



## THE PLOTHOLDER

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## Prizewinners 2009



The AGM was held on a wet and windy November evening, which probably accounted for the low attendance, but here are some of the happy faces of plotholders who were successful in impressing the judges to win prizes. The cup winner 2009 was **Peter Caughey, plot 40**, who was unable to attend on the night. Congratulations to all the winners.

Clockwise from main picture, above: David and Julie Lainchbury, plot 132b, First Prize for Best Half Plot, presented with their certificate by Councillor Jonathan Cardy; Carol Ager, who along with Bill Royce, plot 4, won the First Prize for the Best New Tenant for a Full Plot; Len Cowking, plot 15f, 2nd Prize for the Best Half Plot; Chris Nix, plot 12f, First prize for Best New Tenant for a Half Plot; Gray Rigge, plot 83, who with his wife Liz won 2nd Prize for Best Full Plot. The other winners were: 3rd Prize Best Full Plot, Ian Hopkins, plot 30; 3rd Prize Best Half Plot, Caroline Dick, plot 194f.

## Aminopyralid is back!

Aminopyralid is back on the market. Dow's grassland herbicide was withdrawn from the market in July 2008 after numerous reports of aminopyralid-contaminated manure either preventing or stunting the growth of crops including potatoes, tomatoes, beans, peas, carrots and lettuce.

The product has been allowed back with stricter labelling – aminopyralid herbicides should only be applied to land that will be grazed by cattle or sheep and not land where forage will be conserved – and an expanded training programme for product users. In theory this should ensure that manure contaminated with aminopyralid does not leave the farm. The product is not approved for use on land grazed by horses.

If the labelling and restrictions are followed, manure for allotments should be free of aminopyralid. However, this cannot be guaranteed and it is recommended that you check the provenance of manure and ensure the supplier is aware of the situation.

### More information can be found on:

- the notice on the shed by the gate
- the Chemicals Regulation Directorate website ([http://www.pesticides.gov.uk/safe\\_use.asp?id=2799](http://www.pesticides.gov.uk/safe_use.asp?id=2799))
- and the excellent Green Lane Allotments website ([www.glallotments.btik.com](http://www.glallotments.btik.com) – follow the link to Contaminated Manure half-way down the home page).

*Plotholders' Committee, January 2010*

**NEW!  
COMING  
SOON!**

**SEED-  
SWAP  
SUNDAY  
28th  
FEBRUARY  
11am – 1pm  
in front of the  
Seedstore Café  
(open for drinks  
and great cakes)**

Bring along any spare seed packets, left-over seeds and saved seeds and swap with other plot holders. Full details on page 2.

**Submit items for the next newsletter** – contact [jenbourne@btinternet.com](mailto:jenbourne@btinternet.com)

## News from your Committee

### 2010 PLOTHOLDERS' COMMITTEE

The Plottolders' Committee has been boosted this year by the welcome addition of 5 new faces: Alan Buckingham (plot 185); Angus Carswell (198f); Chris Nix (12f); Martin Scotton (59); and Flora Souper (130).

Many members of last year's committee also stood and were re-elected. Their names, plus the committee positions and responsibilities to which they were elected at the first meeting in December '09, are: David Harnden (chairman, 152); Bob Trevillion (vice-chairman, sheds, 136b, 137); Marguerite Pocock (secretary, 55, 62b); Gavin Collins (treasurer, 163); Jenny Bourne (social secretary, 27f, 28b); Barbara Wood (waiting list, 182-4); Ashley Catto (manure supplies, A, H); Chris Pocock (compost toilet, 55, 62b). Full list below.

### WELCOME TO NEW TENANTS

Ruth, plot 21f; Bruce and Linda, plot 128b; Andy and Kate, plot 45; Catherine, plot 43b.

### THE OFFICE

Based by the site shed, every Sunday, 11am – 12pm.

### COMMITTEE NOTICES

Are regularly updated and displayed in the noticeboard and on the shed by the entrance. Please read them!

### THE PLOTHOLDERS' COMMITTEE

David Harnden, Chair, plot 152  
Bob Trevillion, Vice Chair, Sheds, plots 136b, 137  
Marguerite Pocock, Secretary, plots 55, 62b  
Gavin Collins, Treasurer, plot 163  
Jenny Bourne, Social Secretary, plots 27f, 28b  
Barbara Wood, Waiting List plots 182, 183, 184  
Ashley Catto, Manure Supplies, plots A, H  
Chris Pocock, Compost Toilet, plots 55, 62b  
Alan Buckingham, plot 185  
Angus Carswell, plot 198f  
Chris Nix, plot 12f  
Martin Scotton, plot 59  
Flora Souper, plot 130

### THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

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

### FIRST AID (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.

## WATCH OUT!

Several plottolders have had produce stolen this year – for example, bushes and trees stripped of all their fruit. In the latest incident, someone stole all the sweet potatoes being stored by a plottolder on covered shelves at the back of his plot.

