

Cripley Meadow Newsletter July 2017

**Our next Working party is
Sun 10.30 am-12.30 July 9th
Meet at the shed.**

Come and join in. Last month we had 14 people and this number really gets a lot done. We managed to do a little orchard work and clear and cover plots. See below for some photos. There will be more on the web site



Do make sure you read our health and safety policy on the notice board and wear appropriate clothing and footwear. Next month we have an additional Weds evening working party for those who cannot do Sundays. Please try and come along to do your bit. We are a big site and we do need everyone to contribute.

We have now a few plots covered but sometimes the wind lifts the covers. If you pass one with lifted plastic please help by re-covering. Sometimes the pegs need some

weight on the body of plastic to keep down.

June Jericho Street Fair

Wendy and Emma had a good time on the stall but are here looking very serious! We had quite a few site members buying plants and we now have regulars who know we can fill in 'gaps'.



Many thanks to: Emma, Sara, Wendy, Rodney and Alex, who managed the stall; Emma and Jeremy for transporting plants from Cripley to Jericho and to Wendy, Jeremy, Emma, Louise and Rob, Wendy B, Alison Campbell, Anna, Keith Holton, Elizabeth, John, Mick, Alex who brought plants. We made £179 which is a bit less than usual!



It was a warm and sunny day and we had a great variety of plants with vegetable seedlings, flowers, shrubs and perennials. Let me know if I missed anyone out as my memory is no longer what it was! The money raised will go to the association's site work. Chloe took our remainders for the Phil and Jim fete.

Castle Mill Has now been granted planning permission for their changes to the building. The work is presently planned to start in August and continue until April 2019. An extract from the planning minutes is attached.

Please remember to get permission for built structures before bringing on any building material. It must then be used.

There are some anachronisms on site but we are constantly working on these. As plots are vacated we always aim to return them to within the present rules or specify this in the new plot offer.

Audit

You will **all** have had an audit letter. This goes to the lead member if you share a plot. Most of Cripley Meadow plots are well worked or have minor concerns. If you had a more serious concern which requires a response please make sure you write to Alex with your plan so that we can ensure a level playing field for all. We have already had positive responses. It is a very time-consuming job and many thanks are due to the audit team. It can be a thankless task but after over 12 years of audits members now understand the role of the committee in ensuring the land is used within our lease and rules. Land is in such short supply in Oxford and we need to make sure designated allotment land is well used so it will stay as allotment land for many years to come.

Members of the audit committee are always happy to come and talk problems through with you. Inevitably we will make mistakes or maybe you just need some advice or help.

Ragwort alert

Some ragwort has been spotted on site. It was August 2013 last time we had an outbreak which members dealt with very well. As we are close to grazing land it is important you remove it and stop further spread. Under the Weeds Act 1959 Defra can act where there is a risk of injurious weeds spreading from neighbouring land. Ragwort is a potential killer. It is poisonous to livestock. Eating ragwort can lead to liver damage which cannot be treated. Cattle and horses are particularly susceptible to poisoning by common ragwort but sheep are also susceptible. Dried and dying ragwort is also dangerous because it is more palatable to livestock than the living plant. It is important, therefore, to ensure that it is burnt and does not seed onto Port Meadow. Young plants of common ragwort are evident from the autumn to early June as low



rosettes In their second or subsequent years they produce flowering stems from late June

onwards. These are between 30-100cm tall, carrying dense flat-topped clusters of bright yellow daisy-like flower heads each 1.5-2.5cm across. Common ragwort is biennial when undisturbed but can develop perennial characteristics following cutting or treading.



Ragwort control methods

Where existing plants are cleared, re-infestation will be rapid unless weed management is improved, particularly if ground is not regularly cultivated or mown. Cutting and stem removal at the early flowering stage reduces seed production but does not destroy the plant. Cut plants left lying on the ground may still set seed. These should be removed and bagged or burned within The Code of Practice. It can be managed by using a non-specific herbicide such as glyphosate. Make sure you spray when either very early morning or evening when no insects about and there is no wind and ensure you protect neighbouring allotment growth. It dries to be safe in a few hours but it is not effective if used when sunny or wet. It must still be collected up and bagged or burned.

The shop is open as usual on Sundays during July from 11 - 12noon, but as in previous years it will close for August. We find that most members have what they need by then and many are away. Feel free to contact Sarah to request a one-off sale if you cant get along on Sundays or need something during August: sarahjehome@aol.com or 07960 352787 (these details are also on the noticeboard)".

We have plots available.

Enquiries and new plot holders are as usual steady. Some plots have been covered to try to remove persistent problems before passing the plots on. Often these persistent problems are

developed where members give up way after the time where they have been able to use or manage the plot. We do our best to support members and be understanding about problems. It is however a bit depressing when we have spent lots of time and money on clearance and we see the plot back to waist high weed within 6 months. Sometimes the expenditure can amount to £300-£400 on clearance and cover. Our membership plot subscription would take a lot of years to catch this up!

Do remember that seeding grass and weeds, lack of cultivation and unmanaged permanent planting affects all plots around you as well as yours.

On the **much bigger plus side** we have far more plots that are just bursting with bountiful growth of fruit, flowers and vegetables and are a joy to see. Do take a walk round. The variety is impressive and it is better than any book or web site for ideas and advice.

Saturday 15 July, 11.00 -12.30 Bee and Flower walk Milham Ford Nature Park.

Judy Webb and Oxford Friends of the Earth have partnered to organise a 'bees and flowers' walk at Milham Ford Nature Park. This free educational walk, led by Judy, will focus on looking at which flowers different types of bees (and other pollinators) are using and explaining the features of each flower.

Following the walk, there will be an opportunity to collect Yellow Rattle wildflower seed to use in gardens or wildlife areas.

This year I am growing **butter beans** again. I found the seeds in the Franchi line last year and that was the first time I had seen them. They are my favourite bean. They matured and dried a bit later than the other beans and then provided a fantastic crop that we used right until April /May.



I grow basil on the side of the bean bed. I sow it as seed and it seems to like hanging on for dear life. A row will usually give us enough for pesto for the year.



My peas managed to grow big and strong despite the dry weather...but for once they are not tasty. I tried a French podding variety this year instead of my usual sugar snap. I find it increasingly hard to find tall sugar peas.

The small gate key was reported as not working for a short time on Sunday but it seems to be back to normal now. Usually it is mended with a bit of graphite.



This man-made hole in the fence by the badger hotel appeared recently. The badgers can exit north into the scrub and Port Meadow at

the end of the badger hotel so this just lets them into Cripsey Meadow!. We have badger cams around the site. If we spot the culprit and they are a member of Cripsey Meadow they will lose their membership!

For more info on crops and jobs go to the web site.

<http://www.cripseymeadow.org.uk/Thegardener/year/Things%20to%20do%20in%20july.pdf>

Good gardening...Wendy