

THE URBAN JUNGLE

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

Issue 18 - June 2010

Let's Celebrate – Centenary BBQ and Grand Loo Opening - Sunday July 18th

- The BBQ will be held in the car park, which will be closed to cars all day.
- Members will need to supply their own tables, chairs and drinks for themselves and their guests.
- Please arrive by 1.45pm. At 2.00, Alison Rowe, head of the London region of the Big Lottery, will present the Society with a cheque, after which Mrs Jill Rhodes, former Mayor of Hillingdon, will be opening the composting toilet. The BBQ will follow this.
- We will need volunteers to help set up, to help cook and to help clear up afterwards.

Information about ticket sales is as follows:

- We must know numbers in advance as we have to buy food for the BBQ. Last ticket sales July 11th.
- Feel free to bring family and friends, (as long as they buy a ticket).
- A £2.50 entrance ticket will entitle each ticket holder to BBQ and salads.
- Children under 5 admitted free.
- If you would like to help in preparing salads, please sign the list when you buy your tickets. Thanks.

Let's Get Spick and Span 1 - 11th July: Skip and Tidy-Up Day (Trevor)

We have ordered a skip for Sunday 11th. One of the priorities for this is to rid the site of the piles of rotting carpet that have accumulated over the years; but any bulky items that won't fit in cars can also be got rid of if there is room. (No fridges or freezers!) So that the skip is packed as economically as possible, Ted, Joe, Tim & Gerry will be in charge of loading. Please don't add anything to the skip unless one of these has approved it! We are also having a Working Party to clear weeds and generally to tidy the site, ready for 18th July. We want to make a good impression on our guests. This is an important publicity opportunity for Joel Street Allotments. We want it to open new (financial) doors for the site. Please come along if you can help.

Let's Get Spick and Span 2 - Hedge Cutting: 1st and 8th July (Trevor)

Volunteers needed to clear up please. Peter has already organised a strong-arm gang to cut the hedge, but a disposal team is needed. A job for the ladies?

Northwood Hills Chamber of Commerce Fun Day, Saturday 29th May (Angela)

From a chance meeting with our friend Les Drussel at the Ruislip Craft Market one Sunday in April, we learned that Northwood Hills shopkeepers were getting together to set up a Chamber of Commerce to try to regenerate the shopping parade which had once been flourishing. The idea was to attract family shoppers back to Northwood Hills by having a Fun Day; this had been successful in Ruislip Manor, so why not Northwood Hills? At the time we wondered whether we might ask to be included; after all it would give the allotments a bit of publicity. But it was really intended as a platform for the shopkeepers, so we gave it no more thought.

The following month, at the same market, we were again approached by Les with details of the size of the site allocated to Joel Street Allotments, the amount we had to pay, (nothing if we weren't selling), the by-laws we had to abide by, and the name of our contact organiser, Steve Allen, the new chairman of the Chamber. We were told to "See him as soon as you can, to find out where your stall will be." Suddenly a fait accompli and only a week to count down!! Consulting the weather forecast, and bearing in mind our forthcoming commitments for the Harlyn plant sale and Centenary BBQ to celebrate the Lottery Funding, we bought a gazebo in the B&Q sale. Ray kindly made some sturdy feet to take weights to stop it flying away and Joe helped us to set it up. Roger designed some very professional-looking flyers. We hastily threw together a few decorative herb and vegetable arrangements for the stall, Billie provided us with lots of beautiful photos of the site and Trevor saw to the Joel Street Allotments lettering. Joe and Ray brought a table and a couple of chairs and Ines and Ewan turned up with tablecloths and helped thread up the display. Our objective? It was to put Joel Street Allotments on the map, (and to add to our waiting list).

The morning had dawned cold and rainy. Our hearts sank. Would anyone come? One or two customers of Wenzels came to shelter from the rain as we were setting up, but by noon not many had ventured forth. Cyndy raised our spirits by turning up to help man the stall, but at 1pm Trevor and I had to get back to the site to meet Ken Guy and Eileen Bowlt for the Annual Walkabout, leaving the stall in the capable hands of Barbara F. and Andre. We had created much interest, but no additions to the waiting list.

