

Henley on Thames Allotments Association

NEWSLETTER July/August/September 2010

Chairman's tips : Passing on gardening skills.

On a recent visit to Kew Gardens, Tony Kirkham, the arborist there, said that 'some new gardeners were happier walking round with a clip board rather than a hoe'. In other words people are not learning basic gardening skills any more.

This made me think. Our plot holders are a huge resource of gardening expertise. How can our experienced gardeners pass on their knowledge to new gardeners? Simply talking and answering questions is one way. Gardeners' Question Time is another.

So new gardeners, what would you suggest we do to pass on our gardening skills? Your suggestions please, to anyone on the Committee, to your Site Manager, or e mail marisa@francini.me.uk

General Update

Henley Town Council is still considering the options for extra allotments provision. The only viable option on the table at the moment is the conversion of a strip of land already owned by the Council on the north side of Watermans allotment site. This would convert into a number of 'starter plots' of 3 poles each. Tenders for clearing and preparing the land have been received, and these will be discussed by HTC in July. We will keep you informed.

Please note that there will be no decision on the deer fencing around Watermans until September/October of this year. The decision on the extra allotments provision needs to be made first before HTC will agree the scale and style of fencing needed.

Rent increases for 2011-2012 (due October 1st **2011**) have been discussed by the Council and the Allotment Association Committee. Rents from October 1st 2010 are frozen at this year's rate, and it has been agreed that a 3% increase (in line with RPI) is reasonable for 2011-2012. This means that a 10 pole plot will rise by £1 (from £36 to £37), and a 5 pole plot will increase by 50p (from £18 to £18.50). Each tenant will be informed of their rent increase with their rent letter for 2010-2011 in September.

Allotment Association AGM. The date for 2010 AGM has been set for Thursday 28th October at the Council Chambers, Henley Town Hall, 7pm start. This is a good time to have your say, so please put this date in your diary.

Allotment Association Awards for Best Plot, Best Newcomer and Best Site.

Andrew Hawkins and Liz Cope will be judging both allotment sites for the awards of Best Plot, Best Newcomer and Best Site around the middle of July. Just to remind plot holders of the judging criteria, each plot is given a vote out of 5.

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

Andrew and Liz look at the number and variety of crops growing, how weed-free each plot is and whether the grass paths around each plot are cut.

The total points are then calculated and divided by the number of plots, and an average score for each site is arrived at. Last year, Greencroft won Best Site, but only by 0.1 point (3.3 v 3.4). A few uncultivated plots bring down the average so it's very much a team effort: every plot counts!

Internet Site Update www.henleyallotments.org.uk

The website team are trying to keep the content of the site informative and up to date, so please do send us your comments and contributions. In particular, we are keen to receive: **Recipes** – with fruit & vegetable picking starting in earnest, it would be great to have some new recipes for members to try, so please send us your favourite recipes and we'll add them to the site.

Photos – the website has a photo gallery, so if you have any photographs taken at the allotments or at Association events, and you would be happy for them to be displayed where other members can view them, please send them in. We are particularly keen to have some more photos taken at Watermans. And please do continue to send us your comments and suggestions on how to improve the website, and we will do our best to incorporate them.

Please send all contributions to: marisa@francini.me.uk or jon.lock99@yahoo.co.uk

Free greenhouse. Peta Fletcher, who lives in Lower Shiplake, has an 8ft x 12ft greenhouse that she no longer needs. It is in good condition, and is free to anyone who wants it, but it will need to be dismantled and collected. Please contact Peta directly, by mid July, on 01189-403704, or 07780-700055, if you are interested.

Anderson's Almanac

July Keep hoeing and keep harvesting crops as they mature. Shallots and garlic should be lifted and stored. If growing cordon tomatoes, remove side shoots that emerge between the main stem and leaf stem. Cut down to ground level summer fruiting raspberries that have finished fruiting. Runner beans should flower this month, water when beans have set. Onions should be starting to die down this month: allow the stems to bend over at the neck and let them die off. Then you can lift the onions, but make sure they dry off before storing them. Sow spring cabbage and turnips, according to vendor's instructions, for winter use. Finish pulling rhubarb.

