

Cripley Meadow June Newsletter 2014

www.cripley Meadow.org.uk

A bumper version. After such a long and wet winter we are still really busy catching up and working to make Cripley Meadow a great place to grow food.



**Taken May 16th
Early sweet peas from Alessandra's new plot**

Next Working party is Sunday 8th June from 10.30 to 12.30. Meet at the shed. Jobs include: plot clearing; moving fences and pallets.

We have a few plots available. We have 6 plots being reclaimed across the site. 2 are already ready for use but 3 have proved far more problematic than we thought. These have always been amongst the highest on the site and will have cost the



association well over to £1,000 to remove hazards. The amount of stored rubbish, glass, bamboo, bramble and perennial



weeds has meant 3 working parties, 2.5 days of external work with machines and another needed. We shall wait to ensure they



have proven good gardeners on

them so that the damage from past use is reversed and the very expensive reclamation built on so that this high ground is used productively. If you are on a low site and it is very wet and can face a move be in touch. You need to have used your plot productively and within the rules.

We also have some communal beds available. These are more expensive than plots as they take more committee work and we mow the internal paths as well as providing some shared facilities. There are also some plots we are busy reclaiming as fast as time allows

Jericho Street Fair Saturday June 14 We hope you are still 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 between 11 and 1pm and you can buy from 12.** Mine are all boxed up ready to move.



This is our 8th year at this important community event. The committee and members contribute plants and work the stall and the proceeds this year

will go towards establishing bee friendly planting.

Please keep **gate locked at all times.** This week members have reported car owners leaving gates open while they visit plots.

Sight lines, cycles and cars



OCC Parks have cut back the hawthorn/ivy to improve further the sight lines in this area.

Thanks to Parks and Susanna Pressel for supporting us on this.

Open Day Last year we had a rest but members have asked that we do this again. It is on the calendar for the last date in National Allotment week **Sunday August 10th.** It would be great if members could be on their plots with gates open and if possible be there to talk to visitors.

Trading hours update

The shed is proving popular, but on some days trading it is very quiet. As we approach summer, we expect sales to slow down more.

For June we'll continue to open 10.30 - 12 on normal Sundays, 11.30 - 1 on Working Party days. But from July, we'll cut the sessions to one hour. We'll open 11- 12 on normal Sundays, 12 - 1pm on Working Party days.

New Hours are on the the members noticeboard and the door of the trading shed. Thanks Sarah

School Visit

A small group of 8 pupils from the Dragon Gardening Club made their annual visit

to us in May led by our member Anne Dawes. They



talked with Wendy and proved knowledgeable about crops and asked some very good questions about cultivation. One was puzzled as to why you would go to all this effort when you could buy a bag of carrots?

Water testing The wells were tested again in May. The University have submitted the latest Groundwater Monitoring Interim Report. No exceedences above the trigger level have been recorded in any of the allotment wells. The results to date indicate that there has been no significant impact from the diesel spill on allotment water quality. A further four monitoring visits are proposed within the next 12 months.

Emily Green I Environmental Sustainability Officer
I Environmental Development I Oxford City Council I

The next audit is on Sunday July 6. We have a few locked gates. This is unknown on any other site in the city and you will be asked to remove the lock if the gate is not open before our 8am start. The shorter reminder of the rules is attached and full rules can be found on our web site. **This year we will focus on the following areas:**

- **Between plot buffer paths.** All members should be working to keep or re-establish, keep and manage the buffer path which must be between all plots. (See rules). Generally this is the path to your left when standing at your shed. For plots 120 - 158, the shed positions are now varied as members can have their shed at either end of the plot. If you have one of those plots and a shed at the flats end, the buffer path you should maintain will be on the right as you face your plot with your back to the flats. This path should be kept cut and weed free and must not be used as a compost area. Some of these got a bit confused in reclamation and fence building so if you are not sure where yours is you should ask. Wendy can generally recall who put up which fence and it is these that at times confuse the issue. We are very unusual in having fences but paths between are a must on all allotment sites

Please note re Fences

Were erected as a necessary rabbit defence. Ten we lost the rabbits and they have proved ineffective re badgers and muntjak. We recommend unless you can keep them clear of perennial weed. They are now proving really problematic in the transfer of perennial weeds across the site and plots. All fences (and other areas of plots) must be managed so they do not allow perennial weeds like ground elder and horsetail to make further inroads.

- **Adjacent fences** must be kept clear of growth that is over the height of the buffer path (2ft min-3 ft. max)
- **Headland fences** must be regularly managed to keep perennial weeds out. Ground elder and horsetail are now spreading rapidly across the site.
- **Glass** No glass panes, windows, shower cubicles can be brought on site. Please skip them. If already in use in a building they must be replaced with plastic/polythene before broken. Sadly most is stored and breaks before ever used. We already have far too much glass in the soil for comfort.
- **Rubbish and stored materials.** If you bring material on site for sheds, structures etc. you must first have permission and it must be used quickly. The site and plots cannot be used for long term storage and not at all for non-allotment or non-harvested stuff.

Storage round the association shed. Please do not take any materials from around the green association shed without permission. Apart from the rubble and plant pots this is one of the places the committee store materials we can recycle or use on site. We are about to reorganise this as Jeremy has been storing a lot of this material we use on site and for other members on his plot and we are working to find it a new home.

BONFIRES The Oxford City Council soil analysis of the allotment site (2008 to 2011) found traces of polyaromatic hydrocarbons in the soil. These could have resulted from Victorian ash but also could have been produced by more recent bonfires. Where possible we are advised not to hold bonfires on plots for fear

of adding to these traces and inconveniencing others. There is a **communal bonfire facility**, just near the main allotment shed, by the Cripsey Island Orchard entrance. If you can, please burn your waste here, weather permitting, rather than burning it on your own plot. Help yourself to the ash to put around your fruit bushes, or to discourage slugs and snails.

