

Henley on Thames Allotments Association

NEWSLETTER April/May/June 2010

Chairman's tips

I have just finished planting my seed potatoes, always a tick in the horticultural year.

My next project will be digging my runner bean trench, a useful way to get rid of old cabbage stems and non-perennial weeds. As these things decompose they provide the growing runner beans with nutrients and water and improve the quality of the soil for future years.

However hard I try, I never seem to have enough time for my allotment so I aim to make my time there as effective as possible. One of the best ways to do this is to hoe off germinating weeds regularly. Hoeing also helps keep moisture in the soil by reducing evaporation.

Our allotments are thriving and looking good as a result of your hard work. Thank you and good gardening for 2010.

Andrew Hawkins. Chairman

General Update

Henley Town Council is still considering the options for extra allotments provision. There are no obvious Council-owned sites that could be converted into allotments, but meetings are taking place between the Council and the Allotment Association to see what else can be done. We will keep you updated.

Following another incident of vandalism at Greencroft over Easter, we are advising all plot holders **to keep nothing of value in their sheds, and to consider keeping sheds unlocked at all times.**

For further details, please see the Greencroft section below.

The waiting list for both plots continues to be on the increase. If any plot holder is thinking of giving up their plot/reducing their plot size, please can they ring their Site Manager to discuss this. Help can often be organised by the Site Manager too, if anyone falls ill and cannot manage their plot temporarily.

The new internet site is working very well, and is being used by a number of plot holders. Please do take a look at the new site on www.henleyallotments.org.uk The site contains a lot of information specific to the Henley allotments, including a copy of the latest tenancy agreement, contact details, minutes of AA meetings and newsletters, recipes, and the latest news and dates of social events. There is an area for photos (please send any photos you wish to go on the site to assistantsecretary@henleyallotments.org.uk) There are also a number of links to other external sites that have some fantastic information on growing

plants, where to buy seeds, composting, as well as a link to the Met Office weather predictions for Benson.

Plus, there is a chat group for Henley plot holders, which we hope will be used to exchange ideas, which should prove to be very helpful as the seasons progress. Please remember to use the site, and to contribute to it too. We are in much need of contributions - details of how to contribute are available on the site.

Local woodsman Mark Cotrell successfully visited both sites on Saturday April 24th to sell beanrods and peasticks. He was well received by plot holders, and hopefully this will become a regular event. He is based in the Woodcote/Crays Pond area. Please ring him (on 01491-681097) if you wish to order and collect from him during the next few weeks, as he still has stock available.

First Aiders on site: 2 plot holders at Watermans, who are trained first aiders, have volunteered to be available to carry out first aid should an accident occur whilst they are on site. We are keen to know of anyone else who has first aid training and would be willing to carry out first aid should it be needed **whilst they are on site only**. Please can you ring Doug on 01491-573046 (Watermans) and Liz on 07714-621140 (Greencroft) if you are willing to help.

Judging for Best Plot/Best Newcomer and Best Site will take place in **Mid July**. The exact date will be kept a secret, but plot holders may wish to do a couple of extra sessions in early July to ensure their plot is in great condition.....

A number of incidents have taken place on both sites regarding potential accidents which have required the Site Managers to intervene. These have included dangerous bonfires, unsupervised children hurting themselves, and dogs. Please could all plot holders ensure the following is adhered to: please note that many of the points below are in the rules of the tenancy agreement.

- a) All water tanks are covered – children like to play with water!
- b) Tools are put away safely.
- c) Dogs are kept on leads.
- d) Green material is **not brought on site** to burn.
- e) Bonfires are only lit on wind free days, and are doused with water when leaving the site if still burning.
- f) Bonfires do not disturb neighbours – black smoke billowing over gardens or other plots is disrespectful.
- g) Children are supervised **at all times** by their parents.

Thank you.

Anderson's Almanac

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.

June Keep plot weed free by hoeing or hand weeding. Harvest crops when ready. Finish planting out from the seed bed. Plant out all the greenhouse grown plants as frosts have now finished. Water as required, avoiding watering over plants in bright sunlight. Do not water over the leaves of courgettes/marrows as this will encourage mildew. Early potatoes are ready as soon as they are in bloom – but not all varieties bloom! Spray against potato blight and repeat at two week intervals.

Watermans Update

Your help is needed! Please complete the enclosed questionnaire!

The proposed deer fence has been discussed by Henley Town Council and S. Oxon District Council, but there are questions the Council has posed that need to be answered before any final approval is given.

In order to get answers to some of these questions, we have included a questionnaire that we would like you to fill in, so that we can present **your** views to the Council. The information we get will be used to make decisions on whether deer fencing is needed, as well as gauging your views on a number of other security matters on the site.

Please can you find time to complete this questionnaire (also available on the website) and drop it off to Hobbs Boatyard by 28th May. It should only take a few minutes to do, and we are keen to get your views. Thank you.

Every alternate boundary path between plots is an official path, and Henley Town Council requires plot holders to keep these paths tidy, with the grass cut and free of obstructions. The official paths are those which run down the entire length of the site, and are between the following plot numbers:

2 and 3; 4 and 5; 6 and 7; 8 and 9; 10 and 11; 12 and 13;
16 and 17; 18 and 19; 20 and 21; 22 and 23; 24 and 25; 26 and 27;
30 and 31; 32 and 33; 34 and 35; 36 and 37; 38 and 39; 40 and 41;
44 and 45; 46 and 47; 48 and 49; 50 and 51; 52 and 53; 54 and 55;
56 and 57.

Please can you make sure that you keep these paths clear.

The water supply has been turned on again. Please remember that the taps are metered; excess watering is wasteful and costly, and could result in allotment rents being increased in the future. Could you also ensure that taps are turned off fully once you have finished watering.

