

Cripley Meadow Allotments Newsletter October 2012

Some September working Party members with the St Clare's group



October working party

Is Sunday 14th October 10.30 to 12.30. A group from St Clare's will join us again and then stay on for a further session so if you wish to do your 3 hours in one go you could. We will be on the garden with staking trees, coppicing again and



some clearing back of the boundaries. See right for the trees we did in Sept. If we have enough members

there is, as always, some plot and site work...

Lunch on the Green

52 members joined in. We had some sun, no rain and it was not cold... so quite good for this year!! The wine, juice, (veggie) burgers, and sausages provided by the association all disappeared rapidly as did the Moroccan chicken, tomato soup, couscous and roasted veg, beautiful mixed green and flower salads, slices of frittata, potato salad,

tomato bruscettas and Cripley pickles and salsas (amongst other foods). Delicious apples and cake for pudding meant we and the band were all well fed.

Thanks to Jamie for the BBQ and shopping and to his parents Bob and

Heather, who were great on the BBQ. By the end of lunch it felt as though they had been with us before they were so friendly. They plan to be back in 2 years time if possible. The band was good value and ate lots although played less as they had another event! Thanks to Jeremy, Rodney, Wendy and Tony for erecting the pergola.



Let us know if there is something that would tempt you to join in. Some members

commented on how they would really like to meet more members. It is a great way to swap tips on how to manage both bumper and bad crops and lots of recipes and preserve ideas were discussed

BBC Gardeners Question Time was on Monday 8th October 2012 at Exeter Hall, Killington.

The BBC accepted an invitation from the Royal Oxfordshire Horticultural Society and I was invited as Chair of ODFAA. There was a good attendance including ploholders from many allotment associations across the city. Quite a few of the questions were about allotments... although none

from Cripley Meadow. Apologies for name dropping but I had a chance to speak with Anne Swithinbank again. I had lunch with her and Geoff Hamilton and the President of the RHS 21 years ago when I was the National Organic allotment champion of Great Britain! I admired GH and he actually helped us get the far fence raised on Cripley Meadow. He was insistent on not using peat and growing great food whilst looking after birds and insects. A man ahead of his time!

The 2nd Audit

Will now be on **Sunday 21st October**. Please make sure plots are accessible. Audit reminders are on the web site and noticeboard. We know it has been a dreadful year and are impressed at how members have kept up with the amazing weed production. Please make sure you have taken action on any reminders so that we can all continue to work together in accordance with our agreed rules and advice. According to all allotment literature 'An actively managed site' is a sustainable site'

Competition Awards Evening in the Town Hall in the Town Hall on Thursday October 25th at 7pm.

OCC and ODFAA Allotment Competition Celebration of Awards and Certificates Evening takes place The judges John Alcock and Mike Kent will be there and Val Bourne, the Oxford times gardening writer will present the prizes and certificates. **All entrants are invited**

The season and sharing

It has been the worst year ever for many gardeners so if you started this year we expect it will get easier! Please use the new member's board if you have any tips or recipes or additional produce to pass on or place it is the **CRISIS kitchen basket** which is on the fence by the builders terrapins.

This year the awful summer ended with yet more heavy rain! We've passed the autumn equinox so the leaves are starting to fall from the trees. Pretty soon they'll be winter bare so if you have time, make some leaf mould which is a wonderful soil conditioner. St John's leaf mould should arrive on plot 57 early in 2013.

Leafmould



This is not compost and generally you won't hurry it by adding accelerators or nitrogen. Having said that I think it rots better if you can mow the leaves up with a high cut of grass.

On a small scale, just pop the leaves into a black sack with air holes in it. Water well, tie up the top and leave the bag out of the way for six months to a year or even two. Some leaves, like sycamore, take a long time to rot down. On a larger scale you can make a wire netting cage and keep them in that. If you grow comfrey, you can layer the last cut of the year in with the leaves. It won't speed things up but it adds some nutritional value to the leaf mould so making it a useful medium for starting seeds.

Autumn Sowing Beans and Peas.

Beans like Aquadulce Claudia and peas like Douce Provence are very hardy and a cold snap or snow won't usually bother them. It's wet and the mice that do the damage.

Garlic

Get your order in now and whilst you're waiting for them to arrive you can prepare the soil. I ordered Avignon Wight this year but the crop has failed its

quality checks so I have substituted with Iberian Wight and Albigensian Wight. I am already half way through this year's garlic as it was not the best crop ever.

Autumn Onions

If you want to have some onions ready early next year, now's the time to get some of the over-wintering Japanese onion sets and shallots in. Jobs for each month are on our web site <http://www.cripleymeadow.org.uk/gardenersyear.htm>

Free lime

Longcross have offered us a ton of Lime. This is hydrated lime which is stronger and finer than gardeners lime. It can only be moved by the crane so we are limited as to where it can go. It will be on the headland of Plot 129 which is at the South end of the Castle Mill path (just before the work cabins. It will be covered with a tarp. Please ensure children know it can be dangerous and make sure you are aware of how to use safely.

Details about lime

Lime is usually added in winter for annual crops, such as vegetables, just prior to digging, as the lime can take effect over the winter months and will not damage young growth. If planting perennial plants like lawns, shrubs, fruit or trees, apply lime before planting. However, you need to check your soil pH to see how much (if any) you need to add. A **soil pH test** measures the acidity or alkalinity of the soil. A pH 7.0 is considered neutral. Above pH 7.0, the soil is alkaline and below pH 7.0, the soil is acid. It is especially worth checking soil pH and making any adjustments before designing or planting a new garden, making vegetable plots, planting fruit or when growth is disappointing. Testing can be done at any time, but if carried out within three months after adding lime, fertiliser or

organic matter, the test may give misleading results. If your soil pH test comes back at 7.0 or higher, you have alkaline soil, and liming is not necessary. If the pH is above 6.5, or if you wish to grow acid-loving ericaceous plants, you may wish to reduce the pH by adding an acidifying material.

Liming materials

Lime raises pH. **Hydrated lime (calcium hydroxide), which is the type that will be available on site.** It is a finer powder, quick acting, **but can irritate skin and eyes so needs to be handled carefully.**

The effectiveness (called the 'Neutralising Value' (NV) varies between materials – typical examples include: Ground Limestone (garden lime) – NV 50-55 **Hydrated Lime – NV 70**

Therefore, if you use hydrated lime, you will need much less than garden lime. Liming materials are very finely ground so that they work quickly. Avoid any products with lumps, as they will take years to have any effect.

How to lime Method of application

When applying more than 0.5kg per sq m (14¾oz per sq yd), it is best to dig half into the soil and sprinkle the rest on the surface after digging. When applying less than 0.5kg per sq m (14¾oz per sq yd), dig the entire amount in, but you can sprinkle it on the surface if digging is not practical. The clay in soils resists changes in pH (called buffering capacity) so that much more lime is needed to change the pH in soils with high clay content than in soils with little clay, such as coarse sandy soil.

See

<http://apps.rhs.org.uk/advicesearch/profile.aspx?pid=144#top> for more information

Thanks for reading and good growing

Wendy