

THE PLOTHOLDER

ROYAL PADDOCKS ALLOTMENTS NEWSLETTER - JUNE 1998

This newsletter is the first of what we hope will be a quarterly issue, and is one of the responses to the suggestions made at the Extraordinary General Meeting in March. Its success will depend not only on the Plotholders' Committee elected at that meeting, but also on contributions from you all. Any items of interest will be welcomed for future issues.

The new committee members are:

Les Dickinson, chairman	Plot 82
Susan Saunders, secretary	Plot 56
Russell Knight, treasurer	Plot 181
George Harmsworth	Plot 104
Fred Adams	Plot 116
Richard Emerton	Plot 188
Mike Veysey	Plot 70
Alec Mead	Plot 38
Roy Bennett	Plot 41
Tony Walker	Plot 35
Gill Hiley	Plot 50
Brula Rice	Plot 43 front
Stan Bastian	Plot 20
Carla Bellinger	Plot 31
Bob Bellinger	Plot 107

Steve Hawkins, plot 195, who has served on the committee on and off over the past forty years, has regrettably had to stand down due to ill health. Steve has been a great servant to, and popular member of the committee, and he will be missed. Our best wishes to for him for better health and continued good gardening. Also for health reasons, Jim Houlihan has had to give up his plot, although we hope Jim will continue to visit us.

We welcome new ploholders Peter and Brenda van der Kooy (plot 168 front), and Mary Ewing (plot 53 front), and wish them well in their task of tackling difficult plots.

PADDOCKS MILLENNIUM PROJECT

To give direction to various suggestions made at the Extraordinary General Meeting we have established the Paddocks Millennium Project. Our aim is to get as many plots occupied as possible, and to increase significantly the level and standard of cultivation by the end of the century. We have agreement for the ploholders to open a bank account for any funds we raise, plus any voluntary contributions, (as suggested

at the EGM). This will mean we can buy equipment, weedkiller, black plastic and so on, to help to get difficult plots under control and improve the appearance of the site. Anyone wishing to make a contribution can do so by passing it to Russ Knight or the Chairman (plots 181, 182), or by posting it to the Chairman at 49 Cross Deep Gardens, Twickenham, TW1 4QZ.

We are forming a team of helpers who will assist with clearing overgrown plots or help plottolders who may be in difficulties, perhaps because of ill health or unavoidable absence. More volunteers would be welcome, and anybody willing should contact the Chairman or leave their details at the seedstore on Sunday mornings. Applications for assistance should also be directed to the Chairman.

PLOT INSPECTIONS

One only has to walk round the site and compare it with, for example, council-run allotment sites, to see how seriously the overall standard of plot cultivation has declined. This is the biggest single threat to the site as referred to in the Royal Parks Review. We must arrest this decline quickly, and raise significantly the standard of cultivation in a large number of cases.

To set this in motion, monthly plot inspections by committee members are to be reintroduced. Our ultimate aim is complete cultivation of every plot that is rented. Initially five grades of cultivation will be awarded:

- A: Full cultivation - the shortlist for the Champion Plot competition will be drawn from these
- B: More than half fully cultivated
- C: Between a quarter and a half cultivated
- D: Less than a quarter cultivated
- E: Uncultivated

Those plots which remain uncultivated for a full year will regrettably have to be recommended for termination of tenancy, except in cases of genuine hardship. Of the remaining categories, we must make every effort to improve standards, and where appropriate help and advice can be given.

This is not intended to be an officious regime, but it is absolutely vital that we get every single plot into categories A or B. Every undercultivated plot is a threat to the site as a whole. It is up to every one of us to tackle and improve our plots if they fall short of these standards. Our thanks go to all those plottolders approached recently about the condition of their plots (as well as those who are tackling difficult plots) who have responded promptly. It shows what can be done!

Besides plot inspections, we will soon be advertising for new tenants more widely. If you know someone seeking a plot, direct them to us - but make sure they understand that they will need to spend a minimum of four hours per week on a half plot, and eight on a full plot when in full cultivation. There will be a member of the committee in the seedstore to speak to applicants between 11 a.m. and noon on Sundays.

VANDALISM AND THEFT

We have recently had a spate of theft, particularly from those plots alongside the playground and the path to the cricket pitch. Gaps in the fence will be repaired soon, and the Hon. Clerk and the Plotholders' Chairman are approaching the Parks Authorities to see what they are prepared to do. The committee are considering how the barbed wire frieze to the fence can be either repaired or replaced.

RUBBISH REMOVAL

Nearer the time we will be advertising the dates in July and September when the lorry will be coming to remove non-burnable rubbish such as rubble and metal. One suggestion is to arrange for collection points at various locations. The details are being worked out, but we hope this will greatly improve the appearance of the site, and that plotholders will respect whatever system is introduced and make it work.

REFERENCE BOOKS

The Chairman has made available in his office two complete sets of gardening encyclopaedias, which can be used for reference by any plotholder. One is a set of 51 magazines called 'Grow your own', each volume dealing with a particular vegetable or fruit, as well as giving general gardening tips. The second is a set of the Marshall Cavendish Gardening Encyclopaedia, covering all aspects of gardening, including flowers.

ANNUAL PRIZES

We'd like to award more prizes at the AGM, and are looking for suggestions for new categories. What about one for Best Newcomer? Or the Most Improved Plot? Give us your ideas.

HORSE MANURE

Fred Adams, on plot 116, is still taking orders for horse manure at £15 a load - half loads can also be ordered.

AND FINALLY . . . I realise this first newsletter may seem a bit impersonal, but we hope this will change as the more worrying aspects of the future of the allotments recede, and are replaced by items of a personal and gardening nature. Copies of the committee minutes will be displayed in the seed store, which we hope will reduce the need for so much committee business to be included in the newsletter. Any contributions or suggestions are welcomed.

Les Dickinson,
Plotholders' Committee Chairman