Bonfires are permitted in all areas of the city providing you do not cause nuisance to other people but if you make your own bonfire, please conform to the Code of practice for bonfires on Allotment sites. OCC advice about bonfires

Please ONLY HAVE BONFIRES IF YOU ARE SURE THE MATERIAL IS DRY AND THERE is an easterly wind.

Please note the following comments received recently "everyday someone is setting a fire to burn things in your allotment. We cannot open the windows as the wind carries all the smoke inside our flats and it also smells disgusting - as you might guess-when those people burn things without thinking others. I have seen that you have recycling in your allotment area and I believe you should also have composting areas. I don't understand why someone sets a fire every day? Can you please find a solution to this problem a.s.a.p. Otherwise I will need to complain to the council directly?"

We should have news of the shredder funding application by the end of June. This will help but we will **always need to do some burning**. Please consider other plot holders and our neighbours. We cannot subject anyone to persistent smelly wet garden smoke. As we know from past experience if we have regular complaints then the plot

holder and or the site could be fined and stopped from using bonfires altogether. The site would only be at fault if we had not informed our members.

We have entered the site for the City Allotment Competition. The first plot judging is on June 12th and then the site is in September. ODFAA and OCC run this competition so that members across the city can participate. They aim to celebrate sites, members and good practice. ODFAA work to ensure OCC are kept aware that our designated allotment spaces are well used. Please try to make sure headlands and fences are managed and there is no rubbish around as this is part of the site judging. 8 members have entered this year.

More green and brown waste for you to use



We have had a pleasing regular supply of wood chip to the plot 87 by The Green.



There is always a monthly fresh supply of grass cuttings on the Arcadian living plots.



We have just turned 109 so there is new compost cooking. Please leave to cook

as new stuff is inside. Please remember do not use the green waste piles for waste material from your plot or garden. This must be managed on your plot. Arcadian Living pay for this plot and manage the turning. When you do use from the green waste sites please pile up the brash and woody bits tidily so it can be moved more easily. If we are successful with our shredder bid this will move to the shredder bin. This will make more green waste for compost making for members who bring stuff to shred.

Another source of material comes from our member Chloe

'Please come to Phil&Jim on Saturday 21 June at 15:00 to pick up a Hay Bale for £2 . All the profit go to Phil &Jim PTA.'

MOWING

Barnaby used his new mower at the end of May and early on hit a brick on The Green and had a punctured wheel due to more



glass! Getting anyone to mow on Cripsey is always a task as, although reclaimed, it will always be a rough site that we all need to work at keeping safe. The committee try to go round before to spot and remove glass, metal or bricks that are on paths and it would help if members did the same. This collection of glass, stones and clinker from the side of the fence by the castle mill path had to be moved before the April cut. To be fair this now happens less often so **thanks to all** for being careful about not putting things off their plots. One of these collections

or a metal pole could wreck the machine. Barnaby tries to cut as low as possible to avoid coming more than once a month but when there are incidents like this he has to raise the deck. This means he will have to come more often. Mowing is a very large part of our site maintenance expenses. We are due a membership increase (last one was 7 years ago) to accommodate the rent review from OCC but more importantly the costs of skips, mowing and materials **go up every year.**



Metal collection

Thanks to everyone who has contributed to this. If you have not please check your plot and use this to remove any unused metal poles, galvanised tanks etc. Chicken wire is not acceptable so this should be crushed as small as possible and go in the skip This metal pile will go to a scrap yard (thanks to Tom) so we can make some money for the site to **offset the very high costs of recent reclamation** of a great deal of rubbish on reclaimed plots. We are still working on this. **Please only add metal!** Once this pile is moved you should go back to using the skip as usual

Tomato research

From: Steven Kelly
[steven.kelly@plants.ox.ac.uk]
Steven is looking to get hold of a number of outdoor grown tomatoes from around Oxfordshire. 'We are interested in isolating multiple species of Phytomonas from the fruit and have reason to believe that most if not all outdoor grown tomatoes should contain them. We are particularly keen to get hold of tomatoes that have been **grown outdoors on**

allotments or in back gardens where it is likely that the plants will have been fed up on by lots of different phytophagous insects (many different insects spread Phytomonas). So if you have some tomatoes growing over the summer and can spare one or two (particularly those where the plant or fruit have suffered from insect attack) we would be very keen to get hold of them. Please email me if and when you have a suitable specimen

Cropping at last! After such a mild spring members are reporting some early bumper season ripening. My artichokes and the aptly



named elephant garlic is ready! The first peas and beans are

nearly there and strawberries are evidently ripening across the site. There are now a lot of asparagus beds and of course asparagus beetle to be squashed. **If** crops escaped drowning there was no serious frost and a relatively warm May so things are looking up. **We have a lot of good gardeners on Cripsey so if you are new or struggling do take a walk around to see how many different and great ways there are for using plots within the rules**

Sweetcorn Tips

Sow or plant out under a cloche or the ever popular enviromesh. But beware we still have the risk of badger visits when ripe and before that late frosts. But beware my latest ever record of frost on Cripsey

was June 6 so we are safe? Sweetcorn doesn't like it cool.

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 they 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 and pears to 2 per cluster

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 as the improved rows join together.

Remember Cripsey soil generally 'sets' in June making it harder to dig. So if you have digging to do get going ASAP.

There is more gardening info on the web site
<http://www.cripseymeadow.org.uk/Thegardenersyear/Things%20to%20do%20in%20June.pdf>

Good gardening. Wendy