

Cripley Meadow June Newsletter 2017

www.cripleymeadow.org.uk

It was wonderful to have sunshine, warmth and the welcome rain. This has allowed an explosion of growth. Please try to keep on top of weeds and grass cutting so that seeding weeds and grass do not sow onto your neighbours' plots. The site is beginning to get into its stride with lots of exciting new planting, sowing and finally.... crops. There are lots of good ideas so do take time to walk round. it is well worth it.

Next Working party is Sunday 11th June from 10.30 to 12.30. Meet at the shed. Jobs include:

- Clearing and covering plots.
- Cripley island orchard work

Jericho St Fair is Sat Jun 10



We hope you have been busy collecting and potting up for our **Cripley Meadow Stall**.



Split garden perennials, self-seeded plants, potted cuttings and pricked out seedlings as well as whole packets of seeds or leftover onion sets are welcome as well as any jams or chutneys or cakes etc. made from allotment produce.
Please bring your offerings

to our stall in Canal St between 11 and 12.30. You can buy from 12 to 3.30/4pm. Please do not bring after 1pm. This is our 10th year at this important community event. The committee and members contribute plants and work the stall. The proceeds all go to the site.

We still have some plots available. We are reclaiming and reorganising some plots so they are being covered for a longer-term rest but we are developing other areas into smaller plots and as always, we have some turnover.

Some Committee news



Manda was elected to the committee in 2017 after becoming a member in June 2016 on Plot 72. This plot had been little used for growing anything other than weeds for many years but it was left with some good structures. It is already a beautifully productive plot. She started in April by helping with minutes and the agenda and is now training to be our new secretary. This is very welcome news for us all. **Jeremy** now works for the association one day a month, on project work. This is usually the first Monday after the working party Sunday.

Compost and soil
There is still some remaining soil you can take from plot 66. This will probably be levelled next month. Also, there is still rough manure on plot Arcadian living green waste Plot 109. There is a lot of brash and rubbish but inside this there is

some good compost. Do use and keep the brash managed so it can be cleared.

Carrot Tips

If the early ones failed, you still have plenty of time to sow more carrots. Early varieties are full size in just 12 weeks unlike maincrops that take 16 weeks, although the latter generally grow bigger and keep longer.

June drop

Thin apples to one every 4 to 6 inches if nature does not do it for you. Pears are generally 2 per cluster.

Missing key? An allotment key was found in Walton Well car park on the 27th May. Please contact Sara on Sara Jones <allotment@qtq.org> if you think it is yours. It is very distinctive so it should be easy to identify the correct owner.



BEE report

From Christine Melia on Plot 5a

On the 24th May some bees on plot 5a swarmed. Fortunately, I was contacted early in the morning by Sara, Cripley Meadow Treasurer about strange bee behaviour. After checking around for a swarm I quietened the hives.....which seemed undepleted. However, I found a smallish swarm later in the day in a bush on plot 3 which I collected successfully and hived.

There seems a proliferation of boxes on my plot now but 2 of these will be transported away shortly to other bee keepers elsewhere.

I thought members would appreciate a report on this, in case any other plot holders had concerns but also to demonstrate that the system we have in place is working well. It might be worth reiterating the fact that contact

numbers for beekeepers are on the notice board. Thanks again to Sara on this occasion. I hope this is my only swarm this year but I'll be checking and taking measures throughout the rest of May and June.

Ironically, when the professional beekeeper came to collect the swarm from me, he was pretty sure that they weren't from my hives. So, they were either feral or maybe usurpers from Trap grounds!

New filled water butts

Last month Jeremy filled the new water butts. Whilst we understand this is maybe easier than using your well or the stream, please continue to do as much water harvesting on your plot as possible. It is a labour-intensive job to fill them and they should be thought of as emergency water for dry spells and for those who have yet to make their own water harvesting arrangements. We cannot promise to keep these filled so you cannot depend on them. **Providing the badger fence gates are always kept closed** we will leave them unlocked.

The audit was on May 21st so please watch out for your email letter and follow up any action! Every plot gets one. The emails will go to the lead/invoice member. Some letters require immediate action if your plot is interfering with others. Apart from holidays and emergencies, which we all have, plots generally need working weekly. A weekly hoe and grass cut will keep most seeding problems managed.

Cripley Island Orchard

The trees have suffered from flood, drought and animals but have survived but they are still in need some emergency



TLC to prevent further damage. Hopefully we will have enough members for some training and help with this at WPs.

We are adding strimmer guards as we will go back to strimming the tumps Please do not BBQ here as it attracts animals.

A new and thoughtless illegal Bridge!