The gate at Watermans is sometimes left open overnight, and a reminder goes to all plot holders that they **MUST** close the gate and lock it if they are the last person to leave the site, whatever time they leave. An open gate is an invitation to strangers to enter the site and see what is available to steal! We have had a lot of vandalism recently, and need to discourage casual theft.

Please note that cars must be parked in areas that **do not** block the road around the site perimeter. Plot holders can load and unload their cars next to their plots, but must not leave their cars obstructing the road. Please consider other plot holders by respecting this tenancy agreement rule.

Greencroft Update

Recent Vandalism. Many of you will know that a number of sheds were vandalised on Easter Sunday night. Doors, locks and panels were removed on 13 sheds, but, as far as we know, no items were stolen. This has been reported to the Police, the crime reference number is EC 3558728/10.

Please can all individual plot holders affected by this contact the Police on 08458 505505 to report any damage caused. We have been advised by the Police that their crime figures are based on the number of people that report crime, and that the more plot holders that report their break-in, the more clearly it reflects the number of people who have had property vandalised. It may also help them get more local cover. Thank you.

Please note that we are advising all plot holders to keep nothing of value in their sheds, and to consider keeping sheds unlocked at all times. This may help minimise any further future damage.

Henley Town Council has paid for a new fence/removal of brambles in the area near the car park. Thanks go to the Council for supporting this much needed repair, and to Liz for organising it.

The water supply pumps are being cleaned and reinstalled by Peter Herbert at the moment. Please can plot holders let Peter know if there are any that are not working. The Council has also authorised the purchase of 4 new pumps to help with the increased tenant numbers.

A plot holder on Greencroft has been given permission by the Council to keep bees. The plot holder is a member of the South Chilterns Beekeeping Association and has complied with all the regulations and recommendations required. The hive should be in place by the middle of the year; contact phone numbers will be available by the hive should there be any problems or concerns from other plot holders.

The Committee are very supportive of this, as bee numbers are decreasing rapidly.

Social Events

Henley Festival of Flowers – 15th May to 22nd May 2010

The first Henley Festival of Flowers will take place on the above dates. An outline programme of events is enclosed with this newsletter; the week includes a number of events across the whole town, including floral displays in churches, shop window competitions, competitions for schools, a photographic exhibition, a floral demonstration, and a 'Plants on the Move' competition! Please visit the Town Hall or visit www.henleytowncouncil.gov.uk for more details and entry forms.

The events that we need your help with are as follows:

Floral display at Christchurch

Gardeners' Question Time – Thursday 20th May at 7pm in the Town Hall Chambers

Plant/Seed Swap/Sale - Saturday 22nd May from 10am to 4pm in the Market Place.

Floral display at Christchurch. We are interested in providing a display for this event, and are looking for volunteers to help Doug (01491-573046) and Andrew (01491-576929) to put this together. Please contact either of them if you are willing to help.

Gardeners' Question Time will follow a similar format to the annual GQT held in November, with allotment Committee members on the panel, as well as guest speakers. The event will be open to the public, and tickets will cost £5 each, to include a glass of wine. We have managed to negotiate a reduced rate of £3 for allotment plot holders who purchase tickets in advance, so please mention you are a plot holder (with your plot number) when buying your tickets from the Town Hall one-stop shop. Please note that the GQT in November will go ahead as usual, and is not being replaced by this May event.

The Plant/Seed Swap/Sale will require your help in 2 ways. Firstly, we need you to sow extra seeds for this event so that we have got vegetable plants for sale. You will need either to drop these off on the day in the Market Place after 9.15am (Dave McEwen will be there to collect them) OR leave them in the front garden at 19 Berkshire Road, Henley from Wednesday 19th May. If you do not have time to plant any extra seeds, then any spare seed packets you have will be gratefully received.

Secondly, we are looking for around 8-10 helpers to sell the plants on the Saturday itself. Please can you volunteer for either the morning session (9.30 -1pm), or the afternoon session (1pm – 4.30pm) by calling Dave McEwen on 01491-573336 or e mailing at davemcewen@btinternet.com. Hopefully the weather will be better than last year! The 'Plants on the Move' will be taking place in the morning and a band will be playing too, which should provide a great fun atmosphere. Last year we raised £150 for the AA funds through this route, so it is a great way to raise money for the Association, as well as meeting like minded people.

N.B. Plants on the Move. If any plot holder is interested in co-ordinating an entry for this event (see enclosed sheet for details), please let Andrew Hawkins know on 01491- 576929.

Scarecrow/Sunflower/Pumpkin Competition for children. These fun competitions will be going ahead as usual this year, with the dates for judging to be advised later on in the season. Don't forget to get your kids involved now!

Hobbs Boat Trip – Thursday 3rd June

The Annual Hobbs Boat trip will be held on Thursday 3rd June, 7pm departure from Hobbs, cost of tickets £15.00 each. This is being held a week later than last year, and we are hopeful of a lovely sunny evening! Many of you may not have gone on this trip before; the trip is very popular and with good reason. Included in the price are a 3 and a half hour trip on the Thames, a buffet dinner (prepared by the wonderful Alison) and a quiz. We will also run a raffle with some good quality prizes. Please note: Alison is looking for helpers to provide some food dishes: please contact Alison on 01491-579852 if you can help.

All allotment holders are invited, and are welcome to bring guests. There are only 70 tickets available, so if you are interested, please return the slip below asap, to Peter Herbert, c/o Hobbs Boatyard, Station Road, Henley RG9 1AZ. Payment by cheque please to 'Henley Allotments Association'

No of tickets wanted for the AA Boat Trip on 3rd June.....

Name.....

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