

ROYAL PADDOCKS ALLOTMENTS



HAMPTON
WICK

ROYAL PADDOCKS ALLOTMENTS NEWSLETTER

No 35 Christmas 2010

THE PLOTHOLDER

www.paddocks-allotments.org.uk

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**COME
AND
ENJOY
THE**

**FESTIVE
FUN IN
THE
XMAS
CAFÉ!**

**SUNDAY,
19th
December
11am – 1pm**

There'll be lots of warming good cheer and festive treats – mulled wine, mince pies, home-made cakes and hot drinks – and a chance to buy the new RPA tea-towel, just for yourself or for that last-minute gift (see page 2).

Prize time – the 2010 AGM



Councillor Cardy presented the awards

This year's AGM took place on the evening of Thursday 11th November.

Bob Trevillion, Chairman of the Plottolders' Committee, took everyone through the events of the last twelve months. He reported that good progress had been made on installing new water pumps and on negotiations for the repair and renovation of the Seed Store, which burned down in 2009. On the down side, however, there had been several incidences of theft and vandalism on the site during the year – and Bob urged plottolders to be vigilant in keeping the gates shut and not admitting strangers.

Read Bob's full report on our website.

Our treasurer, Gavin Collins, reported that fundraising was well up on the previous year. This was primarily due to the Seedling Sale in May, the Autumn Social and Produce Show in September, and – best of all – the Seed Store Café, which raised an amazing £2,033.

Read Gavin's full report on our website.

Jenny Bourne, our Social Secretary, ran through the year's social calendar. Highlights were the Seedling Sale and the Autumn Social, both of which were well attended, good fun,



Patrick Kingsmill



Jon Tarlton



Len Cowking

and profitable. Many thanks to Jenny, her fellow members of the Social Committee (Sue Croft, Joan Fulton, Anne Wingrove, and Gaby Armstrong), and to all the café volunteers (Liz and Gray Rigge, Erica, Kristina, Janet, Helen, and Carol).

Read Jenny's full report on our website.

Councillor Jonathan Cardy announced the winners of this year's best plot competition. For the second year running, the cup winner was Peter Caughey (plot 40). **See below for details of the other prizewinners.**

Eleven members of the existing Plottolders' Committee were re-elected for the coming year. Ashley Catto decided to stand down. A new member, Scott Hillman, was elected. **See page 2 for a full list of members.**

The meeting finished with a lively debate about the pros and cons of allowing plottolders' cars on to the site on Sundays. The issue was not resolved at the meeting, and it was decided that – as the issue affects many more plottolders than were at the AGM – all plottolders should be polled. However, it was agreed that drivers who do bring their cars on to the site should exercise particular care: cars and excitable young children do not mix.

PRIZEWINNERS 2010

BEST FULL PLOT

Cup winner: Peter Caughey (plot 40)
2nd: Jon Tarlton (plot D)
3rd: Jo and David Box (plot 160)

BEST HALF PLOT

1st: Len Cowking (plot 15f)
2nd: Patrick and Susy Kingsmill (plot 191f)
3rd: Michael and Caroline Derosa (plot 156b)



Bob Trevillion



Gavin Collins



Marguerite Pocock,
Secretary



Jenny Bourne

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

News from your Committee

WELCOME TO NEW TENANTS

David and Janet, plot 182; Peter, plot 13f; Lotte and Wayne, plot 81; Helen, plot 127f; Rachel and Greg, plot 48b; Dinah, plot 119; Charlie, plot 120; Philip, plot 129; Katie, plot 147b; Sylvia, plot 202f; Laura and Bob, plot 88f; John and Geoff, plot 169f.

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
Chris Pocock, Compost Toilet, plots 55, 62b
David Harnden, plot 152
Alan Buckingham, Website, plot 185
Martin Scotton, plot 59
Scott Hillman, plot 36f

THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Councillors: Tania Mathias (Chair), Jonathan Cardy, Gareth Evans

Tenants: Bob Trevillion (Deputy Chair), Susan Saunders (Secretary), Gavin Collins, David Harnden, Chris Pocock

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.

