

BATHFORD ALLOTMENTS

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

NEWSLETTER - JANUARY 2009.

2008 was the 100th anniversary of the first Allotment Legislation

Despite the fact that allotments have been in use for the a very long time (we've been around for 128 years) it was only this century that any form of legislation was considered necessary and this was finally enacted in 1908. This last year has seen a rebirth of interest in allotments, brought about by a whole range of factors, GM food, the use of pesticides and other pernicious sprays and additives, the exposure of the population to gardening programmes on TV, making it all look dead easy! and now a threat to rising food prices. As a result every allotment up and down the country is teeming with life and has a waiting list. So we have Local Authorities scratching their heads trying to find locations for new ones, having spent most of the last 100 years ignoring the issue and hoping it would go away ! As development plans take about 5 years to mature, don't expect anything magical to happen, although there are signs. In Pembrokeshire the pressure is so great that one group have bought their own half acre field and have got cracking, and even in Bath (Chronicle 24th Dec), a small site opened just before Christmas, 12 organic plots, with a pond and a bit of woodlands to encourage wild life to come and eat their slugs and snails. Sounds a bit idealistic! But a step in the right direction perhaps. Where shall we put our pond?

PLOT HOLDERS MEETING 2009

Next years Plot Holders meeting will be held at the central water butt at 10.00am on Saturday 18th April 2009.

RATS

We appear to have been very successful in controlling the rat population on the allotments, but it does require constant vigilance and the co-operation of everyone in ensuring that their composts are turned regularly. Please turn it completely in April/May and twice more during the year. Under no circumstances *feed* them with kitchen waste, apples, potato peelings etc.!!!

SHOP PLOT.....The shop plot has seen it's first year in action and we managed to get rhubarb, beans, courgettes, and cucumbers to them in season, but not in large quantities. However the leeks and parsnips have been very successful and we have enough to last them until about the end of January. In 2009 we will be trying to be a bit more productive.

We had a lot of help from plot holders with spare seedlings and we thank them for that.

If you haven't noticed, we've had two loads of manure dumped on the plot, which is for general use and every-

COMPETITIONS

The winners of the annual Tallest Sunflower competition were:-

1st Prize Plot 29b (Grandchild of Mrs Judy Sharman) 10'-3"

2nd Prize Plot 22b Mr D Lord 9'-0"

3rd Prize Plot 5a (the McCloud children, a bigger one blew over in the wind!) 8'-5"

All together about 20 plots grew a sunflower and 4 more were over 7'-0" Well done.

The winners of the annual Largest Pumpkin competition were:-

1st Prize Plot 3455 inches round (Mr D Wilson)

2nd Prize Plot 849.5 inches round (Mr M Smith)

3rd Prize Plot 36a40 inches round (Mr R Wickham)

Again over 20 plots grew pumpkins

As this years Scarecrow competition was rather spoilt by the prevailing weather conditions prior to the event. It has been decided that it will be held a little later than usual and will now be held on **Saturday 23rd May 2009**. The judging to take place at 10.00am with a Speciality class, a Children's class and the Wurzel Gumidge Class. Other entries from any where in the Village are invited to have a go on the piece of ground at the top of the central pathway.

The **Tallest Sunflower** will be judged on either Saturday 15th or 22nd August 2009 (whichever date is in National Allotment Week)

The **Largest Pumpkin** will be judged on Saturday 26th September 2009

BATHFORD SHOW

The Show is to be held on Saturday 3rd September.
The Show depends on the support of the allotment holders and there some 20 categories for you to enter, not to mention the various fruit, flower craft and photographic classes. It especially includes a collection of four different kinds of allotment vegetables in a standard seed tray. **So have a go!**

Has Health and Safety gone mad.

Don't we live in a strange world today?
Some allotment holders in Somerset (West Monkton) were informed that because the Parish Council's insurance policy only covered the footpaths and boundaries, they would need to take out a public liability insurance. Enquiries revealed that the minimum premium would be about £350/400 per annum! This they would need to add that to their £10 annual rent! Incidentally the insurance firms thought the idea quite mad! Needless to say no-one took any notice!

Supermarket food.

The Soil Association is predicting that 2009 is the 'peak oil' year. This means that from 2009, fossil fuel extraction will start tailing off, with 2020 being the beginning of an acute situation. It takes 10 calories of fossil fuel to produce one calorie of food the way the Western culture is structured and that clearly is not sustainable. The supermarkets have a system that keeps nothing in stock and everything is constantly on the move in trucks, responding to computerised signals when supplies are running out.A lorry strike or an oil blockade could mean no food on the shelves. So lets make sure that we, at least, have something to fall back on.

Instead of allotment rules which everyone now has on their brand new contracts. I have room in the newsletter for some other contributions so let's start with a poem, written by the winners of last year's new plot holders cup - Phyl & Jim on Plot 2

Ode to the Allotment

Up Bathford Hill by Bridle shop
hides an unsung beauty spot.
Open the gate and you will find
tranquillity and peace of mind.

Allotments all spread out like tartan.
Some are rich and some are Spartan.
Paths of green meander about
with nets to keep invaders out.

Nature's beauty all in rows
And then an unofficial rose.
A drift of smoke ascends to cloud
but not too much, it's not allowed!

Assorted seats - some homemade,
Placed about in sun and shade.
To rest a while with chance to savour
All the fruits of honest labour.

We've just joined this club exclusive
and our praise is most effusive.
Allotments are good for the purse
and great for the belly.
Put your name down at once -
It's better than telly!

There's something primeval in growing your food
You're closer to nature and it brightens the mood
Oh - yes we were down when digging got boring
And the rain just kept on pouring and pouring.

CURRENT LETTING SITUATION

Martin has been busy with the lets and even now one or two situations are not quite clear, but what is apparent is that we will be fully let by the time the dust settles and will still have people on our waiting list.

DIGGING FOR VICTORY

There is a new sense of determination in the air about vegetable gardening. The demand for allotments has outstripped the supply and enthusiasm is high.

However allotment gardening is not for the pretty-potager rose-tinted glasses brigade. If it is to succeed it takes time and commitment. One of the really irritating facts is that when plots change hands they have usually become seriously overgrown and it takes a lot of hard work to get them under control again.

This year we start with a substantial number of new plot holders and we hope you will all make them welcome. One way is to offer to share your advice and experience more directly to offer any spare seeds or seedlings.

When our city backs got quite a shock
And refused to bend for shoe or sock.
when knees creaked and started clicking
Recalling the sound of grandmothers knitting.

When longed for tomatoes were blighted
and the lettuce nobbled by slugs uninvited.
Cabbage white butterflies appeared from the view.
Like confetti at a wedding they flew.

We paid a hard price for their dancing display
They planted their time bombs and fluttered away!
Expletives turned the allotment blue.
Caterpillars are deaf to shoo shoo shoo!

Many a white butterfly will never be,
We squashed them flat ('tween you and me!)
Their revenge came swift and deep
Giant caterpillars haunt my sleep.

But our harvest was bountiful
With riches uncountable.
We sip Rioja to celebrate
Our allotment food is on our plate

A vase of dahlias in blousy display.
All grown by us and picked today.
Vegetables are not the only bounty.
We've met the best folk in the county

There's Nigel, Martin, Mike, Rosemary, Reg, Jean and Bob
And I mustn't forget old Toby the dog
There's Sally and children, Cyril, Jill, John, Lucy and Sue.
To those and to others a heartfelt thank you.