

Cripley Meadow

April Newsletter 2012

www.cripleymeadow.org.uk

Working party

Next working party on **15April** 10.30 to 12.30 meet at the shed. There is lots to do as always. Please bring rakes and wheelbarrows if you have them. Jobs to do includes, burning (weather permitting) improving watering paths, marking, fence work, and thought re.. new wild flower area.

The AGM was **very** productive. **Many thanks** to the 75 members who came for all or part of the evening. Andy sold out of fruit trees and bushes and Susanna Pressell, our local and county councillor came to support us as always. The committee do appreciate her sustained support and help over the many years of reclamation and that of our members. The informal session at the beginning was particularly pleasant with slides of all the plots on site. **The AGM elected the following**
Chair Wendy Skinner Smith Plot 40 Vice Chair Tony Clear Plot 124 Secretary Claire Pike Plot 48b Treasurer Alison Campbell Plot 13 Field Secretary Richard Plot 15
Committee members Jamie Forbes Plot 63 Alex Hollingsworth Plot 81 Jeremy Hyde Plot 91 Hannah Yeadon plot 89/90 Mark Tindall Plot 53 Mark Doran Plot 141a

Membership fees

If you have not paid your subscription you should have had a reminder and you will now

incur a £5 additional charge. Plots will be taken back if not paid before April 31.

The first site mow is on Sat 14th so make sure all paths are clear and there is no metal or stones by or on the site paths. **We will also be grass seeding the new South Field site Paths. Please make sure all path areas adjacent to your plot are clear of any obstructions and/or rubble and rubbish and keep clear.**

Monday June 4 Jubilee Jericho St. Fair

Do put in your seeds and pot up plants to bring to the Jericho Street Fair. It is a bit earlier this year and on Monday.



Last year there was a demand for flowers, courgette and squash. Who knows this year?

Growing Potatoes

Easter is the traditional potato planting time.. **East Ward allotment shop** still has some earlies. There is a notice on the member's board with details. Potatoes are a very hungry crop, so plenty of rotted manure or compost or potato fertiliser in the soil before planting will give them what they need. Do watch out for late frosts after the haulm (foliage) has started to show. Earthing up will help. (I cover the rows with enviromesh which helps.)

Water

In spite of recent rain (since the hosepipe ban came into force) water levels are low. If you

did not do it before do make sure any sheds have guttering and water butts to harvest as much rainwater as possible. If you have a water butt, consider adding a second one or more. Also the more you can build up soil humus the better as this will retain water. Try not to water other than to sow or transplant. If you do have to water do so well as frequent scant watering builds up surface roots so you have to keep watering more! Remember we are sitting on a gravel bed with water underneath us. Members can take water from Castle Mill Stream and Fiddlers stream and the access points are **between plots 6 and 7, between the bonfire spot and plot 9, between plots 30 and 31 and by the south field fences by SF1 and SF13**. All other paths belong to individual members and must not be used for access.

Report on late March/April Site work

- **The paths**

Ady Podbery, our contract mower has done a brilliant job. Last year we spent £1,000 on paths and this year another £2,000 has been used for hard core and labour. We have another stretch to do which will be completed next year and then we aim to try keep it maintained. You can all do your bit!

- Leave your car at home whenever you can.
- Use the car park. Members can apply for a special parking permit (£20 per year) for allotment visiting only.
- Drive your car at snail's pace so stones are not thrown up (and all on the site are safe)
- Never bring cars on site in very wet or particularly frosty weather. The latter is the worst as it just peels up the path surface.

Remember these are essentially site paths for occasional use, maintenance vehicles and deliveries. They are not roads.

- **The fence**

We are still working with Simon and the team from Longcross on badger



proofing the site as agreed with the university and the city when planning was granted. This will be ongoing

through April around the gate and on the east fence. There are more pictures on the web site showing the



work which involved sinking fencing and raising the concrete under the fence. It is vital that members visit plots regularly and ensure that there

are no new habitats under sheds. Our reclamation has managed to remove almost all disused and derelict sheds which can provide a habitat for animal lairs. Many thanks to Tony and Jeremy who have been monitoring this and working hard to solve further problems as they arise.

- **The Association Shed**

on the South Field now has a water butt. Many thanks again to Tony and Jeremy for installing this. There is still 'trough' space for site RUBBLE here so that we can extend the hard



standing. This is not much use for growing due to the adjacent ash tree. It is sad that there is a pile of rubbish

alongside left for the fairies to remove to the skip!

- **The Skip**

The skip has been sorted through twice to remove wood and compacted. It will soon be full and removed after which any rubbish must be taken to Redbridge or stored in bags on your plot until another skip arrives. Generally, when skips are used appropriately, this is fairly promptly. Meanwhile please do not leave any rubbish or 'recycling' by the shed. If you use the burning spot by the island entrance please supervise the burning yourself It is not another fairy activity!

- **Bamboo root removed**

We continue to work on removing bamboo from the site. We had to use a 365 digger to

remove as much bamboo root as possible. It was set like concrete and beyond the strength of the small digger we had last month. The association have not removed the roots from under the plot fence and plots beyond. Plot



holders must now work to keep the site keep bamboo free in accordance with our rules.. Any

growth should be cut immediately to prevent growth re establishing. Many thanks to all for their cooperation with this difficult job. This path area will be re grassed and mowed off monthly to prevent any re growth. Please leave clear until the grass establishes.

- **We have planted 4 alder trees**

on Fiddler's Bow. This is our name for the stretch of land to the west of plots 32 to SF13. It is between us and Fiddler's Island and bow shaped hence the name. This spit of land is only accessible to members on these side plots and by site watering paths identified earlier. There is a burning spot there for use when conditions are suitable. Many thanks to Tony



for ordering and getting the large trees on site. Wendy and Rodney planted these over the Easter weekend with lots of help and encouragement from towpath users on positioning! We had lots

more good comments about how well the new field is progressing. The Common Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) is a widely planted native, British tree. It is well suited to damp and wet ground conditions, and along with the pollarded crack willow already there it will form an attractive native wetland woody area. Like pollarded willow it is used to prevent erosion of river banks and it will provide another level of interest and diversity. Common Alder has attractive male flowers in early spring in long narrow catkins. Female flowers, which are produced at the same time, are carried in small cones which remain on the tree for more than one season. Siskin, heron, goldfinch, blue jay, sapsuckers, warblers, and many other birds like them and their seeds ripen in October and November and persist through winter.

There is more advice on what to do on the web site. **See The Gardener's Year**. It does not account for such bizarre weather with winter, high summer and spring rolled into one. Makes for a challenge!

Good growing to all Wendy

Cripley Meadow Allotment Association Committee