt them, just makes them want to come to the surface.

There are 26 different species of earthworms in Britain, of which 13, the most common, are illustrated on the guide, but about half of them will be immature (no saddle) and so cannot be identified accurately by us. Numbers and putative IDs are recorded in the workbook, and they suggest also sending photographs via the web.

Besides the pit, they ask for observations of any worms found in different habitats in a 5m radius (in compost, under leaf litter, or dead wood, etc).

Finally, they want information about soil type and acidity where the worms are found, and they include instructions about how to measure this (sachet of vinegar, colour chart), and photographs of how to gauge the proportions of sand/loam/clay'.

Bring in the Bees by Jenny Bourne

'If the bee disappeared off the surface of the globe then man would only have four years of life left. No more bees, no more pollination, no more plants, no more animals, no more man'.

Einstein's forecast may be coming ominously true as bee populations plummet world wide. Whatever the causes – widespread loss of habitat through agricultural changes, disease, pesticides, chemicals and synthetic fertilisers, loss of gardens to development – it's very bad news for us all. It is estimated that both bumble and honey bees are disappearing at the rate of 30% per annum. One in three honey bee colonies in the UK were lost last winter alone. On our site we can do our bit as individual ploholders to provide food sources and habitats for bees, even though a large area of brambles – a valuable habitat and food source – has recently been removed to make space for plots.

The first bees of early spring make a 'beeline' for the pulmonaria flowers on my plot. Through the summer they swarm over the allium flowers, lavender and nepeta and my veg and fruit trees are duly well pollinated and productive.



Companion planting is recognised as good practice. By growing nectar and pollen-rich flowers that attract bees and other beneficial insects we can create a plot that is mutually beneficial – we feed them, they pollinate our plants. Single petal, bell or daisy flowering plants are preferred by bees – double-flowered forms lack pollen. All fruit trees are good sources of pollen and many are also excellent nectar producers, eg almond, apple, cherries,

peach, nectarine, plum and quince. Flowering ivy is particularly valuable in the late autumn when few other nectar sources are available to insects – the ivy on the wall by my plot was humming with bees last year. We can also help by finding alternatives to chemical insecticides and making our gardens more wildlife friendly.

These are some of the flowers that will bring in the bees: achillea, agastache, ajuga, alliums, anchusa, aquilegia, aster, aubretia, borage, buddleia, calendula, comfrey, coreopsis, corn marigold, cynara, dahlia, digitalis, echinacea, echinops, eupatorium, flowering chives, gaillardia, helenium, helianthus, helleborus, hesperis, hollyhocks, honesty, iberis, lamium, lavatera, lavenders, leucanthemum, liatris, limnanthes douglasii (poached egg plants); michaelmas daisies, mints, monarda didyma, nemesia, nicotiana, nigella, origanum vulgare, phacelia tanacetifolia, phlox, poppy, rudbedkia, salvias, scabious, sedums, solidago (golden rod), sunflowers, sweet rocket, sweet william, symphytum, teasels, wallflowers, white clover. Native plants can be incorporated into flower beds: achillea millefolium, centaurea cyanus (cornflower), centranthus, corncockle, cowslip, digitalis (foxgloves), filipendula ulmaria (meadow sweet), geranium pratense (meadow cranesbill), hemp agrimony, knapweeds, loosestrife, primrose, red campion.

Sources: *Save our Bees Campaign* www.saveourbees.org.uk

Tip from the *Guardian*, 21 March – 'to make your plot a bee haven buy bumblebee and solitary bee homes (greengardener.co.uk) and, most important, go organic: common garden chemicals are in the frame for harming bee populations...'

Websites for further information (or Google bees):

www.britishbee.org.uk

www.bumblebeeconservationtrust.co.uk

www.twickenham-bees.org.uk (open day 6 June)

Plantwithpurpose.co.uk/plants for beekeepers

Karisgarden.com/chapters/bees

Naturalengland.co.uk

RHUBARB and ginger crumble cake

Use any fruit from your plot – blackcurrant, blackberry and apple or plum work just as well!

INGREDIENTS

Crumble mixture	1 tsp ground ginger
110g/4oz plain flour	Cake
4 tbsp light muscovado sugar	170g/6oz unsalted butter, softened
85g/3oz unsalted butter	170g/6oz caster sugar
Fruit	3 Eggs, beaten
Rhubarb cut into 1cm chunks	170g/6oz plain flour
1 tbsp vanilla sugar or caster sugar, or to taste	2 tsp baking powder
	1 tbsp milk

Preheat the oven to 190 Gas 5. Butter a 25cm/10in springform cake tin and line the base with baking parchment.

Make the crumble mixture first. Rub the butter into the flour to make the crumble mixture until it forms breadcrumbs then add the sugar. Set aside. Toss the chopped rhubarb in the sugar and ginger. Set aside.

Now make the cake mixture. Beat the sugar and butter together until they are pale and fluffy. Beat the eggs in a little at a time. Add a little flour to stop the eggs curdling. Add the rest of the eggs. Sift in the rest of the flour and the baking powder. Fold in the milk. Scrape the cake mixture into the tin followed by the rhubarb then sprinkle the crumble on top.

Bake for about an hour. The crumble should go golden and crunchy and rhubarb cooked through by then. Place the cake on a rack to cool for 15 minutes. Delicious served warm with custard or cream! Serves 8.

RHUBARB with ginger-spiked meringue

from *New Kitchen Garden* by Adam Caplin with recipes by Celia Brooks Brown. Serves 4.

INGREDIENTS

1 kg rhubarb, cut into chunks
4 tbsp light brown sugar, or to taste
3 egg whites
180g caster sugar
2cm piece of fresh ginger, finely grated

Butter a large ovenproof dish. Put the rhubarb into the prepared dish and toss with the light brown sugar. Roast in a preheated oven at 220°C for about 20-30 minutes until the rhubarb is softened.

Reduce the oven temperature to 180°C. Put the egg whites into a spotlessly clean, grease-free bowl and, using an electric whisk or mixer, whisk until stiff. Whisk in the caster sugar, a spoonful at a time, then whisk in the ginger. Spread the meringue over the cooked rhubarb and bake in the preheated oven for 20 minutes until barely crisp and golden on top. Serve immediately.

Note: Doing just the first step produces a lovely compôte, which can be served with plain yogurt or vanilla ice cream.



How to contact us:

You can leave mail for the Committee (but not money) in the postbox in the shed by the gate.

Our website address is

www.paddocks-allotments.org.uk

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