

Henley Allotments Association Newsletter

www.henleyallotments.org.uk

Oct /Nov/December 2009

Chairman's tips – Spacing

One of the questions facing all gardeners, and particularly new ones, is the spacing of crops. Too close and your crops don't have space to reach a good size or to produce a good yield; too far apart and you are wasting ground. Most seed packets and gardening books will give instructions about spacing and it is probably worth keeping a note-book/diary with planting dates and spacings to refer to later.

With potatoes my Dad always put his rows the length of a spade handle apart. One year when I had early blight, Peter Parr suggested that I had planted my potatoes too close. However, early potatoes can be planted closer in the row than main crop.

With carrots, sow the seeds thinly. This year I must have had nearly 100% germination and as I don't thin carrots I have got a massive crop of mini carrots.

With beetroots harvest the larger ones first to give the smaller ones room to grow on. However with carrots, thinning can attract carrot root fly.

Find out what works best for you!

Happy Christmas to you all and happy planting in 2010!

General Update: Vandalism

We are very sorry to report that there has been vandalism targeting sheds at both sites over the half term week in October. At Greencroft, sheds were broken into and equipment stolen. Some equipment was found abandoned in the field behind the site, but not all the equipment was recovered.

Then, exactly one week later, virtually every shed at Watermans was vandalised; locks were broken, sheds were overturned and goods inside scattered on the ground. Glass in some greenhouses was also broken. This follows the vandalism at Watermans only a few weeks ago, when pumpkins were smashed and vegetables and fruit stolen from plots.

The police have been informed, and incident numbers are available from your site managers should anyone have private insurance and wish to make a claim. Everyone is very upset at this mindless and pointless vandalism, and any practical ideas to make both sites more secure would be welcome. The Committee will be discussing this at their next meeting (November 26th), but it is clear that tenants should avoid keeping anything of value at the allotments. Anyone who might have information on this vandalism or has seen or heard anything that might help should contact the police in Henley.

Ground Cover: many people have got ground cover on their plots at the moment. Please can you make sure that it is properly secured, as the windy weather has already split a lot of the sheeting/blown sheeting onto other plots, and spoiling some crops in the process.

We would like to welcome Becky Walker to the role of Committee Administrator at Henley Town Hall. Becky has taken over from Linda Martin, and is the new HTC contact for the allotments.

AGM update. The AGM took place on Monday 12th October, and was well attended. Detailed minutes will be sent to all tenants with the January newsletter, but below are the key points summarised;

a) The rents for next year are being frozen by HTC. There have been 2 years of increases to bring the allotment income in line with the Council spend, but now that this had been achieved, the Council have agreed to freeze rents for 2010/11 at the October 1st 2009 rate.

b) The existing Committee have all been re-elected for the next year.

c) The AA funds are in a healthy condition, with over £3000 surplus as at 1.10.09. We would welcome ideas as to what projects tenants would wish to see some of this money spent on: please can tenants contact their site managers, or e mail marisa@francini.me.uk with suggestions.

The Committee are keen to get new blood to join the Committee, particularly as there are so many new tenants on both sites. Help is needed on bringing the website up to speed, as well as organising social events. The Committee meets every 6 weeks for approximately 2 hours, and tenants are welcome to attend meetings to see what goes on before committing themselves. The workload is not great, and it would be good to have new tenants contributing to the running of the allotments. Please let any Committee members know if you are interested, or e mail Marisa at marisa@francini.me.uk

Internet update: the current site is being revamped and hopefully will be up and running with a on a new server and with a forum in the New Year. More news on this to follow in January.

Anderson's Almanac – more tips from Pete Anderson

November Continue winter digging. Harvest crops as required. Remove bean poles and store. New fruit bushes can be planted this month, and cuttings from gooseberries can be taken. Leaves should be swept up, and can be used on the compost heap (but poplar tree leaves should be burnt). Burn any rubbish or plants that have had a virus on a day with no wind. Next season's seed catalogues become available, and order seeds before Christmas to avoid the Christmas mail.

December Harvest winter vegetables. Continue winter digging if conditions permit; generally this is difficult between mid December and the end of January. In severe weather, protect emerging winter broad beans - these should stand a minimum temperature of -5 degrees. Sit at home on Christmas day and remember all the lovely vegetables and fruit you have harvested over the year with a drink!!!

Social Calendar update

Gardeners' Question Time in conjunction with Henley-in-Bloom.

Thursday 19th November 7.30pm at the Town Hall Council Chambers.

