

# The Allotment

Newsletter of the Hampton Court Way Allotment Association April 2011

## SPRING INTO ACTION!

New season working party

Saturday 9th April

– kick off 10am

*Filling potholes are the priority – spare a few hours to spare your suspension.*

Hot drinks and bacon butties will be served

## View from the Shed

Not much of a view this spring, seems my planned witterings have been curtailed by various others. You may think this is a blessing – but I guarantee to bore you rigid in the summer edition.

March is the busiest but most exciting time of the year for us plotters. As the days lengthen and the air warms, first sowings start to show their heads and every morning brings new life and the prospect of a bountiful harvest.

For me sowing seeds and pricking out is the most relaxing experience. A Nice cup of tea, Radio on and my little dibber in hand – what better way to forget the stresses and strains of the working week.

Over the years I've always put sown seed trays in the coldframe. The even temperature inside promotes a slow but even germination and provides the perfect environment for hardening off plants once they have been pricked

out into cells.

I use this system for all tray or cell sown produce as well as annual and perennial flowers. The young plants are evenly lit and don't become leggy as they so often do when germinated on a windowsill.

A word of warning though. It's a good idea to open the coldframe lid a tad during warm days and this can have unexpected consequences.

Last year having gone to check on progress I found a scene of horticultural devastation. Mice had invaded the coldframe and in their efforts to find seeds the varmints had completely destroyed all my early season sowings.

They particularly like sweet peas and Sunflowers, but will dig up anything that may or may not offer a mousy snack.

So my advice is to put a sheet of glass or polycarb on top of the trays until they germinate.

■ Our secretary Sheena has mentioned in her AGM report below that there seems to be some confusion regarding the maintenance of dividing paths. There is no formal on-site boundary responsibility as there is with home garden fencelines, so path maintenance is generally agreed upon by neighbouring plot holders.

For example if I strim one border I will usually strim the other, if my neighbour has not already done so.

He does the same with each of his borders as does his neighbour, and so on.

I know this is a difficult if you don't have the machinery or if it is too much work, but hey, we're a friendly bunch aren't we? Offering to give a helping hand or lend a mower or strimmer shouldn't be a problem. – after all it's for the benefit of all our plots and the site as a whole.

*All the best – Paul*

## 2011 Annual General Meeting

Forty members and guests attended the Annual General Meeting of HCWAA on Tuesday 25th January 2011. Julie Smith our Chairman, welcomed everyone to the meeting. She thanked Fiona Muldoon, who moved away from the area during the year, for all her hard work as Site Manager. We had all much appreciated the way in which Fiona monitored the site daily with her trusty dog Toby at her side. Julie also expressed her thanks to Eric for once again taking over as Acting Site manager until Jill McDermott officially took over the position at the beginning of 2011.

Julie reported that Riverhouse Arts and Elmbridge Borough Council have announced that they will be holding a photographic competition with "Life on the Allotments" as its theme. They would like permission for entrants

to the competition to take photos on our allotment site. If anyone objects to this would they please let Julie know.

The competition is open to all so why not have a go – you can send up to 3 photos and an entry form is available from organiser Helen Cundy who can be contacted at: 800years@gmail.com. The closing date is in August.

The Plant Swap shop was a great success last year and Julie intends to organise one later this year. The date is to be notified soon.

Tom Appleton, our Treasurer reported that for the second year running our expenditure had exceeded our income. This was due mainly to the very large increase in our water bill. We had managed to keep our rents and membership fees unchanged for at least 15 years but the time had come to make an increase. To be safe we needed to raise our income by about

£500. We could achieve this by raising the rent of a full plot by £2 (to £25 and £15) and the membership fee by £2 (to £5). This would be the first time we have needed to implement an increase in rentals or membership fees. Tom, therefore proposed that the rents be increased to £25 and £15 (concessionary rate) for a full size plot (halved for a half plot), and that the membership fee be raised to £5 in January 2012.

The motion was carried unanimously.

Eric Leigh, Acting Site Manager until Dec 2011, thanked Fiona Muldoon for her active site management until she moved away from the area. He said that it was a hard act to follow, which he had to attempt for the last few months of 2010, at the same time introducing Jill McDermott to some aspects of the role she had expressed a willingness to accept in 2011. Jill has since been co-opted to the Committee and



elected Site Manager from 1st January 2011.

The activity days in January March and October saw major work on the Hampton Court Way boundary hedge from the Hampton Court Gate end and the usual hole filling exercises. Eric thanked all those who helped on the Activity days. He added that it would be helpful in the future if plot holders along the Hampton Court Way boundary kept their own hedges to a standard height of two metres

Eric finished by presenting Jill with her "cross of office" the key to the water supply, and wishing her all the best in her new role as Site Manager.

Piotr Hennig, appointed as Lettings Manager during the past year, thanked the Committee for their support. He has managed to identify several plots which could be divided in half. Six of these half plots have now been let and the waiting list has been reduced.

Piotr's position as Lettings Manager was confirmed by those present at the meeting and the Chairman, Officers and Committee were re-elected for 2011/2012.

