



SUNNYSIDE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

www.sunnysideallotments.org.uk
email: info@sunnysideallotments.org.uk

No: 1 January 2012

After suffering the setback of finding a perfect hole next to each of my previously thriving broad bean seedlings (mice presumably) I am now looking forward (and have also planted more broad beans in pots). Potatoes seem to be the theme of the year and I am tempted by the Sárpo (pronounced "Sharpo") family of potatoes which were first bred in Hungary by the Sárvári family. They are apparently highly blight resistant and include 'Sárpo Mira' and 'Sárpo Axona' both red late maincrop potatoes. Whilst these two are 'peasant survival food' (floury) another two members of the family are 'Blue Danube' with blue skin, a good roaster, and 'Kifli', a waxy potato which is said to have a wonderful flavour of new potatoes and all the blight and disease resistance of the Sárpo family. (Thanks to Alys Fowler in the Guardian)

Chris Locke

From our chairman:

The first Working Party of the year on January 8th was in Birtchnell's Copse.

The Copse was once allotment land and was the first bit to become derelict when allotments fell out of favour. It was created as a nature reserve as part of the town council run scheme to keep derelict allotments away from the hands of the developers and was named after Percy Birtchnell who was a local historian and one-time owner of the shop in the High Street which fell down so spectacularly last year.

It is looked after by a voluntary warden Andrew Calderwood and his wife Diana. The costs come out of the town Council's environment budget not the allotments' but we of the SAS always dedicate one of our winter working parties to whatever needs doing. This year there were 18 volunteers who did a good day's work, with a lunch and hot soup provided by a member; with such a big group a lot was achieved. A gap toothed section of hedge was replaced with new hawthorn plants which will be properly trained and cut to make a stout hedge suitable for nesting birds; the inside of another hedge was faced up; the grass area inside the gate where people assemble before exploring was given a clear up and the section of blackthorn coppice coppiced a couple of years ago and now regenerating was rough weeded. There is a path round the inside of the perimeter of the site, much used by dog walkers and the bramble trying to spread across it were cut back and the longer shoots from last year's growth woven back into the main area to thicken it and ensure a good crop of berries for next winter. Enjoyable, sociable and useful is a good description.

The next working Party

The next working party on the first Sunday in February will be continuing the sorting of the wood store. This lurks over at the back of B road beyond the tea hut. It is a good resource for timber for raised beds, sheds and so on.

You have to ask Ted or Angela who know where things are and make a donation. It's a lot cheaper than buying new wood and is of course good recycling. We have made a policy decision not to accept any more timber until we have the sorting finished (Unless it is something amazing.)

A dozen people all trying to sort one heap tend to trip over each other so there is always something else to be done. In this case Jenny and Clive have set themselves the task of clearing the pathway running between the ends of the A Road evens and the B Road odds which has become overgrown and disappeared altogether in sections. Help is needed here if you don't fancy the wood heap. Hibernating lizards were found here and bedded down again. I hope it does not worry them when they wake up in a different place.

The March working party needs a good idea for work on New. We don't clear paths between plots as this is the responsibility of the tenants but we welcome any suggestions. We know the coppice is due for cutting at the top. This is now providing bean and pea sticks which again is much cheaper and greener than importing canes from China. The other advantage of growing our own is that strange pests with no known predators tend to come into the country in imported materials. No doubt the wood chip and leaf heaps will need a tidy and the brambles taking over the car park need to be finished off.



Open Day

I mentioned Open Day at the AGM and everyone seemed strongly in favour

The next event should be Open Day in August. We still need a co-ordinator. We shall be dividing the work into sections. A group dealing with outside matters like advertising, sourcing plums and honey and so on; a group dealing with the sale of produce, sourcing, pricing and setting up on the day; a group dealing with the site mowing, tidying, setting up tables and gazebos; a public relations group talking to the press, and arranging and staffing greeting parties by the gates including New and putting up notices so that visitors know where things are and when they are happening; a group providing and serving food and drink; a group doing a couple of tours of the site and a group consisting of the Treasurer dealing with floats and so on. We don't normally hold a scarecrow competition every year, but some sort of competition could be held. This way we will have the organisation for a big event without anyone being asked to do too much.

