

# THE URBAN JUNGLE

The Newsletter of the Ruislip-Northwood Co-operative Small Holding and Allotment Society Limited

Issue 01 - July 2007

## **Introduction**

Well, after a long absence we are back. This time the newsletter is in black and white with no photos, all down to the fact that we have had a computer upgrade(!) I am going to keep these newsletters shorter, hopefully they will be issued more frequently and their prime aim will be to pass on news from the committee, give information about site developments and news of pests, diseases etc..

## **Your Committee**

The committee is currently undergoing a change. The jobs of Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and Site Manager are in the process of being handed over to Angela Dixon (Chair), Trevor Dixon (Secretary) and Mike Jessup (Treasurer). Trevor will also manage plot lettings. We don't currently have a Site Manager although Mick Barber is willing to look after the water system. Some further jobs may be identified, so if anyone is prepared to help, please get in touch with one of the committee.

## **The Car Park and Gate**

If any of you have been down to the allotments recently you must have seen a lot of activity around the car park. It was originally intended to extend the existing car park southwards and a working party did some work one Sunday morning to get this underway. However Balfour Beatty, the Company that is undertaking major water mains work in Northwood Hills, approached our Society to see if they could temporarily rent some land so that they could have somewhere to park their vehicles while the maintenance work was being carried out. The committee offered them the option of having allotment space to the north of the current car park, provided that they laid a proper car parking surface and replaced the broken gate that is used to access the car park. Balfour Beatty agreed to this, and are currently laying a new car park. For the next few months, until the water mains work is completed, we can still use our existing car park but additional care should be taken when entering or leaving.

## **Working Parties**

I have already referred to "working parties" when writing about the car park. In any year, a certain amount of routine site maintenance has to be done, such as hedge cutting, maintenance of the lockers, maintenance of equipment, etc. From time to time, the committee will ask for all allotment holders who are able, to join a working party to complete a certain task. Notices giving details of these working parties will be posted at both gates, giving details of what needs to be done and when. I am sure that you have all heard the saying "many hands make light work", so please help out if you are able to.

## **Plant troubles**

It has certainly been an exceptional year from a weather point of view, what with the abnormally warm and dry period in March/April, followed by the unusually cool, windy and wet May/June.

One particular problem has appeared fairly widely on our site, manifesting itself as shrivelled foliage, particularly, but not exclusively, on tomatoes and potatoes. DEFRA and the RHS have been contacted for advice, but the actual cause is still not clear. Originally it was thought that it might be caused by a virus spread by aphids, but following a visit from DEFRA, their view is that it is more likely to result from either soil-borne or air-borne weedkiller. It is certainly odd that the impact is apparently spread widely and randomly across many plots. Anyway – additional news of this will be posted on notice boards as soon as more is known. In the meantime, please follow the DEFRA guidelines already posted. Because of its random distribution, it is highly unlikely to have been caused by one person using a spray – however, it serves as a timely reminder to us all to be very cautious when using any kind of weedkiller.

## **The Dreaded Blight**

The wet conditions we have experienced this summer, are ideal for tomato and potato blight, which appears initially as brown patches on leaves. It has already appeared on at least one of our allotments. Spraying with a fungicide or the traditional Bordeaux mixture before blight appears will help to delay its onset, but once it really takes hold, there's little you can do. Your potato crop can be saved by cutting off the foliage if blight appears, before the disease moves onto stems. The tubers should be fine, but you should delay as long as possible on maincrops to let the tubers mature.

Jenny Jessup