

The Allotment



Newsletter of the Hampton Court Way Allotment Association

October 2008

Autumn Working Party

Saturday October 11th 2008 10.30 am

Please try and spare a few hours to help tidy the site before winter sets in.

We'll have a skip on-site, so save a trip to the dump and get rid of all your non-biodegradable rubbish

View from the Shed

The good...

Last month somebody asked me 'what I'd done with summer?' After explaining that I'd looked everywhere – even down the back of the sofa – and that higher forces were probably more responsible, I nodded and agreed that barbecue opportunities had been few and far between.

The Met Office have described this summer as 'typically English' – with average temperatures and Atlantic fronts bringing in a regular supply of rain. This may be bad for the sausage burners, but for us growers it has resulted in some bumper crops.

By all accounts Cabbage, Cauliflower and Broccoli have been exceptional. Like most of the brassica family, they prefer cooler temperatures and a slow growing period, uninterrupted by extremes.

The real star performers have been potatoes and fruit.

I've picked so many fat raspberries

that I even considered dusting off the jam pan.

A couple of years ago, on the basis that one should try anything once, and having more gooseberries than a single person could eat in a year I decided to go into the preserve business. Unfortunately the resulting brown sludge that eventually found its way into the carefully labelled jars, has, I'm sure, stayed at the back of everyone's fridge who was too polite to chuck it – think it's best that the pan stays where it is.

As for our staple veg, I've heard reports that a two kilo bag of seed potatoes has yielded a two and a half hundredweight crop. Spuds love a lot of water and this year's almost constant supply of rain has resulted in loads of big fat tubers.

The bad...

A less favourable result of our wet summer has been the numbers of slugs and snails, there have been

legions of the varmints. I'm sure that they do have a role in the great scheme of things, but for the life of me I can't figure out what it is. To the disgust of some fellow gardeners I do use pellets, concluding long ago that for me they are the only effective way to protect my carefully nurtured plants. Someone recently suggested I might like to try coffee grounds as an alternative, which apparently, can deter the blighters. Sounds good if you consume coffee on an industrial scale, or are very friendly with the manager of Starbucks, but not really practical in an allotment situation.

So, unless some boffin breeds a weed-eating slug I'll stick to my little blue friends.

...and the ugly

A week after the epic that was The Hampton Court Flower Show, I girded my loins and headed off to check the state of the plot. I knew it would

Continued over

■ The Esher Molesey Garden Society are taking orders for pea sticks and bean poles for next year. If you want to order any, you need to get to their trading depot in Beauchamp Road between 9.00 and 11.00 on a Sunday before mid December, or ring Tom Appleton on 0208 398 1013. Peasticks are £5 for a bundle of 20 and 7' 6" bean poles are £6 for a bundle of 9.

be bad – and it was. Surveying the weed strewn scene before me I was reminded of the feeling on first taking tenure of plot 13 – a great feeling of trepidation but mixed with an huge sense of excitement at the prospect of what could lay ahead.

I imagine that many of our new plot-holders have experienced the same feeling. Yes, there is a lot of hard work involved, planning, clear-

ing, cultivating and building, but when you stand there on a sunny July afternoon with a glass of something, surrounded by the fruits of your labours believe me it's well worth it.

Two months on, beds are cleared and over the winter I'll attack the back. There will be problems next year as lots of the weeds set seed before I could lift them – 'one year

seeds, seven year weeds' is the old saying. However, most will be annuals and hardy annuals, which can be dug in as they emerge early in the season when the beds are prepared.

So, with guilt assuaged and the old place nearly back to normal it's time to peruse the seed catalogues and look forward to the next growing year.

Regards – Paul

From the site manager

I hope you will all be around on the 11th of October as we will need lots of people with spades!

The main plan of action is to tidy up the woodchip pile at the top of the site, section off an area for manure and clear the path leading back to the electric sub station. The weeds were sprayed earlier on so we should see what we are doing.

Other jobs include:

- Pot hole filling
- Tree pruning.
- Checking and repairing the boundary fences along the roadside.
- Placing non-biodegradable rubbish in the skip.
- General tidying.

Kick off will be at 10.30 am.

I'd like to thank everyone who helped out at the last working party, and hope to see you again on the 11th and also welcome some new faces.

Again may I request that all plots are numbered clearly, and tools, compost bins, lids etc marked with your plot number and the postcode.

NO PLOT NUMBER NO DELIVERY. If plots are not numbered visibly then woodchip etc cannot, and will not, be delivered.

Can I also point out that the woodchip is free and we cannot guarantee the quality or a delivery

timescale.

Please keep up the good work watching for strangers who may be looking for their dinner.

We have had some fruit and veg stolen from a number of plots, but thankfully not the vandalism and tool theft of last year.

So thank you for approaching strangers and asking why they are on site.

There is still a large waiting list for plots, and there are quite a few plots that have not been worked for some time.

The site is inspected every three months and holders of un-worked plots will be contacted to enquire of their intent. We are now working on the basis that, plots not having been cultivated for six months, will be refused renewal in the new year. This may sound harsh but there are many people who would love a plot and we feel it is for the benefit of the site as a whole.

There are however, often very good reasons for the plot holder's absence. Please tell us if you would like help, or feel that a half-plot would be more manageable.

Lettings manager John has been very busy this year. Nearly all plots are let, and many have already been cleared – overall the site is looking

great.

Again, I would like to thank everyone who has helped in the smooth running of the site and look forward to seeing you all on the 11th of October.

See you soon – Fiona

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-uk.com

A big thank you from Eric

A big thank you to all those who turned out to deal with the rather hastily organised manure delivery especially Shaun, who was doing a favour for a plot holder who couldn't come himself, and whose plot was at the opposite corner of the site to the point of unloading. The 'Shaun Skip' will be for ever remembered and was adopted the following day by Bryn who was only supposed to be helping George McCrone with his barrow full! A very exciting and strenuous three days. Thank you again.