£2.00 admission charge per person.

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. The panel will then take questions about any horticultural issue. 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! Tickets available from Henley Town Hall, Peter Herbert at Hobbs, and Dave McEwen (01491- 578658).

Christmas Dinner at Christchurch Thursday 17th December 7pm.

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. The menu for 2009 will consist of a home-made soup, traditional Christmas dinner, flaming Christmas pudding and cheese and biscuits. The price also includes a welcome drink, mince pies and coffee. Please feel free to bring your own drinks, although some wine will be available to buy on the evening. Please let Doug know (01491-573046) if you have a special diet or are vegetarian. Tickets are available from Peter Herbert at Hobbs, cost £16 per person.

Plant Sale/Swap in conjunction with Henley-in Bloom

May 2010 – date tbc

This event was very successful in 2009, despite the windy weather, and produced £150 profit for the AA. **Please plant extra seeds when you sow your seeds next spring, and save some plants for this event. This is a simple way to make money for the AA funds, and will use up those unused seeds/plants!**

HENLEY ALLOTMENTS AWARDS - 2009

A number of awards are given out in October every year; these include Best Plot, Best Newcomer and Best Site. Awards are also given to children for the Tallest Sunflower, Largest Pumpkin and Best Scarecrow.

Best Plot/ Best Newcomer and Best Site Judging Rules

Judging takes place in the middle of July. This year Andrew Hawkins and Liz Cope walked both sites and gave each plot a mark out of 5.

- 1 – no sign of cultivation at all
- 2 – only a few crops
- 3 – reasonably tidy with some crop
- 4 – quite tidy with a good selection of crops
- 5 – very tidy and weed-free with lots of crops

They also looked at the number and variety of crops growing, how weed-free the plot was and whether the grass paths were cut.

The total points are then calculated and an average score for each site is arrived at. A few uncultivated plots bring down the average so it's very much a team effort: every plot counts!

This year the number of plots that were awarded top marks of '5' was the best for years. The plots that got a 5 are listed below. Congratulations to everyone!

Greencroft: 8, 8A, 15, 15A, 16, 17, 23, 26A, 31A, 32, 39, 42, 47, 49, 50A, 60A.

Watermans: 2, 6, 14, 15, 26A, 40, 46, 52, 53.

But the winner of **Best Plot** by a whisker was Watermans plot 15 – Tony Robinson!

Winner of **Best Newcomer** was Josh Trindall AGE 14 also at Watermans - plot 35B. Andrew Hawkins said: "The Henley in Bloom judges had been most impressed by Josh's allotment."

Best Site was also very close, with Watermans getting a score of 3.3, but Greencroft getting a score of 3.4! So Greencroft was awarded **Best Site 2009!**

Biggest Pumpkins

1st = 125 lb grown by Finlay Reid at Greencroft

2nd = 63 lb grown by Jennifer Latimer at Watermans

3rd = 51 lb grown by Costas Kyriakides at Watermans

Jack Lambourne, age 8, was in the running to win this event but his pumpkin, last weighed at 264lb and predicted to hit the 300lb mark, was smashed by vandals at Watermans several weeks before the competition. Commiserations go to Jack.

Tallest Sunflower

1st = 114 ins grown by Josh Trendall at Watermans

2nd = 112 ins grown by Doug Richards at Watermans - Doug is Site Manager at Watermans

3rd = 111 ins grown by Jack Lambourne, age 8, grown at Watermans.

The sunflowers are measured during the summer months.

Best Scarecrow

Jennifer Latimer's 'lovely lady' scarecrow beat Costas Kyriakides 'fit bloke' scarecrow to first place (as described by Andrew Hawkins!)

Prize Presentation

The prizes were awarded by the Mayor, Elizabeth Hodgkin who said to the allotment holders, "Thank you for continuing the tradition - it's a great hobby. We've got to get back to basics, to feeding ourselves and knowing where our food comes from."

The sun came out for the prize giving and it was a friendly family affair with all generations represented from tiny tots to their grandparents enjoying the gathering. Rather than the traditional floral bouquet, site manager Doug Richard presented the Mayor with a very big leek and a posy of allotment grown herbs.

Weighing the pumpkins!



Carl and Costas eye up the competition!



The Mayor receives a thank you leek and herb posy with Chairman Andrew.



Josh Trendall, winner of the 'Best Newcomer' cup.

Above: Thank goodness someone bought some coffee!
Below: The prize winners pose with the Mayor.

