

Henley-on-Thames Allotments Association

NEWSLETTER September- December 2011

Chairman's Tips

I've just spent the morning sorting out my strawberry bed. This is the right time to plant out your new plants.

Strawberries send out runners with several new plants growing along each runner. These plants put roots down into the ground which makes them easy to transplant and then establish well. If you are organised you can pinch out a runner, as it first grows, just after the first plant and then you should get larger more healthy plants to plant out.

It is a wonderful example of how prolific nature is.

I must have had well over 200 surplus plants which are now on the compost heap with a few potted up for the Plant Sale/Swap next May.

Another useful tip at this time is to cut-off your potato tops a week or so before you plan to dig them. This encourages the potatoes to form tougher skins so they will keep better. Take care sorting them out if you plan to store them by removing any damaged, sluggy or blight infected ones.

General Update

Alison Enbleby

Alison Engleby has decided to give up her allotment at Watermans recently to have time to concentrate on cultivating her garden. She has been a stalwart member of the Association and a committee member during my time as Chairman.

She worked hard as Site Manager at Watermans for many years and helped very much to improve the appearance and usage there. We have valued her advice and especially her hard work preparing the food for the annual Boat Trip which we hope that she will continue to assist with.

We wish her well and will be pleased to find her a plot if she decides that she has time to manage one.

Thanks for all your hard work for the allotments, Alison.

Andrew Hawkins.

Dates for your Diary

Sunday 2nd October 12noon-3pm at Watermans – BBQ and Pumpkin

Judging (weather permitting). Doug will be cooking burgers and sausages in a bun, price £3 each. Pumpkin judging will take place for both sites, and Scarecrow/Sunflower competition, if there are enough entries.

Monday 17th October 7pm at the Town Hall Chambers – Allotments

Association AGM. AGM packs are included with this newsletter: this is a good time to have your say!

Allotment Practical Workshop 'Getting Ready for Winter'. Date TBA in

November. Advice from experienced plot holders on what jobs to do including information on digging and manuring, as well as planting of broad beans, onions and garlic.

Tuesday 22nd November 7pm at the Barn – Gardeners' Question Time

in conjunction with Henley-in-Bloom. A panel of experts, including a guest speaker, advise and discuss questions from the floor. Please bring your specimens! Ticket prices £2 pp available from Dave McEwen (01491-578658), Peter Herbert at Hobbs, or the Town Hall.

Thursday 15th December 6.30 for 7pm at Christchurch Hall – AA Christmas

Dinner. Doug Richards (Site Manager of Watermans) and team cook up a wonderful home-cooked 5-course dinner (starter, traditional Christmas dinner, flaming Christmas pudding, coffee and mince pies, cheese). Price £16pp, including a welcome glass of sherry, and a glass of port with the cheese. Vegetarian option

available, please tell Peter Herbert when ordering tickets. Price £16pp from Peter Herbert at Hobbs, or phone Peter on 91491-628632.

Rent letters

These will be arriving at the end of September for the year starting October 1st 2011. Rents for this year have increased by approximately 3%, with a 10 pole plot increasing by £1 (£36 to £37), and a 5 pole increasing by 50p (£18 to £18.50). Starter plots will be £14. Rents can be paid at the Information Centre in the Town Hall, and must be paid by the end of October.

Discounted seed packets/potatoes

The Allotments Association is a member of the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG), and this membership provides plot holders with the opportunity to buy seeds/potatoes from Kings Seeds. Prices are considerably cheaper than buying from garden centres, and the Allotments Association also gets a contribution from Kings for every pound spent. A catalogue and price list is enclosed with this newsletter, as well as details of how to order. Please take advantage of this scheme and save money on next year's crops.

Save your seeds for the Plant Sale/Swap next May

Many of you will be gathering seeds from your crops/flowers now, for use next year. The Annual Plant and Seed Sale/Swap will definitely go ahead in May 2012, so please remember to save some seeds/plants for this event.

Paths on both sites

Many of the paths in between plots have become overgrown. We have many elderly plot holders on the site as well as young children and a serious accident could easily happen, particularly if tools are left lying about. **PLEASE** can all plot holders make the effort to cut the grass around their plots as soon as possible. It is a requirement of the Tenancy Agreement that paths remain clear. Thank you.

Bonfire season

As we approach the bonfire season, please remember the bonfire guidelines that are in place (these are on all the notice boards). The most important guidelines are: a) to respect other plot holders/neighbours by only burning dry material and avoiding billowing smoke; and b) to douse your bonfire before you leave the site.

Best Plot/Newcomer

Graham Jones (last year's Best Plot Winner at Greencroft) and Doug Richards have inspected both sites and selected a 'Best Plot' and 'Best Newcomer' on each site. It is the first time both Graham and Doug have judged this competition, and both found it very rewarding and interesting. The winners will be announced at the AGM.

Watermans Update

Locking the main gate

Although closing the main gate only takes a minute to do, the last person in a car leaving the site often fails to do this, and the gate is frequently left open both at night and during the day. We are still getting regular incidents of vandalism and theft, and an open gate is an invitation to enter the site. PLEASE make the effort to close the gate if you are in the last car leaving, whatever time of the day, but particularly in the evenings. Doug is purchasing a new combination lock in the next few days, so we are hopeful of having tighter security moving forward. Thank you.

Greencroft Update

New Site Manager at Greencroft

Lewis Every has agreed to be the new Site Manager at Greencroft. He will be taking over officially at the end of September. His contact details are as follows: Plot number 51, e-mail address lewisevery@googlemail.com, phone number 01491-576147. We wish him luck and thank him for offering to take on this key voluntary role!