Hazel Coppice from a phone interview with Andrew Saunders

Coppicing is a traditional custom used to produce a crop by the cutting of a tree down close to the base from which then grow multiple shoots. This is generally done to deciduous trees

– such a process is not tolerated by pines for instance. It was felt that it would be useful to produce bean and pea sticks and poles on our site for plottolders to use, rather than imported bamboo canes with their air-miles and expense.

Bamboo poles will last longer than coppice poles however. The area selected, in the far southeast corner was considered not suitable for cultivation as a plot. Thirty two hazel saplings were planted three years ago, all of which

have survived. This winter the first quarter of the hazels will be cut, followed each winter by a further quarter in rotation. Each time the hazels are coppiced they will regrow more vigorously. The first sticks and poles should be ready for plottolders to use in 2012, but not initially in large numbers.



The First Frost of the Winter



chillies, peppers, and dahlias – they were all done for. But good news for amateur photographers.



On the 10th October, Hampton Wick awoke to its first hard frost of the autumn. And what a spectacular one! It was a classic combination of a clear dawn sky, a low autumn sun, and the perfect white ice crystals of a hoar frost. Bad news for the last of our end-of-season squashes,



Clockwise from left: globe artichoke; marigolds; leeks; asparagus; allotment pump.

SEED STORE CAFÉ SUNDAYS, 11.00 – 13.00



Following the success of the sale of the eco-bags designed by Sue Croft our new venture is tea-towels, with a similar design by Sue, just in time for Christmas! These will be on sale at the café.

There will be a **Christmas Café** with mulled wine, mince pies and the usual delicious cakes on Sunday 19 December. Look forward to seeing some of you there!

If you can help in the café, please contact anne.wingrove1@btopenworld.com or have a chat with someone in the café, when it's open.

Jenny Bourne



The views expressed elsewhere in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the committee.

Picture gallery

The 2010 Autumn Social

by Jenny Bourne

Autumn Social was a great success! Home made produce flew off the stall, café and bbq did a roaring trade. Raffle tickets bought and great prizes won. All enjoyed Michael de Podesta's officiating skills at the pumpkin competition, although he may have been a bit over-optimistic with his hi-tech Ikea weighing equipment, designed for pumpkins up to 80kg – Ray's winner tipped the scales at 14.86kg!

A new category, by popular demand, was The Peoples' Pumpkin, this year won by Toby and Lara, plot 79. And, despite the difficult growing year, the quality and variety of entries in the Produce Show gave the judges a difficult job! Impressive squash, colourful chillies, succulent mixed veg, gorgeous floral displays and spectacular veggie

bugs and monsters! Congratulations to all entrants, young and old. The café volunteers were kept on their toes, serving a total of 16 cakes and non-stop drinks. We made over £390 and it was a great way to get together to celebrate our growing successes and to wind down our yearly toiling on our plots.

The Social was planned and organised by the Social Committee, this year comprising Sue Croft, Joan Fulton, Anne Wingrove, Gaby Armstrong and Jenny Bourne. It's a truly team effort,

along with the café volunteers and the committee members and plotholders who invest their hard

work, time and energy.

Thanks to all who helped on the day and to Anne Wingrove

and all the café volunteers – a real communal effort!



Episode Two

In our last episode, our heroine Tarragon met our hero Monty at the Bramble Park Allotment AGM, where they bickered publicly about organic/inorganic responses to tomato blight, even though Monty lent her a towel to dry her hair with when she was caught in the rain. She was horrified to discover that her new plot adjoined his. We rejoin our heroine a month later, in mid December.

It was a glorious winter's morning, and the sun shone through the conservatory windows, as Tarragon padded through to the kitchen to make a nice cup of coffee, her cat trailing through her ankles, asking for food. The necessary done, she sat herself down at the kitchen table, wrapped up in her favourite dressing gown to eat her toast and drink her coffee, her titian hair sparkling in the winter's light.