August Harvest crops as they are ready, and water in dry weather. A good weekly soak is much better than little and often, except for tomatoes and cucumbers which need to be kept moist at all times. Cucumbers are the one crop that benefit from the leaves being watered over. Finish cutting back summer fruiting raspberries. Cut back blackcurrants after fruiting. Strawberry runners can be planted in pots in situ: once they have rooted they can be cut from the main plant and planted out to form new plants. Strawberry plants need to be renewed every three years to ensure fruit is maximised. Watch out for caterpillars on brassicas from now on.

September Continue harvesting crops as they mature. Maincrop 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 up. Plant out spring cabbage to final position, and thin out turnips. Order manure if required (after the Henley Show!).

Watermans Update

The questionnaires sent out with the last newsletter had a fantastic response. Over 20 completed questionnaires were received, and they contained some strong views on both the fencing and vandalism. Thanks to all of you who found time to fill it in; your views and priorities will definitely be expressed when we discuss the fencing with the Council in September.

Please note that the Council **will not** be making a decision on the fencing until the decision regarding extra allotments to the north of the site is made, so we will not get any fencing until the autumn at the earliest. (see General Update).

SUMMARY OF WATERMANS QUESTIONNAIRES JUNE 2010

1. Crops that have been damaged by deer include Sweetcorn. Broad Beans. Runner Beans. Flowers. Peas. Lettuce. Brassicas. People probably lose more crops due to them being trampled rather than being eaten.
2. A fence that stops deer **and** vandalism should be considered. It would be best to kill two birds with one stone.

3. Nearly all the plot holders who responded said they would be willing to contribute towards the cost of fencing. But most mentioned that it should be a vandal-proof fence as well as a deer fence.
4. Some people commented that the vandalism is more demoralising than the deer. A Neighbourhood Watch scheme between plot holders was suggested.
NB. The Police have added Watermans to their patrol plan, which should mean that the site is regularly patrolled.
5. A number of comments were made regarding the main gate being left open at night. Also, some comments were made regarding the small gate, suggesting that a combination lock would be useful there too.
7. A communal store would not be used by plot holders; this was unanimous. The security of the communal store was seen as an issue.
8. Some questionnaires mentioned that more water taps are needed.

Given that we will not have fencing erected before autumn, please find below some ideas to deter deer from your plot. Any other ideas would be very welcome!

1. Try hanging human hair in pop-socks around your plot. Deer will avoid human scent, so the hair needs to be as oily as possible (unwashed!).
2. Mark your plot regularly with human urine. This is known to be a good deer deterrent, with male urine being more effective than female!
3. Tie coloured string around the areas that deer like. It seems to put them off!
4. Build a barrier over 1 metre high. This should make it more difficult for the deer to enter.

Taps Doug Richards is in the process of trialling a tap attachment that will allow two hoses to be used at the same time from one tap. If this works, it will double the number of taps available during this hot spell. The AA is also talking to the Council with regard to increasing the total number of taps (currently at 6 for 90 plot holders). This is tied in with the extra allotments provision, so we should have news of this by the end of July.

Greencroft Update

The Cricket Club is keen to let plot holders use the facilities in their new pavilion, and an open morning has been arranged to view these facilities on **Thursday 22nd July at 10.30am**. Dave McEwen and Liz Cope will be there from the AA, and all plot holders are welcome!

Pumps. Peter H has recently changed the washers on a number of pumps, but they are still not working due to the water table being so low. There is no more that can be done, as the only thing that will fix this is rain! Please be patient and pray!

Social Calendar

Dates for your Diary

The annual BBQ will take place at WATERMANS on Saturday August 14th from 3pm to 7pm. BBQ's will be provided for you to cook your food on, but you will need to bring your own food, and a salad or pudding to share with others. Plot holders from both sites are welcome, and there will be games to entertain the children. If you want to attend, please complete the enclosed form, so that we have got an idea of numbers. Last year the weather was glorious, and it is a good way to relax and look at other allotment plots for ideas!!

The annual trip to Wisley RHS Garden will take place on Thursday 16th September. Entry is free, but a guided tour will cost £1 per person. Transport will be in plot holders' cars, and we would expect to leave around 9am, returning into Henley around 6pm. Last year we visited Wisley in June, so the later timing of this trip will ensure that the flowers in bloom will be substantially different. Anyone interested in going should e mail marisa@francini.me.uk, or phone Marisa on 01491-579661.

The dates for the Scarecrow, Sunflower and Pumpkin Competition are still to be confirmed. Please see the notice boards for details.

Boat Trip, June 3rd 2010.

