

# Cripley Meadow April Newsletter 2015

[www.cripleymeadow.org.uk](http://www.cripleymeadow.org.uk)

## Working party

**Next working party on 12 April 10.30 to 12.30**

meet at the shed as usual. Do come along if you can. Please bring rakes, spades, and wheelbarrows. A few battery operated drills would be helpful this month if you have them. Jobs to do include: Building some raised beds on plots 64/65, burning (if the easterly is with us), shredding, working on our recycling yard, clearing plots and work on the island.

Our AGM in March was pleasant and productive. The officers and committee members were all elected unopposed and unanimously. I think most members know and appreciate our hard working and forward looking committee. **Many thanks** to the 40+ members who attended on a wet night. Susanna Pressell, our local and county councillor, came along. We do appreciate her sustained support. The Draft AGM minutes are on the web site until ratified at the next AGM. **Important decisions were made which will apply to everyone. These are about 2016 rise in subscriptions and plans for badger defences.**



The site was busy last holiday weekend with lots of welcome sunshine. There are plots showing signs of great change in readiness for the busiest sowing and planting months of the year.

In clearing please remember our bonfire code (on the notice boards and web site) and do not light a fire that will smoke anyone on the site or in the

flats. Check the wind and make sure the material is dry. If we continue to be reported for smoky bonfires we will inevitably lose the right to have bonfires. The law which protects people from having to suffer the ill effects. Please think and follow the bonfire code.



## Grant for Raised beds on Plots 64/65

The orchard plots on 64 and 65 are going to be managed in future for less mobile members



hopefully they will soon have raised beds. We have pruned the trees and removed the oversize ones and the Rosa Rugosa. It would have been good to leave some but it was full of ground elder. The

money for the raised beds came from Oxford City Council's allotment grant. The open pit on Plot 66 will stay uncovered for green



waste. We need the soil to make up the beds and reclaim plots 66 and 67. Please do not take it!



## Badger Cam

Nigel Fisher, the conservator of Wytham Woods, is helping us with our badger defences. He is a great advocate for wildlife but,

refreshingly, understands badgers and allotments do not mix. We have a badger cam by the gate monitoring the badger hotel. Please leave it be ...and smile!

## Membership fees

If you did not pay your subscription fees before March 31<sup>st</sup> you will now incur a £10 additional charge. Plots are automatically taken back if not paid before April 31. Do be in touch and return your key if you are not renewing so we can manage the plot. We have a variety of plots available so if you know of a space please do put up the poster attached.

## Site grass cutting will start on Friday 10<sup>th</sup>

Please do not put stones or glass on the paths. This is dangerous and can wreck the machines. Bag them up. Communal plot paths (on plots 47, 106 and 107) will be cut BUT only if clear. All compost bins on communal plots should be on the beds. South Field members need to keep the reclaimed path between you and Fiddler's Drain clear. Nothing should be behind the stakes. Do note

these run at a diagonal! This is the site of a potential badger electric fence.



### **Waste!**

This was not the worst of the last skip! This is not something the committee have the time, money, nor capability to cope with! During Oxclean we took about 3 tonne bags of recycling stuff out of this skip and still members left rubbish by the skip in spite of a clear notice which says 'if full keep on your plot!'. The committee cannot do this! Jeremy already goes through the skip to haul out weeds, rocks, wood etc

and he reckons half the skip is full of stuff which could go in a bag and be taken home for disposal with domestic waste.

### **Please take as much of your waste home as possible.**

Some will be recyclable, some will need to go to landfill (eg broken panes of glass can't go in our local recycling. The skip is for allotment waste, metal, glass and plastic and the remains of historic carpet! This regular skip was part of our reclamation which started in 2005. In 2006 we cleared over 6,000 of waste from the site and last year, finally, we cleared the remaining 8 plots with large amounts of historic waste. The skips must now just manage

reasonable waste produced by present members. Most allotment sites have no regular skip and that 1, or at most 2, is a luxury! After this year we will get back to the spring and autumn skip routine so members **MUST** stop bringing in glass and other stuff, 'that might be useful'. The association is not a refuse recycling unit. **If you bring stuff on you must be prepared to take it off.** The bins in the car park by Port Meadow are emptied daily and are sealed so should be used for any food stuffs,

esp. BBQ waste and bottles and cans so we do not get animals rooting in the skips.

### **Committee Recycling Area by the green shed**

This is **committee storage** of reclaimed material that we make use of on-site projects. Jeremy used



to store this on his plot but this led to some problems and this is more suitable.

**Members must not dump there nor take things from it.**

**Please contact**

**Jeremy if you think you have material we could re use.** We will sometimes be able to sell some on cheaply on through the shop as we do tools. The plant pots/rubble area at the left when facing the green shed are open for member use. Please do not put in more plant pots if the box is full.

Sorry for the list of don'ts ... **here is more good news.**

**Leaf mould and more wood chip arrived in March.** Many members now use this material for mulching and paths between beds.

### **Fiddler's stream**





Since September, with flood funding from Steve Smith at Oxford City Council we have been working with Jo Huntley from OCC Parks

and Diane Major and her team of supervisors from Thames Valley Community Rehabilitation Company on a project to clear Fiddler's Stream. In 2014 the 5 trees that had fallen in the water during 2012/3 had



practically stopped all flow. The reeds and weed built up so that it was clearly possible for two/four legs to walk across to the site. Our security was compromised and we experienced quicker and more sustained flooding in the winters of 2013 and 2014. Oxford City Parks team strimmed the bank in October to allow access and the Parks Tree team removed the fallen trees in January. In early March Parks dug a pit to manage the waste and delivered the welfare unit to the site. Teams from Community Rehabilitation started working once or twice a week with grappling hooks, long and short draw forks, azada, spades, wheelbarrows and brute force to drag out the reeds. The stream is too silted up to work in but they pulled out enough to allow some flow to return. It was a very dirty and strenuous

activity. One day we had more than one team so we managed to alternate dredging with some fence removal and plot digging. Cripsey Meadow always had a committee member on site. Many thanks are due to all. The stream still needs dredging in order to transport water as it once did. All the streams and ditches surrounding Cripsey Meadow now fill and overflow even after heavy rainfall. This work will go on for April and we hope this will improve the flow. The stream really does need dredging!



#### **Pruning cherries, plums and damsons**

Pruning is generally done after fruiting in the autumn but apparently you can prune these now the sap is rising... Kitchen Garden says 'this helps keep canker and silver leaf out of the wounds'.

#### **Well diggers and Post driver**

We have a set of well digger spades and a Post Driver available for member's use. They are located on Plot 40 where you will find a booking out board so we know where they are. They should be used and returned each day so not kept out when others could be using them.

#### **Trading**

The shop will be open at 12 - 1pm this Sunday - as it's a working party day.

**The Hungry Gap** is approaching with April and May often seeing an end to winter crops stored and in the ground. We are coming to the end of stored potatoes, onions, Jerusalem artichokes and the leeks, parsnip, beetroot and carrots which we leave earthed up in the ground are beginning to sprout. Purple and white sprouting is being picked and cauliflowers are still growing as is our chicory, forced on and off the plot.

We are holding our breaths for the first signs of asparagus. This is now a common crop on site where it used to be a rarity. We are very fortunate that our generous sized plots allow for the space needed for crops like this and soft fruit.

**Good growing to all  
Wendy**