

Cripley Meadow Allotments Newsletter October 2015

October working party

is on Sunday 11 October 10.30 to 12.30.

The island tumps have now been grass seeded but need some weeding and the new orchard needs weeding. Members attending will also be able to do some fruit picking and sharing as there is fruit ready.

Orchard plans

We are working on making a plan of the orchards with references to information on varieties and this will be available soon on the orchard notice board as soon as possible

Fruit

The castle mill orchard has established very well whereas Cripley Orchard has had a harder life. Both were summer pruned this year. We have only lost two trees, one to weeds and the other broken by the mower when branches were just too heavy with fruit. Please remember picking from communal areas is only allowed on specified picking and sharing days except for the odd one as you pass. Please do not harvest trees worth..... there were not many but all the gages went through September!



The last few weeks of sun has been ripening fruit as a late blast to another good

growing year... once the blackfly and flea beetle had subsided! A lot of members now grow borlotti /cannellini beans for drying for the winter. Hopefully this year's crops will inspire you to give it a go if you have not already done so. It is great winter food. Some find climbing beans a little difficult to get going and you may need to sow twice but I save my seed and always leave enough for two sowings. They need a good, compost rich soil to retain moisture. I do not water my plot other than if sowing when there has been no rain. They then require a little hand weeding but no other no attention other than picking, shelling and drying. I plan for the beans to be coming up in 2nd week of June when all known



frosts are over or I cover for the latter part of May. The climbing frame needs to be strong.



A few members have asked about drying them. This can be a problem so worth some care. They are best left till the leaves have dropped and they are brown on the stalk but watch out for frost warnings. Best if dry when picked. If not stiff spread them out somewhere to dry in their pods. If too cramped and not enough air they will rot. Best shelled when the pods are stiff and crack open almost by themselves. These were just right for shelling and I have more drying



under cover. You can use them fresh in which case they take about 45 mins. Season afterwards as salted water toughens the skins. They are a lovely creamy, nutty flavour and are great just seasoned with virgin olive oil. Borlotti beans, fresh and dried, are great

in pasta soups and risottos.

If drying spread the shelled beans out on trays to dry for the few weeks. If you put them in storage jars leave the lid off for longer still. They are prone to mould. Otherwise just keep in an open basket or bowl.

We had a delivery of **wood chip** and it went within a very short time. We will keep trying to attract more



Bonfire

Jeremy made a great job of managing this huge pile. **Please do not use this area as a compost pile... most small woody stuff can go in the shredder box or the pit on plot 66.** This is for bigger wood that



will not rot down. Jeremy makes use of lots of it to make charcoal as a soil conditioner

Site Wheelbarrows Jeremy upcycled a number of wheel barrows for communal use. They have CMAA painted on the side and are available outside both association sheds. They must be returned to either association shed area immediately after use. Please do not keep on plots overnight.

Recycling yard

The area behind the green association shed is our recycling yard. Jeremy manages the yard. Some of it is already spoken for /or being collected for ongoing projects. Members must talk to Jeremy before taking any material from here.

A set of motorcycle wheels were removed from here during the week of 26th Sept to 3rd of October. These are 35-40 cm in diameter and are welded on an axle. These belong to Keith Holton and were donated to the Association to make a large trolley for use in site work. **Please return them ASAP.**

2nd Audit is on Sunday October 18th

Plots must be open. Please make sure you have taken action on any previous reminders. Everyone has a 1st audit letter. Not everyone has an Oct one as this is generally a follow up unless a plot is observed to have problems since the last audit and we have not been informed of any difficulties. Do remember to let us know if you are having problems. We have had little/no time to help individuals given the level of maintenance and clearance this year but we hope to be able to do again in

the future. Unfortunately the amount of weed and waste members leave on plots for others to clear is really excessive and our skip bill is still enormous. With such a large site and so many members the committee cannot step in to manage member's plots but if aware we can do our best to be supportive where we can and give time for work to be caught up.

ODFAA talk on Soil
2015 is the United Nations Year of Soils
You are invited to an O&DFAA TALK
Understanding Your Soil:
Formation, function & fertility
Chris Bird, M. Hort (RHS)
Lecturer in Horticulture
Sparsholt College, Hampshire
On Tuesday 24 November at 7.00pm
Old Library at Oxford Town Hall
Refreshments from 6.30
Free All welcome

OCC/ODFAA Allotment Competition
Celebration of Awards and Certificates
takes place in the Town Hall in the Town
Hall on Thursday October 29th at 7pm.

The judges will be there and Lord Mayor will present the prizes and certificates. Cripsey Meadow entered the site competition and 5 members entered the individual classes. All will be invited to the wards evening. Please let me know if you do not get your invite.

