

# The Bushy Times

Newsletter of the Bushy Park Allotment Association

Issue 36

May 2014

## ***PLANT SALE OPEN DAY***

A reminder of the opportunity to come and support us and enjoy yourself at the same time:-:

**Spring Open Day and Plant Sale: 10<sup>th</sup> May**

There will be unusual tomato, pepper, chilli, courgette and squash plants for sale as well as more standard varieties. We plan to make pizzas in the bread oven. On the day the shop car park will be closed.

## ***COMPOST AND WOODCHIP***

Both our car parks have a bin for compost and a bin for woodchip. These are waste products that we can have delivered free to the site for your use. Some deliveries are also made along the track for those in the middle of the site to cut down the distance that materials have to be moved, however these locations have very limited capacity.

We have pointed out that they are for communal use and that everyone who wants to make use of them should have a fair share. If you buy these materials commercially they cost £3-4 per bag and a barrow load is saving you at least £5-6.

These bins have become untidy as tenants pick and choose what they want with no thought for their fellow tenants or the management of these materials. The bins in the south car park ended up looking like a fly-tipping incident with material extending across half the car park and very little actually in the bin. The Environment Trust volunteer team moved the compost into its bin after they did the track repairs. Since then tenants have once again burrowed into the back of the bin creating a void that the supplier cannot fill up and the compost is extending over the car park area.

**If you wish to make use of this material in future, please only take material from the front of the bin.** This will allow subsequent deliveries to be placed into the bin and not migrate across the car parks. If there is loose material from a recent delivery spilling onto the car park area, do your bit for the community and spend a few minutes to fork it back into the bin.

We stopped the wood chip deliveries after a serious over supply issue at the north car park. Once the available material has been cleared we will resume deliveries. In the meantime there is still plenty of woodchip in the south car park. You may have to work a bit harder for your freebie!

**If we cannot communally manage these bins to keep them tidy then we will have to consider stopping deliveries altogether and everyone will lose this benefit.**

## ***SAFETY***

The repairs to the track seem to have encouraged some to drive at speed through the site. Please remember that there are many young children around and we expect drivers to stick to speeds **less than the 10 MPH signs that are in place.**

Please be aware that the stream at the north end of the site is another hazard for young children and take appropriate steps for their safety.

Keep an eye out for hazards on your plot and the paths. Cane tops can be protected with recycled plastic bottles. Plot holders are jointly responsible for the paths alongside their plots. Grass should be cut and any holes filled in to make the path safe to use. Hoses are a trip hazard, I am particularly bad at leaving the hose across the path and I am training myself to keep it tidied away. We are not all fit and spry and a trip can easily lead to a sprain or a broken bone. If you see a hazard try and rectify it immediately.

Finally, if you are working early or late at your allotment or during the week when fewer people are around it is good practice to make others aware of your presence. If you have an accident they are more likely to be aware and able to help. When I leave my plot late in the evening I let any neighbours present know that I am departing.

## ***VOLUNTEER DAY***

It was very useful to have a volunteer group to work on the track repairs and the Committee are proposing that we organise our own volunteer work day in the autumn when we all have more spare time. There are small and larger jobs that we could tackle with community effort. General rubbish collection and clearing out the stream are a couple of jobs that would improve our general environment. Watch this space for more details

## ***COUNCIL LIAISON***

Plot inspections will be ongoing from early May but there is no need to panic if you have just taken over a plot. However if you took over a plot 6 months or so ago the Council does expect you to have made serious efforts to cultivate the plot. We will take account of the state of your new plot when you took it over and do not expect the whole plot to be dug over.

The plots that will be notified to the Council are those that have **not** been cultivated over the last year to the extent that the Council expects, that is to quote from the new Terms and Conditions: -

**3.1 A minimum of three quarters of any plot shall be in a “cultivation cycle”, with a minimum of 3 crops being grown and be generally in a tidy condition.**

**“Cultivation cycle” is defined as ground preparation, planting of crops, tending and harvesting fruit and vegetables on a continuous annual basis. (T&C)**

We are now keeping a photograph record of the plots that do not get the regular work that the Council requires and that a plot deserves. This is something that other allotment sites in the Borough do as a matter of course and will demonstrate to the Allotment Officer that there has been little or no activity on a plot over the year.