Julie thanked Paul Field for his work while as a member of the committee. We are all pleased that he will continue to produce the Newsletter although he is no longer on the committee.

Paul asked members to email him if they had any specific items they wished to be included in the newsletter.

## From the site manager

Hello fellow farmers, I hope you have all managed to grab enough time to start getting your plots ready for potatoes, onions, broad beans, etc. With a bit of luck it should be getting warmer and sunnier over the next few weeks, not quite t-shirt weather but anything is better than cold grey skies.

You may have noticed that we have at long last managed to secure a steady supply of manure; this is now available at both ends of the site so feel free to help yourselves. We also have an abundance of leaves available to keep you entertained, sadly just at the roundabout end at the moment but there are plans to change this once the woodchip has gone from the beekeepers car park.

On a recent site inspection it was noted that quite a few plots are still failing to display a number. I don't want to nag but it would really make the committee's job so much easier not to have to keep referring to the site plan every few steps! It is also difficult to identify the boundaries on several plots so may I give you all a gentle reminder to maintain the paths properly; it should be possible to walk the length of each plot without having to climb over obstacles or dodge massive ruts.

There are a few safety issues that I need to urgently bring to your attention: A small dog was running free on site at the weekend and was close to being run over on at least two occasions, this is a serious hazard and must

## Visit the depot and stock up for spring

For those of you that are new members, and as a reminder to you all, membership of The Hampton Court Way Allotment Association carries with it Associate membership of the Esher Molesey Garden Society. You will get their Newsletters from time to time.

You also have the right to use their Trading Depot which is situated on the Beauchamp Road Allotment Site whose entrance is between No's 104 and 106 Beauchamp Road.

It is open EVERY Sunday between 9.00.a.m. and 11.00.a.m. EXCEPT for August 28th and four Sundays around Christmas (18th December – 8th January). It is also open on Wednesday evenings from 7.00.p.m. – 8.00.p.m on all Wednesdays during April, May, June and July. Some stock is also available at most Monday evening lectures.

The Depot stocks a good range of composts, fertilisers, insecticides, fungicides, weed and moss killers, and other anti-pest devices. It also has a good range of gardening tools, canes, stakes, pots, saucers, seed trays, watering cans, hoses, and other gardening aids.

If you want to garden, preserve the wood of your shed or fence, clean your paths or patio, there will be something to help you. If you cannot find what you want please ask and, if possible it will be ordered in.

Any Other Business – The following suggestions and comments were made by members:

- "Potato swap" in mid to late March. It was agreed that this was a good idea.
- A visit to the Chilli Festival held at West Dean, Sussex in August. If enough members were interested a coach trip could be arranged.
- People should stay on their plots while watering. Tom said that members should turn off any unattended hoses.
- Committee Members telephone numbers should be displayed in the Newsletter as well as their email addresses.
- A member kindly offered horse manure, to be collected from her stables.
- Concern was expressed about the poor water pressure in the south east corner of the site. Unfortunately there is nothing that can be done about this.
- The owners of the building site on the corner of Embercourt Road appear to have re-applied for planning permission, possibly for flats rather than houses.
- A member asked if there was a rule regard-

ing the maintenance of shared pathways between plots. Tom explained that as the responsibility is shared between plot holders people should seek agreement with their neighbours. It was suggested that the Committee could devise some recommendations concerning the paths and it was agreed we would consider this. If there was a particular problem members should inform Jill as site manager.

After the meeting John Negus gave a most interesting and enjoyable talk entitled "Home Grown's Best" The enthusiastic audience responded to his interactive style of delivery by adding their own knowledgeable contributions and also joining in a quick fire quiz at the end of the talk.

As usual a most welcome refreshment buffet was provided, organised by Marie Mullard, with help from Ceinwen Appleton, Noelle Leigh and other members.

**See you at the working party – Sheena**

not continue. If you are bringing a dog on-site please ensure that it remains with you at all times and is – if necessary – properly restrained. There are numerous children riding their bikes around the site and whilst this is not a major issue at the moment it is an accident waiting to happen, particularly when so many motorists are still driving too fast and the road is full of potholes.'

I am hoping to connect the water supply on Saturday, 2nd April, in readiness for the working party the following weekend – no doubt we will need gallons of tea and maybe a bacon buttie to keep us going that day! The roadway is in a dreadful state following all the inclement weather and it would be really appreciated if everyone would do their bit to fill a hole or two. This is a massive job to complete in just one day but if we all lend a hand, barrowing scalplings or spreading them out, it shouldn't be too arduous a task. Even just an hour of your time will reduce the burden so please don't be shy; Together Everyone Achieves More – 'TEAM' work is the key!

Thanks to Elmbridge Borough Council there should be a rubbish skip available for all our broken or unwanted non-biodegradable items, if everything goes according to plan this should be delivered on Friday 8th April and removed on Monday 11th.

**Happy cultivating everyone, let's hope it is a bright and bountiful year. – Jill**

## Who to contact

### CHAIRMAN

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