

Newsletter

January 2009

We are well into the new year and the winter period of gardening inactivity is behind us. On the world stage we are still facing the difficulties brought forward from last year but in spite of this there has been some feeling of renewed hope with the inauguration of a new American president.

In a similar way, we gardeners are still faced with the perennial problems of last season but we can plan new crops, research new seeds and make new resolutions. Let us be optimistic, it is often said that optimism is an essential quality of a good gardener, and look forward to the green shoots of spring which will inevitably follow the important preparation and hard work of the next two months.

Those of you who attended the AGM in November will be aware that there is some general concern about the untidiness of some plots and the effect this has upon their neighbours. We have thought it essential to remind all tenants, in this issue, of their responsibilities in this direction and also of the agreements which they have with the town Council. We are lucky to be able to rent a plot so reasonably on such an attractive site. There are many others in the queue waiting for the pleasure of gardening at Sunnyside.

Annual General Meeting, of Sunnyside Allotment Society, Saturday 29th November

The AGM was attended by about thirty tenants. They were pleased to hear that the society is flourishing, with a strong financial position. The Chairman, Freda Earl reported on an eventful year mainly centred on negotiations between the Allotment Management team and the Council over the introduction of new costs but she felt that common sense had prevailed and a paper is to be prepared on how allotment costs are calculated. She also reminded us that S.A.S. is now 12 years old and is respected by

everyone who has dealings with it. This is in no small measure due to past and present AMT and other committee members.

The way our site looks is mostly the result of our work. Pathways between plots are mown; Ted Dyer has always checked the water supply; good relations fostered with the Network Rail have produced better rabbit fencing; bird boxes and eco bean poles are produced by us. The work, on and off site, is shared by the committee members and now that nearly all our plots are let, we have a need for more help, particularly from younger tenants to safeguard our future.

Untidy Gardens! Please keep reading!

No one likes being inspected.

Previously, when plots were comparatively hard to let, the council had a relaxed attitude to under cultivated gardens but now we have to tighten up. We do not want the plots to be highly manicured but they cannot be allowed to go back to 'rough', paths must be cared for and weeds must not be allowed to seed all over neighbouring gardens.

The Allotment and Leisure Gardens Act says you can have an orchard, but the trees must be

cultivated in clear earth or a lawn.

You can even have a fruit tree in a lawn with a bench and a bed of salad .

If you are finding it difficult to cultivate the whole of your plot you can reduce your holding. Please talk to the council about it or Freda Earl or John Driver on our committee.

Until now some tenants who have started the year enthusiastically and then find the pressures of work too much have had a council letter but then have managed to tidy up sufficiently to avoid eviction and can carry on without worry.

This will not continue in future.

If the same happens the next year, the next letter will be cumulative.

Eviction Procedure

- The allotment reps inspect allotments four times a year. They are sympathetic to problems.
- A list of those needing warning letters is handed to the council.
- First letter sent requiring reasonable progress within the next month.
- If no progress, second letter sent.
- Third letter of termination.
- Appeals procedure can be used.
- REMEMBER If you have a problem contact the town council about it.
- REMEMBER. The letters are cumulative from year to year.

Your allotment rep. will support you as far as possible, but cannot help if your garden is considered untidy and not had due care.

Rent Demands

If and when you receive a letter from the town council, PLEASE READ IT and TAKE ACTION. We all received rent demands in September and they had to be paid by 27th December. Two tenants have been evicted this year because they forgot to pay until January and the process of re-letting had already begun by then.

So

- Read communications from the Town Council.
- Act on them. Ring up and explain if you

have a problem.

- Make sure you have notified any change of address or email.
- If your tenancy is in your partner's name make sure they tell you.
- Do it sooner rather than later!

Allotment Handbook

You are reminded that all tenants are entitled to a copy of the Allotment handbook in which you will find all sorts of invaluable practical advice and information specific to Sunnyside site. It has been collated by the town council and new tenants should receive it automatically when they take on a plot and existing tenants can obtain a copy from the Civic Centre. It is free and well worth consulting.

Updates from the handbook.

- Farmyard manure is in short supply. Both our regular supplies have run out so please let the committee know if you find a satisfactory one.
- Fencing, fenceposts etc You are reminded that Mannings of Hog Lane, Ashley Green offer Sunnyside tenants 10% discount on their products (5% if you have items delivered).

Rabbit Fencing along railway boundaries

Fencing has been installed by Network Rail on SS old site and the town council has contributed to fencing along the SS new site boundary with the farmer's field. We are now provisionally planning to install fencing on this site's railway boundary on SATURDAY 28 FEBRUARY and SUNDAY 1 MARCH. **We need your help.** Network Rail is providing the materials. The boundary needs to be cleared in advance and a trench must be dug in which to bury the fencing. We plan to use a digger but the fence will have to be inserted and backfilled by hand. This is a big job and we need as many tenants as possible to take part, particularly those on SS new site who will benefit most. **Please put the dates in your diary. Just an hour or two will help.** Further information will be sent by email and posted on the site noticeboards.

Roadways

The roadways are very wet and soggy at this time of year so please try to avoid driving on them. They are so easily damaged and difficult to repair.

Social Affairs

The Christmas drinks party, held on a bright Sunday morning just before Christmas, was a happy occasion attended by many tenants and their families. Festive food and mulled wine were served outside the tea hut and there is always something special about enjoying an alfresco party on a cold December day.

