

Cripley Meadow Allotment Association Newsletter Feb 2016

www.cripley Meadow.org.uk



The next WP is on Feb 14. We had a good turnout in January. There is still lots to do including moving the remaining soil into the raised beds. We used the remaining grant for this to pay Jeremy to complete the beds and fill. There is not enough to complete this work so do join us if you can with a wheelbarrow and spade. We also have a few more plots to clear.



We have registered to contribute to OXCLEAN again. We will meet from 10.30 to 12.30 on Sunday Mar 6. This can be counted as a working party contribution. There is our usual working party the week after. Here is the crew from last year. We meet by the gate.

Fruit sales Andy of the Heritage Fruit Tree Company will be at our AGM at St Barnabas on March 14th selling in the car park from 6-7pm. His latest catalogue is attached. Not everything is available as already sold out a lot this season. He has some more trees available as bare root and containerised and we are expecting another list? He cannot fit everything into his van so it is best to pre-order and collect. ***Do remember to check rules about fruit planting and get permission before buying. Claire does permissions so email her. They go to the next committee meeting which is March 11th.***

Andy is giving a talk on fruit pruning at our AGM.

From Sara, our treasurer: If you're not planning to renew your subscription to work your plot, please let us know so that the plot can be made available for a new member. Your invoice and invitation to the AGM should arrive in early February if it hasn't

already. Only one invoice and invite is sent per plot, so do check with any other members on your plot. If your plot has not received an invoice in the first few weeks of February, please email Sara allotment@qtq.org including your plot number in the email.

Our new Gardening year starts on March 14th so please pay promptly. Do remember that there is a late payment surcharge of £10 which will be applied after 31st March 2014. Most members now pay by cheque by post or online. There is a **Subscription Hour** at the Shed on **Saturday March 13** from 11am to 12pm. If anyone has difficulty paying their subscription please be in touch with Sara or Wendy.

Our 2015 AGM is on Monday March 14th at St Barnabas School Hart Street, Jericho. Meeting starts at 7pm Members of the Committee will be present **from 6.00 pm** for you to pay your subscription. There will be nibbles/drinks/slides so that you can chat to us and other members. Do come along if you can. The main items this year are badger fencing, Option 1 mitigation for Castle Mill and reporting on the proposed new Flood Channel and its possible impact on allotments. If you want to raise an item it will now go into AOB as the papers are in process. **The 2014 annual report, copy of the invitation to the AGM, agenda, 2015 draft minutes, budget and accounts will be sent out as an email package shortly as an email shortly**

Follow the link [things to do in Jan / Feb](#)

Outdoor Sowing and Planting

If you are going to plant out or direct sow into the ground in early spring, try putting a cloche up or covering the ground with horticultural fleece a couple of weeks before hand. It will warm the ground up a couple of degrees. If you are sowing early remember even if warm light levels are low until March 20th (equinox). You can help with foil backs to propagators on windowsills but you need to turn every day.

Broad Beans and Shallots If we have any cold weather and the rain keeps off you can start sowing your broad beans and put in Shallots. Some people find them easier than onions and they have the advantage of storing for longer. It is not unusual for them to keep 12 to 18 months.

Chitting Potatoes Not everyone agrees this is productive nowadays but it is



often still recommended for earlies ...and earlier crops overall can miss blight. If you are chitting your potatoes in a shed or garage, watch out for mice and very cold nights. If they get frosted at this stage your chances are pretty slim for a good crop. Covering with fleece or newspaper is usually enough for the frost but not the mice!

Pruning and Clearing

Don't forget January/February are the best months for pruning apples and pears and removing any self-seeded saplings that have grown on boundaries. Next month the sap will start moving and before you know it, they'll be in leaf. It is also the time to cut autumn fruiting raspberries down to the ground to stimulate the new canes and don't forget the blackcurrants.

Winter trading 2016

The shop was not open on a regular basis in January, but members are very welcome to make contact to arrange one-off sales Sarah sarahjehome@aol.com or 07960 352787 and Sara sara@qtq.org This could be weekday or weekend. Depending on weather and conditions, we will re-open in February/March. Please see notice board for updates and times.

