

The Bushy Times

Newsletter of the Bushy Park Allotment Association

www.bushyparkallotments.org.uk

Issue 67

August 2023

SEPTEMBER OPEN DAY

The September Open Day is planned to be held on Saturday 16th September 2023, Noon to 3PM as usual. We will monitor the weather during the preceding week and if the forecast will adversely affect the event it will be deferred until the following Saturday, 23rd September. We will keep you informed about any changes in good time. Please note the dates in your diary.

Help with this event to make it a success will be required, whether it is donating food, spare produce/plants or assisting before, during or after the event.

- There will be food and beverages, primarily vegetarian,
- There will be a produce sale. Donations of any spare produce or plants will be most welcome!
- Feel free to donate a cake or a savoury dish, sampling others baking skills is a treat.
- *Any help you can provide on the day will be welcome.*

Looking forward to seeing you at the event.

NEWS UPDATE

Tomato blight has been reported at the south end of the site. Please bag-up infected material to promote plant hygiene.

The Council Officer is continuing to show and let vacant plots so you may find you have a new neighbour. Get to know them, they may need advice and help.

The Council plan to clear vacant and neglected plots for allocation to new tenants by the autumn.

The council have installed a new lock on the main gate which will hopefully solve the access issues. Remember that if the lock jams, try giving the padlock a sharp knock on the gate to free the tumblers inside, it usually works for me!

Tenants are reporting produce theft which is very distressing particularly when it includes an entire crop. Please be alert and report any suspicious incidents.

The shed break-ins were reported to the Council, please do not leave anything valuable in your shed, power tools are the thieves first choice.

Please lock the gates on entry and exit, the vehicle gate is often unlocked when I arrive/leave. If you find it unlocked please do lock it after use.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Bushy Park Allotments is not a waste management facility, recent incidents have been: -

- Tenant returning from a holiday break found a pile of woody waste dumped on his green waste compost bin.
- Repeated dumping of metal/plastic/wood waste on a tenant's plot.
- A tenant seen dumping logs from outside the allotments at the south car park.
- Dumping of random objects in the car park that "*might be useful to someone*" but which are just fly tipping.

The waste from your plot is your responsibility and should be taken off site by you or composted. The only exception is the woody waste facility that is provided on site, this in ONLY for plant material, not old sheds and plastic! It will be opened again in the autumn.

2023 - YEAR OF THE HORSETAIL & RED ANTS

HORSETAIL

This year horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*), often called mare's tail, has appeared in an area of my plot where I was not expecting it! The RHS website provided the following information.

This an invasive, deep-rooted perennial weed that will spread quickly to form a dense carpet of foliage, crowding out less vigorous plants. It may establish from spores, but usually arrives via rhizomes from neighbouring gardens, or stem fragments in composts or manures. It appears in spring and summer and should be treated in late summer.

The creeping rhizomes of this pernicious plant may go down as deep as 2m (7ft) below the surface, making them hard to remove by digging out.

A glyphosate-based weedkiller can be applied in late summer when growth is strong. Before using, bruise the shoots with a rake to ensure effective penetration. Repeated treatment will be required.

RED ANTS

The red ants have been rampant this year, appearing everywhere, the conditions must have been perfect for them. I have been bitten a few times when they have ventured up my clothing. Data following from the RHS website:-

Ants can cause concern but they are an important part of the biodiversity of a healthy garden. The eusocial nest structure can be complex with different casts and ages of worker ants. They often have mutualistic associations with sap sucking insects such as aphids.

Ants feed mainly on other invertebrates, including other ants. They also collect the sweet liquid known as honeydew, which is excreted by aphids and some other sap-feeding insects. Ants can protect aphids from ladybirds and other predators in order to secure their supply of honeydew. Increased numbers of aphids may result in more damage to plants. Ants do little direct damage to plants. Ants will nest in compost heap or bin. They will not be causing any damage in this situation, actually assisting on a small scale with the breakdown of material.

*Some ants (mostly *Myrmica* species - commonly known as red ants) can sting, but for most people this is no more than a minor irritation.*

ALLOTMENT T&C UPDATE – Section 3

In March the Council revised the Terms and Conditions. I am copying in sections of the T&C to keep you updated. Section 2 covers the termination process, this will be in the next newsletter. I am jumping to Section 3 in this newsletter. This covers cultivation and is relevant to the current unworked state of many plots! If you are not able to work your plot to the required standards please consider giving it up.

Cultivation

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.

3.3 - You may only plant fruit trees or bushes on your plot (you must not plant ornamental trees and bushes). Any new fruit trees you plant must be on dwarf root stock which will grow up to a maximum of 3m (10ft) in height. New trees must be planted as near to the centre of your plot as possible.

