

# The Bushy Times

## Newsletter of the Bushy Park Allotment Association

[www.bushyparkallotments.org.uk](http://www.bushyparkallotments.org.uk)

Issue 65

April 2023

### COMMITTEE NEWS – AGM - RENT

The AGM was held on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2023 at 11:00 AM in the shop carpark. Thirty tenants including six committee members attended. Feedback on issues of concern was received. The minutes are distributed with this newsletter.

There was a seed swap afterwards.

The Council have notified the increase in rent that will apply from October.

- Rent will £21.70 per rod, up from £19.50, 11% increase.
- Concession rate will be £10.80.
- Key deposit goes up to £15.

A 1922 vegetable gardening book that I have been reading has a section on allotments and one of the interesting facts is that allotment rent for “*good land with a water supply*” was 1 shilling per rod! A quick check on net present value of the 1922 shilling, values it at £2.59, about one eighth of our current rent. Times change!

### COUNCIL INSPECTIONS

The Council have given notice that the plot inspections will be resumed after a lull that was initiated by Covid. The up-to-date relevant Terms & Conditions are: -

**2.2** - *You should expect the Allotment Officer or other Council representatives and the Site Committee to regularly visit your plot. When you pay for the use of your plot, you agree to the Council's Terms & Conditions.*

*If the cultivation standard at any time on a plot is below the 75% required by the T&Cs in 3.1 this could trigger the termination process.*

*A preliminary site inspection will be made early in the year to identify any plot considered below the average cultivation standard on that site.*

*We may send enquiry letters, e-mails and/or make a phone call to ask about your intentions for your plot. If necessary, you may be asked to contact the Allotment Officer or Site Committee within 2 weeks. If you do not reply within this period a first warning letter will be issued. This is the start of the formal process that could end with the termination of your tenancy.*

**3.1** - *Your plot is provided on an annual tenancy agreement. This agreement says that a minimum of three quarters of your plot should be in a cultivation cycle\*, with a minimum of three different crops being grown and that your plot should **be generally kept in a tidy condition**. Up to one quarter of your plot can be used to grow flowers.*

*\*A cultivation cycle is defined as ground preparation, planting of crops, tending and harvesting fruit and vegetables on a continuous annual basis.*

Many plot holders have standing crops over the winter and also have fruit trees and bushes that should be maintained. All allotment plots should be tidied, prepared and made ready for planting in April.

**3.2 - No single crop may cover more than one quarter (25%) of your plot.**

Details of the termination process are in the T&C on the Council website. They have had a recent update with significant changes and I urge all tenants to check the T&C's for their rights and responsibilities.

The Council have closed the waiting list for allotments as there are 3,800 people on it borough wide! The details for Bushy Park are: -

- Number of plots on site: 389
- Number of plots taken in the last 3 years: 51
- People on waiting list: 1,125 – currently a theoretical 60 year wait!
- Vacant plots: 30

Plots are being offered to people who applied in May 2012!!

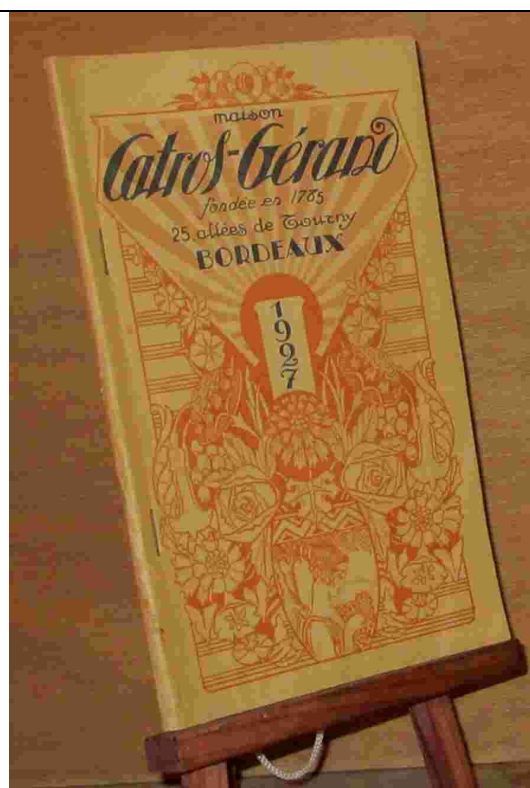
If you are not complying with the cultivation requirements, you can expect to be chased by the Council. If you are unable to cultivate a standard 5 rod plot, the Council may allow you to downsize and give someone on the waiting list an opportunity that you are not fulfilling.

## ***PLANT FOCUS – BIGOURDAN HARICOT***

Our annual trip to France usually yields some new seeds to try. Last year it was beans of the Tarbais type, Bigourdan Climbing Beans. It is a variety with a long green pod that is curved. It produces large seed in the shape of a flat kidney.



My box of Bigourdan Haricot seeds, 250 gm of seed so enough to give away samples. The label notes it was sourced from Catros-Gerand which led me to their 1927 seed catalogue seen right.



