

Henley Allotments Association Newsletter

www.henleyallotments.org

April/May 2009

Chairman's Tips

'Life is like a plum pudding' said my teacher, 'you only get out of it what you put into it.' Allotment gardening is much the same. I have written at length about the importance of maintaining and improving soil fertility: you can only grow good crops if your soil is in good condition.

I hope that the following 3 tips will help you grow better crops and enable you to use your limited time more effectively.

1. Don't walk directly on dug ground, use a plank which spreads your weight and prevents soil compaction and the resulting loss of soil fertility.
2. Try to keep your grass paths cut, which reduces weed growth, such as couch grass, invading your allotment from the path.
3. Use a hoe before you can see the weeds, when they are still just small seedlings. Weeds compete with your crops for soil nutrients and moisture. Hoeing also helps maintain moisture in the soil by closing cracks which lose water quickly.

I hope these 3 tips will help you have a productive season on your allotment.

Good gardening. Andrew Hawkins

General Update

Manure for plot holders

Unfortunately we have NOT been able to get the manure we wanted for the allotments. The frost and snow in January/February spoiled the manure we were due to get, and, despite promises that more would be forthcoming, we have failed to get a further amount. Apologies to all of you who have been waiting for it to arrive - we will endeavour to do better next year.

Site waste disposal

A number of people have asked where they can dispose of waste they have collected/inherited from their allotment.

Green waste can be composted. Most green waste can go on the compost heap as soon as it is dug up, but the more pernicious weeds (e.g. couch grass) need to be dried off until they have died before adding to the compost heap.

Non-green waste can be taken off the site and disposed of at various tips. There are 3 tips nearby: A) the Saturday morning collection at Henley Station Car Park, which takes waste(but NOT Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE), paint, hazardous waste and garden waste.) from 8am to 12 noon. Please note that sometimes the vehicle gets full before 12 noon, and that this service is due to finish in June 2009, (but may be extended until later on in the year). B) Maidenhead Recycling Centre, Stafferton Way, SL6 1AY. Open 08.00-20.00 April to September.

C) Smallmead Waste Management Facility, Island Road, Reading, near Madejski Stadium. Open 08.00-20.00 April to September.

PLEASE NOTE that Oakley Wood refuse tip (near Wallingford) is currently closed for 3 months for refurbishment, and will reopen to coincide with the new refuse collection service in Oxfordshire in June 2009.

A trailer is available to ALL allotment holders to use. Please ring Doug Richards on 01491-573046 if you wish to borrow it.

WE WILL ALSO BE REPEATING THE COMPOSTER TRIAL AT WATERMANS ON SATURDAY 25TH APRIL FROM 11AM TO 1PM. The composter will take ALL green waste. Tenants from Greencroft are invited to bring along their green waste too.

For smaller amounts of rubbish, a plastic carrier bag, filled on a weekly basis, can always be taken home to add to your own rubbish bin.

The other alternative is to burn your rubbish. If you decide to do this, PLEASE remember the Good Bonfire Guidelines, which are attached to tenants' contracts. The main points to remember are that A) fires must NEVER be left unattended, and must be doused with water before leaving the site, B) material should be dry before burning to avoid excessive smoke, and C) avoid burning fires when it is windy/when neighbours might wish to enjoy their gardens. Please note that there have already been a couple of bonfires at Greencroft this season that have been left to smoulder and have subsequently involved Site Manager intervention. This is not acceptable.

Allotment News

Waiting lists

Both Watermans and Greencroft have waiting lists for plots, with the Watermans list standing at 9, and Greencroft at 5. Prospective tenants are keen to get an allotment before the season proper starts, and there are still a few plots at both sites that have not been touched this season. PLEASE, if any tenant is finding that their plot is getting too much for them, can they contact their site manager to get help. Site managers can organise someone to help you with your plot for this season (until September 2009), or a 10 pole plot can be halved into two 5 pole plots. This solution has worked well in the past couple of month with people who are struggling. PLEASE NOTE that all plot holders will be under pressure this season to cultivate their plots: we are no longer able to allow unattended plots to deteriorate. Unkempt plots cause tension with waiting tenants, and site managers have a lot of difficulty explaining why overgrown plots are not available to new tenants to rent.

Watermans News – Site Manager Doug Richards 01491-573046

There has been a lot of activity on Watermans in the past few weeks on the left hand side of the site (where the new fence has recently been erected). Hedges have been planted, as have a couple of fruit trees and bushes. We are looking to make this area a haven for wildlife, and so if any tenants have any teasel, honeysuckle, buddleias etc that they do not need/want, please could they bring them to the site and agree with Doug where they can be planted. We are also looking to have a small picnic area here, and even a sandpit for children to play in. If anybody has an old sandpit (with a cover) they would be willing to donate to the site, please contact Doug.

Care whilst exiting the site

Doug nearly had a serious accident whilst leaving the site last week at dusk. A small, low sports car, without its lights on, was coming along Reading Road, and was hidden by the vegetation now rapidly growing near the tree stumps. Doug could not see the car and exited, nearly causing a very serious accident. Please be aware that, although the vision is much improved when exiting, low vehicles CANNOT be seen.

