

THE URBAN JUNGLE

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

Issue 07 - August 2008

This newsletter was supposed to be issued at the end of June, before I went on holiday! However I just had too much to do before I went away to get this done and, ever since my return, I seem to have spent all my spare time watering, weeding, picking and freezing. As rain stopped play on the allotment today, I thought that I must get this finished, so here goes.

Welcome To

In the last few days we have had some people take on some of the uncultivated allotments near the car park. I will give you more details in the next newsletter.

And Farewell

Many of you will know Ron Swann who has worked a plot on our site for many years. He had been unwell since the death of his wife a year or so ago. We have now been told that he has been moved into a nursing home; so he will no longer be working his allotment.

Hormone Weed Killer Damage –A Message from the Committee

Several of our members have already reported weed killer damage to crops, similar to that which some of us experienced last year. These have been reported to DEFRA. Apparently lots of other people, (including commercial growers), right across the country have the same problem. We now know the identity of the chemical in the weed killer which is causing the problem – it is aminopyralid. This chemical only had a provisional licence for sale and this has now been revoked and the chemical withdrawn, pending further investigation. It is possible that the horse manure is a source of this chemical on our site and so we are advising all our members not to use the manure heap for the time being. If you have plants which are affected, (last year it hit potatoes, tomatoes, broad beans and peas), it is worth trying a combination of watering and feeding. Last year this seemed to help them to recover and certainly potato yields were not badly affected. Current official opinion (RHS, Pesticides Safety Directorate, DEFRA, etc.) says that affected crops are safe to eat, as horses and cows have suffered no ill effects from eating sprayed hay. Please burn – do not compost – any affected plant material, but not until 1 September! Make sure you read any notices posted on the site, as the committee will keep you up to date with the latest news.

Weather Watch – Be Blight Aware!

(This warning has come too late – the dreaded blight has arrived. However remember this for next year).

Now is the time to apply a preventative spray against blight. Both potatoes and tomatoes are likely to be affected. Blight loves warm and wet, (humidity greater than 75%), weather. Although blight can strike at any time, (it was very early last year), high to late summer is the most likely time for an attack. Even if it is not warm and wet, it is wise to spray crops in mid-July and again in early August. What spray you use depends on how green you are trying to be! Most people use a copper based solution such as Bordeaux mixture, but you can also use Dithane, (definitely not organic). Trevor has joined Blight Watch. He will post a blight alert on the board, if he receives a warning text – another good reason to keep an eye on any notices!

Working Parties – A Message from Mike Jessup

You may remember that I was asked to organise three working parties to see if we could tackle various jobs around the site, after which the committee would review whether or not this could be a good method for getting things done in future.

Firstly – a brief review of what's been achieved. We've done a lot of clearance of rubbish from around the site, pruned bushes around the equipment shed, carried out maintenance work on lockers, done emergency repairs to holes in the fence by Tesco and are part way through erecting metal fence panels behind the hedge along Joel Street.

The top lockers are looking in good shape now, following replacement of one complete end (great job by Gary), and the application of two coats of preservative. Repairs to the bottom lockers are mostly complete (thanks to Roger), and one end has been coated with preservative.

On fencing - we've erected 1 metre pedestrian barriers lashed to scaffold poles to the South of the Main gate, and put up about half of the 2 metre metal panels, again lashed to scaffold poles, between the main gate and car park gate. The reason this is taking so long is that it's been necessary to level the ground and cut the hedge back as we go.

We have enough panels to complete the fence between the two gates, and then the plan is to buy more barriers to complete a fence to the North of the car park gate. Hopefully we will then be in a state where all the gaps in the hedge that have been used by kids to get access to the site are then blocked off.

I discussed how to proceed with working parties at the committee meeting on 9th June. There seems to be two types, of jobs, namely general site clearance work and more specific projects. We agreed to have 2 or 3 parties a year to tackle general site clearance, but "project" work needs preparation and materials in advance, and is more suitable for some people than others. So we will try to plan and advertise for help with these separately. Completion of the fencing and work on the lockers both fall into this category, so watch for notices if you could help with either of these.

To finish, thanks to everyone who has given up time to help. As we are not a council site we do have to do everything ourselves. I'm only too well aware that some people have physical restrictions, or may have other commitments on Sunday mornings, but there are always plenty of tasks which need doing at other times, particularly if you have specialist skills.

Scaffold Poles and Boards (from Mike Jessup)

In my search for cheap materials for fencing,, Linda at the smallholding, put me in touch with a Company in Greenford which sells second hand building materials, like scaffold poles, fencing panels, metal barriers and scaffold planks, (though they seldom get planks). Have a word with me if you want their details, or I could assemble an order if several people are interested.

Hedge Cutting Working Party - Ted

Last month Ted organised a group of people to cut the street side of the hedge. I hope you have all noticed how smart it looks! On the day the passers by certainly appreciated it. Peter and Michael did some stalwart cutting with the hedge trimmer, which tended to overheat as it was a boiling hot day. Rosemary, Cherry, Lily, Blanca, Ted, Trevor and Angela helped to clear up the cuttings and it was all done in a couple of hours. Linda's husband has cut the frontage to her smallholding, so we are looking pretty good on the outside. Michael has offered to help to cut the inside of the hedge. Sometime after the 1st September we will need to burn all these hedge clippings.

Crop Thefts – a Message from Angela

Unfortunately crops have again been stolen from plots by persons unknown. Please let a member of the committee know if you notice any unfamiliar person entering the site, with or without, a key. We have a number of new members this year, but a friendly greeting should allow you to sort out strangers from members. Members who have asked friends or family to water their plots whilst they are on holiday would be advised to introduce them first to a member of the committee and also to their immediate plot neighbours. This should avoid any misunderstandings. The terms and conditions clearly state that members should always accompany their visitors to the site; this is for security reasons.

Clearing Rough Ground

It has been brought to the attention of the committee that some members have been using mowers inappropriately. Our machines are for domestic, not industrial, use and are not designed for use on rough ground. Rough use causes damage to machines, which others need. At the moment the society does not have any machines capable of clearing rough ground, so hand clearing is the only option, (unless you have your own machine or hire one).

New Committee Members

Ines Uriarte and Peter Jose have been co-opted onto the committee.

A Repeat Appeal - Newsletter Distribution via e-mail

It would save us (particularly Cherry!) a lot of time and effort if we could e-mail this newsletter to you. If you have an e-mail address, please let Trevor know at joelstreetallotments@tiscali.co.uk Thanks.

Jenny Jessup