

ROYAL PADDOCKS ALLOTMENTS



HAMPTON
WICK

ROYAL PADDOCKS ALLOTMENTS NEWSLETTER

No 27 Sept 2007

THE PLOTHOLDER

www.paddocks-allotments.org.uk

Join us for the last fund raising event of the year. Why do we need to raise funds?

The water supply refurbishment programme costs £500 per pump!

Autumn Social Sunday 7th October 12.30 – 3.00

We're looking forward to a great day for the Autumn Social – fingers crossed for some perfect Indian summer weather! Bring your giant pumpkins for the grand weigh-in, this year judged by a guest from the NPL. Buy quality jams, chutneys and other delights at the home produce stall, take a gamble on the raffle and tombolas, enjoy delicious refreshments, take part in children's fun activities and socialise with your plotholder neighbours.

Your help is needed to make sure it all goes with a swing :

Donations – we need things to sell

It's time to get thinking about jam and chutney making for the Home Produce stall – all your home made produce from your plot, as well as cakes, biscuits and anything else you can turn your hand to will be greatly appreciated on Marguerite's stall.

Prizes

This year we will be running tombolas and we are asking for donations that would be suitable for prizes– we would welcome donations for the children's tombola – good quality small games, crafts etc. Prizes for the adult tombola will be bottles and plants - an opportunity to look out those unused gifts that you never got round to opening and to pot up extra cuttings in time for October!

Raffle

We are also hoping for contributions to the raffle – gardening books, wine, homemade cakes etc will be very welcome.

Volunteers

We always need willing volunteers on the stalls and children's activities on a rota basis. Help is always welcome for setting up and clearing away. If you would be able to help on the day for an hour or so please contact me or one of the Social committee members – Sue Croft, Gill Hiley, Helga Foss and Sarah Colclough via the mailbox in the shed by the main gates.

Jenny Bourne plot 27f jennybourne@beeb.net Tel: 0208 943 1792

Dates for your diary

Find out what's going on at the Royal Paddocks Allotments for the rest of this year.

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

AUTUMN SOCIAL – SUN 7TH OCTOBER 12.30 – 3.00
A.G.M. – THURS 8TH NOVEMBER LION PUB 7.30 for 8.00

COMMUNITY ECOLOGIST'S JUNE VISIT

What's the best way to encourage friendly wildlife on site, while using as much of the land as possible for the purpose it's provided for – allotments? That was the question the committees put to Dr Nigel Reeve, the Royal Parks Community Ecologist, when he visited the Paddocks on 11 June. There's a long waiting list for plots – but we need to keep some ground for our natural allies too. We aren't talking pigeons, slugs, squirrels or rats – they don't need any encouragement.

Beneficial creatures are often less easy to spot, but will thrive if we give them enough of the right habitat. Among those on our side are foxes (they eat rats, rabbits and the occasional slug); hedgehogs (slugs and snails); amphibians (slugs); song thrushes (slugs and snails); wasps (cutworms and other insect larvae); bees and other insect pollinators; and small birds which eat various insect pests and larvae. Many of them of course also eat each other. The habitat these creatures need is a certain amount of bramble, varied undergrowth and trees, plus ponds at least a metre deep, with no fish, for amphibians. Slug pellets can be attractive to hedgehogs, and Dr Reeve advised putting them under cover, if using them.

He was very enthusiastic about the current state of the Paddocks, especially the native hedge, which as it matures will provide an excellent habitat for many creatures. This may be the longest hedge in the Borough! and there's still a final section to go in this winter, together with a patch of coppice, which will eventually provide more good habitat, plus a usable crop of home-grown poles.

Worries about the future of the horse chestnuts, seriously attacked last year by leaf miner, weeping canker and pseudomonas, may be receding, Dr Reeve said. Native organisms may be beginning to control the leaf miner, an exotic pest from southern Europe, and without the additional stress the trees may withstand the other two diseases better.

Questioned about the now worryingly familiar parakeets, Dr Reeve said that no official study had been carried out by the Government, though there was a considerable body of evidence that they compete with hole-nesting birds, and eat fruit and fruit buds. (Many tenants will have found their beak marks in produce this summer.) Until more official research has been commissioned the birds' numbers will not be subject to control.

Dr Reeve suggested doing a wildlife audit to get a clearer idea of just what creatures are 'tenants' along with us. Get in touch if you're interested in doing this. – Susan Saunders plot 56

STORING POTATOES can be difficult if you have a lot, and don't know how to clamp. They need to be kept dark, and in a cool but frost-free place. Cardboard wine boxes are a good alternative to sacks, with the advantages that the bottle compartments separate the potatoes (useful if some go off), and they can be stacked.

BUILDERS' BAGS make good and inexpensive containers for compost, supported at each corner. They'd be even better if they were dark green – easier on the eye, and more light-excluding. Does anyone know of a source in this colour?

..... QUERIES ANSWERED BY EXPERTS

As an affiliated society to the RHS, tenants can have advice from the labs at Wisley (plant material must be sent via the Committees, quoting our membership number). However, there's a lot of information available on-line as well. Look up www.rhs.org.uk, or, for the organic angle, www.organicgardening.org.uk (onetime Henry Doubleday Research Association). Both websites have factsheets on many topics, plus topical information.

'The views expressed in *The Plotholder* do not necessarily reflect the views of the Plotholders and Management Committees'

NEW CONSTITUTION PLANNED

Despite having been in existence since 1921, the Royal Paddocks Allotments has been working since 1956 with a constitution never formally adopted. It is time to remedy this situation, and a group of tenants led by Helga Foss has been working on a revision which will take us through the new century. It is planned to make this document available before the Annual General Meeting, for consideration by tenants at that meeting. It will be circulated in email form, and paper copies will also be available in the shed by the site entrance.

