

Cripley Meadow Newsletter

August 2010

Diary Dates: Working parties

Sun 8th August 10.30 am-12.30

Weds 11th August 6-8pm

We will be pollarding the willows on the Island to produce canes and poles for members of the working party & doing more tumping to be ready for autumn tree planting. John is ordering soon so let him know if you have a local variety you can recommend. Thanks are due to James Allen who donated some plum trees for the island. This will add to the damson hedge. We also have some plot work as we have another communal plot to open.

National Allotment Week
Cripley Meadow
Allotment Association

Open Day

Sunday 15 August 2010

11:00 – 15:00

**Tour our award winning plots & the
Cripley Island Orchard.**

This is in **National Allotment Week.**

It would be great to see lots of ploholders on their open plots. This is a great opportunity for all members to invite friends and family and visit one another's (open) plots.

We will have a table on The Green where you can leave vegetables for visitors to sample. There will be a pot for visitor donations. Cripley Island Orchard will be open and there will be tours at 11.00, 12.00, 13.00 and 14 00.

Association Shed Water Butt



Thanks to John Langsbury, John Sivell and Tony Clear for installing the water butt. The water (when collected) is particularly for new members when without wells or water butts and for planting on the island.

Recycling



We have some more pallets for making compost bins by the shed so please help yourself.

Green Waste Plots Logs for Members



We have put some of the logs from the reclamation onto Plot 57 for members to take. This is generally willow. It must not be used on site (where it will generally sprout) but this can (unusually) be taken off site for wood burning stoves etc.

Wood chip



Wood chip is available on plots 57 and 109. See map on notice board and web site. Do remember

the badger likes wood chip too so if you use it on your plot it does make it more likely they will visit. Please leave some on the plots so the badger can rifle through for slugs and snails.

Burning Spot

We have now made a new communal burning pile by the Association Shed. This is for communal plots and members with no space on their plot for a garden burner. It is ONLY for burning dried perennial weeds and organic material that cannot be composted. Please follow the OCC bonfire code. A copy is on the notice board. You must burn your own stuff here and supervise it.

Lunch on the Green....

Sunday September 26 ...with music.

We hope the community brass band 'Horns a Plenty' will be joining us for our Lunch on the Green on 26th September. We will give them a small donation for their instrument fund and of course a share of our allotment grub. Please come along and bring food, drink, family and friends and help us celebrate the allotment year. We shall be celebrating the many members' contributions to working party work on the island so some drinks and food will be using lottery funding to support voluntary work. Micki will be letting us have more information about the vegetable and flower show and we shall be presenting Lewis with his prize for best plot number

Communal plots get more communal!

Communal Plot 47 has now mended the shed roof and well and are managing their paths cooperatively. We have a waiting list for communal plots so we need to use them as well as possible and this group responsibility is great to see. As many of the members have little or no garden the communal plots are a great first foothold into gardening.

How long does it take to manage a plot?

Or how long is a piece of string? Obviously this varies depending on the size of your plot but all generally need regular weekly visits. We all know if you go away on holiday for a few weeks how much can grow! To keep a plot in accordance with our rules would be difficult without weekly visits for most of the growing season. Within 3 weeks most plots will be a problem to neighbours. Gardening next to waving grass and weed seed blowing onto your plot is hard work.

A new allotment field



As reported to the AGM we have started work on re-opening our allotment land beyond the mid fence. After 3 years of waiting lists we have saved some of our reclamation fund and this, with OCC grant money, has enabled us to make a start on clearance. This land has always been part of our lease so held by us under license to use only as allotment land. It has not been used for about 30 years. Now there is greater demand not only here but on neighbouring sites and across the city we must try use resources as well as possible to enable others to have growing space. The council fenced this off in 1991. It was then seriously bottle dug with deep open pits and self set trees. It increasingly harboured rough sleepers, drinkers and yet more rubbish. The tree officer as always had the final say on site specific tree management. The next stage is for the bulldozer to remove the tree stumps and level and remove rubbish. The land is badly pitted due to previous bottle digging and beyond working party work until made safe and level.

Wildlife news

As reported earlier we consulted the local badger group and Natural England before working on this reclamation and the OCC work was done with their guidance. Sadly the badgers are losing a few friends on the site. The population has clearly grown around us. It was probably the building on the embankment that squeezed the sett into the disused land in 2004/5 before the new fence was put in. Had we known this we might have been able to modify the fence at the time? Certainly they were not in there before as the old fence would never have kept them from our sweet corn! Our increasingly marvellous spread has undoubtedly increased their family size. Do remember the badger gates are there because this fence cannot keep them from digging under so the gates limit the damage. We continue to work with the badger groups on trying to live together **and** have allotment land. We know there is now a fairly steady level of complaint from members as sweet corn and carrots disappear wholesale! We now have three active and probably related sets around us. These are in the car park spinney (they come over the bridge) on Castle Mill

ground by our railway fence and in the disused area to the left as you stand at the fence, where we have left the tree cover. We have left significant cover here... far more than the required 15m buffer. We hope we can get better at moderating the damage to the allotment whilst benefitting from the much decreased rabbits, slugs and snails.

We are of course a valuable, varied bio diverse corridor for the great variety of wildlife that crosses our land. Our 10ft fruit tree rule means we now cater for far more songbirds than when we had the 15-40 foot trees which pigeons and magpies prefer. We have frequent sightings of red kites and buzzards



overhead and nesting great grebes, kingfishers, moorhens, coots, mallards, heron ...and now even a little grebe on Castle Mill Stream. The thrushes are back on site and the island plant life is more varied as

the light, glades and coppicing enrich the diversity.

Most of you will have noticed the young litter of foxes, fearless and commanding the whole site.



We hope they are putting paid to a few rabbits as one or two have been seen on the island!. We seem to have got a new and white wild black and white cat on site. It is reported as feral so take care.

Strange moorings will be removed



Castle Mill Stream and Fiddlers Stream must not be used by members for making moorings as this will attract landings and compromise our

security. Members have been using the island to get water. Please do not as it makes an obvious opening. We have two paths between plots 6 and 7 and between plots 30 and 31 where members can collect water from Castle Mill and Fiddlers' Stream if your plots do not butt onto these. Members must not go on other member's plots.

Student visits



One of our members asked to bring two student groups for allotment and orchard visits as part of their summer studies. Low carbon, climate change, community and of course healthy food formed part of our discussions. Also our most recent student with questionnaires, Emma Burnett, wanted to say thank you to all as "everyone was super helpful" She also wanted to know how many hectares of allotment land and how many members are in Oxford City. The approx latest figures are about 71 hectares and 2,500 members.

We hope to see many of you soon at the working parties and Open Day. Meanwhile good gardening. Why not take advantage of the drop of rain and sow some Chinese vegetables for autumn /winter cropping. Cripsey Meadow Allotment Association Committee