

Cripley Meadow April Newsletter 2010

Dates for this year are on the web site and noticeboard.

June 12 Jericho Street Fair

Do put your seeds in and pot up for bringing plants/allotment produce to the Jericho June Fair. We open our two stalls at 12 for our 6th year at this important community event.

Working party

May working parties are Sunday 9 May 10.30 to 12.30 and Weds 12 May 6 til 8pm. Do note they are now the **second Sunday and Wednesday in the month**. At April's working parties we built two sheds for a new communal plot, started clearing a released plot and burning off material on the island from stream clearance. Sightings of the great crested grebes and kingfisher were magnificent rewards.

Manure

We will have a manure delivery to Plot 57 (by the Green) this week and another next week.

Dogs

This was raised at the AGM. We agreed to strongly re state our rule that **All dogs must be on a lead at all times when not confined within a fence on a plot**. Hopefully it goes without saying they must **not foul others plots or headlands** and must be cleaned up after.

Skip

We have had one skip and will get another. Please do not over fill. When the skip is not there you must store waste on your plot or take it to Redbridge. NOTHING should be left by the shed. We no longer have a metal skip. MandM can no longer justify it.

Clearing a released plot

We have to clear a large amount of waste from a plot that has recently been released after many years. This rubbish may cost us £300 to get rid of! Allotment Law says we could charge members who do not clear their plot but we think the audit process deals with most problems.. Remember, 'recycling' does not mean that you can use your plot as a dump/store.

Buildbase We have been offered a delivery of free wooden pallets and a discount card for members at Johnsons Buildbase Oxford OX4 6LN They do tool and plant hire and hard landscaping stuff. The palettes will be stored by the association shed and members are welcome to take them for use on site. They make **good compost bins and we encourage everyone to have a compost bin**. Please remember: cooked food waste attracts vermin and perennial weeds should be dried and burned, not composted.

Subscriptions

April 15th was our final day for payment of 2010 invoices. Any unpaid plots (very few) are now being offered to new members. We had a few problems where members moved and did not let us know! Please remember, if you move, it is your responsibility to inform the committee. We still have c. 250 members. Members on communal plots wanting a larger plot join the waiting list but take priority over non-members.

2010 Audit

Our first audit for 2010 is **on Sunday 23 May** We know a few members lock their gates so please make sure they are open that day.

The site is looking great with spring preparation underway.



We were asked at the AGM to give some reminders for the audit so here they are...

Care of plots Members must keep their plots in a reasonable state of cultivation and cultivated to at least 75% of their potential in a proper and husband-like manner. This is taken to mean that it is either in readiness for growing, well stocked with produce (relevant to the time of the year) or being made ready for crops or being prepared for the following season. Where there are paths between beds and growing areas these are well looked after. Some plots are being reclaimed after previous neglect and one growing season's grace is generally allowed for this.

Care of pathways and headlands All plots should have a pathway between them of minimum, of 2 to 2.5ft and managed headlands. Some of the paths between plots got lost in clearing but they are an important and necessary buffer between plots. Traditionally each plot-holder managed the path to the left when standing on their shed line. Please work together with your neighbours to keep the paths between you managed. The headland is the bit outside your fence and up to the mowed edge of the main

tracks on the site.. Avoid planting on adjacent plot boundaries as this can block light on a neighbour's plot or take root space. Headland hedges/fences should be no more than 5ft.

What can be grown Plot holders may grow any kind of vegetables, flowers, soft fruit or herbs. Cultivated blackberries may be grown on headlands next to site paths or on plots 5 ft from boundaries. Fruit trees should be planted only with prior permission and should always be grown on dwarf root stocks and kept to no more than 10ft high and at least 5 ft from any boundaries. This generally means: apples grown on rootstocks M27, M9 or M26; pears and quinces on rootstock Quince C; plums grown on rootstocks Pixy and Ferenain; and compact peach cultivars. Fruit trees and bushes should be sited only where they will not create an obstacle or nuisance to others as they grow. Due to pressure for growing land there is now a limit that fruit trees should take up no more than 30% of a plot holder's total (except for the few plots with established fruit trees planted when the demand for land was less than today). Communal plots cannot have permanent planting like fruit trees and bushes. If plot holders do grow a number of trees they must ensure that the surrounding areas are kept weed free and cut to avoid seeding.

Weeds Plot holders must take steps to eradicate pernicious weeds - such as bindweed, thistles, ground elder, golden rod, michaelmas daisies and nettles – and ensure that they do not spread to other plots. Members must not cause a nuisance to other plot holders by allowing weeds to seed.
Please cut those dandelions NOW and seal them in a bag ...they still seed when cut!

Rubbish. No rubbish may be dumped on any part of the Association's land. We commend recycling but plots cannot be used to store or accumulate material. The ground is for growing. Unwanted vegetable matter must be burnt or composted on your plot and other rubbish kept in sacks and put in the skip provided from time to time or taken to Redbridge. —Kitchen waste that attracts vermin— e.g. cooked food, meat, – should not be composted.

Wells Plot holders who have a well on their plot are responsible for the safe maintenance of it and for providing and maintaining a strong, raised well surround and cover. New wells may be dug but please notify the committee so we keep their positions logged for safety.

Audits take place twice a year in May and September and are organised by an audit manager. This year this is Alex Hollingsworth and Micki Mather. The audit committee consists of at least 5 committee members. All letters are agreed by the Committee who are elected annually. All members have a chance to influence the management of the site by standing for election.

