

The Allotment



Spring into action!

Activity Day – Saturday March 15th 2008 10.30am onwards

This is the day when all plot holders can contribute a few hours to spring clean the site; filling potholes, putting non-biodegradable rubbish that won't go in

wheelie bins into the skip provided and sorting fences etc around the site. The more we can do ourselves the less we have to pay and the lower our rents!

View from the Shed

For me March truly heralds the new growing season. Beds are ready, potatoes are chitting, seeds have been bought, planting plan is decided and with daylight hours increasing it's time to get this years crop started – after all the preparation it's good to see some green shoots.

When I first took on my plot I stuck rigidly to the sowing and planting schedules suggested by publications on the subject, which, in general, has stood me in good stead. However I've found that with certain plants I like to advance them a bit. If you are growing greenhouse plants such as peppers, aubergines, melons, and cucumbers they can be sown now on a windowsill and then transferred to the cool greenhouse or coldframe. Growth will slow down, but they'll form strong roots and will soon romp away when temperatures rise and you can take advantage of a longer ripening period.

Mid-month I will start to sow beetroot, parsnips, and turnips in modules in the coldframe. These will be ready to plant out in April/May and should provide strong plants for an early crop.

Another important job is to prepare a seed bed for brassicas. Choose a sheltered site and if the soil is not too wet rake the surface over to a fine tilth

ready for sowing. I always try to protect the bed from pigeons, who just love baby brassicas. Fine netting is good, and string criss-crossed above is very effective. Successional sowings will provide all the young plants needed to transfer into the main beds.

Many thanks Eric

After 10 years in the position, Eric Leigh our site manager stepped down from the post at the AGM in January.

During that time Eric was always on hand to organise deliveries, sort out plumbing and liaise with police on security matters – our site is a testament to his hard work and diligence – something from which we have all benefited.

In recognition Eric has been honoured as Life president of the Association and I'm sure, that, along with the Committee, all members will wish him a long, relaxing and happy time on his plot.

Welcome Fiona

As new elected site manager, Fiona rightly says that Eric will be a hard act to follow. However with her undoubted enthusiasm, personality and management skills I'm sure she will do a fantastic job. We bid her welcome and good luck!

Where there's smoke...

Just a reminder to anyone considering a bonfire to ensure that they stick to a few simple rules. If possible make sure the prevailing wind does not blow thick smoke over Hampton Court way or onto neighbouring properties. Avoid too much damp material and do not burn non-organic matter as this may produce toxic fumes.

Esher Molesey Garden Society

Some of you who have only just joined us and some of you older members (in length of membership, not age!) may not know what this Society is and how we are connected to it.

The Hampton Court Allotment Association is affiliated to the E.M.G.S. This means that all our members are associate members of the E.M.G.S. This means that you can all use the trading depot on the Beauchamp Road allotment site (entrance between 104 & 106 Beauchamp Road, East Molesey).

The Depot is open on Sunday Mornings between 9.00 and 11.00hrs. It is also open on some Spring and Summer Wednesday evenings - full details are in the E.M.G.S. Newsletter which you also get as a benefit of

Continued over

membership.

The depot stocks most of the seeds, fertilisers etc. that you could use on your plot at prices that are considerably less than most garden centres. You are also able to enter classes in the Flower show which is held each year - this year on Saturday 16th August - so start planning to grow the best potato or dahlia now.

Full details will again be sent to you in a newsletter nearer the time.

The society also arranges a series of talks on gardening and other matters of interest. These are held on Monday evenings at St Nicholas Church Hall in Thames Ditton, usually on the first Monday in each month. The next talk is however on Monday 31st March when

the speaker will tell us how to grow vegetables in pots.

For us associate members there is a £1 entry fee, but for £3 you can join the Society and get all the talks for free - again see their newsletter for details. If you need any more information contact our treasurer, Tom Appleton, he is also their trading Secretary!!

From the site manager

Hi to all new plot holders and members, I have taken over as site manager from Eric and hope I can be half as good as he was - it will be a hard act to follow.

My name is Fiona Muldoon and can be found on plot 29.

The weather so far has been kind and the plots are all beginning to take shape in preparation for the coming growing season.

New faces are appearing and I hope everyone is as helpful and friendly to them, as I experienced.

We will be having our spring activity/ working day on March the 15th and we hope as many people as possible will be their to help. A skip will be on site for all the non-biodegradable rubbish only.

We will need the potholes filled the paths and woodchip piles sprayed, general clearing up checking fence boundaries etc. Hope to see you all there from about 10.30am.

I would like to point out a few things that

will help the forthcoming year run more smoothly.

Please can all plots be clearly numbered, and can all plot holders please park off the road and on their own plot.

It is a good idea to also mark all tools and compost bins including the lids with your plot number and postcode.

Tools can be marked with an ultraviolet pen this makes it easy for police to identify the owner if items are stolen then recovered.

The water will be re-attached on the 1st of April - remember it is metered so we pay for it, not that we have needed it so far this year!

We have had problems with vandals and theft - if people could keep their eyes open and ask strangers wandering around "If they need help" or "why are they here" we might be able to keep the vegetable stealers at bay. If you see anything suspicious you can email me on fmuldoon@ntlworld.com.

If you have the misfortune of anything stolen or damaged we will need a police report number which you can get online. This will help keep the pressure up and keep the patrols coming round.

I hope this a very successful growing year for everyone and I hope to see you all over the coming months.

Regards
Fiona

March Diary

Veg

- Prepare seedbeds for direct sowing.
- Prepare runner bean trenches.
- Feed winter lettuces.
- Hoe out weeds regularly.
- Check for pests and diseases.

Fruit

- Complete planting of bare rooted trees and bushes.
- Protect blossom with fleece if frost is forecast.
- Water well if dry.
- Tie blackberry and stems to supporting wires.
- Apply a feed of sulphate of potash and mulch over with compost or manure

Sown undercover

Move early sown plants into cold frame to harden off

Direct sow

Lettuce
Endive
Rocket
Spring onions
Broad beans
Peas
Spinach
Cabbage
Turnips
Beetroot
Parsnips

Plant Out

Early Potatoes
Onion sets
Asparagus crowns

Who to contact

CHAIRMAN

Ian Billett
ian.billett@ntlworld.com

TREASURER

Tom Appleton
tomcien@aol.com

SECRETARY

Basil Rainbow
0208 3988471

SITE MANAGER

Fiona Muldoon
fmuldoon@ntlworld.com

MEMBERSHIP/ LETTINGS

John Morgan
johnmorgan42@aol.com

COMMITTEE

Marie Mullard
mgmullard@hotmail.co.uk

Drostran Stileman
stileman63@aol.com

TRUSTEES

Sue Boustead
Sue.boustead@btopenworld.com

Marie Mullard
mgmullard@hotmail.co.uk

NEWSLETTER

Paul Field
paul-edenmedia@btconnect.com