3.4 - Fruit bushes and fruit trees must be pruned and not cover more than one quarter (25%) of your plot. The plants must not overshadow adjoining allotment plots, or overhang boundaries or encroach on pathways. We may tell you to remove any trees that are, or are becoming, a nuisance to others, such as exceeding 3m (10ft) in height.

3.5 - Mature fruit trees on your plot (trees that have been growing on the allotment for over 10 years) may be a hazard to you and your neighbours. Mature trees may be over 3m (10ft) in height and overhang more than one plot. If you have such a tree on your plot you can get advice about pruning it from our website.

You should not prune any branches over 75mm (3 inches) in diameter and you must not use power tools for pruning. Tree branches and roots which exceed 75mm (3 inches) in diameter may need specialist tools and the help of professional tree surgeons which must be paid for by the plot holder.

3.6 - Hedges must be properly cut and trimmed, and must not overhang paths, plot boundaries or overshadow neighbouring plots. The maximum height of any hedges or boundary fencing must not exceed 1.2m (4ft) or be used to restrict access.

3.7 - You must not plant ornamental trees or bushes whether conifers (spruce, fir, pine) or deciduous (eucalyptus, oak, ash) on your plot. Lawns, large play areas and equipment associated with a domestic garden are not suitable for an allotment.

3.8 - There may be trees and shrubs surrounding the allotment site which the Council maintains as part of its Biodiversity Strategy for the borough. These trees will be identified and their locations recorded by the Council. These trees can only be pruned with permission from the Council's Tree Section. Advice on tree health and contact information for the Council is on our website.

3.9 - There are many different cultivation methods and methods such as No Dig and permaculture are increasing in popularity. You can ask to leave a maximum of 25% of your plot fallow/uncultivated (for rotational purposes), but you must request this in writing, setting out the dimensions of the area and period

of time required. This will be considered by the Site Committee or Allotment Officer and agreed if appropriate.

3.10 - Non-cultivation of a plot to these standards will result in termination of your tenancy. (3.2)

3.11 - You must not remove soil, topsoil, gravel, sand or clay from the allotment site.

LOCAL INFO

Have a look at the coping stones on the downstream side of the Pantile Bridge on Hampton Hill High Street just outside the allotments. At the end nearest the allotment gate there are several scalloped shaped notches on the edge above the path. These were formed by locals sharpening tools on the soft fine-grained sandstone, which is a perfect whetstone material. Penknives, kitchen knives and even allotment tools were given a fine cutting edge here.

I have seen this phenomenon at two other locations: -

- An antiquarian friend pointed similar marks on a Shropshire churchyard tombstone, he thought scythes were being sharpened before heading to the harvest fields.
- A cellar windowsill on the Blewcoat School in Victoria, there soft red brick was the medium for knife sharpening!

BÖĞÜRTLEN PESTİL – BLACKBERRY LEATHER

I came across fruit leathers in an Anatolian village market near Istanbul. They were prepared from plums, mulberry, grape and blackberry. This recipe was an unusual way to use this year's abundant blackberry crop, the Bedford Giant lived up to its name in vigour and fruit size.

INGREDIENTS

Blackberries	1035 gm
Cornflour	1 tbsp
Granulated sugar	50 gm

Frozen box of the Bedford Giant crop defrosted, simmered gently for 15 minutes. Weight reduced to 804 gm. Put through a Mouli food mill (fine plate), yielded 640 gm of fruit paste.

Re-heated and simmered for 15 minutes to concentrate down to 600 gm pulp, bubbling like a mud volcano. Sugar mixed with the cornflour to avoid lumps, stirred into the mix and brought to a simmer for 3 minutes with stirring. Weight at this stage 605 gm.

Spread on the silicone baking sheets on two trays, about 2-5 mm thick and into a 90° C oven for 2 hours to start drying, then left in the oven overnight.

Next morning, thickness of paste noticeably reduced, given an hour at 60° C, starting to be peelable off the silicone so another hour and left in the oven to cool thoroughly.

At this point the sheets were divided into 30 mm strips with a tea knife and most peeled off cleanly, a few sticky areas inverted and returned to the cooling oven for the day. In the evening I dusted them with cornflour, rolled them up and stored them in a box.

I expect to have taster samples at the September Open Day!

Phil Iddison

[Plot 308/309]

On behalf of Bushy
Park Allotments
Association

Please contact the Council via their website

https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/parks_and_open_spaces/allotments
**for any matters relating to your tenancy or the T&Cs. Please also
report thefts, gate issues & water leaks directly to the Council,
quoting your plot number if this is relevant to the issue.**

Contact me - phil.iddison@arcadis.com about the newsletter.