Founded in 1785, Catros Gerand seed company specialises in the sale of flower and vegetable seeds, bulbs and lawn seed. It is based in Carbon Blanc, near Bordeaux.

This variety is widely used in Southwest France for the preparation of cassoulet and is reputed to have excellent taste quality. The height of the plants can go up to 2m and more, a proper climbing bean which needs support.

I have grown the Tarbais type of drying bean before and they can be very productive. They need to be in a sunny position and suitably warmed soil because the beans do not like the cold. I start them off in root trainers at the end of April to plant out mid-May into a trench that has a layer of compost buried beneath the surface for moisture retention.

Apparently beans at the fully green 'mangetout' stage of this variety can be harvested until an advanced stage of development because they have neither string nor the parchment layer in the pod that is tough. I shall see!

Otherwise leave the pods until they start drying and the skins start to feel papery. At this point the seeds still have moisture and can be shelled and used fresh or frozen for later. I do leave a good number to dry more fully on the vine for seed, to the point at which the pods split open easily and the beans seem dry. They do need to be fully dried to keep for seed use, when dropped onto a plate they should have a 'chink' sound. Contact me if you would like some seed to trial yourself.

## ***CRITTERS - WIREWORMS***

As a youngster working on my grandparents vegetable plot, various pests were pointed out to me as being unwelcome. One was the wireworm which my grandmother called a 'leatherjacket', a reference to its tough skin. I have only recently been able to track it down for identification via the internet.



Wireworm larvae

Wireworm is the common name given to the larval stages of click beetles. The larvae grow up to 25mm in length and are a golden-brown colour. The exterior is hard and their legs are short and stout. Wireworm can live up to 4 years in the soil before pupation and finally emerging as adult click beetles of which there are a number of varieties.

Some wireworm feed on the roots of plants and will also create burrows into tubers. They can be a problem in potato crops. Affected plants may wilt and die if roots suffer a large amount of damage. Other species feed on decaying material and also other insects. There are no biological or chemical (organic or otherwise) controls for wireworms. They are not common on my plot and I now tolerate them and leave them to it as I have not seen any specific impact on my crops nor any large-scale infestations. I do lift my potatoes quite early, as soon as the tops are dying back as I have significant damage by slugs if they are left in the ground.

## ***RATS***

The Council have notified us that the pest control company will be visiting to tackle the rat problem. This will take the form of a night shoot.

When the date is notified, I will send out a warning email. Tenants should vacate the site before dusk on the date(s) of the visit.

## ***BEETROOT FALAFEL***

Falafel were a staple snack food during my years working in the middle east. This version incorporates an allotment standby and is good for late season beetroot that has lost some of its flavour.

a shallot fried to crispness in oil, add 3 sliced garlic cloves towards the end of frying to colour.  
250 gm of cooked beetroot, cubed (winter harvested beetroot takes up to an hour to soften)  
400 gm tin of chickpeas drained [or 100 gm of dried Tarbais haricots, soaked and cooked]  
100 to 130 gm breadcrumbs  
2 tsp cumin  
1 tsp of **pul biber** or another chilli to your taste  
Parsley if available, any tender beetroot top leaves from the harvested roots  
Salt (generous) & pepper  
Zest of 2 lemons – juice into the sauce below, no waste  
1 egg

Blitz all of these in a processor to a coarse texture, adding the egg towards the end. Form into 12 falafel balls, shape with an ice-cream scoop to make a compact ball. Roll them in semolina to mimic the deep fry crunch. Sit them in an oiled bun tin, this reduces handling as they are a little fragile! They benefit from an hour rest in the fridge, uncovered. Cook in a pre-heated fan oven @ 180° C for 25-30 minutes. Eat hot with the following dressing and a side salad. Also good cold.

Dressing made from:-

300 ml plain thick yoghurt  
6 tbsp tahini or more to taste!  
Juice of 2 lemons

All whipped together with a fork, add a little water if it is too thick, quantities provide enough sauce, but it is addictive, you may need more!

TIP: tahina settles in the jar during storage, the sesame oil rises to the top and is quite difficult to mix back in. Two days before you need it, ensure the top is on securely and invert the jar. Give it a shake every few hours to encourage it to mix again. If you want to speed up the process, take the metal top off the jar and heat it on the lowest microwave setting for short periods until it slackens up. Watch it like a hawk as any moisture evaporation will be explosive!

<b>Phil Iddison</b> [Plot 308/309]  On behalf of Bushy Park Allotments Association	Please contact the Council via their website <a href="https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/parks_and_open_spaces/allotments">https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/parks_and_open_spaces/allotments</a> <b>for any matters relating to your tenancy or the T&amp;Cs. Please also report thefts, gate issues &amp; water leaks directly to the Council, quoting your plot number if this is relevant to the issue.</b> Contact me - <a href="mailto:phil.iddison@arcadis.com">phil.iddison@arcadis.com</a> about the newsletter.
<b>EMAIL LIST UPDATE</b>	Please contact me if you wish to add or remove a name to/from the list, for instance if you have a friend who helps with your plot and who would like to receive the newsletter.