

THE URBAN JUNGLE

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

Issue 04 - December 2007

Introduction

I hope that you have all enjoyed the recent festivities and that you are now looking ahead to 2008. Let us all hope that we have a better gardening year than 2007. This newsletter is certainly looking ahead to next year, giving you some background information to the forthcoming AGM and an update on both the car park and security situations.

The AGM

The AGM will be held on Monday 4 February at 7 pm, (full details given in the Notice of AGM which is enclosed with this newsletter). Remember, everyone who rents a plot is a shareholder of our society, so it is important that you all come along and have your say (and vote) on those things which matter to you. So put the date in your diary now!

2008 will be a year of change since our current chairperson, secretary and treasurer, (Dick, Jo and Geoff respectively), are all standing down. For many years Geoff and Dick have been the trouble-shooters on the allotments; dealing with all sorts of problems, water leaks, getting together working parties to maintain the boundary hedge, repairing lockers, repairing equipment, etc. These jobs will still need to be done in the future, so the society will be looking to its members to see if anyone has the skills / time / energy to help with any of these tasks. If you think you can help, please make this known at the AGM. Thank you

Fees

You will have received an invoice in the pack along with this newsletter. These are due now and should be paid by January 31st. Cheques will be accepted at the AGM. This year the rental rates have again been increased in line with inflation – but our rates are still less than half those charged by the London Borough of Hillingdon, so we do think we are good value for money.

Car Park - update

If, like me, you have been thwarted when trying to park on our car park recently you should be interested in this bit. Balfour Beatty have told us that they now plan to finish their work by the end of February, (I assume that is 2008!). Before they move out they will be levelling and surfacing the car park area and they will be providing us with a new gate. They have asked us via the newsletter to.....“please add our thanks to your members for their patience and pass on our best wishes for the New Year to all.” Meanwhile the contractors should not be using our area of the car park for their vehicles. Notices have been put up reminding them of this fact. Any members who see contractors vehicles parked in this car park should point out the notices and request them politely to move their vehicles.

Security- update

The society has acquired some security fencing at a knockdown price. This will soon be erected along the Joel Street boundary. Together with the new gate (see above) we hope that this will significantly reduce the incidence of theft and vandalism.

What To Do – Seasonal Tips

For those of you wishing to do some armchair gardening, now is the time to plan your plot for next year (remember to rotate your crops) and to put in your seed orders. Some mail order firms have special discounts / offers for those who order early. It is particularly important to order early if you are ordering seed potatoes. One year when we were a bit tardy with our order, we found that the seed company could not provide us with the variety of potatoes we wanted – which completely threw our plans for the potato patch! On the subject of potatoes, many people had trouble with slugs last year. Experience shows that red skinned varieties, such as Desiree, seem to do well on our soil and are less susceptible to slug damage.

It need not be all armchair gardening at this time of year though. If the ground is not too wet or cold you can still dig and manure your plot. (As I am typing this it is freezing outside but at least it isn't raining!) Other options are to spread manure as a mulch over uncultivated ground or to make a manure compost heap so that you have some good compost ready to dig in in the Spring. If you find that your ground is waterlogged you could try digging drainage channels for waterlogged areas and use raised beds. All these activities should help to deal with any excess weight put on over the festive period!. Finally you should avoid walking on any really wet areas as this will compact your soil.

Equipment

Our equipment (mainly lawn mowers) will not be available to use until the ground dries out somewhat and the weather improves. Notices will be posted to let you know when the equipment will be available to let again – hopefully in early Spring. I will also try to include details in a subsequent newsletter.

Recipe: Squash & Apple Soup

Does anyone have a favourite recipe that uses allotment grown fruit / vegetables? If you do, and you are prepared to share this with other allotment holders, please let me know and I will print it in a subsequent newsletter. Meanwhile, here is one of Mike's favourites: _

Ingredients (serves 4-6)

2 onions peeled & chopped

1 clove garlic, chopped

1tbs olive oil

500g/1lb 2oz pumpkin or winter squash. skinned and cubed

2 baking apples, peeled, cored & chopped

570ml/1pint veg stock

300ml/0.5pint dry cider or apple juice (or use more more stock)

2 sprigs fresh sage (can use thyme, or similar herb)

Salt & freshly ground pepper

Method.

1. Cook onions in oil for 2 mins then add pumpkin, apples & sage

2. Cook for a further 2 mins, then season & add stock & cider/apple juice if using. Simmer for about 20mins

3. Liquidise. Can be served hot or will freeze well

Happy New Year to you all.

Jenny Jessup