Badger fencing

We are making good progress with this. It is dependent on the availability of University funding so not yet certain but if it is agreed we will try move quickly. Nigel Fisher of Wytham has continued to be really helpful.

The only alternative now is to fence the remainder of the site and in this we have (finally) found a solution the Environment Agency have agreed to. We do not have to leave 10m from the banks as originally thought but we do need room to be able to work to clear a space for a small digger and back fill the fence. We reckon this is about 3m from Fiddlers Drain/ Stream and Castle Mill Stream. We are awaiting an estimate from the fencing contractor (who has previously badger fenced Wytham). We have included costs for extraction of river water, piping, water butts, and clearance. Walter Sawyer, OU Head gardener will be in charge of this which is very reassuring. You may recall he and his team did the excellent work clearing and planting Castle Mill Orchard. We now think this will mean only affect a handful of sheds which will need moving and a couple of fences. All along Fiddlers Drain, Stream or Castle Mill banks will have some disruption. We will be in touch with plots which will need some shed movement/replacement (5) or fence removal (2) as soon as we have any news about funding.

McVeigh badger fencing spec

This is the type of fence we are exploring. It is more visually appealing, tough, resilient and easy to erect X™ fence® will deliver major dividends for your next fencing project. From its unique X shaped knot to its revolutionary forged stiffstay manufacturing technology, X™ fence® promises new dimensions in wire fencing that simply can't be overlooked

The X™ knot Badger X™ fence® has been designed to withstand the aggressive nature of badgers. Once the base is buried underground, the fence will exclude badgers from areas of harm, likewise for our otter fence. Taller heights are recommended for optimum burying, however where costs are a concern a shorter height and mesh can be used. Badger fencing should be at least

1250mm high, buried a minimum 450mm into the ground and then angled for 200mm in the direction a badger would approach. More info below.

<http://www.mcveighparker.com/sites/default/files/pdf/downloads/Xfence%20Badger%20Specification%20Sheet.pdf>

We will continue to keep everyone updated by email newsletter. Nigel is working on the estimates and as soon as complete they will be presented to OU. The University are well aware of the inconvenience to members of Castle Mill and have remained firm in their commitment to help with excluding badgers given Castle Mill has exacerbated this problem for us. What has been very difficult has been finding a way to do so. They are also well aware that we have been incredibly understanding and tolerant of the many ups and downs our neighbour has required. The patience of Job has definitely been required! We have an increasing number of Castle Mill residents as members who are grateful for the warm welcome they have had and commented on our beautiful site.

If and when we have funding we will be in touch to organise what needs doing when and how we can help! October to March is always our working time for major projects but of course we also need to watch the weather which can limit working.

Whilst I am sure all of us would rather not fence the AGM decision was unanimous as the only way forward to secure and sustain the future of the site. Fingers crossed that we are successful.

Castle Mill ES addendum

We have received no member comments about the Environmental Statement

Addendum on Castle Mill. We sent out the reference to all members in the September newsletter. The Public Consultation runs from 2 September 2015 to 14 October 2015. **The committee will send in their submission ASAP after our committee meeting on the 7th.**

New Members

We have had lots of interest from new members recently and we have done lots of tours to accommodate this. We have c 30 new members across the site with the prospect too of a bee hive returning to Cripsey Meadow. Just one so our incredibly healthy solitary, bumble and small bee population will not be scared off. We have finally been able to begin to redevelop the central area. We need to complete the raised beds on 64/65 and use the soil heaps. We have been too busy with plot clearance this year to make good progress with it and we have so far had fewer members on WPs. This often happens in the summer but we hope you will all be turning out to help where you can now the season is turning.



Plots 67/68 and 69 have been marked out to provide small plots with small shed rights. 147 is also

turning into to be small plots having been mown off for the summer and we will probably do the same with plots 70 and 53 and 137

which is now back with the association for clearance.

Many thanks to all members. Our new members often comment how welcoming a site we are.

Growing stuff

It was warm at the end of September so weeds are still growing. Please do not let seeding weeds blow all over. If you let them seed you might as well scatter seeds all over your neighbours' plots. Still time to order garlic and autumn onions

Site mowing is planned for 15/16 Oct weather permitting.

Gardening classes?

I have been asked if we could put on some gardening classes on site ... digging, composting, and weeding. We know Tube can tell you how to do anything nowadays! If there was interest we could probably find a suitable person. Maybe £5 per hour per person with groups of 5 minimum, 10 maximum people per group. We would be happy to explore.

Do drop us an email if you would be interested?

Follow the link for October in our [Gardeners Year](#).

Thanks for reading and good growing /Wendy