Be aware that there is a thief about and that it may be risky to store your produce on your plot. Please remain alert and inform a committee member of any incident.

Remember that you shouldn't walk on paths between plots, unless they border your own plot or you have explicit permission from the other plottolder(s). The reason for this rule is to prevent the spread of plant and soil diseases, but in view of the recent thefts it would be as well to avoid any misunderstandings that could arise if someone is seen walking around other people's plots.

*Plottolders' Committee, January 2010*

## New Faces on the Committee

Welcome to the new volunteers to the committee, who have been persuaded to share their manifestos and their interests –

**Martin Scotton:** This is a difficult one, as suffering from clubroot makes me shy and retiring... but here goes: Aged 58, I have been toiling at the RPA since 1981, so perhaps it is about time I tried to make some small contribution to the running of the place. I was an Analytical Chemist for many years, before work gave me up, but breathing fresh allotment air certainly beats the acid fumes of the laboratory. My range of veg is conventional; I'm a bit OCD regarding Brussels Sprouts – it's so nice to be able to produce something in the middle of winter.

**Angus Carswell:** Obtained a half plot in spring 2009 just in time to plant some salad crops and use the great summer weather. The site was unattended for some time, so it was a 'little' challenge laid at the door of the man, rather than my wife! to double dig the plot and have it ready for a new season of cultivation. Will plant some fruit bushes and develop a mix of vegetable crops. I wanted to join the committee to assist them in running the site (which already works very well) and bring ideas to make plottolders' access and use of the site even easier, and also how to reduce the waiting list for new members.

**Alan Buckingham:** I have been a plottolder for almost 15 years, and am particularly interested in growing unusual and heritage crop varieties. Recent successes include rat's tail radishes, Mexican mouse melons, and achocha (superfood of the Incas!). I work as a writer and photographer. My most recent books include 'Allotment Month by Month' and 'Grow Vegetables'. My new book 'Grow Fruit' will be published in April.

**Flora Souper:** I suppose that having a name like Flora it was inevitable that I would love growing all kinds of plants. I try to grow all my plants organically (so not always successfully!) but really enjoy watching and encouraging wildlife to help me deal with the various pests. My reason for joining the committee is that I feel very strongly that I am very privileged in being able to have my allotment and when, last year our cafe and store shed were burnt down and sheds were broken into, very few people turned up to help. I therefore want to encourage more people to get involved and assist those who are committed to maintaining our wonderful allotments.

**Chris Nix:** As a new arrival to the Royal Paddocks I've found it to have a friendly and supportive atmosphere and a charming character. I know that this doesn't happen by accident and when there were vacancies on the committee I wanted to help the good work to continue. I am one of the new tenants on the former bramble patch. Since arriving I seem to have developed a shed building fixation and grown too many potatoes.

## SEED SWAP SUNDAY

Get those spare seeds at the ready! We will be having our first seed swap on Sunday 28th February from 11am to 1pm outside the café. The idea is simple – just put a small amount of seed into an envelope or we can provide envelopes at the event for a small cost. Label the envelope with the variety and sowing details. You will then be able to swap seeds with your allotment neighbours.

This simple and free event will hopefully mean the growing season will bring a rich variety of crops for us all.

## CAFÉ NEWS!

Everyone at the café Winter Warmer enjoyed the festive fare, including mulled wine – 'an old family recipe passed down through the generations', mince pies in competition and a chocolate torte – special thanks to Sue Croft who brought it the day before flying off on a family holiday! Sarah Colclough's christmas decorations looked beautiful, 'like a little snow lodge – it could have been in Aspen!' The café stayed open during the week of snow and was surprisingly busy – a perfect escape from the winter blues and cabin fever!

**Open Sundays, 11.00 to 13.00**



# Picture gallery

## Tarragon of Virtue

A wry romantic look at allotment life by Helen Nix

### Episode One

The rain lashed down that night, as Tarragon slipped into the packed meeting room of the small church hall, her hair dripping wet. She paused at the door, as she scanned the crowded room for a seat, and wrung out some of the rain water from her tumble of titian hair.

