

THE URBAN JUNGLE

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

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Introduction

Well it is the end of another growing season. We found that all fruit cropped well, but things that needed warm sunshine, such as squash, peppers and chillies, really struggled. We noticed that it seemed to be a good year for sweet corn too, which made me cross as we decided not to grow any this year as we lost nearly all our corn the previous year. Once again blackfly was a problem. The ladybirds eventually did their stuff, but they were a bit late starting.

Well next year is another season and time for a new committee too,

2016 AGM – All Change?

Peter Jose (Chairman) and Angela Fleming (Secretary) have both said that they will be standing down at the next AGM, so the hunt is on for someone to replace them. If you think that you might be interested, and want to find out what is involved in holding these committee positions, please contact either Peter or Angela who should be able to give you any information you need.

Water System

As you will know our current water system is old, prone to leaks and difficult to maintain and repair. The committee has applied for a grant from the local council to help to pay for renewal work. We understand that our application will be discussed at their December meeting, hopefully, we will know early in the new year whether we have been successful. Obviously it would be preferable to carry out any work in the winter months, when there is no demand for water and when the ground is easier to work. If this project goes ahead, there is bound to be some disruption. Every effort will be made to keep this to a minimum, but we would ask for your co-operation while this important work is being done. Thank you.

Bonfires!

Winter is peak bonfire time, so it is worth repeating the “bonfire rules”. Please think before you light up. As a general rule if the wind is coming from the direction of Tesco’s (i.e. from the north) it will normally be all right to have a bonfire. But do check no one is working on their plot immediately downwind from you, as they might not be very happy getting a lungful of smoke. Smoke blowing onto the road can also be another serious problem, that could cause an accident, so don’t light your bonfire if the wind is coming from the east, i.e. the bottom of the site. Also think about what you are burning. Damp, green waste creates a lot of dark smoke. The burning of plastics or oils on the site is absolutely forbidden, as they are very polluting.

First Aid

My husband always says that allotments are dangerous places, and so they can be. We find strains, cuts, scratches and stings are the most common problems. The committee was asked if there should be a first aid box, available to all, kept in a place like the machine shed. After some discussion, it was decided that this was not practically possible. However it was agreed that each allotment holder should be advised to consider having some basic first aid items available on their plots. (We keep antiseptic wipes, plasters, hand wipes and antiseptic cream in our shed for our own use and we always carry a mobile phone.)

Machinery – A Perennial Problem

If you regularly read this newsletter you will know that we are continually having problems with our machines. This costs us all a lot of money in repairs. When the committee discussed this, it was agreed that we would ask, via the newsletter, if there are any mechanically minded plot holders who would be prepared to take on the responsibility (but obviously not the costs) for managing the machines. If you are such a person, will you please talk to a member of the committee.



LOTTERY FUNDED

Rubbish – Another Perennial Problem

Once again we are finding rubbish dumped around the site – usually in the car park or down by the lockers. The area around the stables is rented by Tim. Tim allows us access to take manure from the heap, but that is all. There is no rubbish collection facility on the site. If you have rubbish on your allotment, you must arrange for its disposal yourself.

Mike and Jenny’s Plot

In the last newsletter I told you about some things we were trying out for the first time on our plot. Well, I am now in a position to let you know how well (or not) we managed. I will deal with the marigolds first. This year we grew *Tagetes Minuta*, which is said to control bindweed and couch grass organically. I did have some problems getting the seeds to germinate (they hate the cold) but, in the end got a few sturdy plants to put on the allotment. I wasn’t convinced that they were going to work, especially when I saw some bindweed winding its way up one the stems of the plant. However, much to my surprise, the bindweed died off and the ground around the plants was surprisingly grass and bindweed free. I will definitely try this again next year. Another similar experiment, following the same principle, was to see if *Tagetes Erecta* could keep the eel worms from munching our potatoes. Well this was a total failure. The potatoes grew so strongly that they smothered the marigold plants and killed them all. We still had eel worm damage on our crop. While we are talking about marigolds, a friend of mine grew *Tagetes Linnaeus* this year and planted them out around her runner beans. She reckoned that she had no problem with black fly this year, while my plants were annihilated, so I will see if this works for me next year.

We also tried out three new crops. The cucamelons grew well but were just a “nothing” crop. I didn’t really have a use for them. The Gigantomo tomatoes were great fun and grew very large fruits. Much to my surprise they were really tasty and didn’t have a lot of seeds. They made lovely soups and pasta sauces so I will be growing them again. Lastly, we grew a new potato variety called Manitou, which was reckoned to be better than Desiree. I will be going back to growing Desiree next year!

If you have ever tried to grow tomatoes on your allotment you will know what a problem blight can be. We read in a newspaper that some research scientists were claiming that spraying tomatoes with soluble aspirin was as effective against blight as any fungicide. AND it helps to increase yield. We tried this this year and we were pleased with the results. If you want to garden organically, we recommend that you give this a try.

Finally, I was talking to Tim a few weeks ago about carrots. We agreed that Autumn King was a super variety to grow. I asked him how he protected his carrots from root fly. He told me that he grew them with coriander which stopped the root flies from scenting the carrots. This is another thing I will try next year.

Just In Case You Missed This Last Time

Here are some useful references for those of you who are on line. Trevor Dixon is our web master. If you have any ideas for items / photos to be put up on our web site please let him know.

Our email address	joelstreetallotments.co.uk
Our web address	joelstreetallotments.weebly.com
RHS website	www.rhs.org.uk
Another useful web site	www.gardenfocused.co.uk

And Finally

This really is my last “and finally” because, after a good few years, this is my last offering as editor of the Urban Jungle. If any of you feel that you would like to take over, please talk to a committee member.

Happy Gardening in 2016!

Jenny Jessup