A bridge/dam was 'constructed' in mid May from Cripely Island to Fiddlers Island across Fiddlers Stream by the weeping willow. It used logs and branches from our side. There was some similar building last year which was done by some older children on site. They removed it. We alerted members then and only last month reminded all that children are **very welcome** but they must be the responsibility of parents and must be supervised. We do not have time for clearing up activities like this. In 2015, we spent a lot of time reporting on how difficult it was to clear the stream! It promotes weed build up and compromises our security. If you know anything

about this do let us know or better still clear it out!

Cropping at last! We have had fantastic asparagus this year and our artichokes are now headed up and the first beetroot is being pulled. The black fly landed on the beans last week. If you catch it early soap spray will work. The asparagus beetle is being regularly squashed and the elephant garlic is growing well. Lettuce and radishes of all kinds are abundant and my first peas and beans have flowered and will be cropping soon. Carrots were late germinating so it will be a while before they are pulled. Potatoes have recovered from being hit by frost a bit but the rhubarb which was forced is looking very sad. That rain came a bit late. It will need a bit of TLC. I only force one of my 3 clumps so it will have 2 years to recover.

Compost efficiency

If your soil's quality isn't all it could be you can make your compost and manure go further by using it where it is most needed. When planting out pumpkins and squashes, dig a hole roughly 60cm on a side and the same deep. Mix the soil in your wheelbarrow 50:50 with compost and refill the hole which will now become a mound and plant out on that. For crops in rows you can do the same, drawing out a shallow trench and refilling with an improved soil/compost mix. Eventually you'll improve the whole plot this way.

Cripley Soil set in June

Remember Cripely soil generally 'sets' late in June making it harder to cultivate and dig. If you have spare ground, do sow some green manure and

improve the structure and fertility of your soil.

Badger activity

We still have some badger incursions and are following this up with badger cams and further work. The main problems still appear to be where there were previously-used routes and the badgers are now clearly making big changes! **Members are being helpful at reporting sightings and activity like digging or dumps.** Please keep this up and keep a special eye for any digging activity on/around or under sheds and let us know immediately. The last thing we want is to keep one inside the fence.



It is vital members with plots along the fence line

keep a metre free either side. We have sprayed the fence line and we

mow both sides monthly so we can monitor its length. **Please do not stack anything in this space or fence it off or dump anything either side.**

That means no weed dumps please as these make mowing so much more difficult.

This is a path for committee access for maintenance and monitoring. Adjacent plot holders should manage any space that comes up to this monitoring space. Please do not let nettles, brambles or, worse still ground elder grow as this will spread along the site. On the south field, there is a path behind the plots which we mow. Please do not put anything behind the plot

marker stakes. The machine has only just enough room.



My aquilegia is not as good this year so this is last year's photo as a reminder of better times! I did do some clearing out and weeding in this permanently planted area which has vines, lemon balm and aquilegia. I am now missing the display but it will soon seed again and meanwhile I have removed the self-seeded blackthorn, brambles, buttercups and dandelions.

This made me give a thought for longevity which I decided to share with you

This site has been allotments since 1876. For much of that time most of the plots were dug from end to end and cleared of crops every year. There were not as many crops grown as nowadays, nor were they so varied in their planting. The introduction of flowers would have been annuals for cut flowers and probably dahlias and gladioli, which are regularly raised and moved. There was very little permanent planting.

During the last 30 yrs. of the 20th the site became very underused like many allotments and gradually it became very overgrown with many self-seeded trees and bramble. This also allowed other pernicious weeds to get a hold and roam. We are still trying to manage and limit the spread of ground elder and horsetail. Both will find a way up where soil is not cultivated or mown regularly. Hence our present policy of removing fences as these are almost impossible to keep clear and they provide a

route along the paths from one plot to another. The fences are no longer useful for pest exclusion which was their major purpose. All who have removed them are amazed at how much easier it is to manage their boundaries. I have started removing some headland fence as I have some bindweed in there and I do not want to transfer to my beds. Similarly, well managed paths act as a buffer zone between plots.

Please give some thought to any areas of your plot with permanent planting. These must be managed to keep these weeds at bay. Never put it where there is already a weed problem. Clear it thoroughly first. Comfrey and rhubarb are useful plants that can manage some weed suppression for a while. I have included a green manure reference <https://www.growveg.co.uk/guides/green-manures-the-good-the-bad-and-the-ugly/> which has some useful advice on the use of short term green manure. Short term green manure is realistic on allotments but do check the digging in and seeding.

Cripley Meadow is a beautiful spot with a fantastically diverse membership with a wealth of gardening styles. If we all do our best to work the land and keep the soil fertile. it will be there for another hundred or so years.



Good Gardening-Wendy