And then the phone rang, she sneezed and the coffee spilt down the soft terry towelling of her robe. Dabbing herself with a piece of kitchen towel, she grabbed her mobile, muttering quietly as she did so.

"Hello?"

"Hello. Is that Tarragon?"

Her brow furrowed. She hated sales calls. "Who is this?"

"It's Monty, Tarragon. From the Bramble Park Allotment Committee. Is now a good time to talk?"

"Not really, no."

His dark, husky tones paused for a moment.

"Thing is, I've got some news for you, I'm afraid. Bad news."

"What?"

"Well, it's your shed, Tarragon. It's been broken into."

"My shed? Grandad's shed?" her voice cracked slightly.

"Yes, I'm afraid so. I wanted to ring you first, so it wasn't quite such a shock. Look, do you want to pop down?"

"Yes. Yes of course. I'll pop down in half an hour."

"OK. I'll see you there."

And as she put the phone down, she burst into tears, and as she did so, the sun went behind the clouds, and the world went slightly grey.

Even if she hadn't had the call, she'd have known something was wrong as soon as she'd entered the allotment. A number of the sheds had broken windows, and plotholders were talking urgently to each other in hushed tones. As she approached her own plot, her hand went to her mouth. The window was broken through, and the door had been trashed. She took in the scene. Quite a lot had been taken. Her Italian leather gardening gloves, her kettle, and... tears sprang to her eyes, and her hands started to tremble.

"Tarragon?"

She jumped and turned around, to find herself looking full square into Monty's toffee brown eyes. She looked away at once, running her hands through her hair.

"Are you alright Tarragon?" She nodded quickly, not able to speak. He shook his head. "I know. It's awful", he said, his voice full of sympathy. "What's been taken?"

"Oh, you know, bits and pieces. Nothing that valuable really, it's just..." and her voice broke again, and she had to look upwards to stop the tears. "Stuff I can't really replace. My grandad's spade, the sickle he taught me to use... silly really. And I can't even make myself a cup of tea to get warm again..." And she burst into tears, unable to fight it any more.

He put his hand on her shoulder gently, and she caught her breath. "It's not silly at all. The whole thing makes my blood boil. But you have to make a list of what's gone for the police. Look, let's get you a cup of tea down the cafe, and I'll help you."

She nodded gratefully, and they set off together down the dirt path to the cafe, past the soft mounds of snow on either side. She shivered. "God, it's cold. I should have put my thicker coat on."

He paused, and she looked up at him, trying to read his face. He swallowed, and pulled the scarf from his throat, and gently wrapped it around her neck. She gasped, as he gently touched her arm before saying, "Let's get you into the warm." And he gently took her arm, and walked her to the cafe.

"Two teas please, Rowan," said Monty. Tarragon looked up in surprise.

"Rowan?" she said looking at the handsome man wearing a pinny behind the kettle.

"Tarragon?" Rowan asked, hardly able to believe his eyes. "I haven't seen you in years – not since I left school!"

"I know," she said, throwing her arms around him.

Monty looked at them in surprise. "How do you two know each other?"

"She was my girlfriend when I was in the upper sixth. We were the golden couple back then, weren't we, Taz? It's just so great to see you again. You'll have to come round to dinner – what are you doing tonight?"

And as they chatted and talked about when they would meet up, Monty swallowed hard, and quietly turned and walked back to his shed.

To be continued...

Soil Know-how by Alan Buckingham

We all appreciate how important our soil is. If it is fertile and well structured, then our plants stand a better chance of growing well, staying healthy, and producing good crops.

All soils consist of minute particles of weathered rock, mixed with water, air and organic matter from rotted-down remains of plants and animals. And all soils teem with microbes, invisible to the naked eye and busily converting the organic matter into water-soluble nutrients on which plants depend. But soils in fact differ widely. Some are light and sandy, others are heavy and clay-like. Some are acid, others are alkaline. And while some are rich in nutrients, others are thin and poor.

