

Cripley Meadow Allotment Association Newsletter March 2017

www.cripleymeadow.org.uk



Sunday March 13th is our next site working party. This is Jeremy Alex and Ian at the March 2016 working party

Do come and join us. Please wear clothing, footwear and gloves suitable for rough work. Meet at the shed and we will provide any other tools. Come and Join us and meet other members.

Invoices for 2017 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 have arrived in early February. Only one invoice and invite is sent per plot, so if you have not had one do check with other members on your plot. If your plot did not receive 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 at the AGM so please pay promptly. Do remember that there is a late payment surcharge of £10 which will be applied after 31st March 2016. Most members now pay by cheque by post or online. If anyone has difficulty paying their subscription please be in touch with Sara or Wendy.

Our 2016 AGM is on Monday March 14th at St Barnabas School Hart Street, Jericho. The 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 from 6 so that you can chat to us and other members. Do come along if you can. The main items this year are

- Tree management plan,
- Mitigation for Castle Mill
- Plot paths
- members waste management

The 2017 **annual report**, 2016 draft AGM minutes invitation to the AGM, AGM agenda, budget and accounts, are all attached to this email.

There will be no St John's Leaf mould for a year or more due to a St John's building programme.

Castle Mill mitigation

Plans for this can be found at <http://public.oxford.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=OKOVRWMFJHD00>

Of particular interest to members is the work schedule for the changes to the blocks. This will mean we will have a building site next to us from August 2017 possibly through to April 2019. The flats will be in use throughout and Roger Dudman Way usable for all but a short time. The plans

for the badger run area are probably the most significant for us and we need to ensure our protection is at least maintained. There does seem to be some possibility for improved badger exclusion and badger protection. It is planned that this area will accommodate the bike sheds and planters. The badger run will continue to be kept clear but will be more secure and less open to interference.

It is good to be back in such a green and pleasant land. Oxford so far holds its own with places in China, Japan, Singapore, Perth, Melbourne, Anglesea, The Great Ocean Road, Port Fairy, Sydney, San Francisco, Monterey, Cambria, Santa Barbara, LA, Palm Springs, The Thousand Palm Oasis, New Orleans, Baltimore, Sillicott City Waskington and New York. We visited some fantastic botanic gardens and more intimate spaces like the communal garden in St Kilda, which we saw with ex members Judy and John Cook



The Highline in New York was another communal planting plan but with much bigger resources and snow!



Things to do - March

You could be picking

- Over wintered spinach, leeks and kale. Old Brussels sprouts stalks will give a late head of greens that are good to eat.
- If you still have parsnips they will be beginning to sprout so lift and store if you want to eat. Keep cold and dry.
- Lift covers from forced rhubarb. If ready pull rather than cut to reduce infection. Once picked leave cover off so plant recovers.
- Lambs lettuce and corn salad leaves if you kept them from getting too wet

You could still be digging and clearing

- If you dig get as much done as possible but try to do it when the soil is dry. Do not dig if the soil is clagging your boots or when frozen as you will bury wet and cold soil. If you are digging try to add some organic matter

(compost or manure) to make it worth while.

- Build a compost heap.
- To reduce digging - look up 'bed systems'.
- Try to keep soil covered when not being used to keep clear of annual weeds.
- You should have cleared and stored any Jerusalem artichokes soon as they will start to sprout.
- Cut autumn fruiting raspberry canes to the ground
- Clear and cover strawberry bed for an earlier crop.
- If you didn't do it in October cut back vines to 1 year old wood for fruiting this year. The later you leave it the more the vines will bleed as sap rises.
- Divide clumps of mint/ chives to rejuvenate. Plant mint in a sunken bucket to prevent invasion.
- Cut back shrubby herbs like lavender, thyme and sage

You could be sowing and planting

- If you have some fleece or polythene cover the soil to warm it up for first sowings.
- When the soil is warmed, (weeds start) it is worth trying some early sowings of peas, broad beans, beetroot, radish, cauliflowers, spinach, spring onion and possibly some early lettuce and carrots under cover. Fleece is effective cover and gives some protection from bird damage.
- Onion in warm sunny spots. Cover to protect from birds
- Feed over wintered brassicas like spring cabbage and sprouting broccoli and kale
- Early potatoes that you chitted in January in Late March. If you have trouble with scab on your potatoes try a layer of grass cuttings in the bottom of the trench to keep in moisture.
- Buy and plant fruit trees and bushes (You need to write to committee re trees)
- Late march direct sow hardy annuals like cornflower,

nigella, Californian poppy, poached egg plant (all easy to grow and seed and bird friendly. Liked by hoverflies which eat aphids

Other Jobs

- Continue chitting early potatoes. Put them in trays in a light frost free place to develop little buds. There is now lots of evidence to suggest this is probably only worth it for early crops?
- If frost is forecast protect early fruit blossom with fleece. Uncover on frost free days
- Erect pea/ bean poles.
- Cover strawberry plants for earlier fruits Cut autumn fruiting raspberry canes down if not done already tie in summer ones if come lose from supports.

**After lots of flying around we are looking forward to getting back to some gardening!
Wendy**