The holder of a plot which is falling below an acceptable standard is notified. The letters we use are on the web site. First reminders are intended to be just that: a friendly reminder or query to see if there is a temporary problem. If there are ongoing or repeated issues we use different letters to target specific concerns. The aim is always to get members to sort out problems quickly so that they can continue to enjoy their allotment and their neighbours aren't inconvenienced by the problem. A set time is given

(depending on the time of year) for action. For obvious reasons, less time is given during the growing season. Membership is conditional on keeping the rules and with such a large community we are dependent on one another. If no improvement is made within the requested time further letters are sent and Ultimately- though we make every effort to fix things before it comes to this- a member may be asked to give up their plot. Obviously we really want people to keep plots and grow fruit and vegetables successfully and cooperatively.

Badgers and other pests

We have been consulting Natural England and a local badger group about living with badgers as the setts and activity around us is increasing at an alarming rate. This is partly due to our never ending and much improved food supply. Both bodies have commended our efforts to live alongside badgers and have been really supportive and helpful. I have included info they gave us for electric fencing but this is for information only at this stage. It is not really practicable on our outer fence as not complete and the badgers will find a way round and can swim. Plots could use a smaller low voltage version just to protect areas planted with sweet corn? Such fences are legal but must be clearly identified. There is a £10,000 fine for damage to badgers so members must consult with the committee over problems. We cannot get rid of badgers, nor would we want to as the gap would simply be filled by another group.

Electric fencing needs

2in x 1in canalised roof battens for posts, 1 every 3 metres at least and insulators to nail on the posts /OR polyposts(plastic)

1 every 3 metres at least. Wire or poly wire. An electric fencing unit (battery or mains). An option is to buy an alarm clock to turn the current on at night (or when it gets dark) and off in the morning.

Costs Countrywide Stores, Witney quoted (24/03/10) Green Polyposts/pack 10 /14.99 Nail on Insulators /pack of 50/12.59. Poly wire /17.99 Battery ESB57/119.99 (2 yr guarantee) ESB15/96.39 Wires must be well supported If the area to be fenced is small a barrier may be better. If badgers are digging under a fence then wire can be placed below the fence. It needs to go down 6in to 1 foot and then turn out for 1 foot at right angles. Any wire fence needs to be at least 4 ft above the ground and **very strong** as badgers are good climbers

Bamboo

You may recall a member raised the issue of growing bamboo and its invasive nature in 2008. They called for it to be banned. You will see from the 2008 AGM minutes this was discussed in general and we agreed it would not be banned. Perhaps that was a mistake as it is neither 'vegetable fruit nor flower' as required by our lease, and sadly the member was proved right as it has proved difficult to contain successfully. The minutes state : 'it should be grown with (plenty of) mown grass around and 'managed within our rules' We have worked hard during reclamation to ensure height limits are managed so that the site is suited for optimum fruit and vegetable growing and better shared security. Consequently no fences/hedges are above 5ft, or fruit trees above 10ft. We have published this information frequently in newsletters and annual reports. All hedges have been audited on this basis for 3 years. We

have a member who used to manage the bamboo at Wisley. She informs us their bamboo had dugout ditches around where they could saw the roots off. It was a difficult job with no end.

Bean poles

If want to grow bean poles then the environmental, sound and sustainable alternative is to use native indigenous species, like hazel, that can be readily cut as a hedge at 5 ft and can be coppiced on a cycle to provide poles.

Coppicing

We have been managing the native trees on the island by coppicing and we have planted hazel on other communal areas for this purpose. We do not yet have enough for distribution and ... and may never have this quantity.. but we can increase this. We have some funds to bring the disused area back into cultivation and we may need to keep more coppiced areas here as it seems likely there are some patches that are not reclaimable as plots and where this may be more successful.

Willows

Please note that willows must not be planted, even as hedges. If willow sticks are used for dry hedges or poles they must be bark stripped. Otherwise they will grow. All hedges and boundary planting are confined to 5ft on headlands i.e. next to public paths. There should be no hedges or solid fences **on adjoining boundaries**. We all need to work together to sustain good growing conditions for all and for the future.

Local food gets top marks!

Did you notice the 'top' restaurant this year cooks with

seasonal, locally sourced food. Do look at the 'Gardeners Year' on the web site and see what you could be eating, sowing and planting now.

Dry Weather –Even in dry conditions frequent but little watering will produce surface roots and may mean you have to keep watering. Water the drill well when sowing or transplanting and cover with dry soil ...then be brave and leave well alone. It is worth to optimising collected water by making sure all buildings have gutters and water butts. We are about to install them on the association shed. The glorious weather got everyone out...but today's rain is very welcome.

Do let us know if you have any anything you think we should share with others... **and let Micki know (see below) if you are up for a 'show'.**

Cripsey Meadow Allotments
Fruit, Veg & Flower Show
2010
Show off the fruits of your labour this year at an end of season show to coincide with Lunch of the Green.

Categories to enter will include:
Heaviest pumpkin
Oddest Shaped Vegetable
Most Colourful Bouquet of Flowers
Largest Sunflower
Largest Leek

More information to follow soon, but you can register your interest with no obligation by contacting Micki
Mather
mickim@gmail.com
or at Plot 149

