

Cripley Meadow Newsletter

August 2013

Working party is **Sun 11th August**
10.30 am-12.30 at the shed

We will be working on the island and on clearing unworked plots.

What a wonderful change from last year's miserable weather. Flood to heat! No doubt you are now all remembering to put in another water butt and harvesting where you can. It was lovely to see some sun and the present wet and warm makes for rapid growth. In July Cripley Meadow and a lot of other sites across the city (I visited 17) were full of the smell of strawberries. Apparently it was a great year for these and cherries. My strawberries were useless and one of my cherry trees died from aphids! I blasted it with soapy water but that seems to have been the last straw! Luckily it came from a good nursery and they will replace it in November. I am hoping there will be some good healthy strawberry runners on Cripley so that I can re stock in September.

Talking about good smells I hope you are enjoying the wonderful smell whilst coming over the Castle Mill Bridge. It is the annual treat from the lime tree in flower in the car park.

If you have not already noticed the wonderful smell whilst coming over the bridge it is the annual treat from the lime tree in flower in the car park.

Mowing

Ady Podbery has had to give up as our mower as the machine he used on Cripley has finally worn out! He has been with us a long time and helped a lot with reclamation so we are sorry to see him go. He will probably be back to do some tractor work for us later in the year. We are just setting up a new contract. Barnaby from Arcadian Living, who manage the waste plots will now do our mowing. Please keep all rubbish cleared from headlands and site paths.

Latest on Water situation

From Emily Green OCC/environment
"I have received some information from the University's consultants. As you can imagine, there is a lot of material to go through, which then needs to be discussed and any additional work agreed with the Environment Agency. The report is also being reviewed by an external consultant and the Environment Agency.

I anticipate that I will be in a position to provide you with an update based on the findings of this report hopefully in the week beginning 19th August.

For clarity, we have no evidence to suggest that allotment holders are presently subject to any unacceptable risk. We will be requiring the university to carry out long-term monitoring of groundwater (for at least 12 months) to ensure that levels are acceptable. We are also seeking to secure the alternative water supply until we are

sure that it is no longer needed as a precaution."

Early Notice re Car Park Part closure in September

The Highways team have a job to re-grade the Walton Well road Car Park the works are due to be carried out W/C the 16/09/13 for a week. This would mean closing half the car park at a time.

Ragwort alert

The floods seem to have brought back ragwort and there is lots of it about this year. As we are next to grazing land it is important you remove it and top further spread. Under the Weeds Act 1959 Defra can take action 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 pasture and on bare ground.



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.

Audit

As you know we did the audit much later this year to accommodate the slow start to the season. Everyone should have had an email or letter as for this one we contact everyone.

Most are thanks for managing the many trials of last year. There are reminders (we all need these from time to time so please follow these up) and warning letters where plots are not being worked within our rules or sometimes not at all! The letters clarify the problems and what needs to be done and by when. Please respond so that we can work out what we need to do to make sure we all work together within the rules. If you have not had your audit notice please contact

Alex alex.hollingsworth@btinternet.com



Shallots and onions

The shallots looked good (no onion fly) and they were

brought underneath the canopy to dry and turned a lovely golden colour. **These are Golden Gourmet.** They are now plaited

and hopefully they will last through to next year. My onions are now up and undergoing the same process.

Storing the harvest

As the harvest gets into swing, it's certain you'll find a few gluts. Try to share as home grown produce is just too good to waste. Sometimes you can let things go to seed and use the pods (radish) or seeds (coriander) and as a last resort it all makes good compost.

A Tomato Tip If you're using tomato feed, don't overdo it! I feed weekly with home made comfrey feed. Some gardeners like to swap this for a high nitrogen feed at this time to give the plant a boost by promoting the leaf growth.

Holidays

If you're managing to get away for a break this month try and get all the weeding done before you go away. Even if the soil looks pretty clean, a run over with the hoe will kill off the seedlings before they get established and make life easier on your return.

Remember Richard is available for a fee to help with watering and mowing.

richard <richaloe@spamarrest.com>

What to do on the plot

<http://www.cripleymeadow.org.uk/Thegardenersyear/THINGS%20TO%20DO%20IN%20AUGUST.pdf>

Good gardening

Wendy