Please volunteer for anything you would like to do. E-mail me at mrsfredaearl@talktalk.net. If you have already volunteered or regard yourself as part of the organisation already please send me an e-mail anyway.

Trees on plots

If you have trees on your plot it is your job to keep them down to manageable size. It costs about £400 to have a big sycamore cut down and the cost goes on THE RENT. There is a big sycamore on New which is the subject of complaints at the moment. The Town Council will not give tenants permission to do works on it unless they have insurance. Is there anyone who is qualified to do tree work?

Freda Earl

Your current Committee Members

Chairman:	Freda Earl	865661
Vice Chairman:	John Eaton	865307
Secretary:	Jenny Sippings	865890
Treasurer:	John Powell	878640
Minutes Secretary:	Lin Phillips	862882
Newsletter Editor:	Chris Locke	877326
Other members:	Simon Weightman	877607
	Annick Mulcahy	862572
	Andy Walker	07966245732
	Angela Wheeldon	874440
Associate member:	John Driver	862734

Future events 2012

Diamond Jubilee party: Tuesday 5th June

We thought this would be a nice excuse for a party! And it will replace the allotment family picnic. It will be for tenants and their families, and if you wish to invite neighbours this will be fine. The SAS will provide plates, cutlery and some basics, but it will operate on a "pooled food" basis. So the idea is for you to bring enough food for you and all your guests, which will then be shared by everyone. There will be more details in the next newsletter. If you would like to help organise the event, please get in touch with Jenny Sippings (jenny.sippings@ntlworld.com) or Angela Wheeldon (874440).

Potato Tasting event: Sunday 23rd September

Another date for your diary! As you may have seen, this year's SAS calendar features potatoes, so a potato tasting event towards the end of the growing season would complement this nicely. With such a bewildering variety of seed potatoes to choose from, we thought tenants might welcome the chance to compare the taste of different potatoes, and discuss their potato growing experiences.

So please bear this event in mind as you are considering which seed potatoes to order. Why not experiment with 1 or 2 new varieties this year? The event won't work if we all grow Charlotte, nice as they are! Some of the seed potato suppliers have good websites which give information on cooking qualities, disease resistance etc.

Water resources

The reservoirs at Marsworth are currently very low and so far we are having a dry winter, so water shortages/restrictions this summer may be a possibility. A few years ago the SAS committee compiled a **Water Conservation** leaflet which includes tips on growing in dry conditions, and judicious watering methods. This is on the society's website (http://www.sunnysideallotments.org.uk/Downloads/water_tips.pdf) and is also contained in printed form in the Welcome Pack available from Berkhamsted Town Council, which all tenants are entitled to receive.

At the moment a local hosepipe ban does not affect allotments in the town, but this could change if the situation were to become serious enough. In order to make the best use of any rain water we do have, tenants are reminded that their sheds/greenhouses should be fitted with guttering and water butts.

Angela Wheeldon

Please Note: To offset rising printing costs, an electronic version of future editions of the newsletter will be sent to all those people that supply an email address to Jenny Sippings – (jenny.sippings@ntlworld.com).

Scaffolding planks for sale

A small quantity of these will shortly be available for sale to members. They are useful for providing temporary walkways on plots to avoid compacting the soil. They are about 13 foot long, with metal ends and will cost about £11 each; they are quite heavy. Contact a committee member or Ted at the tea hut.

The loo

Occasionally the loo is found to have been left unlocked. Please remind friends or children who use it to make sure the padlock is firmly closed and the numbers rotated. At the moment the water is turned off so users will have to flush with a watering can or fill the cistern.

Recycled materials available for use

Working parties have recently been sorting and rationalising our supply of wood and other materials. As a result there is a quantity of **discarded wood** which would be **suitable for open fires or wood burners** at the top end of B9. Some of it will need cutting up. Please help yourselves – we would rather it were used than put into landfill.

