

# THE URBAN JUNGLE

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

Issue 10 - March 2009

## Introduction

The weather was not kind to us gardeners in 2008 and it continued this way into 2009 – dumping the worst snow fall for many years on the very day of our AGM. A few brave souls made it to the meeting but, because it was an impossible journey for many of you, Angela has asked me to attach a copy of the Chairman's Report to this Newsletter which I have done. Elsewhere in this Newsletter you can read about both our Future Plans (Angela), and the advantages of being affiliated to NSALG (Trevor). I have also included a Rhubarb Cake recipe for you to try, (which Trevor first sent to me in May last year and I've not had room to include it since!)

## Welcome To .....

There has been a lot of letting activity. This will be covered in the next Newsletter.

## And Farewell To .....

It is with great regret that we must say goodbye to Jacky Fineman who has been a valuable, active Committee Member. She is a very busy lady and personal demands on her time have prevented her from cultivating her plot as she would like to. Hence she has taken the very difficult decision not to renew her membership. We will miss her.

## Future Plans (Angela)

A number of important measures have been taken by the Society during 2008 which will affect all our members.

In March, the Committee updated and revamped the Terms & Conditions of Membership. All members are now legally required to sign two copies of this document. Both copies will be countersigned by a Committee Member, the first to be retained by the member and the second by the Society, as a record of the contract undertaken by both parties. All Allotment Societies are legally required to provide their members with a similar contract, although the conditions will vary. In our case, they are based on the terms of our lease.

It was agreed at the Committee Meeting in March 2008 that the Terms & Conditions would be circulated to all members, beginning with new members. This has now been done, but there is still a handful of people who have not returned their forms for countersigning. We strongly urge those who have forgotten, to do so immediately, as it is now a condition of membership for 2009. If you have mislaid your form, please contact Trevor and arrange to meet him on site to exchange contracts. His mobile number is on the notice board.

The other important measure arose from a letter of complaint read out at the AGM concerning plot holders not tending their plots. This letter voiced the concerns of many members we have spoken to on site and provoked some discussion from the floor. Our lease states clearly that these premises are to be used for allotment purposes only under the terms of the Small Holdings & Allotments Act and managed in a good and husbandlike manner. Consequently, the following motion was carried unanimously:

"Any member who neglects to cultivate his/her plot will not be offered renewal of membership for the following year."

A further requirement of our lease is that we should maintain the trenches put in to drain the site. Many of us have noticed that our plots have patches of standing water during the rainy season and one or two plots retain water for much longer because they are low lying and collect water from higher ground, rendering cultivation impossible. Our more experienced members have told me that trenches either side of the main paths used to be dug each winter so that water could flow away into the stream beyond the paddock. Over the years, successive plot holders have filled in these ditches, unaware that this has had repercussions elsewhere on the site. With the decline in membership from the 1980s, there were fewer hands to do the work, hence the flooding we have today. Today, however, the tide has turned in our favour and we now have full membership and a waiting list in double figures.

The drainage was discussed at the AGM and we have decided to start work on the main trench which runs through the centre of the site and flows down through the channel in the paddock to the stream in the line of hedges. Trevor and I have taken technical advice on how wide and deep this needs to be and the answer is 2 feet, (60cm). Eventually more channels will need to be dug feeding into this one, but there is no point doing these until there is somewhere for the water to go. In just two sessions a dozen of us have already broken the back of the lower trench beyond the crosspath and opened up the trench in the paddock. The water is now flowing well. A further two Sundays should complete that stretch. We could do with a couple more volunteers to help clear brambles. Look out for the posters on the notice boards. By the end of March we will need to be working on our own plots, so we will have a break until the Autumn, when we will start on the stretch above the crosspath. Members need to be aware that they should leave a 3 foot path either side of the pipeline uncultivated to allow access to widen the centre trench.

## **NSALG (Trevor)**

As mentioned in the last Newsletter, we have affiliated to the National Society of Allotment & Leisure Gardeners in order to benefit from their insurance arrangements. This brings several additional benefits which you may wish to take advantage of

### **NSALG Cheap Seeds**

Through an arrangement with King's Seeds, members can buy seeds, seed potatoes, onions sets, plants and other gardening sundries at about half price. In return the Society receives a discount of approximately 10%, which goes to our funds. Cathy (Brushfield) has kindly volunteered to act as our Seed Secretary to co-ordinate this. In July, seed catalogues will be available for anyone who wishes to order. Members simply fill in the order form and give it, together with payment, to Cathy. The seeds are sent back to her, individually bagged for each member; larger items are despatched directly to the member. So as individuals we can buy cheap seeds and the Society's funds also benefit. Notices will be put up in due course, giving more details and a more precise timetable. In the meantime, Cathy has a few of last year's catalogues to look at - although not to order from - for anyone who is interested.

### **NSALG Magazine**

NSALG also publishes a quarterly magazine, with a mixture of news, articles, gardening tips and the usual adverts. Members can have this delivered direct for £6 per year. Please see Trevor if you want to order.

### **NSALG Personal Insurance**

As a further benefit to members, NSALG can also arrange personal insurance for affiliated members. Details are on the notice board in the car park.

### **To Bee or not to Bee**

I expect many of you have read recent reports in the national press lamenting the serious decline in the number of bees in the UK. As allotmenters this is of concern to us, as we need bees to pollinate all our fruit and vegetables, I was surprised and pleased to learn at the AGM that we have a bee hive on site. However this does mean that we all have to be careful if we are thinking of using any insecticide sprays on our plots. I know many people do not use any sprays and of those that do, most use organic sprays. But even these can be deceptive, because they can be dangerous to bees and other beneficial insects. If you are spraying, please try to use a spray which is "bee" friendly. If you are using another type of insecticide, at a minimum please follow the instructions to minimise the impact on bees, which is usually advice to spray when bees are not active. Finally, whenever you are spraying anything, please think of your allotment neighbours and only spray when the air is still and there is no wind.

### **Recipe - Rhubarb (or Apple) Cake (from Trevor)**

This is a timely recipe because rhubarb seems to be doing well this year. This is because it likes an old fashioned cold winter!

- Rub 5 oz butter into 10 oz SR flour (& a pinch of salt).
- Then mix in 5 oz soft brown sugar plus either:  
3 cooking apples (peeled, cored & diced) or  
3/4 large sticks of rhubarb (sliced into smallish chunks), plus some finely diced ginger & a teaspoon of powdered ginger
- Make a well in the centre and add a beaten egg, plus enough milk to mix into a dry dough.
- Tip into an 8" loose-bottomed cake tin and bake in a fairly high oven for 30-40 minutes.

When cool, eat and enjoy!

### **And finally .....**

We have decided to put the issue of this Newsletter on a more formal basis. It will now be issued 4 times a year, in March, June, September and December. Obviously there is not enough space to include all that is happening in the Newsletter, so please keep an eye on the notice board for current information.

Jenny Jessup