



SUNNYSIDE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

www.sunnysideallotments.org.uk
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2/2008

So homegrown vegetables are the fashion of the moment! We are evidently deserting flowers and turning to vegetables. Rising food prices make gardening a popular and profitable pastime. Many towns have waiting lists for allotments to add to the 330,000 allotment holders already in the UK. Sales of seeds are rising, the national lottery is making more and more money available to schools and communities, to promote gardening. Cookery programmes with popular chefs, encourage us to enjoy the flavour and freshness of home grown vegetables and the appetite for organic produce increases. I have even seen an entry for allotments in a book that's about all things wonderful in life!

So think good thoughts as you enjoy the sun and fresh air and exercise, forgive the mice and the rabbits (some creature has just eaten all my broad bean shoots!) and remember that Cicero said "if you have a garden and a library you have everything you need in life."

With this increased demand, and we already have a waiting list, it seems sensible to offer more half and quarter plots. This is happening at Sunnyside and Freda Earl, our Chairman of S.A.S., gives us some good advice in this issue on how to make the most of small gardens.

It is impossible, in this country to go three months without commenting on the weather. Again it has been completely topsy turvy. The working party enjoyed warm spring sunshine at the beginning of March but we were surprised by several centimetres of snow at the beginning of April. We have some lovely photographs which show Sunnyside in these different moods and we are very grateful to John Driver for his continuing photographic diary.

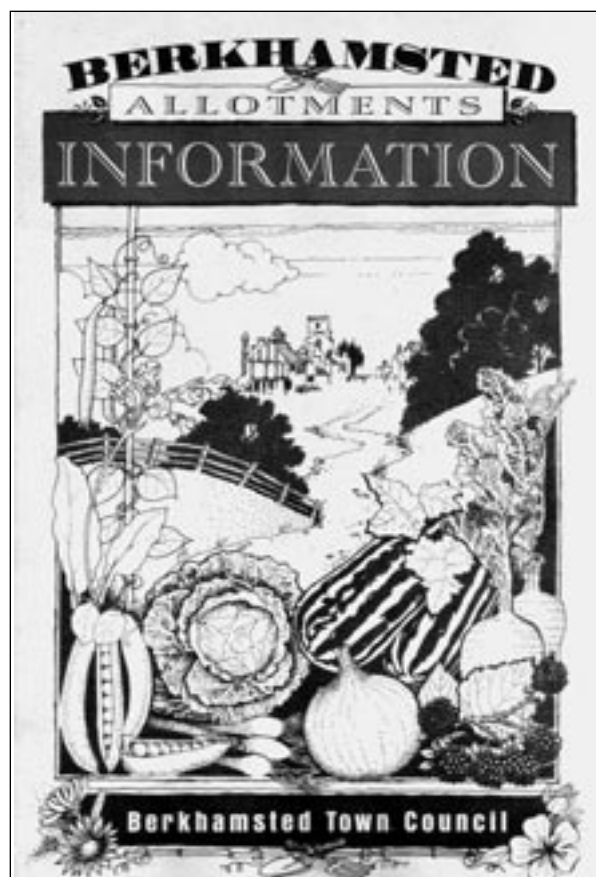
Berkhamsted Allotments Information Pack and Website Information.

This pack is now available. All new members are given a copy when they sign on and old members can obtain them from the Council Office. They are well worth the climb up two flights of stairs! They are full of excellent information and advice and are presented in a most attractive cover designed by Dennis Hallam from Butts Meadow site. (Shown on the right).

It is also well worth consulting our website where you will find interesting articles on different aspects of gardening. Fiona Duck's description of her experience with developing deep bed plots over the last ten years would be very helpful for new tenants who are thinking of going in that direction.

Rats, Rats!

The fight against these vermin is ongoing. There was considerable concern raised at the AGM in November and as a result of this, two electrical traps are to be bought, one for each site. Our secretary, Jenny Sippings has posted a lot of information and advice on our website www.sunnysideallotments.org.uk which is well worth looking at. Several tenants are taking action by netting several plots together and small hole netting is advised in the hope of keeping the rats out.



Tidy gardens

The town council stress that tenants must keep tidy gardens otherwise they run the risk of having to forfeit their plots. We all have our own plans and no-one want to see every garden looking exactly the same.

Freda Earl has this advice :-

"We are all individualist on Sunnyside, that's what makes it such a good site. With the summer coming we would like to emphasise that while it is fine to peer at your neighbour's plot and think, "I wouldn't do it that way, it is far too tidy," letting weed seeds, pesticide spray and bonfire smoke cross your boundary is not good neighbourly behaviour. Dandelions in particular can go from a small green plant to a plague of blowing seeds in not much more than the time it takes you to have a cup of tea.! Enjoy your summer."

Just to remind you, regular inspections are made to see that tenants are trying to comply with this advice.

Reinstatement of grass roadways.

We are very grateful and would like to say thank you to all those of you who have been helping to reinstate the roadways with stones, soil and turf, after the laying of the new water pipes in November. They are beginning to look better but it is taking longer than we expected and unfortunately, the contractors will be unable to cut the grass until the stones have been covered because of potential damage to their machinery.

So everyone, please continue with the good work. Excess stones should be raked off and loose ones should be pressed into any sunken areas.

