

# THE URBAN JUNGLE

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

Issue 26 - March 2012

## Introduction

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2012. I always regard March as the start of the gardening year although much has already happened. We have had our AGM (see the report below), we are already gearing up for our Diamond Jubilee Plant Sale – helpers needed please and we have moved into the 21<sup>st</sup> century now that we have our own web site. Want to know more? Read on.

## Farewell to....

Murugesu Thanikasala - Tony - who has been a plot-holder for many years, has died following a heart attack. He had been seriously ill with cancer for some time and had recently undergone an arduous course of chemotherapy, throughout which he coped with stoicism and dignity. Our thoughts are with Jaya.

## The 2012 AGM

Another record attendance, despite having to change the date at the last minute as Fairfield had double-booked us! And a very positive mood from all those attending to continue to improve the site and to forge links with the local community. We had input from Ann Marie Chapman-Bennett from the Community Police (see below) and from one of our Ward Councillors, John Morgan, regarding parking issues. The meeting seemed to go reasonably smoothly, thanks in part to the Committee's nominations having been sorted beforehand, which gave plenty of time for members to voice any concerns or priorities.

Thanks to Adrian for putting together the slide show at the start, and Graham and Janice for ensuring that everyone was welcomed. Also to those who contributed home-made preserves for sale. And especial thanks to Mick and Rose for organising the refreshments and raffle, the profits of which paid for the hire of Fairfield.

## Treasurer's Report for 2011 (Barbara Cumbers)

We have more members now than in 2010, with all new members only taking 5 poles, rather than a standard plot of 10 poles. The insurance and NSALG membership of £5 is paid by every member regardless of the size of their plot, so overall income has increased (£5405 in 2011, compared to £5021 in 2010). In addition, some previously uncultivated plots have now been let, increasing the rent received for land.

For various reasons we haven't spent as much on maintenance round the site this year as we did in 2010 (£1225 in 2011; £1499 in 2010). Consequently, there has been an excess of income over expenditure of £606. Nevertheless, the committee decided to increase the rent by £0.05 per pole, from £1.30 to £1.35, in order to cover the expected increase in expenses because of inflation. In particular, water costs are expected to rise substantially. We had a fairly serious water leak in the early part of 2011, resulting in a water bill of £980 for 2011 (£593 in 2010). We also had to pay £420 for the repair of the water main.

Some of the tools used for site maintenance were replaced in 2011 with better quality machinery that may prove more reliable. Expenditure: £575. We hope to continue this in 2012, possibly with some tillers for members to use on their own plots.

Our overall finances are in a fairly healthy state, and we started 2012 with a balance of £5456. Expected income for 2012 is £5790.



## **The Committee**

The following members were elected to serve for the following year:

Chairman: Angela Dixon  
Treasurer: Barbara Cumbers  
Secretary: Trevor Dixon 07914-921390

Committee:

Michael Barber (Site Manager) 07884-416935  
Linda Brown  
Cathy Brushfield  
Jenny Clark  
Robert Clark  
Sue Eddiford  
Barbara Faulkner  
Ines Uriarte  
Tim Wood

## **Matters arising from the AGM**

Members expressed concerns about the drainage. This has been an on-going project for the past three years and we are now in the final stage, renovating the ditch on the southern side of the lower main path. There were also concerns about the rising cost of the water supply; not only do we have considerably more members than before, but the actual water costs are rising year-on-year. So we will be actively researching the possibility of constructing a borehole, and - more importantly - seeking help with funding this project. There was also continued interest in the possibility of some kind of communal building. Again we'll investigate the various possibilities and possible funding. And you wanted another BBQ! (Hopefully with slightly better weather than last year!) We have also been asked to run a plant stall at the Jubilee Event on Saturday June 2nd. The Committee is already actively working on this and fairly soon we will be looking for volunteers to produce plants for sale on the day.

## **Dial 101....**

As usual, Ann Marie Chapman-Bennett from the local Community Police attended the meeting, and gave us a briefing on the latest developments to deal with crime in the area. She stressed that all crimes should be reported immediately, or it will give the impression that none are occurring. For the next six months, a Dispersal Zone has been put in place in and around the shopping area of Joel Street, but unfortunately for us this stops at Colchester Road as - apart from our crop thefts and shed break-ins last year - no crimes have been reported in and around the allotments. Trespass is not a crime, but any theft or damage, including graffiti, is, so please report it. Your stolen gardening tool may be used to help commit the next crime! The Community Police can be contacted on 020 8721 2546. If you need immediate action, then dial 101. And - in every case - please also report it to us: [joelstreetallotments@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:joelstreetallotments@tiscali.co.uk). We report all crimes to Ann Marie personally and liaise on a regular basis. She also has a key to the site and an open invitation to pop in and walk round.

## **RHS Membership**

As reported briefly in the last Newsletter, we have looked around carefully to find the current "best buy" for our insurance and have found that it is through the Royal Horticultural Society. This provides us with:

- 1 - Public Liability (essential for attendance at any outside event, but it also gives us all-round legal protection)
- 2 - Employer's Liability (which covers anyone, paid or otherwise, engaged in any communal task around the site)
- 3 - Buildings Cover for all communal buildings and their communal contents (ie. the two locker blocks, the machine shed and the composting toilet).



It does not cover - and no policy would - personal sheds and contents, nor personal injury while working on your plot. (But sheds and contents can be insured personally through NSALG: please ask if you want details.)

