

ROYAL PADDOCKS ALLOTMENTS



HAMPTON
WICK

ROYAL PADDOCKS ALLOTMENTS NEWSLETTER

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THE PLOTHOLDER

www.paddocks-allotments.org.uk

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THANKS

to David Harnden, who became Acting Chairman of the Plottolders' Committee in July '08 and was duly elected in November '08 to that post.

No one could have predicted that he would have had such an eventful year: first there was a fire in the stable buildings in February '09 and then at the end of the month, the skip lorry became stuck in the mud.

At all times, David showed patience, persistence and respect for all.

Thank you, David – now enjoy your plot!

*Marguerite Pocock
(Secretary to Plottolders' Committee)*

SEEDLING SALE

Our best sale yet – £268.60 made on the sale and £122.08 in the café – a grand total of £390.68!

VOLUNTEERS!

needed for work party days on the first Sunday of the month; also for the Seed Store Café – see page 2.

All Hands to the Pumps!



Keeping our water pumps working is an ongoing struggle. Most were installed about sixty years ago and we must accept the fact that they won't last forever. Already, some no longer work properly: they are hard to pump and don't hold their prime. Fitting a spare part such as a new leather washer sometimes solves the problem, but a few pumps are now beyond repair and need replacing.

Pump action

We plan to install three new pumps on site this year. What does this involve? First, the pumps and spares have to be shipped from the Czech Republic, since no-one in the UK sells them. Second, a length of steel pipe with a specially made point has to be sunk into the ground to a depth of anything from 12 to 20ft, until reaching a layer of gravel within the water table. We then have to clean out the sand collected in the pipe, attach the pump, and develop the well.

We are lucky to be so near the Thames, as water should be found almost anywhere on site. However, judging how deep to go and knowing when the water table has been reached is a specialist job. Although we have managed

through trial and error to install a few pumps, only three are working properly, one needs more attention, two have been removed, and one more needs to be taken out.

We have sought high and low for installers of hand pumps and found only one in the UK with the experience. He no longer installs the pumps himself but is willing to do the final job of finding the water if we sink the pipes 10–12ft ourselves. The fee is about £1,000 per day, which includes two people's labour and use of his equipment. Depending on the distance between the installations he should be able to do three pumps in a day.

Help us sink new pipes

Three new pipes need sinking ready for pumps to be installed. This part of the job is not difficult, but it's hard work. The more pairs of hands we have, the quicker and easier it is.

Please come and help us. Join one of the regular workdays on the first Sunday of each month.

If we don't get these new pumps installed and working now, we may face water shortages this summer.

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

News from your Committee

FREE WOOD CHIPS

There are free wood chips on plot 126 for people to use on their paths (plot 126 is where the manure is also delivered). Help yourselves – Turner Tree Care, who are providing the chips, can supply as much as we want. You will need several inches of chips for effective weed suppression.

Turner will not supply chips from obviously diseased trees, but cannot guarantee that every piece of wood is free from disease, so you use the chips at your own risk. However, Turner has supplied chips to three other allotments for a number of years and has never heard of any problems.

Do not use the chips as mulch on your beds until they are well composted, which can take three to six months or more. The reason is that as the wood breaks down, it removes nitrogen from the soil. However, you can add the chips to your compost if it is lacking woody material, as long as you allow the chips to break down fully before using the compost.

WELCOME TO NEW TENANTS

Hillary, plot 187f; Peter and Sarah, plot 78f; Claud, plot 127f; David and Jenny, plot 30; Dan, plot 146f; Ian, plot 174; Sonia, plot 174; Kathryn and Rosie, plot 62f; Matt, plot C; Susan, plot 88b

THE OFFICE Open every Sunday, 11am – 12pm.

THE PLOTHOLDERS' COMMITTEE

Bob Trevillion, Chair, plots 136b, 137
Chris Nix, Deputy Chair, plot 12f
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
Angus Carswell, Sheds, plot 198f
Ashley Catto, Manure supplies, plots A, H
Chris Pocock, Compost Toilet, plots 55, 62b
David Harnden, plot 152
Alan Buckingham, Website, plot 185
Martin Scotton, plot 59

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.

Compost Toilet by Chris Pocock

Our 'twin-vault' compost toilet was designed to have at least a two year cycle. That is, to use one vault for a year, change to the second vault for the next, then empty the first vault and reuse.

At the design stage, I had no idea of how much the toilet would be used. Then there seemed little enthusiasm from allotment holders to use such a primitive facility! Each vault had to be large enough to last for at least a year in order to give time for its contents to 'mature' and robust enough to

remain functional for at least two years. I did not relish the idea of having to do internal maintenance whilst it was in use! It has now been in use for over two years and is still not full although not through lack of use. Nevertheless I shall soon be closing down the left side and opening up the right. Please use this one as the sign says. Phase three will be to provide running (rain) water to the hand basin and maybe some internal decoration. Any suggestions, criticisms or questions are always welcome.



