

# Cripley Meadow Newsletter July 2015

**Our next Working party is Sun 12 July 10.30 am-12.30. Come and join in fighting weeds, overgrown fences and clearing the island 'pond' area. Do make sure you read our health and safety policy on the notice board and wear appropriate clothing and footwear. As requested we have a Weds evening working party next month as well as the usual Sunday.**



## **Jericho Street Fair**

Many thanks to Alex, Tony, Sara Rodney and Wendy who managed the stall. It was a rather wet day. But we took about £200. Again we had a great variety of plants with vegetable seedlings, flowers, shrubs and perennials. We could have used more perennials and herbs this year. Many thanks to Wendy, Alison, Tony, Jeremy, Wendy Ball, Sedhar, Nicole, Ada, David, and Patrick who donated plants.



I hope I did not miss anyone out! The money raised will go to the association's site work. Again Chloe took our remainders for the

Phil and Jim fete the following week.

## **St Barnabas Primary School Summer Fete is Sat 4th July.**

If anyone has any spare plants left – please donate them to their plant stall. Any plant donations can be taken to the school before the day, or on the day when they will be setting up from 10.30. Proceeds going towards outdoor equipment in the playground.

## **This year's first AUDIT is on on July 5th from 9 until 1pm.**

The audit committee are going to do a path audit later on in the summer as this takes more time. We hope to do some re-measuring of plots before the next invoices.

Otherwise as reported in the last newsletter **adjacent fences and headlands are priorities this year. We are still trying to limit the spread of perennial weed. Horsetail and ground elder** are still moving through fences, permanent planting and neglected plots. They are really difficult to remove so we must stop them establishing across a wider area. Otherwise like some other allotment sites we will all be permanently pulling them up. Please look out for both and remove immediately. I have put some further information on this below.

**You are responsible for the section up to where the site path is mown and your adjacent path, which means your boundary and 2 ft beyond. This will sometimes be outside your fence as no one should have put a fence on someone else's plot.** We are also still looking carefully at storage on plots. Rubbish is still costing us too much time and money. Having to clear a plot can cost between £200 and £500

which so much more than the membership fee. Please do not store rubbish or **glass**. You should get permission before bringing on any building material and then it must be used. There are some anachronisms on site but we are constantly working on these. As plots are vacated we always aim to return them to within the present rules or specify this in the new plot offer.

It is only 10 years since the site emerged from being mostly overgrown in 2004 so we all must keep to the rules agreed by the members so that all plot holders can work together to grow food and flowers. As with the climate this is always in a state of change.

## **Please look out for your audit email as all members get one.**

I had one last year as my headland hedge had crept over the 5ft limit! It is now going back down. Members of the audit committee are always happy to come and talk problems through with you as inevitably we will make mistakes or maybe you just need some advice or help. We are still rarely in a position to actively help with plot management when members experience sudden crisis but we hope we will be able to manage this again once the subscription rise eases the demands of site management. We know many plot neighbours look out for one another and there are many mutually supportive networks that have developed over working with your plot neighbours.

## **We still have some plots**

available. Enquiries and new plot holders are steadily coming in. Some plots have been covered to try to remove persistent problems before passing on and still more need reclaiming having just been given up after no work.

## Dry weather

It is still very dry so do attach guttering and water butts to any sheds you have and harvest water. The communal water butts by Castle Mill are not filling correctly but we are (still) working on this and badger exclusion with the university. We have communal paths for members to access Castle Mill stream and Fiddlers stream with buckets between Plot 6 and 7, 30 and 31 and adjacent to plot SF13.

## Sheds for sale

**One of these small sheds 5x2 one larger 6x8 and a smaller 4x6 are on site for sale. The smallest shed is already made up. The others will need moving, re-building and some repair.**



The small shed is on site... on its back on Plot 147. We suggest £50 ono. The larger 8x6 shed is £75 or ONO. We think they are in reasonable condition and will be bought as seen. Email Wendy if interested?

## Update on Cropping

We have been indulging our love of **asparagus** for the past 8 weeks and now hope to let it grow if we can keep up the asparagus beetle squashing routine. Our **artichokes** came early and are surprisingly fleshy given we have not watered them. **Lettuce, spring onions, beets, carrots and new potatoes, peas and beans** are all being harvested regularly ...but oh is it the year for **black aphid!** Early pinching out and spraying with washing up liquid spray did not keep them at

bay as usual and I have pulled really infested ones up and eaten the beans small. How it is some plants next to one another are infested and others not?