What sort of soil do we have?

The National Soil Resources Institute* describes Bushy Park and the Royal Paddocks as having 'freely draining, slightly acid, loamy soil'. Our own soil tests bear this out. Using a basic soil-testing kit from a garden centre, we have got pH readings of around 6.5–7.0 – which is on the borderline between slightly acid and neutral. The term 'loamy' means a mix of sand, silt, and clay-sized particles, which makes sense when you think that we're on the flood plain of the Thames. Loam soils are generally a good thing – they're not so heavy that they get waterlogged, and not so sandy that they dry out completely. However, our soil is not particularly fertile. The NSRI gives it a score of only 2 out of 5. So, it'll benefit from a bit of extra help.



How to feed your soil

There are two methods of ensuring your soil stays healthy, fertile and productive. The first is to add organic material in the form of compost or manure. The second is to use fertilizers – either organic or inorganic.

Composts and manures

Both composts and manures improve the structure of the soil as well as putting back valuable nutrients. They help break up compacted masses so that air can circulate and roots can grow deeply and spread widely. They improve drainage, too. Areas of heavy soil drain more freely, whereas sandy soils retain moisture for longer.

Dig or no-dig?

Opinions differ over whether it's better to dig in your compost and manure or simply spread it over the surface of your beds and let earthworms do the work. Pro-diggers claim that turning over the soil incorporates the organic material more quickly, aerates the soil, and exposes any over-wintering grubs and other pests to hungry birds.

Anti-diggers claim that it's better not to disturb the structure of the soil, that valuable moisture and nutrients are lost by too much digging, and that leaving manure as a surface mulch suppresses weeds. Whichever method you choose, give manure time to rot down before sowing or planting.

Green manures

Green manures are short-term crops grown not to harvest but to dig back into the soil. They're usually sown between spring and early autumn and are left in the ground either for just 2–3 months or right through the winter. Green manures suppress weeds by starving them of light and food, they put nutrients back into the soil (often by 'fixing' nitrogen), improve soil structure, and in winter protect the ground from the kind of extreme weather conditions that can cause the leaching of minerals. More about these in the Spring newsletter.

■ **Do any plotholders have experience of growing green manures on our site? Write in and let us know.**



Caliente Mustard

Fertilizers

These provide a more concentrated, quicker-acting source of nutrients than manures and composts. Organic fertilizers are derived entirely from plant or animal material. They include: bonemeal; dried blood; hoof and horn; fish meal; blood, fish and bonemeal; and seaweed extracts. Inorganic fertilizers are extracted from minerals or are produced using industrial-scale chemical processes. All fertilizers contain at least one of the three key elements that plants need from the soil: **nitrogen** (N, added in the form of nitrates and ammonium compounds); **phosphorus** (P, added in the form of phosphates); and **potassium** (K, added in the form of sulphate of potash).



Phacelia Tanacetifolia
– good as a green manure

Lime or no lime?

Our slightly acid soil is suitable for growing most fruit and vegetables. The exceptions are blueberries and brassicas. Blueberries need a very acid soil and are therefore best grown in containers or raised beds filled with a special soil mix. Brassicas (cabbages, cauliflowers, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, swedes, etc) will grow, but they're less prone to clubroot if the acidity of the soil is reduced. The way to do this is to add lime, which is alkaline. Sprinkle in some powdered limestone if you are digging during the winter or shortly before planting out seedlings. You can even drop some directly into the planting hole. Just don't add lime at the same time as manure: the two act chemically with one another.

Crop rotation

Rotating your crops is good for the soil as well as your harvest. It prevents the soil from becoming 'exhausted' and it reduces the risk of soil-borne pests, funguses and diseases building up. We will cover this topic more fully in the Spring newsletter.

*National Soil Resources Institute
<http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/>

- Click the Postcode button on the right hand side of the map. Enter KT1 4AL.
- Select the Identify button, and click on our area of the map to call up a local soil analysis.

Jenny Bourne



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