Reminders

- Please **always** leave vehicles in the car park when it is wet or frosty as both conditions just churn them up. Our paths need constant work to maintain.
- **Dogs MUST ALWAYS be on a lead when not on your plot.** If any member persistently breaks this rule after warning we will have to ask them to stop bringing their dog on site so that our rule continues to work for all.

Soil Testing

Members that came to **Understanding Your Soil: formation, function & fertility by Chris Bird, M. Hort (RHS) Lecturer in Horticulture Sparsholt College, Hampshire** in the Town hall in November will remember he stressed the importance of good soil to good

crops. Plenty of humus from home-made composts and manure for structure is a good starting point but it is good to check acidity (pH) and major nutrients (N,P,K). The only accurate way to find out what your soil's acidity and nutrient levels are is to use a test kit. These are relatively cheap to buy.

A sour or acid soil blocks access to nutrients so plants can't absorb food. Adding more fertiliser to sour soil is near pointless but lime will sweeten it and plants thrive again. Often a soil isn't just exhausted, it's actually short of one specific element. It may have plenty of nitrogen available from manure but be short of potash (potassium) or phosphorus. Adding a fertiliser that is rich or purely the specific element missing is the most efficient way to correct this situation.

The tests are fairly easy to use but the important thing is to get the initial sampling right. If you have a three or four part rotation, treat each section as a separate plot. On each plot, imagine a large W. Take a sample from the 3 top points and 2 bottom points to give 5 in all.

The samples should be from about 10cm (4") below the surface. Make sure your trowel is wiped between samples to avoid cross-contamination. Once you know your soil, you can effectively improve it and, in turn, get much better crops. Not only more productive but more disease and pest resistant.

Ada Grabowska-Zhang who is a plot holder on SF1, is running a course on plant breeding through the Department for Continuing Education this

April. We have very notable speakers, including Kate McEvoy, the co-founder of the Real Seeds Catalogue, and Claire Luby from the Open Source Seed Initiative. The talks topics include seed saving and strain improvement, as well as methods for comparing plant performance and some citizen science. Sign up on

www.conted.ox.ac.uk/Q100-147 .

Compost delivery 1 Feb

To help you along we had 3



trailer loads of rough compost delivered ...about 20 tons! It is from Parks so it can have weed/ root. Do pull out any nasties and put to the side and clear any spills from the hard-core path. **Please share. Transport for this is paid for by the association so it should benefit all members.**

Unfortunately



Someone is seriously damaging green waste plot on 84. They are digging out soil by the side of the raised compost and creating pits.. this one is about a foot deep! There is still rough compost there and we are trying to spread this to raise the plot a little. This activity is

dangerous and destabilises the plot. It makes access and management dangerous.

Please think!



STOP PRESS

After 4 long years we think we have arrived at a solution to our badger incursion. As mitigation Oxford university agreed 4 years ago to help protect the badgers but stop incursions of badgers onto our site. We have reported fully on this previously. The remaining solution is a badger proof fence for the rest of the site (wire and post 1300mm high) This was discussed amongst other options and the 2015 AGM agreed unanimously we should pursue this. This is the only remaining solution. As soon as the water recedes (it is up a bit at present) we will aim for all systems go ASAP so we can get the necessary clearance in. We have written Environment Agency permission. Jeremy Hyde Plot 91 will be managing the moving and shed stuff with members and later installing the water butts and pumps. Walter Sawyer and the OU Parks team will be doing the clearance (they did the clearance and planted our second orchard). Archer and Bishop will be installing the fencing. They were recommended to us by Nigel Fisher of Wytham woods, who has been really helpful with this project. It has been a really difficult project to pull together but we are at the final stages of signing agreements.

West Area Planning Committee of February 9th

accepted the Environmental assessment in its many forms, signed off the remaining planning conditions, accepted Option 1 mitigation and voted down discontinuance! The plans for Castle Mill mitigation within Option 1 can now be discussed and eventually there will be another planning application and further consultation. We will continue to work to ensure mitigation does not sacrifice Cripsey Meadow to Port Meadow. Presently tree planting in the badger run and our unpollarded willows are top of our list. .. and there we were hoping for a bit of a rest...

Good gardening Wendy