

Henley Allotments Association Newsletter

www.henleyallotments.org.uk

August/September 2009

Chairman's tips

Many plot holders I've talked to recently have been very positive about the crops they have harvested this year. Both allotment sites are looking good so a big thank you to our Site Managers and to you, our members.

Although it is still late summer, now is the time to think about getting your allotment ready for next year. One basic idea is to carry out crop rotation: I do potatoes one year, followed by peas/beans, then cabbages, and then roots and onions, so that pests are less likely to build up in the soil. Also, the more of your allotment that you can cultivate this autumn, the easier it is next spring

As I dig my potatoes I plant up with leeks. Garlic cloves can be planted at the end of October and new strawberry plants in September. You could consider planting a green manure such as field beans or mustard to help maintain soil fertility over the winter. There is always something to do. Enjoy your gardening. Andrew

General Update

Thanks and Good Luck for the future to Linda Martin, Committee Administrator at Henley Town Hall, who is retiring at the end of September. Linda has been responsible for managing the allotments on behalf of the Council for the past year, and has done an outstanding job. The AA will miss her enormously, and we hope that she has a very happy retirement.

AGM date: In the last newsletter the AGM date was incorrectly typed as Monday 10th October 2009. **PLEASE NOTE THIS SHOULD HAVE READ MONDAY 12TH OCTOBER.** The AGM is open to all allotment holders, and is a great opportunity to get your voice heard and to contribute towards allotment priorities. The meeting will be held in the Town Hall Council Chambers at 7pm. The AGM papers are included with this newsletter.

Plot sizes for 2010: There is a combined waiting list of 14 for the allotments, which is the highest figure for many years. Some tenants have struggled to keep up with their plots, and we would ask them to consider carefully the size of their current plot/if they can manage their plot for another year. **Next year's rents are due on October 1st 2009 and so now is the time to decide if your plot is the right size for you.** Many 10 pole plot holders have reduced their plots to 5 poles during this year, and they have found this size far more manageable. Please note that with the waiting lists getting longer by the week, the Site Managers will be under huge pressure to

ensure that all plot/all of each plot is being used for cultivation at all times. People on waiting lists also find it difficult to understand why they cannot have an allotment when there are plots on both sites that have been neglected for months.

Theft of produce/vandalism : Watermans : You may have read in the Henley Standard that there has been some vandalism and produce theft at Watermans. This has included potatoes, soft fruit, onions and pumpkins. **PLEASE CAN TENANTS QUESTION ANYBODY THEY SEE ON SITE WHO LOOKS SUSPICIOUS, AND MAKE SURE THAT THE GATE IS LOCKED IF YOU ARE THE LAST PERSON TO EXIT THE SITE.**

Everyone who has lost produce has been very upset, so please challenge people if you see anything unusual. Any plot holder affected should let their Site Manager know, as well as reporting the theft/vandalism to the police. This has to be done individually, and cannot be done by the Allotment Association on behalf of tenants.

Discounted seeds packets/potatoes: the Allotment Association is a member of the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG), and this membership provides tenants with the opportunity to buy seeds/potatoes from Kings Seeds. Prices are considerably cheaper than buying from garden centres, and the Allotment Association also gets a contribution from Kings for every pound spent. A catalogue and price list is enclosed with this newsletter, as well as details of how to order. Please take advantage of this scheme and save money on next year's crops.

RHS Membership: Every year the Allotment Association pays £30 for RHS Membership. This membership includes 2 RHS cards, which allow 4 people to visit all RHS gardens at a discounted price (excluding Sundays at Wisley). Dave McEwen keeps the 2 cards (01491-578658), and will loan them to plot holders who contact him wanting to use them. Although no-one has taken advantage of these cards in the past 12 months, we have decided to renew membership/these cards for a further year. If we find that there is no take-up in the next 12 months, then we will discontinue this membership for 2011.

Watermans/Greencroft Update :

Site Manager Watermans : Doug Richards 01491-573046.

Site Manager Greencroft : Liz Cope 01491- 576115.