Also some of my fruit is showing more **mealy aphid** than the ladybirds can cope with so I have been pulling those leaves off and bagging them!

A new crop for me after many years is **early small turnip**. I have been trying new varieties and they do seem much sweeter than I those large winter brutes. Our **strawberries** have given up the ghost ...again! We had lots of kind donations from other members and note theirs are growing wonderfully! We are going to have a break from them. If we miss them we shall start again. This year they were too dry and the ants got under the weed suppressant and tunnelled them to death!

**Trading** The shop will open as usual during July i.e. 11am - 12noon most Sundays, 12 - 1pm on the Working Party day.

For more info on crops and jobs go to the web site

<http://www.cripleymeadow.org.uk/Thegardenersyear/Things%20to%20do%20in%20july.pdf>

Good gardening...Wendy

## Information for the identification and Removal of Ground Elder and Horsetail

These weeds are on the increase particularly in boundaries, fruit areas and paths where they are not regularly cultivated, weeded or cut. They can have dreadful consequences for the site as they have deep roots which travel long distances. Members must be aware and work to remove them. They are difficult to dig out as they have a resilient root structure but constant mowing/weeding will

eventually work to limit them. Last year we had to reclaim one plot after 4 years of neglect and this had very significant bramble boundaries, ground elder and bindweed. The new members have grassed it after the initial working party/ machine clearance and they will be mowing weekly as generally only grass will survive this treatment.

**Ground elder** (Ground elder has apple-green, lobed leaves and flat heads of cream-white flowers in summer. It spreads rapidly and can creep between cultivated plants. It has large clumps of foliage. It dies down below ground in winter, which means it's difficult to spot when cultivating the soil. However, it's capable of re-growing from fragments of root, making it a particularly virulent plant. It is rampant and competes with cultivated plants for light, water and nutrients.



**Organic Solution** - In existing cultivated areas it's best tackled by digging up the cultivated plants and washing their roots to tease out the cream-white roots of ground elder. Regular cutting of the foliage, just below ground level with a hoe will gradually weaken the plant, but this needs to be done every 7 days, as soon as regrowth appears. Alternatively, fork through the soil every 10 to 14 days, removing every piece of ground elder root that's found.

**Chemical** - Apply systemic weed killer to the foliage as soon as it appears in spring. Re-apply

throughout the growing season at four- to six-week intervals, or as soon as any re-growth appears. Richard has had some success with ordinary malt vinegar applied to the roots.

**Horsetail** is a deep rooted herbaceous weed with tough, light brown or bright green shoots that resemble pine needles. It dies back completely in winter. It flourishes on undisturbed damp ground. Time to act spring, summer, autumn



**Organic solution** is to remove rhizomes by digging as deeply as possible. The deep roots of established horsetail colonies will re-grow. Regularly removing the shoots and rhizomes as soon as they appear will weaken the plants, but total eradication requires determination over a number of years. Where horsetail is growing in grass, regular close mowing will cause it to die off, although it may persist in borders at the edge of lawns. Black polyethylene or woven sheeting can be used to suppress weeds as can straw, bark chippings, grass clipping and composted organic materials. These can lock up nitrogen as they decompose. Loose materials need to be applied as a substantial layer, at least  $\frac{3}{4}$  but these steps are unlikely to remove these weeds within existing planted areas. However cover can mean the

roots simply move sideways until it finds the light again so you may just be transferring it to your next door neighbor.

**Chemical** solution is to spray shoots with glyphosate in summer. Tread down the shoots before spraying to bruise and crush them, which will allow the herbicide to enter the plant and be taken down to the roots.

Do check fruit planting to ensure the ground does not have these weeds as once established it is difficult to remove and it will spread. Land infested already with these perennial weeds should be avoided for fruit until it is removed.

The roots of both can be left out to dry and burned or drowned in a weed bucket (very smelly but works)

**Unfortunately neither Ground elder nor horsetail respond well to organic solutions on allotments given we are all so close to one another and if one excludes them they will come up next door. But if you are tenacious and work at it every week you can have an impact.**