

BATHFORD ALLOTMENTS

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

NEWSLETTER - June 2009. No 19

EARTHLY PLEASURES

Apparently the sale of growbags has risen fivefold this Spring and the pleasure of burying one's hands in the soil is no longer the preserve of we old, silver-haired, horny handed gardeners! They're all at it, gardening has become really fashionable. The threat of global food shortages and our present reliance on imports - some 1,200,000 tons more of the stuff than just 10 years ago, has got us worried, especially with global warming and the risk that many sources of supply in Southern Europe and Africa are threatened with water crises and poor harvests.It could be Dig for Victory for real.

COMMUNITY PLOTWe are not allowed to call it the shop plot any more!has had a good year and we are well away with our second season. So far we've got broad and runner beans, onions and potatoes, with courgettes and leeks promised. The lower portion has been rotavated and if you have any spare seedlings feel free to transplant them on Plot 11. Just stick a cane in so the others can see where you've been.

If you hadn't noticed, we had two loads of manure dumped on the plot and it seems to have been very successful, so next year we'll have three loads and give everyone a chance to get a good bean trench going

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. Under no circumstances *feed* them with kitchen waste, apples, potato peelings etc.!!!

PLOT HOLDERS MEETING 2010

Next years Plot Holders meeting will be held at the central water butt at 10.00am on Saturday 17th April 2010.

COMPETITIONS

The annual Scarecrow competition saw eleven scarecrows decorating our allotments in glorious sunshine. So we got at least one thing right. The date in May is definitely better than the previous April date!, but it was half term so none of our children were the slightest bit interested! They were all away on holiday somewhere! Next year we will pick a more convenient date in May!

However the entries were of a high standard and it is clear that the winners put a lot of time and effort into their contributions.

The winners were as follows:-

Special Class, 1st Prize to Plot 30a, Cathy Adean, 2nd Prize to Plot 32, Mrs Nigel Weeks.

Wurzel Gumidge Class, 1st Prize to Plot 32, Nigel Weeks, 2nd Prize to Plot 17 Clive Higgs, 3rd Prize to Plot 19b, John Woodruff. Well done to all of them.

Don't forget the Tallest Sunflower competition on Saturday 16th or 23rd August and the Largest Pumpkin competition on Saturday 27th September

GOSH

Slow Growing!!

A Daily Telegraph report on allotments in the London Borough of Camden, indicates that there are 883 people waiting up to **40 years** for one of it's 195 plots. In Islington, Burnley, Fylde, the Wirral and Kingston-on-Hull the waiting lists are just 10 years.

The average national wait is apparently three years two months.

There are over 100,000 people in Britain waiting to rent a plot!!

The Assistant Secretary of the National Society of Allotment & Leisure Gardeners said people should fight for their rights and contact their M.P. "Every council is duty bound to provide 20 plots per 1,000 residents. It's up to people to put pressure onto their authorities to move things along."

The Show is to be held on Saturday 5th 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!**

200 YEARS OLD

About 15 miles up the road from us, is Britain's oldest allotments, in the village of Great Somerford. They were established in 1809, by the then philanthropic vicar, at the time of the enclosures. Great Somerford's free gardens and allotments were the first allotments to be laid down in the Enclosures Act, given in exchange for tithes to provide the poor agricultural labourers of the parish with a means of growing their own food. Now 200 years later, they are still in use and as popular as ever.

The plots are still let free, but if you come from out of the village you make a contribution. The manure is shared and they, like us, have the good humoured competition between those of us who are not averse to using a bit of weedkiller and the green brigade.

They have just published a book on their allotment entitled "The Poor Man's Best Friend"

Next year we celebrate the 130th anniversary of our allotments and like Great Somerford's, they are as well used as they have ever been, with a wonderful cross section of our community. Martin and I could write a very funny book about some of the characters who are or who have been plot holders and the strange 'happenings' that we have had to deal with!!

Martin has been busy with the lets and we have had to chase up 4/5 plots that haven't been very active. However our waiting list continues to grow. Clearly it is now too late consider further lettings until the autumn when we know how many plots are available.

A GENTLE REMINDER

With the large increase in the number of children on our allotment plots it is important to remember that ball games are not allowed and parents should ensure that their youngsters do not wander onto adjacent plots.

HOW WE'VE COPED WITH THE DEMAND FOR PLOTS

As most of you know we appear to have some 60 full plots, in fact it is 59 as their isn't a No 1. Some 10/15 years ago there were far less than 60 plot holders, at best probably about 40, and many of them had more than one.

Several had three and one had five!! They are the ones we should thank today, as they kept the allotments going through some pretty threatening times.

Fortunately for your wardens most of our plots are fairly generous in size and as our waiting list has increased, Martin has been able to sub-divide the larger ones, so that today only about 20 plots are still full size. But the number of plot holders has risen slowly to double that earlier number....

today's count**81**

I imagine that as we older ones give up, the number could reach 100!!

Minutes of Plot-holders annual meeting held at the central water butt on Saturday 18th April 2009 at 10.05 am.

Present:-

Stan Cherry, Wendy Chambers (Parish Council Reps) and 21 Plot holders.

The meeting began with the introduction of the Parish Councillors, Stan and Wendy.

1. After last years debate over the P.C.C's plans for the new rent and contract proposals, everything seems to have been satisfactorily introduced and the one or two issues over the contract accepted.
2. It was confirmed that payment through the wardens had also worked satisfactorily
3. Martin up dated the meeting with the current letting situation, indicating that all the available plots had been let, but there were still quite a lot of people from outside the village on a waiting list.
4. After a stuttering start on Plot 33 by the school, it had been decided to put it up for rent again and due to the changed circumstances at the school Martin had arranged for them to have another plot, which he has prepared for them.
5. Now that everyone has a contract which includes the rules, they would no longer be printed in the newsletter, so there was room for other contributions and they would be welcomed by the editor.
6. We have had an issue over rats and over the last two years about 12 a year have been killed, but in recent weeks one main source of the problem had been exposed and hopefully we have it under control.
7. The Community Plot had worked reasonably well last year, with parsnips, leeks, runner beans and rhubarb being the main crops. It was being extended this year and everyone was encouraged to bring a spade and plant their spare seedlings on it. Already several offers of plants had been made (Clive runner beans, Martin onions, Mike broad beans and parsnips)
8. Plot holders were reminded that spare seedlings, seeds or plants could be left on the seat above Plot 8, with a label for use by others.
9. Plot holders were reminded of the Scarecrow competition on 23rd May and the Largest pumpkin competition on 26th September. There were some concern (David Rouse) about allowing the public onto the allotments to view the scarecrows and it was pointed out that the chairman, hadn't acted very democratically over the issue, however it was agreed that it would be monitored carefully and a decision taken before we suggest it again for next year.
10. Plot holders were reminded about the village Flower Show and Martin explained the Allotment tray section.
11. Mike mentioned the two cart loads of "free" manure, but it seems that not everyone was able to get a share so it was agreed that we would get three loads next year
12. AOB

Under this item were discussions about the tree at the bottom and Mike is to get a quote for pruning it.

The meeting concluded with thanks to Stan and Wendy for their attendance and to the wardens for their contribution to it all.