Manure: all the manure has now been used, but don't forget the compost and wood chippings at the top of the Watermans site that can be used by all tenants, including Greencroft.

Watermans: The date for judging the children's annual sunflower/pumpkin and scarecrow competition is still being discussed, but this should be in early October. It is unclear if the pumpkin competition will go ahead, given the vandalism to pumpkins on the site. Please look out on the notice board for further details.

The children's play area is still being developed, and a plastic sandpit with cover is still needed. Please contact Doug if you can help.

The nature reserve bank is coming along well, but we still need plants that attract birds and bees, like teasels, foxgloves, poppies, honeysuckle, and buddleias. Please leave any plants by Doug's shed.

Doug is making some bumble bee nesting boxes, and is looking for any spare canes, minimum length 8" (200mm). Please leave any canes you can spare on Doug's plot (31) or by his shed.

Finally, Doug would like to thank everyone who has left spare vegetables on his plot (31). They have all been used for meals at the Christchurch Centre, and are very much appreciated.

Anderson's Almanac – more tips from Pete Anderson

September Continue harvesting crops as they mature. Main crop potatoes should be ready for lifting this month. If the top growth is still green, then cut it off when the remaining stem has dried. Wait 2 weeks to allow the potatoes to harden and then dig them up. Plant out spring cabbage to its final position, and thin out turnips. Order manure if required.

October There is the possibility of frost this month, which will finish off the non-hardy plants – runner beans, courgettes, marrows, french beans, tomatoes, cucumbers, etc. Early brussels sprouts and leeks may be ready this month. Autumn-flowering raspberries should be ready, but do not cut down the stems until spring. Start winter digging, and prepare the runner beans trench (although this can be left until spring). Remove yellow leaves from cabbage and brussels sprouts. Sow winter broad beans and autumn garlic. Tidy up your plot!

Social Calendar update

BBQ at Greencroft 16th August 2009: Around 30 people attended the Greencroft BBQ and a great time was had by all. The weather was absolutely gorgeous, (for once the sun shone all day), and it was great to spend time wandering around Greencroft looking at the many immaculate plots and getting ideas for next year. Thanks must go to Liz Cope, who did a fantastic job organising the event; Roger, Liz's husband and BBQ king extraordinaire; Dave McEwen, who organised and ran the bar; and Robin Rippon, who loaned his brand new gas BBQ to help with the cooking.

Coming soon.....

Children's Sunflower/Pumpkin/Scarecrow competition : See above under Watermans update.

October 12th AGM at the Town Hall Council Chambers 7pm start.

NEW EVENT Allotment workshop for all ploholders : Watermans Allotments Saturday 7th November from 10am to 11.30am

A tenants' workshop will take place on site with Sue Rippon, South Oxfordshire's Master Composter and various Allotment Association members. The aim of this informal session is to discuss any practical questions you may have on growing produce, and to understand more about composting. Many people are still confused as to what weeds can be added to the compost heap, what will break down over the season, how to compost and what to compost. This is particularly topical, given the new SODC waste collection scheme!

This session is open to all allotment holders (and friends) at both Watermans and Greencroft, but we believe it will be of particular interest to newcomers.

Gardeners' Question Time in conjunction with Henley-in-Bloom. Thursday 19th November at the Town Hall Council Chambers 7pm

Why not come to our own version of Gardeners' Question Time? A panel of 5 experts will be available on the top table, with both Martin Sheldrake from Toad Hall and Sue Rippon, S. Oxfordshire Master Composter, giving short presentations on topical issues. Following these presentations, questions will be taken from the floor, and (hopefully) specimens will be presented to the panellists for identification of problems! As with the Radio 4 programme, you will find that, although the panel have many years of experience between them, they will often disagree on a solution! So why not join us for a great night of learning and laughter.....

Christmas Dinner at Christchurch Thursday 17th December 7pm.

Following the success of this event, held for the first time last year when over 60 people sat down to an excellent 4 course dinner cooked by our very own Doug Richards, we will be repeating this event again. More details about the cost and meal will be provided in the next newsletter, but please put this date in your diary if you like good food at an excellent price and with like-minded people!