To qualify for this insurance, the Society is now affiliated to the RHS. This, in turn, brings a small perk which you may wish to take advantage of! We have invested £10 of the Society's money to buy a discount card, which any member can use to get a 30% reduction for two people on entry to any RHS garden. For us, this is most likely to mean Wisley, unless you are on holiday elsewhere in the country. (It also covers Harlow Carr in Yorkshire, Hyde Hall in Essex and Rosemoor in Devon.) The card can be used as many times as we want; the only restriction is that it cannot be used on a Sunday, which is a full-members-only day. So, anyone who wants to use it for the day, please ask to borrow it and return it a.s.a.p. for another member to use. And if it proves popular, we can have up to three cards, so we'll buy more if you want us to. And for anyone who has never been to Wisley - just go! It's a fabulous day out! The new glasshouse alone is worth the price of admission. And that's without the fruit and vegetable gardens, the orchard, the rockery, the long borders, the rhododendron walk, the model gardens and a lot more.... There's a very good Garden Centre as well! (The food's quite good too, but don't turn up late, especially in summer!)

### **Another Perk for Our Members**

As the Society is now affiliated to the Royal Horticultural Society, those of you who are not already individual members in your own right may wish to take advantage of the special offer they have just announced. They are offering individual membership at the reduced rate of £35.70, a saving of 30% off the standard price. This entitles you to unlimited free access for two to all four RHS gardens, as well as 80 other gardens throughout the country; a monthly magazine, "The Garden" (cover price £4.25); priority booking and members-only days for all RHS shows, including the Chelsea Flower Show and the Hampton Court Palace Flower Show; and free personalised gardening advice by email, post or in person. In addition, you will receive a £5 voucher to spend at any RHS Shop or Plant Centre, and the Society also receives £5 for everyone who joins. We have sent off for the introductory pack, so watch this space!

### **New Machinery ( a message from our Site Manager, Michael)**

I am pleased to say that we have just purchased two new rotovators, one medium sized for use on those larger beds; and another smaller one, ideal for use on raised beds, (and some ladies might find this one easier to use). Those people wishing to use them must supply their own unleaded petrol, (I do have cans if needed). Please note, the rotovators are for cultivated soil only, not for areas that have been left fallow. If you wish to use these rotovators but need some help, I will be at the allotments most weekend mornings over the next few weeks. Failing that, you can phone me, my contact number is on the board.

### **Site Toilet (a message from Ines)**

Here is gentle reminder to a small minority of users of the site toilet.

The toilet on site is a COMMUNITY toilet. PLEASE LEAVE IT AS YOU WOULD WANT TO FIND IT. Those of us who do use it are ALL responsible for keeping it clean and tidy.

The toilet works by dehydrating the solids and evaporating the liquids in order to reduce waste volumes by up to 90%. Waste is transformed into a neutral, odour free material in a completely ecological process. The unique chimney and the evaporation process creates an air flow which radically reduces odours in a way which is not possible with a conventional composting toilet. It is a waterless system

#### **To clean the toilet:**

NO WATER OR CHEMICALS CAN GO DOWN THE LOO – there are toilet brushes available and these can be used with a little water to clean down the pan.

HUMAN WASTE AND LOO PAPER ONLY DOWN THE TOILET PLEASE.



There is NO EXCUSE for anyone to leave the toilet seat and rim in a mess. It can easily be wiped / cleaned with a small amount of the antiseptic gel and some toilet paper.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO PUT THE TOILET LID DOWN AFTER USE, as this will reduce the potential for flies. (I have noticed that there are a few flies around at the moment and this is because of the horse manure pile behind the toilet. To all plot holders near there - please help yourselves to the manure as it has been left there for you to use).

CLOSE THE DOOR AS YOU LEAVE.

A supply of loo paper is kept in the machine shed so if there's none in the toilet, a key holder for the shed should be able to get another roll.

If there are any problems with the loo including no paper or antiseptic gel, you can send a text message or voice mail to this number - 07591550968

The number is also posted in the loo.

### **Have You Remembered? - A Date for your Diary (Barbara Faulkner)**

Our allotment society has been given a large stall for the Community Diamond Jubilee Celebrations on June 2nd, which will be held at the Recreation Grounds in Chestnut Avenue. We therefore have a wonderful opportunity to pull out all the stops and show what can be achieved by "growing your own". It would be good to have a co-ordinated look this year, with lots of healthy plants ready by June 2nd and to this end pots, compost and seed will be provided. If anyone prefers to use their own seed, they will of course be refunded any expense. The use of a greenhouse would be a bonus, but not essential, as lots of plants could be nurtured under cold frames, etc. The plants suggested so far are tomatoes, courgettes, pumpkins, cucumbers, peppers, chillies, lettuce and herbs such as coriander, parsley, basil, mint, rosemary, sage and lavender. If you would like to join in this planting and nurturing venture, please contact Barbara Faulkner, or any member of the Committee, or just email us.

### **We Now Have Our Own Web Site!**

And it's a free one, so it's not costing us a penny! Although if we find it useful we can upgrade, which will give us a unique domain name and a few more bells and whistles, such as a members-only section. It's still very much a work-in-progress, so log in and let us know what improvements you think we can make. (Be kind, please!) [www.joelstreetallotments.weebly.com](http://www.joelstreetallotments.weebly.com)

### **And Finally .....**

I haven't forgotten that I said that I would try to give you some more information on green manures and "no dig" gardening. I will try to give this higher priority in the next newsletter.

You cannot have missed the fact that here in the South East we are facing drought conditions. If anyone has any ideas on how we can manage water better or grow different crops that perhaps need less water, please let me know so that we can share these thoughts. The Committee have already discussed this, and would urge anyone who has a shed or a greenhouse on their plot to fit guttering and water butts. Any other ideas welcome.

And this really is my final point, while on the allotment one Sunday recently I saw a magnificent red kite flying overhead. It was magical.

Jenny Jessup

