

Cripley Meadow Allotment Association Newsletter Feb 2018

www.cripley Meadow.org.uk

The next WP is on Feb 11. We had a good turnout in January.



We filled path holes, coppiced hazels, took the top growth off two very overgrown plots and Jeremy chopped up yet more Heras fencing. More of the same next Sunday. Please come along and join in. Apart from organising the site your committee do far more than their fair share of WP work.

Oxclean We have registered to contribute to OXCLEAN again. We will meet from 10.30 to 12.30 on Sun Mar 4th. This can be counted as a working party contribution for 2018. We meet by the allotment gate.

22nd February 2018
ODFAA has brought Pennard Plants 'GROW YOUR OWN' to West Oxford Community Centre



ODFAA would like this to make this an annual event for all Oxford plot holders. Please come along and get your tubers, plants, seeds, etc. from this award-winning company. You can help us publicise this by printing the attached poster and putting it in your window... or anywhere else where you can do so responsibly

Here is another reminder of the remaining dates for the 2017/18 gardening year before our new gardening year begins on March 12th

- **11 February Working party 10.30 to 12.30**
- **14 February Weds CMAA committee meeting (AGM admin)**
- **4th Mar OXCLEAN WP 10.30 to 12.30 and subs day at the shed 11-12**
- **7th March Wed CMAA committee meeting (AGM prep)**
- **12 March AGM St Barnabas 6pm for 7pm**

NB March working parties are counted in 2018/9 year

The AGM kicks off our 2018/9 Cripsey Meadow Gardening Year. If you are not planning to renew your subscription to work your plot, please let us know so that the plot can be made available for a new member. Your printed invoice and invitation to the AGM should arrive in early February. As usual this year one **printed** invoice /AGM invite/Agenda will be sent per plot. However every member will get an emailed AGM invite /agenda in a week or so. This should alert all to get ready and pay your subscription! If your plot has not received an invoice in the first few weeks of February, please email Sara allotment@qtg.org and **include your plot number in the email. Next year we would like to email the invoices too? We will be asking your opinion on this at the AGM.**

Our new gardening year starts at our AGM on March 12th. Please pay promptly. Last year we had to remind 50 members during March and we were still chasing at the end of April. This is when you lose your membership if you have not paid. We think this is too long a time given the invoices go out in February and the weed growth rate in March/April! Some plots just sit there growing ever taller weeds before we find the member is gone. Presently there is a late payment surcharge of £10 applied after 31st March. We would like to change this to a few days after the AGM and bring the 'non-payers closure' to the end of March. Please pay by or on March 12th. Most members pay at the AGM or by cheque by post or online. We will discuss shortening the payment time table at the AGM.

There is a **Subscription Hour** at the Shed on **Sunday 11th February** from 11 to 12. This is the last year we intend to offer a subscription hour to pay your subscription in person on site. Last year only one person attended and we believe that our other arrangements for people to pay (either on line or in person at the AGM) mean that members will not be disadvantaged.

If anyone has difficulty paying their subscription, please be in touch with Sara or Wendy.

Our 2018 AGM is on Monday March 12th at St Barnabas School Hart Street, Jericho.

Meeting starts at 7pm
Members of the Committee will be present **from 6pm** for you to pay your subscription. There will be nibbles /drinks /slides from 6-7 and you can chat to us and other members. Do come along if you can. In general our AGM items for discussion are:

- Is our timetable for subscription payment is too long winded? It damages the site and makes too much work for the committee.
- In future should we email invoices and AGM letters/agenda?
- Report on % members doing their WP and WP donations. When should these go up?
- We will do a mid-summer short audit this year
- Composting all your green waste on your plot. We have been asked to keep open a communal waste plot. We did this for a while in 2017 but the quantity and quality of waste means this has pushed a member's responsibility onto the

- committee. This has proved unmanageable.
- Water harvesting on plots
- How members manage waste on site
- Fence rules and /path update
- CCTV on the site
- Bonfires. How do we sustain them?
- Information on Castle Mill Flats work schedule.

The agenda and annual report will clarify the items. All these items are about making sure the site has a fair and sustainable future. Generally they do not involve constitution or rule changes.

We asked you to let us know by the end of January if you wanted to raise an item. If you do it will now go into AOB.

The 2017/8 **annual report**, copy of the invitation to the AGM, AGM agenda, 2017 draft minutes, budget and accounts will be sent out to all members as an email package before the AGM.

