

BATHFORD ALLOTMENTS

Founded on May 19th 1880 for the "labouring poor"

NEWSLETTER - Dec 2010. No 21

100 years of the Bathford Flower Show



It was very rewarding this year to be able to help our Flower Show celebrate their Centenary.

The turnout was excellent and the tea garden and the weather made it a very special day.

As usual allotment holders made a major contribution to the vegetable section and

Dennis Wilson got 3 First Prizes, 5 Seconds and 3 Thirds and he also won the Allotment cup.

Second place for the Best Kept Allotment went to Yvonne Francis and Third place was shared between Clive Higgs and Elizabeth Tait.

There were four runner-ups, Mrs Blackband, Dave Lord, Nigel Weeks and Jennifer Ferriday.

The Best Beginners cup went to Tony and Ann Aldridge.

Several others got First Prizes including Bob Palmer, Mo Rice, Martin Wright, Jennifer Ferriday and Mike Smith.

Other Prize winners were Dave Lord, the Jackson family, Derek Brown, Neil Dowman, Jenny Lillingston, Roger Boakes and Sarah King.

Many allotment holders were also successful in the Sections E - J

The overall winner was once again, Gordon Drewett and it was sad to learn that Rosemary Drewett has decided to retire and we thank her for her many years of tireless effort to keep the Show on the road.

PLOT HOLDERS MEETING 2011

Next years Plot Holders meeting will be held at the central water butt at 10.00am on Saturday 16th April 2011.

MANURE 2010!

Our manure, which was not first quality, seems to have bedded down nicely now and we will try to get some better stuff for next year!!

I have ordered three loads and hope that it will be delivered before we start planting.

WATER

As you will realise, this last gardening season, with the long dry spells has resulted in a whopping water bill, twice the normal in fact. It has been decided though that as long as the weather next year is kinder, water use should average out and there will be no change to our water charge.

In fact it brought with it a few advantages. Because the ground was parched dry we spotted a couple of leaks, which have now been repaired!! Thank you Clive, Richard et al

COMMUNITY PLOT

The idea of such a plot was to supply the shop with allotment produce throughout the year. However whilst it has served its purpose by making plot holders aware of the fact that spare produce can be given to the shop. This awful summer pointed out that most of us were much too busy watering to give another plot much of their time.

The situation is now being reviewed and perhaps just the fruit section planted by Roger will be retained and complimented. It would be good though if everyone planted a row for the shop and took it down at harvest time.

BADGERS???

An extremely unfortunate incident occurred during the early fruiting season. As a result of the very dry weather Mrs Badger from down by the river, who could no longer dig for grubs, brought her 6/7 youngsters up to the allotments to feed (the troop was apparently spotted leaving!) and the gooseberries and blackberries disappeared overnight. That's the theory the wardens like best! However it is not beyond a possibility that other suspects exist and it is important that any suspicious strangers be reported to the wardens. Politely asking them 'if you can help' is usually the best approach.

TALLEST SUNFLOWER COMPETITION

This year more sunflowers were grown than in any previous year. It seemed that almost every plot had some. However there were two clear winners with just an inch between them when measured on the 6th September.

So **First Prize** 10'-0" went to Plots 31/32 Nigel Weeks.

Second Prize 9'-11" was on Plot 58a Alison Bartlett

and at a poor **Third** 9'-1" Plot 8 Mike Smith

Fourth was on Plot 46b 8'-6" M/s F Gillison

At least 8 others had sunflowers over 7'-0" Well done.

We again thank the Parish Council for sponsoring this event with garden vouchers.

WATER BUTTS

We not only had to use a great deal of water last growing season and mend a few leaks, but sadly through carelessness two butts had to be completely emptied and repaired. Thank you Clive for all your hard work.

Please don't wash your veggies, your garden tools or anything else in the butts, a bucket of water on your plot should suffice!!