Items from this central store of recycled materials is available to all tenants in return for a donation to SAS funds. You need to see Ted Dyer, (or any member of the committee). Further details are in the SAS Handbook in the Welcome Pack available on our web site or from the Town Council. But if you need something specific for your plot, come and ask us if it is available before you go and buy it.

A delicious seasonal recipe from Lin Phillips:

Brussels sprouts and apple crunchy salad

150g fresh Brussels sprouts, trimmed of outer leaves
one crisp eating apple
lemon juice and olive oil
50g hazelnuts, pecans, almonds, or
sunflower or pumpkin seeds
(optional)
a few leaves thyme or basil
salt and pepper



If using nuts or seeds, toast them under the grill (watch out or they will burn!)

Slice the sprouts from top to root thinly, place in a bowl with a good squeeze of lemon juice, plus the thyme or basil leaves.

Quarter and core the apple (leave the skin on) and slice into the sprouts. Add the olive oil and salt and pepper, and toss together.

Serve straightaway, scattered with the nuts or seeds.

Working parties

Our first working party in January was very successful, with 18 people helping. Work took place in Birtchnells Copse, organised by Diana and Andrew Calderwood. Other tasks were undertaken on Old, including clearance of paths.

Sunday 5th February

This working party will concentrate on sorting the woodheap, coppicing of hazel on SSN, continuing the pathway between A and B roads, and painting the summerhouse window frames.

Sunday 4th March

This working party will include the reinstatement of paths.

All are welcome and a light lunch is provided.



Help with digging

In response to my enquiry about occasional supervised help with heavy work on plots I received the following from Amanda Johns:

I am a new member to the SAS and have a plot on Sunny-side Old - I was reading the newsletter last night and saw the note about teenagers helping out with digging etc for pocket money. My nephew is 16 and a keen outdoor person and I'm sure would be interested. Amanda can be contacted at amandajohnson0376@yahoo.co.uk

If you are struggling with the maintenance of your plot or you can see that one of your neighbours is struggling it would be a good idea to contact Freda, Angela or Jenny (via the tea hut); this could avoid the possibility of your receiving a warning letter.

Chris Locke

Christmas drinks

The Christmas drinks were very enjoyable. Not as cold as the previous year when there was snow on the ground. Many thanks to David Lassman for preparing the mulled wine.



Tenancy changes

Welcome to:

Old

C7B

Tom Troughton

A37B

Chris & Jonathan Randall

New

67

Ben Morton

51A

Neil & Nicola Thompson

Goodbye to:

Old

C1

Barbie Warren

B34B & C35B

Karin Huber

B32B

Anna Penning-Rowsell

New

42

Cliff Canavan-King

10

Richard Bassett

Bean poles

Sycamore bean poles are now available for tenants inside Birtchnells Copse gate above SSN.

Hazel pea sticks & bean poles will be available after the next working party on February 5th, inside the top gate of SSN.

Finally we would like to wish anyone suffering from ill-health or awaiting an operation a speedy recovery.

Allotment society subscriptions for 2011/2012 are now overdue. If you're not sure whether you've paid yet you can check with John Powell on 01442 878640. If you have not paid these should be given to John Powell or left at the tea hut. Membership of Sunnyside Allotment Society is not compulsory but it does give tenants access to National Allotment Association information and to the seed purchasing scheme; this scheme also benefits our Society as we receive a percentage of order payments. Any money belonging to the Society is used for improvements and maintenance which would not be paid for by the council. In the past for example we have hired diggers to improve roadways on the site.

Sunnyside Allotment Society Subs

Subs for 2011/2012 (£3.00) can be sent with this slip to John Powell (20 Castle Hill Avenue) or left at the tea hut on B15. (Cheques payable to Sunnyside Allotment Society please).

Name: _____

Address: _____

Plot Number: _____ Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Amount enclosed: _____ cash/cheque (please circle)