All-new website

Last month we launched a completely new, redesigned Royal Paddocks Allotment website. You'll find it at www.paddocks-allotments.org.uk or by simply googling 'royal paddocks'.



On the site, you'll find

- news and information about upcoming events
- newsletters to download
- site rules and regulations
- photographs taken by plottolders
- tips on what to do each month
- links to other useful websites

We're keen to make the site as useful and topical as

possible, so please tell us what you think, suggest any changes or improvements you'd like to see, and send us your photographs so that we can put them online.



Thanks to Mark Buckley (of DOWN-TO-EARTH Websites) and Alan Buckingham for putting the site together.

SEED STORE CAFÉ Sundays, 11.00 – 13.00

We'd like to thank Gaby, who has decided to step down from managing the café for the time being. She was the driving force behind keeping the café going after fire destroyed the building last year.

The café is now being run on a collective basis, with the regular volunteers taking responsibility for rota, supplies, gas, finances etc. However, we need more plottolders to join the rota, to serve in the café, bake cakes, or both. As the group of regular volunteers is quite small we have had to decide to close the cafe on 13 June as there is no one available. This is regrettable but unless we have more volunteers we have no choice. So please offer your time – a couple of hours serving drinks and cakes and an opportunity to socialise with fellow plottolders.

Please contact anne.wingrove1@btopenworld.com or have a chat with someone in the café, when it's open!

Jenny Bourne

Picture gallery

Seedling Sale, Sunday 9 May

A little bit cold, a little bit windy, but no rain! This year's Seedling Sale drew the crowds and the plants and seedlings flew off the tables – a wide variety including tried and tested tomato varieties, outdoor cucumbers, climbing French beans, Brussels sprouts, Welsh onions, aloe vera plants, 'Blue Ballet' and 'Uchiki Kuri' squashes and 'Black Tuscany' courgettes.

The long, cold spring meant that many of us were keen to buy plants to fill the holes left by the frost damage! The Seed Store café volunteers did a fantastic job of serving coffee, tea and delicious home made cakes to the long and patient queues forming in the shed. Many thanks to all who provided plants, manned (womaned!) the stalls and helped set up and clear away and thanks, as usual, to all the volunteers who give their time

and baking skills to keeping the café going –

new volunteers always welcome!



Hedging and Coppicing

One of the many attractive features of the Paddocks allotments is the old perimeter wall around three sides of the site. The fourth side, along the Avenue, was bounded by a wooden fence which became increasingly dilapidated. It was replaced by substantial secure metal railings. These, though quite attractive to look at, have two disadvantages, lack of privacy for the plottolders backing on to the fence, and the clear view for passers-by of the back ends of the plots.

In 2005 we decided to plant a traditional hedge of native species paralleling the metal fence. A double staggered row of bare-root young trees (whips) was planned. The hedge line is along the edge of the chestnuts, not too far under to be shaded but not far out to encroach on productive ground.

A small group prepared and planted the ground in three sections, starting at the Church Grove end, over the winters between 2005 and 2008. During the process we unearthed and disposed of large amounts of glass, plastic and other rubbish.



Altogether we planted around 1200 trees, all native species bearing seeds and nuts useful for birds such as finches, and flowers with nectar to support pollinating insects. If the hedge thickens up enough birds will be able to nest – blackbirds, which feed on insect pests, and snail-eating thrushes. The hedge is predominantly hawthorn, but also contains blackthorn, hazel, field maple, dog rose, guelder rose, buckthorn, crab apple, spindle, dogwood, rowan and wayfaring tree. Each tree cost around 50 pence, and many plottolders contributed to the cost of their section, as well as keeping a watchful eye on the plants.

Fortunately there was only one dry summer, 2007, when the section of new whips needed watering, so there were very few failures. The entire hedge is doing well now, and the first section at the St John's end is now four years old.

The hedge will need some maintenance, and ideally it should be laid when it is about 10 years old. Hedge-laying is a traditional method which thickens up the base of the hedge and makes it stockproof. Each vertical stem is almost cut through, leaving a small amount of intact bark. The stem is then bent almost horizontal and staked. New vertical growth then takes place along the whole length of the horizontal, in effect forming a living fence, or 'fedge'.

