

Ruislip-Northwood Co-operative
Smallholding and Allotment Society

Issue 30
December 2013

The Urban Jungle

ANOTHER YEAR DRAWS TO ITS CLOSE

I just don't know where all the time goes. We certainly have had another "interesting" year as far as gardening is concerned. I think we have experienced just about everything we could have had- cold, wet, drought, sun and, most recently, wind. I'm just waiting for the snow now.

WELCOME TO

Satish and Izabela who have taken two of the vacant 5-pole plots.

AND FAREWELL TO

Adrian who has moved out of the area, and to Jackie who has decided that allotments aren't for her. A particular farewell to Alan who was helping his wife, Sally, with her plot, but who has sadly died. Our best wishes and sympathy to Sally who will try to keep up the plot on her own.

GEOFF CRICK

As most of you will know, Geoff Crick died this autumn. For many of us, Geoff was our first introduction to Joel Street Allotments when he was Secretary, and subsequently his shed became one of the focal points for social activity on the site as he and Brenda brewed tea and welcomed people in for a chat. He will be sadly missed.

FEES FOR 2013

You'll be pleased to know that we can hold rents to the same rate as 2013, which is £3 per pole plus £5 insurance and affiliation. A pole is about 25 square metres. Lockers are still £6 per year rental. Your invoice for 2014 is enclosed with this newsletter. Please pay as soon as you can, or at the AGM at the latest. Cheques should be made payable to:

Ruislip-Northwood Co-operative Smallholding and Allotment Society Ltd.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE ACTING CHAIRMAN

Allotment gardeners seem to me to be the most varied bunch of individuals I have ever encountered. I think that is very positive and I enjoy the variety. However, it can make our administration difficult from time to time as, for example, when dealing with non-cultivated plots. Of course, there may be many reasons for this but we have to deal with it because it almost invariably affects neighbouring plot holders. Below are our guidelines to ensure fairness:

Plot inspections will be carried out in spring every year, soon after the Easter weekend, by three members, one of whom should not be on the committee.

Plots will be put in one of four categories:

- A. More than 50% of the plot cultivated. Plot tidy.*
- B. Less than 50% of the plot cultivated. Some work done in the current calendar year.*
- C. Little or no work done in the current calendar year.*
- D. Same as C, but which were also in C in the previous year, and remained largely uncultivated throughout that year.*

Plot-holders in category C will be contacted soon after the inspection, and asked if they wish to keep the plot. Options will be:

- 1. Cultivate at least some of the plot this year.*
- 2. Downsize (if they have more than 5 poles).*
- 3. Give up.*

Plot-holders in category D will be told that unless significant work is done in the current year, they will not be invited to renew their membership. They will be given the option of giving up or downsizing immediately, and in that case would be offered a refund of part of the rent already paid.

Of course, we would much rather encourage members to cultivate, rather than tell them they should leave. My general advice is to start any digging early, the frosts then kill pests and help break up the heavy clay. Autumn is best, but digging on cold, dry winter days can be very invigorating. Spring is then busy with sowing etc. I often see members struggle with digging hard, dry ground in late spring / early summer and having great difficulty in catching up. The hard work doesn't seem to me to bear worthwhile fruit. So we look forward to seeing you braving the cold and wet to make an early start and surprise the plot inspectors with your productivity.

*"... start digging early,
the frosts then kill pests
and help break up the
heavy clay"*

Plot inspections are due in April, so if you've neglected your plot this year, make sure you do some weed clearing and rough digging before then.

Peter Jose

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The next AGM will be on

Monday 27 January 2014

in the main hall at Fairfield, in Windsor Close

Put the date in your diaries NOW.

Papers have been sent out by e-mail and will be available at the meeting. The draft of the minutes of last year's AGM is on the notice boards. The doors will be open from 6.30pm for refreshments and for the sale of raffle tickets. The meeting proper will start promptly at 7.00pm. Mike Lawer has again kindly volunteered to run the raffle, and his wife will manage the refreshments - many thanks to both of them. If you have something to donate as a prize, please bring it along to the meeting.

ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

As many of you will know there have been a number of crop thefts over the last couple of years. If anyone is found taking produce from an allotment which is not theirs without the owner's permission, they will be asked to leave the site and the Society. Similarly, anyone using intimidating or threatening behaviour towards another person while on site will be asked to leave.

A paragraph will be added to the Terms and Conditions that all members agree to: "Members will remain courteous to our neighbours and to fellow allotment holders at all times". I'm surprised it hasn't been there all the time.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Ines had to resign as Chairman in the summer because of family commitments. She also resigned from the committee. We're very grateful to her for the time and effort she put in. Peter Jose took over as Acting Chairman. Michael Barber has indicated that he is standing down as Site Manager at the end of this year. This is quite an onerous role so the Committee are considering whether site maintenance could be done differently, thus spreading the work load. If you think you could help in some way with this, please have a chat to Peter Jose.

We urgently need more people to volunteer to help to run the Society.

Even if site maintenance is not your thing, we urgently need more people to volunteer to help to run the Society. Please consider it, and contact Angela Fleming if you think you can help.

**Ruislip-
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Smallholding
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Society**

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BITS AND PIECES

New Security Fence

Those of you who have been down to the site recently will have noticed that a new security fence has been installed between the allotments and the smallholdings. It is hoped that this will significantly reduce the incidence of thefts and vandalism. Thank you to all those people who helped in clearing the area to enable the fence to be put up and to those who helped install it.

On Site Toilet

Unfortunately the on site toilet was being misused. As a result it has been decided to make the toilet “ladies only” for the moment. The toilet has been locked; keys are available from Angela Fleming for a deposit of £3, which is refundable.

Water supply

Some of you will remember that a complete renewal of the system was agreed at the AGM last year. This has proved more difficult than expected and has been put on hold. In the meantime, the water pressure has been reduced, and this has significantly reduced the water loss.

King's Seeds

Not many people made use of the scheme this year. It's a shame as, not only are the seeds very cheap, but each sale brings a small amount of income for the Society. Please think about it for next year.

Machine shed

One of the padlocks on the machine shed unaccountably went missing in November, and we've had to replace it. As yet, not all keyholders have been given the new key. Please bear with us while we try to sort it out.

Meanwhile if anyone knows where the old padlock might be, please let either Peter or Angela know. Maybe you put it with your own stuff by mistake? Maybe you put it somewhere safe, but somewhere we haven't looked yet? We'd be glad to have it back.

...AND FINALLY

We hope you all enjoy the Christmas break, and hope to see you all at the AGM on 27 January.

Jenny Jessup (editor) and the Committee