If you are a 'strimmer' for heavens sake keep well away from the plastic butts, they damage easily and we don't want to have to do that again!

Largest Pumpkin Competition

This years competition saw a high percentage of plots with a pumpkin or two, but the winners were whoppers and inches apart!!!

The **Winner** was Plot 31/32 Nigel Weeks 72 1/2"

Second prize was Plot 34 Dennis Wilson 70 1/2"

Third prize was Plot 35 Mr B Coward 57 1/2"

SAVE YOUR OWN SEEDS!

Over the last 2/3 years the Newsletter has reported the findings of the WHICH magazines research into the germination rates of purchased seeds and as you will remember they were appalling! With up to 99% of seeds dead before planting! If you add to that the general cost of the seeds, at a minimum of £2 a packet it clearly makes sense to save seeds from your own successful sowings.

Now a few warnings before you start, are required. Some years ago plant breeders discovered that if you cross breed two strains of plant sometimes the offspring produce the best of both, often with extra vigorous growth. These seeds now go under the name of F1 seeds and cost quite a bit more, (F1 stands for Filial 1 by the way), but unfortunately these new strains rarely breed true.

This also leads to another factor to be aware of. Some of your own seeds will cross breed without you being aware, especially the brassicas, cabbages with cauliflowers and sprouts with kale, so try to keep these apart and watch where your neighbour is planting his!

If you do decide to grow to 'save your own' then it will probably be best to start on something you really value and use and concentrate on it to see how successful you are. You might even develop your own strain! If you have ever wondered how the experts grow these huge onions and leeks it's because they have over the years experimented and achieved their own strains.

The best and easiest way to start is with the beans and peas as they are self germinating and will come true. This means they will be as good as their parent. Stick to one variety of course or cross breeding is a possibility. Then keep an eye on the best plant with the most beans/peas or the longest etc and don't harvest from it. Just leave it until the pods are bone dry and the seeds rattle. If there is dampness then dig the whole plant up and hang it upside down in a cool dark, dry place with some airflow. When they thoroughly dry, pod them and be scrupulous in your inspection of them. Any that look odd or have a hole in them (a bug?) discard, then store in a paper bag or envelope remembering to put the variety and date on it. Don't use plastic bags as they encourage condensation and mould!

Once you have your seeds remember they won't last forever, so here is a chart of how long they are good for in years and germination times.

Seed	Expected life	Germination in days
Beans, Broad	2	21
Beans, French	2	14
Beans, Runner	2	14
Beetroot	5	13
Spinach, Chards	5	13
Broccoli	5	8
Cabbage	5	8
Carrot	3	16
Cauliflower	5	8
Cucumber	7	9
Kale	4	8
Kolrabi	4	7

Scarecrow Competition 2011

As reported in the last Newsletter, there is a proposal for it to become a village competition, with residents building them in their front gardens etc.

The idea has been explored and in conjunction with the school it has been decided to judge the Scarecrows on the 28th May 2011. (More details to follow)

This will mean that the competition will be even fiercer, so let's make sure that the allotments have the best ones!

Bonfires

Those who attended the annual plot-holders meeting will remember the idea of a bonfire on the allotments on the 5th November, which was suggested by Clive H. Having thought about it and discussed it with the Parish Council it would seem to be a very good idea. It would save having dozens of little bonfires at various times in the Autumn.

So on Bonfire Night about 8/10 of us turned up on a fairly damp evening and watched and admired a huge conflagration masterminded by none other than Clive himself, who had worked very hard to get it altogether, despite all of us!

Well done Clive. Can we do it next year too!

Seed	Expected life	Germination in days
Leek	3	14
Lettuce	4	7
Marrow	6	7
Onion	4	14
Parsley	2	10
Parsnip	1	17
Peas	2	10
Radish	4	6
Salsify	2	12
Spinach	2	11
Squashes	6	7
Swede	2	8
Sweetcorn	3	9
Tomato	3	7
Turnip	2	8