

THE URBAN JUNGLE

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

Issue 11 - June 2009

Introduction

There is a lot of information to give you this time, so I will dive straight in

Welcome To

(Please note that there is now a very useful plan of the site on the notice board which will help you to see where our new - and not so new – members are located.)

Along the lower path we have two new members: Ricki and Barbara.

Along the car park path we have John, Teresa, Mark (below the Tesco wall) and Andre (half way down).

Finally, at the very end, in what was once bramble, you can find Paul, Marian, Sean and Richard.

King's Seeds Scheme (Cathy)

We have an opportunity to join the "Kings Seed Scheme", whereby allotment members can order seeds and other items through our Seed Secretary (Cathy Brushfield) at extremely competitive prices. A sample catalogue has been attached to the car park notice board so members can get a flavour of what is on offer and the related prices involved, the latest catalogue and order forms are unfortunately not yet available, but should be issued sometime in June 2009. The benefits of using this scheme are twofold, as not only do our members obtain first class seeds etc. at very low prices, but additionally the society also receives a small remuneration from Kings Seeds for the orders placed. Although it is now too late to order most seeds for use this year, onion sets and shallots can still be ordered using the forms provided with the catalogue on the notice board, (last order date 20th September 2009). Completed order forms should be handed to Cathy together with the correct remittance. Keep an eye on the notice board for the new catalogue and feel free to chat to your newly elected seed secretary about this exciting scheme.

Ken Guy's Walkabout

On Saturday 30th May Ken Guy and Eileen Bowlt visited the site. Ken is Chairman of the Ruislip Combined Charity, who is our landlord. Eileen is a local historian, who is also a charity committee member. Eileen knows a lot about the history of the site and was particularly interested in the work that is being done in opening up some of the drainage ditches. They were both very pleased to see the level of activity on the site. They really enjoyed their visit and reported back to the Trustees how pleased they were to see the good use of the land as allotments.

A Pat on the Back (Angela)

As a follow on from the previous item, it is timely to thank all of you who have made the site look so much more attractive and cared for. Every time I pass any members on my way to my plot, (which is as far away from the entrance as you can get), they remark on how much the site has improved in the past year.

Thank you too, to all members who have kept a watchful eye on the site and have reported members' concerns and queries. Unless we know there is a problem we can't set about fixing it.

Give yourselves a pat on the back for all your hard work.

Weather Watch – Be Blight Aware! (A repeat of last year's advice)

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, 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 or e-mail members, if he receives a warning text – a good reason to keep an eye on any notices and to give us your e-mail address!

Letting out of Mowers - Fly the Flag

I know that, in recent weeks, many of you have found it difficult to get hold of a mower when you want to cut your paths and, to add to the frustration, you find yourselves walking down to the machine shed only to find it closed. A new scheme is now being trialled whereby if a committee member is on site and available to let out equipment, they will hang their name on the shed door AND run a blue flag up a new flag pole which has recently been installed nearby. This will enable you to tell, without leaving your plot, whether it is worth your while walking down to the shed to collect a mower.

Cultural Advice (Angela)

For those of you relatively new to vegetable gardening, here are a couple of tips on rotation and watering.

Rotation: - to minimise disease, it is important that crops are planted in a different place each year. Ideally you should use a 4 year rotation plan but as a minimum you should use 3 years. It is easy to think that you can remember what was planted where each year, but in practice a written plan of your plot each year is essential.

Watering: - watering is essential at planting time and, for fruit, just before harvesting. Water sparingly at other times. Over watering encourages surface roots instead of deep roots, so plants will collapse quickly in a drought as they will not have built up a strong root system. Also, over watering of some plants, such as tomatoes, can make produce taste very bland and mushy.

The Water System (Angela)

Three new water tanks have been installed by Gary and Ted. Thank you both. Will everybody please look out for any leaks and report immediately any that you find. Any water leak is money down the drain for our Society!

Electronic Gates (Angela)

To help with security, when members use the lower entrance to come on site, will they please normally use the pedestrian gate and their key. The double electric gates are for car access only if members need to unload. If anyone is coming in on foot with a wheelbarrow or similar load, so that they can't use the pedestrian gate, will they please use the access code to half open a single gate. Members can park on the cross path only to unload. Otherwise please leave the cross path for the elderly or infirm to park on. Thank you.

Harlyn Primary School Visits and Others

We've already had two visits from infant classes from this local school and one after school from the Gardening Club. Two more visits have been pencilled in for July.

Lottery Funding

If you have been on site recently you will have seen notices to tell you that the Committee are putting together an application to request a grant from the Lottery for a composting toilet. Opportunities to apply for funding come up from time to time, so if you have any ideas for new facilities that will enhance the site, please let a member of the Committee know. Regrettably, funding is not available to improve existing features such as security, or the water system.

Joel Street Community Meeting

There was a meeting recently of all those people who have an interest in what is going on in the Joel Street area. Trevor and Angela represented Joel Street Allotments at this meeting and put up a small exhibition, (thanks to Roger for his photos). Those attending represented a wide range of people – young and not so young residents, the Community Police, the disabled, the local Church and our local Councillor. The discussion covered all local concerns. I'm sure none of you will be surprised to read that they were - littering, fast traffic and bored youth hanging around Northwood Hills, especially at night. Three boys from Haydon School gave a well constructed presentation about their school and answered questions from the audience. Somewhat surprisingly, the concerns of both young and old were the same. There is going to be a follow up meeting at Fairfield Hall in October.

And finally

It is the Society's centenary next year and the Committee is looking for suitable ways to celebrate this occasion. If you have any ideas, please pass them on to a Committee member. They are already planning an exhibition – possibly in the local library, so they are looking for contributions for this from the members. They are particularly interested in any anecdotes, old photos, newspaper articles and weather records.

Sorry – once again I have no room to include a recipe.

Jenny Jessup