"Are you here for the Bramble Park allotment AGM?" said a gravelly male voice, softly. She found herself looking into a pair of toffee brown eyes, looking quizzically at her. She nodded, silently, taking in his gently tanned skin, quietly aged by many hours in the sun and the rain. "Your hair's wet. Do you need a towel?"

"You've got one?" she said, touched by his kindness. "I always keep a small one handy in my rucksack, just to be on the safe side. I'll dig it out for you. Before that, I need you to sign in. Are you an allotment holder? I haven't see you before."

"Yes, I got my e-mail through last week. I've got plot 384b. My name's Tarragon Virtue."

His brows shot up, but he said nothing for a moment as he passed her the agenda and minutes of the last AGM. As his tanned, calloused fingers touched her delicate pale ones, Tarragon felt a jolt of electricity pass between them she'd never have expected.

He smiled, looking deep into her eyes. "I'm Monty. There's a seat at the front. They are just coming out agenda item 17. I'll bring you the towel in a sec."

As she took her seat on the front row, the chairman spoke. "Now then, one of the trickier items of business this. As you know, it is virtually impossible to grow a tomato on this allotment because of the blight. Monty has been doing some work on this – and is going to present this item. Monty?"

Monty walked to the front table, dropping the towel on Tarragon's lap, winking at her as he did so. "Thanks Basil." He ran his hand through his long dark hair, before he started to speak. The audience shuffled in their seats, expectantly. "Tomato blight is a nasty disease, and it's airborne. It dies quite quickly when it hits the ground. So the key to this is picking a variety that is resilient, like Firline or Legend, and protecting them from the blight spores. You can do that by building a simple transparent tent roof construction with this kind of design." And he turned to a flipchart, and quickly sketched out a design which looked suspiciously like one of the more ambitious Grand Designs. As he did so, Tarragon took in his slight but athletic frame. Monty turned back to the audience, putting the flip chart marker down with a flourish. "So, that's my recommendation to the AGM. An organic response to the blight, dictated by how the blight itself operates. Any questions?"

There was a lot of excited muttering amongst the plottolders, and a lone hand went up into the air.

"Yes, miss. Could you give your name and plot number before you respond," asked the chair.

"Yes certainly. My name's Tarragon, plot 384b, and I don't agree with Monty. My grandad successfully reared generations of lush tomatoes in a blight plagued area. Yes he chose resilient varieties, but he didn't build all these plastic cloche things. He just regularly sprayed his plants and recommended dithane. I feel that it is right to use the best that modern technology has to offer against the blight. And that's the approach I'll be taking on my plot."

The room hushed. The chair drew breath, before turning to Monty. "Monty, would you like to respond?"

Monty nodded, and turned to Tarragon with grave authority. "Tarragon, of course you could do that, and I wouldn't judge you for it if you did. We all take our own path when we're gardening. But I for one choose to work with the earth than against it when I'm trying to grow things. I can only recommend that when you start with your plot, you'll choose to do the same."

The chair nodded. "Always difficult decisions to make, handling pests on your plot. Any other points to be made on this item? No? Well then, thanks to Monty for all his hard work on this.

Tarragon felt hot as her cheeks flushed red. "Who the heck does he think he is, to patronise me like that in front of all these people? I hate him!" she muttered furiously to herself. She looked up and saw Monty standing above her.

"I'm sorry, I should have introduced myself more fully when we met. I'm Monty Greenwood, head of the allotment organic sub-committee, and plottholder of 385b."

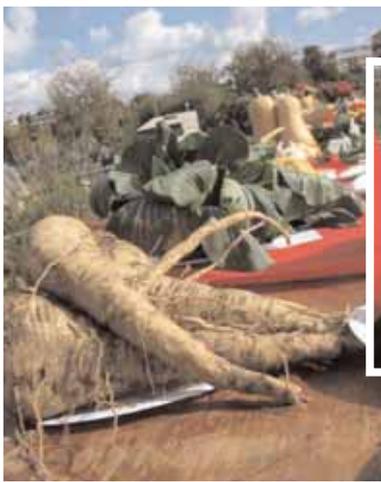
"385b?"

"Yes. I'm your neighbour on the allotment. Tell me, are you finished with my towel?"

To be continued...