Another project begun in 2007/8 was the planting of a half plot at the south west corner, at the Cricket Club end of the Avenue boundary. Thirty-six young hazel trees were planted in 2007/8 for coppicing in the future to produce bean poles for sale. This can reduce the site's dependence on imported bamboo, and give us some income. Two years' growth produces a sturdy pole over 2 metres long, as some tenants, who already have a stool of hazel coppice on their plots, will know. Rotational coppicing, 8 trees at a time, will start in Jan 2011. *Susan and Andrew Saunders*

Summer Pest Watch by Alan Buckingham

By early summer most of your sowing and planting out should be done, and young crops should be growing strongly. But at the same time a new generation of young insects emerges, too. Some are beneficial – bees, ladybirds, hoverflies, and lacewings, for example. Others are less welcome. Here are a few you might be less than pleased to see.



Aphids

The scourge of every plotholder, there are scores of different species of blackfly, greenfly and other aphids. Many attack only one particular crop – broad beans or peas, for example. The insects feed on sap, stunting or distorting new growth, and spread viral diseases.

What to do Encourage natural predators such as ladybirds, lacewings and hoverflies. If necessary, spray with bifenthrin, insecticidal soap, or pyrethrum*.

Cabbage white butterfly

Adults lay eggs on the leaves of cabbages, Brussels sprouts, and other brassicas. When they hatch, caterpillars start feeding.

What to do Check for eggs and caterpillars, and squash or pick them off. Spray with bifenthrin or pyrethrum*. Use nets to keep off butterflies.



Asparagus beetle

Red, cream and white beetles emerge in May and start eating asparagus shoots and foliage. Grey grubs with black heads appear shortly afterwards and join in the feast. Badly infested plants may be completely stripped.

What to do Inspect regularly and remove beetles by hand. If necessary, spray with bifenthrin or pyrethrum*.

Gooseberry sawfly

The sawflies themselves are inconspicuous and harmless, but their caterpillar-like larvae have a powerful appetite. They start to hatch in May, begin eating at once, and can easily devour all the foliage from gooseberry and currant bushes.

What to do Check under leaves for larvae, especially deep in the heart of bushes, and remove by hand. If necessary, spray several times with pyrethrum*.



* NOTE **Pyrethrum** is an active component in pesticides such as Doff All-in-One Bug Spray and Vitax Py Spray Garden Insect Killer. **Bifenthrin**, a common ingredient in many popular pesticides, was banned on 30 May 2010 – although products containing it, such as Scotts Bug Clear and Rose Clear 3, may be used for another year, until May 2011.

Book Review

Allotment month by month

Alan Buckingham, DK

This book does what it says on the tin! **Allotment month by month** is a comprehensive and accessible guide for allotment plotholders, new or old, providing practical and sound advice on how to produce bumper crops of healthy veg and fruit right through the year.

Starting from the questions that beginners (and even established plotholders!) commonly ask – not about how but about when – ‘Is it time to plant my seed potatoes? When shall I sow runner beans? What’s the best time to prune my apple tree?’ advice is sound and realistic – grow a wide variety of different crops, in modest amounts rather than going overboard with one vegetable – who needs two whole rows of kohlrabi? Each month covers sowing and planting guides and charts, with a what to do and how to do for each vegetable and fruit, useful cultivation tips and a comprehensive pests and diseases section.

High quality photos illustrate the text – clear and easy to follow layout, headings, sub-sections contain a wealth of information, growing tips and advice on all things allotment.

This is one of the most useful allotment books I’ve come across, and I don’t say this because the author is one of our plotholders and a committee member! Alan acknowledges the advice and wisdom of a neighbouring fellow plotholder – we are fortunate to have such a pool of expertise and know-how on site.

Allotment month by month is a highly recommended ‘must-have’ – even the most experienced plotholder will enjoy going through the months to check out what’s going in when and to compare and contrast with her/his own efforts! *Jenny Bourne*



Keeping the cornfields happy and the farmer at work

NOW

Breaking the soil. Now
Don’t sit and wait for rain.
The sweltering fields are
thirsty.
Entice the mountain streams
in little runnels
Look. They bubble and sport
over the chattering stones.
Listen to the green blades
drinking.

AND THEN:

Up come the weeds –
wild oats and darnel,
star-thistle and burr –
great bully boys to dominate
the fields.
Tackle them with your
mattock.
Hack them down. Until at last
the shining corn is free.

AND THEN:

Down come the birds –
wild geese and saucy cranes –
no manners and no morals,
all beak and belly.

WHAT THEN?

– Shout them away.
Make such a hullabaloo,
they won’t come back again.
That’s what it’s like for the
farmer,
Keeping on and on.

WHY?

Who can say?
Perhaps the Father of all
Things
saw the soil on our boots
and feared we might grow
sluggish.
So he willed
to sharpen our wits with
troubles.

AND THIS IS TRUE:

It takes high art,
and skill and patient toil,
to break earth’s sleep
and wake the fields to
harvest.

Virgil, born 70BC. Freely
translated by M E Rose 1992



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



Jenny Bourne