The Sunnyside Christmas Calendar was on sale with its usual artistic photos showing the allotment year, and also giving many gardening tips. Over one hundred have been sold and we must thank Jenny Sippings and Angela Wheeldon for all the effort they put into this annual project. Already they are thinking of the calendar for 2010. This time the theme will be the crops we grow and they are asking for any unusual recipes so if you have a favourite, please email it to jenny.sippings@ntlworld.com or drop it into 82, George St.

Check your 2009 SAS Calendar for your January gardening tips

New tenants:

Mrs Marilyn Kirk	A31A
Ms Anne Wilberforce	A1A
Ms Lisa Hartley	N8
Ms Michela Burns	A31B

Tenants who have left:

John Savage	A31B
Ms Lynne Stevens	N12A
Mr Adam & Mrs Liz Hall	N38
Mr Brian Ellis	N65
Jane & Joe Garstin	A1
Ms Deborah Kibble	A31A
Melanie Wattret	N8

Committee:

Brenda Baynes	Newsletter editor	865853
John Driver	Vice-chair	862734
Freda Earl	Chair & site rep	865661
John Eaton	Deputy site rep	865307
Rebecca Gee		874842
Nick Hood		878331
Rachel Lyon		876311
John Powell	Treasurer	878640
Prue Scofield	Minute secretary	878559
Jenny Sippings	Secretary	865890
Angela Wheeldon		874440

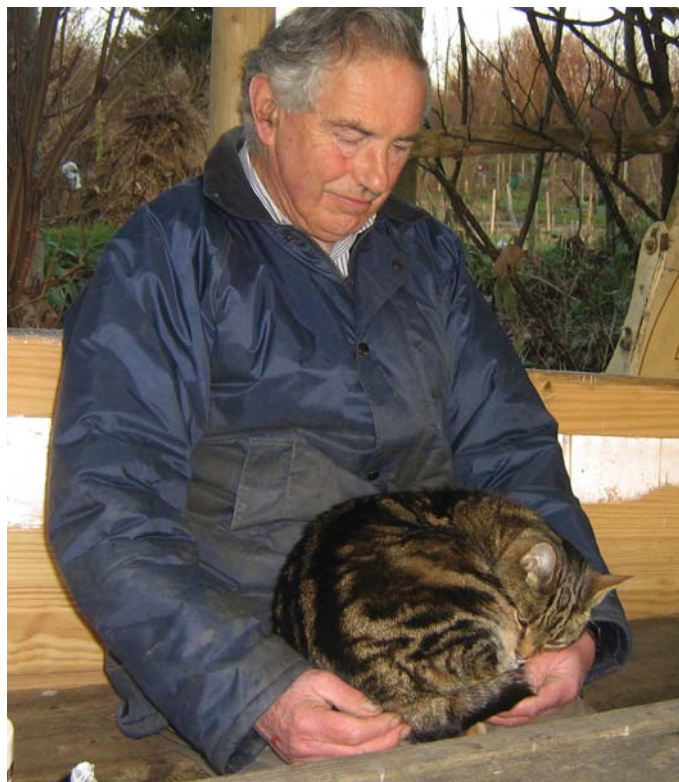
Need help with plot maintenance?

Andrew Street, a local landscape gardener, is currently available to help with digging and other plot maintenance.

Contact Andrew on 07830 505559 for rates.

For sale:

Gas barbeque. For details contact Fred Jackson on SS Old A27/A42



Ted with Stripey, the cat who is earning his keep!

BERKHAMSTED TOWN COUNCIL'S ALLOTMENT LETTING POLICY (AS @ 07/01/09)

Allocation of allotment plots

1. Tenants will not be allowed to keep their allotment plot(s) if they move out of the parish (defined as being any place up to one-mile beyond the parish boundaries).
This rule will not be applied retrospectively. Depending upon the personal circumstances of the tenant an Allotment Representative can give them up to, but no longer than, six months to vacate their plot.
2. Existing tenants who want another plot will be allowed on the allotment waiting list.
3. Allotment plots are allocated in strict date order according to the date upon which the person first applied to be placed on the list. Any person on the list who refuses the first plot that becomes available will be left on the list retaining their original application date solely at the discretion of the Allotment Representative who will consider if they have given a reasonable reason for turning down such an offer.
4. Tenants will be permitted to rent up to a maximum of forty poles at the discretion of the Allotment Representative in accordance with Town Council policy.

Tenancy agreement issues

5. A tenant who has a hose licence must pay water rent on the entire area of land held by them.
6. Sheds/greenhouses will be permitted upon application to and approval by the Site Representative. In all cases the building must comply with the approved specification i.e.
 - Tenants must provide suitable guttering and a water butt to catch rainwater falling on the structure in question,
 - No permanent foundations/foundation slabs of any kind are permitted.
 - The maximum overall size of building allowed is
 - 2.440 m (eight foot) Long
 - 1.830 m (six foot) Wide
 - 2.135 m (seven foot) High
 - On plots of five poles or less either a shed or a greenhouse will be considered, but not both and the maximum size should be reduced to:
 - 1.830 m (six foot) Long
 - 1.220 m (four foot) Wide
 - 2.135 m (seven foot) High

Division of allotment land

7. It will be at the discretion of the Allotment Site Representative how many full sized plots will be retained on their site (as opposed to being subdivided into smaller plots) subject to a reasonable number of full size plots being retained.