However, when we returned to clear up at 4.30pm, after the Walkabout, 10 signatures had been added to the list of people wanting plots! All thanks to Cyndy, Barbara F., Andre, Bob and Jenny, Andy, Graham and Janice, Adrian and Cathy, Sam, Barbara C. and Rose for manning the most popular stall on the street in spite of the rain! And thanks to Ted and Gerry for turning up to support. This was definitely a success story for the allotments. Plant sale next year by popular demand!

Central Trench (Angela)

The following morning - 30th May - Gerry, Ray, Andre, Matthew, Allan, Barbara C., Andy and Kevin turned up to dig the trench across Michael's plot. Clive also brought his digger which made short work of the trench from the car park down to the starter plots. I had hoped to finish this before the BBQ, but by an unfortunate coincidence the World Cup has intervened, stealing my crew! A trench still remains to be dug across Jenny and Mike's plot and the Starter plots.

Machines (Angela)

The Committee has come to the conclusion that we need more robust machines and has therefore decided to trial a new petrol mower and a grass trimmer. These will not be for general use until the Committee is happy with their performance on site. We will then review the matter. Adrian and I have done considerable research into suitable replacements for the worn-out machinery in store. Until now we have not been in a financial position to consider this, but our current full membership has replenished the coffers. The plan is to scrap the already worn-out mowers and trimmer and to replace the others as needed. Joe and Ted have already started to clear the shed; Mower 2 and the rotavator have been removed as unusable. There are currently no plans to invest in another rotavator as the shed has limited space. Members who have relied on it to rotavate their plots will, in future, need to hire one, or buy their own. Three mowers remain. We have found a Hayter agent to do repairs for future purchases. The current machines would cost more to repair than they are worth.

Hillside Children's Visit (Angela)

On the afternoons of June 8th and 9th, two classes from Hillside Junior School visited our allotment site as part of their investigations into what a plant needs to grow. Most of the children were 8 years old, although some were still seven. Their teachers had obviously prepared them well for their visit because their questions were very much to the point and they listened attentively to the answers!

After our initial introductions, the children were divided into two groups of twelve. I had given their teachers five quiz sheets containing several drawings of fruits and vegetables, (beautifully crafted by Billie). The idea was for the children to match the fruit and vegetables to their jumbled names. I expected perhaps two to be completed, but they all turned up with clip boards and pencils, having done all five! We therefore set about trying to identify them growing on the allotments. That was more difficult, because we could not see the vegetables growing below ground or those that were still only producing flowers, not fruit. Nevertheless, most vegetables were recognised by at least one child in the group, even rhubarb, carrots and beetroot. One common vegetable stumped them all. Guess which one?

Kevin invited a group to look round his plot (and helped them with the answers) and Ted showed them his trick of watering courgettes when they had grown so large that their roots had become invisible. Billie and Andre volunteered to help the children with their activities and answer their many very sensible questions. Trevor and Sam showed them how to sow lettuce seeds and I showed them how to make free plant food with comfrey leaves. It was a toss-up between using the shears and pouring on the water as to which was more fun! I didn't think there were that many angles to hold a pair of shears!

The children left with lots of plants and herb cuttings to tend at school. From our point of view a Summer visit was far more successful than a Spring visit because of the weather and there was more for the children to see and do. This initiative is new to our site and we are all learning. It was great that more members wanted to get involved and much more interesting for the children. Many thanks to all who helped make the day a success.

Intruder

An intruder has been seen gaining access to the site by climbing over the fence from Tolcarne Drive flats. Please be vigilant and report any further sightings to the Committee.

And finally

Please note that Minutes of Committee meetings are displayed on the notice boards. The next newsletter will be in a month's time.

Jenny Jessup