PLEASE continue to take care when exiting the site. Meanwhile we will ask the Council to cut back the new growth as soon as possible.

Greencroft News – Site Manager Liz Cope

The pumps have been stored over winter by Pete Herbert, and therefore should all be in working order. Pete has started to put the pumps back, and by the time tenants read this newsletter, all pumps should be installed and working properly. PLEASE can you let Pete know (01491-628632) if there are any pumps that are NOT working.

Hopefully we will not have the problems we had last year, thanks to Pete's efforts.

Cricket Club Toilet facilities

PLEASE NOTE that all Greencroft tenants are allowed to use the toilet facilities in the Cricket Club Pavilion. Access can be made by going round the back of the Pavilion and walking up the ramp. The toilet is the disabled toilet at the far end. No key is needed. The toilet will be permanently open until the Autumn, when the water in the pavilion will be switched off.

Anderson's Almanac

Further tips from Pete Anderson.

March (A bit late for this season – sorry!) Around the middle of the month, plant first early potatoes, second earlies being planted at the end of the month. The seed bed may be sown around the middle of the month if conditions permit. This includes cabbage, sprouts, broccoli, leeks. Sow in their final growing positions peas, broad beans, onions, radish, parsley, parsnips, spinach, swedes, turnips, beetroots, carrots. Carrots will need protecting from carrot root fly by either a tall barrier around them, or by covering with a mesh tunnel. Both need leaving in position until autumn. In a greenhouse, sow celery, and African marigolds for companion planting with brassicas to reduce whitefly in summer. Cut down autumn-fruiting raspberries when new growth appears.

April Plant maincrop potatoes, bearing in mind that they are not frost hardy and will benefit from being protected from frost when they have sprouted above ground. Any delayed sowings should be made now, e.g. parsnips, which require a ground temperature of 9 degrees before they will germinate. Keep the seed bed weed free. In the greenhouse, around the middle of the month, sow marrow, courgettes, cucumbers for outdoors and outdoor tomatoes, but in all cases check seed packet notes. Prick out the African marigolds into trays, also the celery. Runner beans and dwarf beans may be sown in pots for planting out later after frosts have finished. Sweetcorn can be sown in pots for planting out. Rhubarb may be ready.

May Potatoes will need earthing up when about 9-12 inches tall. Pea support should be put in place. About the middle of the month, direct sowing of runner beans, French beans, and sweetcorn can be made. Successional sowing of peas, beetroot, lettuce and spinach can be made. Keep checking the seed bed, and when sufficiently advanced, plants may be put in their final position. Check strawberries and remove any runners,

and put straw or matting in place to keep the fruit off the ground. Net when the fruit has set. Thin out parsnips.

Henley in Bloom – Gardening Buddies

We are looking to work more closely with Henley in Bloom this year. The Gardening Buddies group meets regularly and tidies up various green areas in the town. Their next meeting date is Saturday April 18th, 10am at Reading Road/Noble Road, where they will be moving some of the daffodils that have grown in the wrong place. All helpers are welcome: all you need are some tools (fork, spade, secateurs etc), a pair of gloves and about 2 hours spare time. May meeting dates are Thursday 7th, 21st and 28th May – for details please phone Judith Smith on 01491-630077 or visit www.henleytowncouncil.gov.uk

Henley Litter Blitz Saturday May 2nd. Meet in the Market Place at 9.30 am.

Reminder - Plant Swap/Sale May 16th from 9.30am to 3.30pm

On Saturday 16th May, there will be a Plant and Seed Sale and Swap in Market Place. Held in conjunction with Henley in Bloom, people will be bringing plants and seed packets to sell/swap. Helpers and plants are needed; please contact Andrew Hawkins on 01491-576929 if you can help. Don't forget to plant a few extra seeds whilst sowing your vegetables for this event.

Social Calender Update

NEW - Trip to Wisley- Thursday 11th June

A trip to Wisley will take place on Thursday 11th June. We need a minimum number of 10 people to qualify for FREE entrance, and a 90 minute guided tour of the site will also be available for just £1.00 each. So far we have 10 people confirmed for the trip. PLEASE contact either your Site Manager or e mail marisa@francini.me.uk if you wish to join us. Details to follow regarding transport options (car share/minibus) .

THE ANNUAL BOAT TRIP DATE has been set for Wednesday 27th May, 7pm departure from Hobbs, cost £14.00 each. This date is over one month later than last year, so we are hopeful of a lovely sunny evening this year!! Many of you may not have gone on this trip before, but the trip is very popular and with good reason! Included in the price is a 3 and a half hour trip on the Thames, on one of the Hobbs boats, a buffet dinner (the excellent food being provided by allotment holders), and a quiz. We will also hold a raffle with some good quality prizes. All allotment holders are invited, and are welcome to bring guests. There are only 60 tickets available, so if interested please return the slip below asap, to Peter Herbert, c/o Hobbs Boatyard, Station Road, Henley RG9 1AZ. Payment by cheque to 'Henley Allotments Association'

No of tickets wanted for the AA Boat Trip on 27th May.....

Name.....

Address.....
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Plot number..... Greencroft/Watermans (please delete as appropriate)