Outdoor Sowing and Planting If you are going to plant out or direct sow into the ground in early spring, try putting a cloche up or covering the ground with horticultural fleece a couple of weeks beforehand. It will warm the ground up a couple of degrees. If you are sowing early remember even if warm light levels are low until March 20th (equinox). You can help with foil backed propagators on windowsills, but you still need to turn every day.

Broad Beans and Shallots If we have any cold weather and the rain keeps off you can start sowing your broad beans and put in shallots.

Chitting Potatoes



Not everyone thinks this is productive nowadays. It is often only recommended for earlies and earlier crops can miss blight. If you are chitting your potatoes in a shed or garage, watch out for mice and very cold nights. If they get frosted at this stage your chances for a good crop are reduced. Covering with fleece or newspaper is usually enough for the frost but it will not deter mice!

Pruning and Clearing

Don't forget January/February are the best months if you are still winter pruning apples and pears. Now is also the time to check for and remove any self-seeded saplings that have grown on boundaries. Next month the sap will start moving and before you know it, they'll be in leaf. It is also the time to cut autumn fruiting raspberries down to the ground to stimulate the new canes.

Soil Testing

Members that came to the ODFAA 2016 November Chris Bird talk on 'Understanding Your Soil' will remember he stressed the importance of good soil to good crops. Plenty of humus from home-made composts and manure for structure is a good starting point but it is also good to check acidity (pH) and major nutrients (N, P, K). The only accurate way to find out what your soil's acidity and nutrient levels is to use a test kit. These are relatively cheap to buy. A sour or acid soil blocks access to nutrients so plants can't absorb food. Adding more fertiliser to sour soil is near pointless but lime will sweeten it and plants thrive again.

Often a soil isn't just exhausted, it can be short of one specific element. It may have plenty of nitrogen available from manure but be short of potash (potassium) or phosphorus. Adding a fertiliser that is rich or purely the specific element missing is the most efficient way to correct this situation.

The tests are easy to use but the important thing is to get the initial sampling right. If you have a three or four-part rotation, treat each section as a separate plot. On each plot, imagine a large W. Take a sample from the 3 top points and 2 bottom points to give 5 in all. The samples should be from about 10cm (4") below the surface. Make sure your trowel is wiped between samples to avoid cross-contamination.

Once you know your soil, you can effectively improve it and, in turn, get much better crops. Not only more productive but more disease and pest resistant.

The November 2017 Chris Bird talk on companion planting was also very illuminating on the impact good soil has on companion planting and pest resistance.

For more advice follow the link [things to do in Jan /Feb](#)

Winter trading 2018

The shop does not open on a regular basis in January/February, but members are very welcome to make contact Sarah to arrange one-off sales sarahjehome@aol.com Depending on weather and conditions, we will re-open in March. Please see notice board for updates and times.

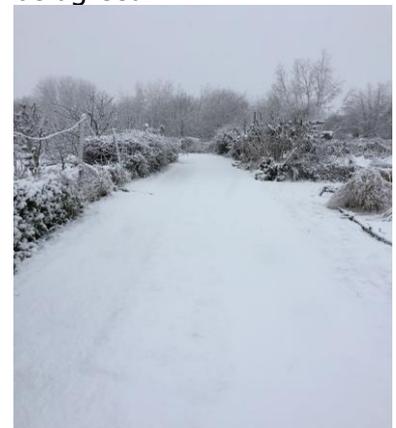
Reminders

Please **always leave vehicles in the car park** when it is wet or frosty as both conditions damage the paths.

Dogs MUST ALWAYS be on a lead or on your plot only. They must never be allowed to wander on the site or go on other members' plots. If any member persistently breaks this rule after a clear warning, we will ask them to stop bringing their dog on site. Our rule must work for all.

Castle Mill Flats work

We were expecting to have agreed a schedule of works by now but this is still not available! I met with some of the OU team this morning, Feb 6th. Some preliminary work will take place on the Castle Mill site from February 12th for 7 to 8 weeks. Beard, the contractor, will install a working area on the Castle Mill site above the laundry between blocks E and F. They will also be testing out some scaffolding on another block. I am told this should not impact on the badger run nor the site but we are awaiting more details. We will share any information we have at the AGM. This work will be ongoing into 2019 and it will involve using some of the site but the terms of this are yet to be agreed.



Sara Jones took photos on site in the snow on Dec 12. There are more on the web site

Good gardening Wendy