Top soil needs to be put over the stones and levelled. Any clumps of grass or turfs which you dig up could help to cover the stones. Also it is a good time to sow grass seed, which is available from the Tea Hut on B15.

The soil is soft and damp at present, so help is urgently needed NOW. The sooner the roads are adequately reinstated, the sooner the contractors will be able to resume cutting the grass for us.

Future events

Family barbeque.

Saturday 28th June.

We are planning to hold our usual family barbeque at the end of June. Patrick Stileman has kindly offered to organise it again. Children are most welcome and it will start at the early time of 4pm. We hope it will be well supported and it will be a happy occasion for new and old tenants to meet. Bring your own food and wine and enjoy cooking on Patrick's great barbeque.

Open Day

Sunday 17th August

This will be held again to coincide with National Allotments week. We feel it is well worth while to open our allotments to the public and we know they especially appreciate the sale of any produce.

There will not be any competitions or stalls this year, we aim to keep it as simple as possible, but the appearance of a few scarecrows might well add to the attraction of the event!



Above: The 1st March working party made a good start on repairs to the roadways.

Tenancy Changes

Goodbye to:

Mr Robert Bennie	B14A
Mr Neil Laidler	N7
Mr Jim & Mrs Julia Renton	B18B, C17

Mr John Whittington	N43
Peter Phizackerley	A28
Pippa Ramsden	B34

Welcome to:

Kathleen Lazar	N7A
Betty Patterson	N70
Claire Mongan	N55B
Nick Hood	N7B
Jon Cronin	A30A
Lucy Ashley	B39B
Nanette Street	B21A
Brian Ellis	N65
Carla Ryan	A24B
Anne Bland	A28
Michelle Cripps	N43
Deborah Kibble	A31A
Barry Pattenden	N46
John Goffey	B18B
Meg & David Robinson	C17
Philippa Jones	B21C
Matt Kennedy	N33B

Bird boxes

John Driver is in charge of our bird boxes in Birchnells Copse. He reports that there are thirteen this year, two more than last year and some are in changed positions. So far, there is sign of nest building in most of the boxes but there are no eggs there yet. He plans to make another inspection towards the end of April and we hope there will be more activity to report then.

This is part of Sunnyside's efforts to encourage wild life – of the right sort which plays an important part in the cycle of productive gardening.

The challenge of smaller plots. Ten poles or less.

Why ten poles? When allotments were set up it was reckoned that ten poles of reasonable land would enable a man to grow all the vegetables he needed to keep his family, except for potatoes. Things have changed, not many allotment holders now expect to grow all their root vegetables to be eaten with dried peas and hardy brassicas to keep the family healthily fed until the summer crops are ready. There is a kale called "hungry gap" and its name is not a joke.

Allotments were despised and sold off for housing in the last century. Now people want to grow their own again and we have a waiting list at Sunnyside. John Driver and I have been looking at our vacant plots and we have been dividing them into smaller plots. If you were to apply now you would be offered a five pole plot rather than a ten. If, as many people do, you wanted a two and a half pole plot we would be delighted because then more people could enjoy the pleasure of eating their own produce.

It is a challenge to grow as much on five poles as you can on ten. One answer is to feed the soil well. Keep an ongoing compost heap or, we have suppliers of good quality farmyard manure, phone numbers are on the tea hut wall. One load shared with your neighbour will keep two five pole plots in good heart and repay you with more tender salads, more productive runner beans and fatter leeks.

A lot of plot holders use the raised bed system. This looks a waste of space but as long as the path ways are not too wide and the soil well is manured, the plants can be planted more closely in the deep fertile soil and the roots will be able to go under the mulched paths for water in the hot summer. You end up with a bigger yield and you only have to dig and manure the beds not the whole plot.

If you have plenty of space you may end up growing more than you need. If it gives you great joy to see a row of fifty splendid winter cabbages although you know you will only eat half of, them why not trade or barter with other tenants for the things they really like growing.

However you do it, enjoy your allotment whether you are old or newer tenants.

Freda Earl

Committee members.

Our committee members are listed below. We urgently need another member to represent the opinions of Sunnyside New. It is not an onerous task, meetings are held every two months on a Wednesday evening in the Civic Centre. If you feel that you could help out in this way, please get in touch with Freda Earl or John Driver.

Your current Committee Members

Chairman :

Freda Earl 865661

Vice Chairman:

John Driver 862734

Secretary :

Jenny Sippings 865890

Treasurer :

John Powell 878640

Fiona Duck 874334

Angela Wheeldon 874440

Brenda Baynes 865853

Ted Dyer 872684

Anna Dolan 870918

Prue Schofield 878559

John Eaton 865307

Newsletter articles

We are always on the lookout for interesting articles for the newsletter.

If you would like to contribute please contact Brenda Baynes our Editor on 01442 865853 or email her at brenda.baynes@btinternet.com.



Above: Karin & Roy get working on B34b



Above & below: Who would have thought these lovely pictures could have been taken on April 6th!



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).

Subs for 2007/2008 (£2.50) are now due and can be sent with this slip to John Powell (20 Castle Hill Avenue) or put into the post box on the tea hut on B15. (Cheques payable to SAS please).

Name:

Address:

Plot Number: Telephone:

Email:

Amount enclosed: cash/cheque (please circle)