**Autumn Social and Produce Show** Another day of sun for the Social and our first Produce Show – a high standard of entries including celeriac, kohlrabi, crimson popcorn, perfect apples, space gardens and veggie monsters meant the judges had a hard time! All the usual events were enjoyed: pumpkin competition, raffle, bbq, home produce stall, kids' crafts, drinks stall and café all went smoothly, thanks to the work of the Social Committee: Sue Croft, Joanie Fulton, Sarah Colclough, Kristina Collins, Ann Wingrove and all the committee members and plottolders who helped to make this such a successful event.

Photographs by Stanley Colclough and Jenny Bourne.



## Winter Pruning by Alan Buckingham

Everyone's a bit scared of pruning, aren't they? To most of us, it's a dark art – complex and mystifying. But in fact it's nowhere near as difficult as you think. Here are a few rules that should help.

### What to prune

Most fruit trees and bushes should be pruned in winter, when they are dormant. Apples, pears, gooseberries, redcurrants, blackcurrants, blueberries, blackberries, autumn-fruiting raspberries and grape vines are all best pruned between about November and February.

The exceptions are stone fruits such as plums, cherries, apricots, peaches, and nectarines. Don't prune them now. Instead, wait until spring or summer, when they are actively growing. That way, you'll reduce the risk of infections such as silver leaf and bacterial canker entering the trees via pruning cuts.

### How to prune

The basic principles of pruning are simple. At the start of their lives, all young fruit trees and bushes need training into shape. Thereafter, the aim of pruning is to keep them growing healthily and to stimulate them into producing plenty of fruit.

- Start with 'the three Ds'. Cut out any stems or branches that are **dead, damaged, or diseased**.
- Next, look for areas that are crowded and congested or where branches are touching or crossing. Thin those out so that air can circulate freely and so that sunlight can reach ripening fruit later in the year.
- Cut back any branches that are hanging too low or touching the ground. Gooseberries in particular tend to sprawl if left unpruned.
- Most apples and pears produce fruit on clusters of short little stubs called 'spurs'. The more there are the more fruit you're likely to get. So, don't prune them – unless they become so overcrowded that they need thinning.
- When pruning new shoots and stems, cut back to a healthy bud pointing in the direction you want the new growth to go, usually outwards from the tree or bush not into the centre. Make a sloping cut parallel with the bud so rainwater drains away from it.
- In the case of established gooseberry and redcurrant bushes, cut out up to a quarter of the oldest stems each winter. This will make way for new growth. And cut back sideshoots hard, to just a few buds, in order to generate new fruiting spurs.
- Prune blueberries and blackcurrants much more lightly. Remove just a few of the older stems if they no longer bear much fruit.
- Autumn-fruiting raspberries should be cut right down to the ground in February. New fruiting canes will appear in the spring. Summer-fruiting raspberries, blackberries, and hybrids such as tayberries and loganberries are slightly different. Cut out the canes that bore fruit last year, but keep the young canes that didn't. They're the ones that will bear fruit in the coming summer.
- Finally, whatever the state of your fruit trees or bushes, don't prune too much in one go. Although you're unlikely to kill a plant if you overdo it, you'll probably shock it into producing lots of new foliage and very little fruit. If you've got an old, neglected tree or bush that's become overgrown, prune it back into shape gradually, over two or even three years.



A good cut is sloping and parallel with the bud so that rainwater drains away from it. Aim to cut close but not too close.



A bad cut is at the wrong angle. It leaves an unnecessary stub and water drains towards the bud instead of away.



Cut back new shoots growing from the main stems of gooseberries and redcurrants to just 1–4 buds.



Use a pruning saw to remove large branches neatly and cleanly. Current thinking is against applying wound paint to the cut surface.



A torn, ragged cut like this one will heal poorly and risks infection getting into the wound.



This apple tree has a disease called bacterial canker which will spread if it's not removed. Cut out all affected branches and burn them.

### CURLY KALE with CREAMED HORSERADISH

A quick and easy method of cooking kale, and a sure-fire way of making it taste irresistible. Serves 2.

**Ingredients** 200g curly kale  
Knob of butter  
2 tbsp creamed horseradish

#### Method

1. Shred the kale into bite-sized pieces, removing any thick or tough stalks. Wash in a sink full of cold water.
2. Heat a large wok or pan over a medium-high heat. Add the kale, drained but still wet, cover and cook for a few minutes until tender. Don't let it stick or dry out.
3. Tip the kale into a colander to drain.
4. Melt the knob of butter in the wok or pan. Add back the kale and stir in the creamed horseradish. Serve as soon as it has warmed through.

**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](http://www.paddocks-allotments.org.uk)



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