If you have any comments should be sent in before the AGM, either by email, or by letter via the postbox at the main gates.

RENT PAYMENT PLEASE FILL THE FORM IN

Rent payment letters are on their way, and as in previous years tenants are asked to complete the form attached and return it with their payment. It is very difficult to keep our records of contact details up to date without these forms, and rents will not be accepted without them.

'GROW YOUR OWN' was first seen on stage at the Edinburgh Festival last year. Now it's a film on general release. It may be a low-budget production (say Andree and Ashley Catto plots A, G) but it's well worth the price of admission. Set on allotments in northwest England, it tells the story of the impact that a group of refugees has on the locals when they're given plots to help the cope with their new circumstances, often following traumatic experiences in their native countries.

What makes this film so entertaining despite the 'worthy' theme is the quality of the acting and the humour of the script. Diverse characters are thrown together, with all sorts of consequences. At first the locals view the newcomers with suspicion and enforce draconian dictats. However, it is not just the refugees who dislike the new rules - home grown eccentrics find themselves in collusion with their neighbours, and unexpected alliances and friendships start to blossom.

Ultimately it takes the invasion by a mobile phone company to unite this little community, with some heart warming results.

WHAT'S COOKING?

BLACKBERRY MASCARPONE MOUSSE

Wally and Annemarie Locher of plot 57 share this recipe - a family favourite for the autumn.

450g blackberries, 140g golden caster sugar, 2 egg whites, 250g tub mascarpone

Heat the blackberries and a rounded tbsp of the sugar gently in a pan till the juices run, then simmer till the berries are soft (5 minutes). Press through a sieve and leave to cool.*

Put egg whites in a bowl with remaining sugar and set over a pan of simmering water. Whisk for about 3 minutes till you have marshmallow meringue. Take off heat, and whisk for a further 2 minutes.

In a bowl beat the mascarpone together with the puree. Fold in half the meringue, cutting through the mixture, then fold in the rest; turn into a serving bowl and chill for 2 hours.

To finish, just before serving you can cover with whipped cream (142 ml), decorate with more fruit, and some leaves too, if you like, and dust with icing sugar.

To make ahead, gelatine is needed. Put 3 tbsp water in a cup, sprinkle over 11g powdered gelatine (1 sachet), stand cup in simmering water and stir till dissolved. Add the gelatine to the blackberry puree, and continue from *.

Welcome new tenants

Mark Jones plot 121, Eve Blackwood plot 193b, Alistair Wood plot 202b, Andy Weston plot 104, and Stephen Morgan plot 21f.

Have you logged onto our fantastic new website?
www.paddocks-allotments.org It's simple to register and then you can join our lively discussion forum. You can also find the newsletter in electronic form and plenty more besides!

Wildlife Matters

A Place to Bee

We dismantled our rubbish pile -fruit tree branches etc - at the beginning of the summer and disturbed a bee's nest near the bottom of the pile. For a few weeks the small bees continued to fly in and out of holes with a lot of activity around the entrances to the holes, grouping together just under the surface of the soil, until three weeks ago when there was no more sign of them.

Nigel Reeve, the Royal Parks ecologist was kind enough to look at the nest after his wildlife talk on site and he identified them as common carder bees, *Bombus pascuorum*, that nest above ground in cavities in heaps of soil, compost, old birds nests etc. It was fascinating to observe them buzzing in and out – perhaps they'll return to take up occupation again in our new rubbish pile!



March of the Harlequins

The harlequin may sound like a bit of a jester but there is nothing funny about it at all.
Matt Shardlow, Buglife

Voracious, invasive, predatory, competing with our native ladybirds for food sources – and on our site! Did you notice unusual ladybirds earlier this year, approx 5-8mm in size, with a white plate with a big black M-shaped marking on it

just behind the head, orange with 15 or 20 spots, or black with two or four orange or red spots and with brown legs? They were probably harlequin ladybirds. The fear is that these introduced predators will sweep aside many of the 46 indigenous British ladybirds. A survey is being carried out on these potential invaders and the call has gone out to gardeners, farmers, wildlife enthusiasts and anyone interested in ladybirds to record all ladybirds they find. Surveyors have been asked to report any findings of the harlequin, including where it was found, using a grid reference or postcode, the date and how many ladybirds there were – a photo would help verification of each find.

This information should go to www.harlequin-survey.org.

Jenny Bourne

COMMITTEE NOTICES

PARKING

Car parking, as you are all aware, is an ongoing problem. We ask that ploholders only park their cars on the road for loading or unloading and then either park in the communal areas or outside the gates.

PATHS

The committee would like to remind ploholders that they are responsible for cutting the grass on half of the access paths joining their plot and also the area of grass in front of the plots. A letter containing guidelines on paths will be sent out together with your rent renewal notices.

BONFIRE ETIQUETTE

Please consider your neighbours and the local residents when lighting fires this summer – keep burning to a minimum and only burn completely dry matter on still days. There have been several complaints from neighbours, who do not have the option of going home to escape smoke, as we can.

We would recommend not having fires until the Autumn when others will have windows closed, and will be less affected. The Weekend Rule of no fires on cricket match days still applies.

MAIL FOR THE COMMITTEE

Can be left in the postbox in the shed beside the site entrance. Please don't leave money.

A BIG THANK YOU

Thank you to George Loosemore who cut back overhanging greenery in Church Grove. If your plot borders the road please make sure nothing is growing over the wall where it may lasso passers-by.

To contact us: Contributions to The Ploholder are welcome: contact Jenny Bourne, plot 27f jennybourne@beeb.net ; Sarah Colclough, bliss@plot39.wanadoo.co.uk Ian Hopkins, plot 30. Website address www.paddocks-allotments.org.uk