

Cripley Meadow Newsletter

July 2013

Next Working party

Sun 14 July 10.30 am-12.30. Tump Weeding and digging out old fences. We will need lots of pairs of hands.



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Jericho Street Fair

Many thanks to Alex, Susan and all the Hollingsworth family for all the help from their house. Annalisa, Tony, Alison, Alex, Rodney and Wendy managed the stall and we raised £275.

Again we had a great variety of plants with vegetable seedlings, flowers, shrubs and fruit trees.

Many thanks to all, particularly Sheila, Claire, Gabi, Wendy Rodney Alison, Tony Annalisa, Richard, Suzanna Pressel, Alex, Jeremy, Wendy Ball, Jane Mollison and Chloe.

Again Chloe also took our remainder s for the Phil and Jim fete



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the following week. The money raised will go to the association's work to enhance the natural environment... Be friendly planting and bird boxes.

Our first Audit is on July 7th Please check the reminders sent out last month and on the notice board. This is later than usual to take account of the slow start to the season. Sadly a few plots are unused and very overgrown. If you are next to them- apologies- and if you are on them your membership is at risk as it is conditional on the rules for cultivation. We shall do our best to resolve the problems and as always take into account temporary unusual circumstances if we know of them.

As discussed at the AGM we think fences and lack of regular grass mowing on plots are contributing to the spread of ground elder and horsetail. If you are keeping your fence please make sure it is regularly cleared of weeds. Also please do not grow invasive or climbing plants on adjacent fences. Any planting on these boundaries should be of path height only.

Unusually we do have some spaces available. We think this is due to the ravages of 2012 which made for depressing gardening, particularly for newcomers. However enquiries are steadily coming in again so we expect to fill these as the year progresses.

If you need temporary help on your plot to solve a plot problem or to tide you over a busy patch or just to water and cut the grass while you are on holiday, our Field Secretary, **Richard Haigh on plot 15** is available. He charges £10 per hour and is very experienced. He now cuts the grass on a number of plots regularly so if you want to hire him

the contact is richaloe@spamarrest.com. He will work out a price based on materials/time taken. Also **Victor on Plot 130** is available for thorough digging and weeding, at the same charge. You can contact him or write to him at 21 Whitworth Place, Canal Street OX2 6BZ

Castle Mill

OCC and OU have kept us informed of issues with regard to Castle Mill. There are now more reports on the Castle Mill planning web site. (Follow the link) The advice from OCC environmental officer is that there is no increase or significant risk from groundwater.

<http://public.oxford.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=LUCOEPMF00U00>

Rubble pit. When we came to manage the rubble pit we found it was already so over full that the excess took up the remaining space! This is now closed. Rubble cannot go in the skip but clean (no glass) rubble can go next to the shed where it gets used for mending paths and holes. Glass, metal and plastic can go in the skip. **No weeds or soil!** There is a collection bin at the back of the shed for branches, hard vegetable haulms suitable for our shredding trial. (No weeds) This is now likely to be in August.

Arcadian plot 84. After 5 years of working with Arcadian Living and now many members use the rough compost. We have used the remainder this year to reclaim and raise a new half plot at the back of Plot 83/84. Materials are building up on Plot 109. This will be turned later in the year but some members without grass on their plot use the cuttings for mulching and warming up their compost bins. We are giving plot 84 a rest and

mowing off this year to ensure perennial weeds are not a problem there. It will be back in use next year.

The City Allotment Competition first judging is on July 15th and 16th which is later than usual. We entered the site as usual and 3 plots are presently entered.



Badgers

After much effort, ingenuity and help from Longcross we seem to have resolved the entry through the gate area. We had set up our electric fence in our waste ground to stop the badgers coming round the stream but sadly it was trashed by persons unknown. This has been reported to the police.

Please let us know if you

see anything suspicious. We aim to continue to try to live alongside the badgers (we have 'given over' 1 acre of allotment land to the sett) but we need to keep them off site as they are not compatible with vegetable growing. We shall keep trying.

Vegetable(s) matter(s)

If you're growing **garlic**, keep an eye on it. Apparently the flower stems from hard necked garlic is a delicacy. Once the foliage starts to go over it forms a hard neck the bulbs start to break up into individual bulbs ready to grow next year. Once harvested, drying the bulbs is vital so find somewhere under-cover with good airflow so they will dry out. A slatted bench in the greenhouse can be the answer but watch out for sunny days as you can end up cooking the garlic.

If you have a **polytunnel** or greenhouse try to ensure good **ventilation** or mildew problems will set in. I water my polytunnel once every 4 days in the evening if possible and into pots sunk in the ground by each plant so there is less evaporation.

Comfrey Feed My tomatoes are (finally) growing well! I use my own comfrey based feed which I also use on cucumbers, peppers and aubergines. I grow Bocking 14 comfrey on the plot and cut just before the blue flowers open. Do cover up as some people find the sap very irritating? I put the leaves in an old water butt with a hole in the bottom and weight the top of the leaves with bricks. Black liquid oozes through the hole into a covered bucket. Some people cover the leaves with water but I find this is smellier produces a weaker liquor. Just cover the bottom of the watering can with the black liquid and top up with water. You can water with it and use as a foliar feed.

Smell has also meant I have changed my perennial **weed management** from a wet weed bucket to dry dark. I put them into old manure bags and stack until rotted down and then add them to my compost bin.

Blackfly. There is a lot of blackfly around this year. Aphids have many natural enemies, including ladybirds, hoverfly larvae, and lacewing larvae so keep up with insect friendly flowers. Hoverflies have short feeding tubes and they prefer plants have flat and open flowers. This helps the hoverfly to easily reach the pollen. After feeding, the adult hoverfly will then lay her eggs on colonies of greenfly and black fly. When the eggs hatch, the resulting larvae feed on the aphids with dramatic effect! Other friendly ways of controlling aphids

include rubbing them off with your fingers, spray them off with water and the use of insecticidal soap (a potassium-salt soap available at most garden centres). Many people have success by spraying weekly with very dilute washing up liquid - about one teaspoon of to a couple of litres of water. Aphids breathe through their skin so this clogs up their skin and causes them to literally suffocate.

You need to keep it up as if there are any within a half mile radius, they'll come back a few days later, but keep washing them. Soft soap or bug clear both have natural ingredients i.e. soap and rapeseed oil.

For more info on crops and jobs go to the web site <http://www.cripleymeadow.org.uk/Thegardenersyear/Things%20to%20do%20in%20july.pdf>

Good gardening...Wendy