The annual boat trip took place on a glorious evening and was attended by around 70 Association members, partners and friends. All were treated to a fantastic buffet dinner, prepared and served by Alison Engleby and Liz Cope; a very tricky quiz (well done to John and Natasha Street who came out on top); and a raffle, with prizes including a night at the Milsoms (Loch Fyne) Hotel, chocolates from Gorvett & Stone, wine, allotment books, and asparagus donated by Graham Jones. Many thanks go to Alison and Liz for providing the buffet and also to Peter Herbert and the staff at Hobbs for laying on a wonderful evening's entertainment.



Plant Sale, May 22nd 2010.

As part of the 'Festival of Flowers', the plant sale took place in the Market Place in glorious weather. In addition to the usual sale of plants, raffle tickets were also sold. The event was a great success, raising a total of £448, which will be split between 'Henley in Bloom' and our association funds. Thanks to everyone who donated plants, helped on the day or made a purchase.



Gardeners' Question Time, May 20th 2010.

Held as part of the 'Festival of Flowers', the latest Gardeners' Question Time took place in the Town Hall with a panel chaired by Dave McEwen and including Martin Sheldrake from Toad Hall, Andrew Hawkins and Doug Richards. The audience enjoyed a short film from last summer about Henley in Bloom, an enjoyable and informative talk from Martin Sheldrake, who brought many plants to talk about, and then a wide range of questions were put to the panel, which drew on their many years of horticultural experience.

Please find below some watering advice from the 'National Society of Allotments and Leisure Gardeners' that should help you understand which crops to water during a dry season. Hopefully you will find this useful!

Water carefully.

Let grass grow longer as it will stay greener.

Use manure and compost to help retain soil moisture.

Mulch—a layer of tree bark, gravel and compost will be protection from the sun and reduce moisture loss.

Use a watering can to monitor the amount of water given to each plant.

Water in new plants thoroughly—but not too much afterwards. This will encourage a deep root system and get the most benefit from soil moisture.

Remove weeds.

Do not over-water herbs—many come from hot climates so can endure long hot spells.

Use rainwater butts to supplement tap water.

Watering Crops— Dry Season

Carrot	Never water, it will lower yield and affect taste
Jerusalem Artichoke	Never water, it encourages the formation of leaves and not tubers
Parsnip, Swede	No beneficial effects from watering
Onion	In a very dry season, water the ground before planting to get your sets off to a good start
Turnip	In a dry year, flood the bed about a month before harvesting
Cauliflower (winter), Cabbage, Calabrese	If the soil is very dry, puddle in to help them get established
Potato (main crop)	Water only when the flowers have just opened. At any other time it will lower the yield
Spinach	Regular watering will extend harvest
Potato (early)	Regular watering will extend harvest
Tomato (outdoor)	Regular watering will increase yield but may reduce flavour
Cucumber	Water throughout growing season to improve both yield and taste
Courgette, Marrow	Water when fruits start to swell, then water copiously
Leek	The more you water the bigger the crop.
Lettuce	Water from sowing to harvest, encouraging rapid tender growth
Spring Onion	Once you start to water you can not stop!
Cauliflower (summer)	Continuous watering to stop plants running to seed
Peas	Water throughout the life of this crop
Runner Beans	Continuous watering (and crop may still fail!)
Celery	Huge volumes of water required
Chinese Cabbage	Any shortage of water will cause it to fail and run to seed
Sweetcorn	Watering when plants are young and the earth is dry can increase yields

Dear Allotment Holder,

Re: BBQ at Watermans - 3pm to 7pm on Saturday 14th August 2010

ALL WELCOME!!

We would be delighted if you and your family could join us for our Allotment barbeque. All you have to bring is your own meat or vegetarian food which can be cooked on our barbeques, plus a salad OR a pudding to share.

Plates, cutlery, wine, beer, apple and orange juice, plus glasses will be available. We would appreciate you making a small donation towards our costs.

You are welcome to bring your own picnic rugs, tables and seats and we will provide activities for the children.

Could you kindly fill in the slip below and return to the following address as soon as possible please: -

Liz Cope
Paddock Cottage,
Upper Culham,
Wargrave,
Berkshire, RG10 8NR

Thank you and we look forward to seeing you there!

NAMES and number of adults:

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Plot No: Greencroft/Waterman

Tel.No:

I will bring a salad/ I will bring a pudding

Names of children and ages:

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