If you have problems with the standpipes please report them to Pete Lewis on the Council website. His contact details are also on the gate notices.

## ***SCARECROW & PHOTO COMPETITIONS***

### **Scarecrow Competition**

We are holding a scarecrow competition for this year's July Open Day. Entries are invited for registration on or before the Open Day from children 12 or younger. The entries will then be judged and the winner will be announced at the September Open Day.

The height of each scarecrow should not exceed 1.8m (6ft) and should be made from reclaimed and recycled materials.

### **Photographic Competition**

The Borough has asked for photographs of the allotments to go on their website. This is an opportunity to get a photo onto the website. Please send photos to the email address below as follows: -

- a) Maximum 2 photos for each entrant.
- b) Subject should be plants, produce, wildlife and scenery at Bushy Park Allotments not people.
- c) Give your name and plot number and also your age if you are under 12.
- d) Send in entries by the end of July.

We will have an independent judge review the photos and prizes will be awarded, details to follow.

## ***SOME GARDENING MYTHS***

### **MYTH No 1 – trim the tops and roots of your leek seedling when planting out**

**FALSE** - This is one of those old rules that does not bear analytical investigation, despite dating back to the Roman writer Columella who wrote a book on gardening. Joy Larkcom quotes Belgian research that shows that this practice actually reduces yields.

### **MYTH No 2 – plant potatoes on Good Friday**

**FALSE** - Why should you choose this date? Good Friday changes date each year and does not take into account weather conditions such as soil temperature. It may be down to Irish superstition. When the potato arrived in Europe it was treated with great suspicion and the Irish chose this date and also sprinkled them with holy water. Or is that just another myth????

### **MYTH No 3 – parsnips are better after frost.**

**TRUE** – Cold temperatures convert starches in the root to sugar, enhancing flavour and letting the flesh caramelise if they are roasted. You can always lift them early and keep them in the bottom of the fridge for a couple of weeks to get the same effect.

### **MYTH No 4 – don't water at midday.**

**FALSE/TRUE** – Hungarian research has failed to prove that water droplets on leaves in the sun scorch the leaves. However watering in full sun will lead to higher evaporation losses and also it is better to water the soil under the foliage for the water to reach the roots.

## ***EXPERIMENTAL PLANTING***

Each year I try and find some experimental plants to grow. This year they are:-

**Tuberous rooted chervil** – last year's planting of tubers from Paris yielded plenty of seed and it germinated well over winter and despite slug depredation some have survived so I am hopeful. I froze seed for next year as I expect it will not have long viability.

**Chia – *Salvia hispanica*** – a new wonder seed that you may have seen in the media or health food shops. I sowed some seed from the supermarket at home in the warmth and they have germinated well. However they are hardiness zone 9 -11 so will probably need a hot summer to do well and yields are reported to be low so I do not expect a significant harvest.

**Córek otu – *Nigella sativa*** – again supermarket seed that I use on Turkish pastries, slow to germinate. Hopefully this will be an attractive flower as it related to love-in-a-mist.

**Haricot de Soissons** – French climbing bean to dry, intermediate in size between a borlotti and a butter bean. Seed purchased at the Salon d'Agriculture in Paris, hopefully there will be enough seed to offer some in this year's Seed Swop.

**Okra – *Clemson Spineless*** – probably too ambitious but I may have some room in the polytunnel and even if it only flowers it will look good as it is a hibiscus. There will be some young plants in the Plant Sale.

## ***RECIPE ????***

If anyone would like to contribute a recipe based on seasonal allotment produce I would be happy to include it in the Newsletter with an appropriate credit.

Phil Iddison - Chair

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Please email if you want to go on the newsletter mailing list or wish to contact the Committee or have suggestions/contributions for the newsletter.