

THE URBAN JUNGLE

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

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Introduction

As I said in the last newsletter we hope to issue these more frequently so, as I have a bit of a backlog of information to pass on, here is the second issue hard on the heels of the first one - it is an important one dedicated to equipment issues!

Equipment - General

The committee are keen for all plot holders to keep their plots looking neat and tidy. Certainly everyone should ensure that the paths around their plots are kept open. For those taking on an overgrown plot this can seem like a daunting challenge. So, as many of you will know, we have certain pieces of equipment which are available for plot holders to use at their own risk. There are three lawnmowers, a light weight brush cutter, two light weight strimmers (only fit for use on grass) and a rotovator (kindly lent us by Janis, not currently available for loan as maintenance work is being carried out on it). In addition, we are hoping to get an industrial strength brush cutter up and running soon. Unfortunately though, we have experienced some significant problems associated with this equipment - security, misuse and availability.

Security - Equipment Storage Shed

Recently we have had a piece of equipment stolen (we were lucky though, and got it back) and in the past we have had some equipment vandalised. We have therefore purchased a container at the cost of £1200 to replace the old wooden equipment shed which was in a poor state, and not secure. Hopefully this will protect our equipment from the weather and from vandals. Unfortunately we are not in a position to give every plot holder a key to the container which means there is limited access to the kit (see "Availability"). Currently every officer of the committee has a key.

Misuse

Nick has kindly agreed to maintain our equipment and he is working hard to keep it all in good condition. However we have come across several cases of irresponsible use. e.g. use of the wrong kind of petrol and the loss of a metal pin from the rotovator, equipment not being returned and equipment being returned with damage.

For the moment the committee feels it necessary to restrict access to the equipment shed, so that equipment can only be issued by one of the committee, who will ensure that the correct petrol is used and that the person borrowing a piece of equipment is shown how to use it and is using it appropriately. A logging system has been introduced so that equipment will be booked out to a plot holder and then booked back in when the plot holder has finished with it. This means that equipment should not be passed onto another person when you have finished using it. We realise that this will be tedious, but feel it is necessary at this time.

The committee are working on preparing an instruction sheet for each machine so that it is clear how the machine should be used, and for what it should be used (or maybe more importantly, for what it should NOT be used!).

Any equipment which is not working properly will be labelled as such with an "Out of Use" sticker. No one should try to use this equipment.

Availability

Many of you are frustrated by not being able to get hold of equipment when you need it. Equally, committee members get frustrated if they come down to work on their plots and find that they spend all their time getting equipment out for other people. We are going to try a compromise. The committee will try to ensure that there will be someone available to loan out equipment in the morning (9.30 to 13.00) on the following days: Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday. The name of the person “on duty” will be on the equipment shed. Please do not ask people for equipment at other times.

Last, but certainly not least, be SAFE

People using the equipment do so at their own risk. We would however advise the following precautions. Whatever equipment you are using, you should be wearing stout boots; this is particularly important if you are using one of the brush cutters. If you are using the brush cutters or trimmers you should wear the goggles provided. If you are squeamish about putting on goggles someone else has used, we will try to provide some antiseptic wipes for your use. If you are not really sure how to use a piece of equipment, do not be afraid to ask the person on duty for advice.

Jenny Jessup