



Newsletter

May 2009

It's all go again! With any luck, some of the early green shoots are well on their way to maturity. Has your judgement been right this year? Too eager to get started in this lovely spring sunshine, and the gardener's enemy, late frost, may well have nipped and damaged the tender growth. May is one of the most beautiful months in the gardener's calendar, a time of intense activity and pleasure in seeing results in fast and succulent growth. It brings a great urge to get going. Not only with planting, but also with harvesting for those of us who have already thought ahead with asparagus, broad beans, rhubarb, spring cabbage and even the first crop of early peas. Sunnyside can look at its best at this time of year with early blossom and fresh green growth. A splendid place to take your children, to stir their interest and encourage them to start helping you and watch the course of nature throughout the year. But not everything in the garden is always lovely. Unexplained and disappointing results are always depressing. With this in mind, this newsletter gives you some help and information from our Chairman, Freda Earl. Worth reading and following!

Let's hope that the forecasters are right, that the summer ahead is good not only for barbeques but also growing fruit and vegetables.

FREDA'S TIPS

I learned to garden as a child when I was given a small patch of ground and handed packets of clarkia, cornflowers and and gypsophyla and told to grow them! .I talked to people who had never grown any plants in the ground. Couldn't their parents give them advice? No, they had never gardened either. It came as a nasty shock to realise that not just one, but two, generations had missed out on one of life's greatest pleasures. It also made me realise why so many people have paved gardens with pots. They know how to grow house plants and they use this skill in the garden. But they want to move on and grow their own food but who will give them advice?

It has been suggested that skilled gardeners (that's us) should hold sessions, teaching basic things. Are there any readers who would be interested in taking part?

How to find out what to do if you are a new gardener.

1. There is good advice to be had from other allotment holders. Look for someone whose system appeals to you and follow their advice.
2. Seed packets tell you what you have to do to persuade their contents to grow. But like ready cooked meals, it pays to read before you buy! The seedsman's aim is to tempt you NOW!

3. If you have time and you like a challenge it is fine to "sow seeds at a depth of 2mm, cover with vermiculite, wrap in polythene and put in fridge for ten days, take out and put at room temperature for 14 days then put back in fridge for another month ...and so on!". You may end up with some gorgeous flowers but this is not for me. If like most of us you spend the gardening season about a couple of weeks behind trying desperately to catch up these are not the seeds for you either.

4. The seeds you want should say "easy to grow". (avoid "choice", it is garden-speak for lacks the will to live). They should say "disease resistant" and "flavour excellent" otherwise you might as well buy shop vegetables. "Vigorous" and "heavy cropper" are all good things to have but you might well wonder why you need resistance to Patagonian winter blight!

5. Seed packets often tell you when to plant. Sometimes in words and sometimes in nice little coloured charts. This looks fool-proof for the new gardener but read the note at the bottom. "if you are in a cold area, wait until the soil warms up"

6. Are we in a cold area? On some maps you will see a nasty blue tongue sneaking down from the north east along the line of the Chilterns linking us with the lower slopes of the Pennines. We are actually in an area with late frosts in the spring and early frosts in the autumn. The Chiltern Hills are quite high up and we are a long way from the coast. Don't take risks. Either grow under cover or wait a little longer

7. The weather always waits until your back is turned. A cold February this year has surprised us with the damage it has done. Plants growing happily for years, like Hebes, have only just survived. Autumn frosts are not much trouble but late spring frosts are another matter. We have not had a killing frost in June for some years but it is all too easy to stand at the grave of lovely

runner beans all blackened by the frost. Tender plants put out before the frost date must be covered.

I hope these thoughts and tips will help some of you.

Enjoying Sunnyside on a winter evening



URGENT REMINDER FROM THE TREASURER

We have to register all members who have paid their Annual subscription with NSALG to enable them to benefit from our membership the main one of which is the discounted seed scheme. Members who have not yet paid and who wish to be included should do so no later than mid May. The subscription of £2.50 (£2 of which is paid to NSALG) should be sent to John Powell either by placing it in his box in the Tea Hut or by post to him at 20 Castle Hill Avenue HP41HJ.

NATIONAL SOCIETY of ALLOTMENT & LEISURE GARDENERS LTD (NSALG).

The Society is a member of the above with whom ALL SUB PAYING members are registered. They offer a wide range of benefits, including:

- Substantially discounted seed scheme.
- Quarterly magazine (copy in tea hut or online)
- Specialist allotment insurance scheme
- General advice including advice on legal matters

- Information and advice through their website - www.nsalg.org.uk

Their rules state that we have to provide a current list of officers and members names and addresses.

We pay £2. for each registered member and beside the above benefits the organisation also depends on the money to enable them to fight to protect, preserve and promote allotments. (We have been grateful for their assistance in the past).

INSURANCE

Whilst the Society has Public Liability Insurance this is specifically to provide cover for events at which non allotment holders are present, anyone wishing to insure buildings, tools or equipment must make their own arrangements.

Blue Tit Boxes

John Driver has been watching the blue tit-boxes again this year. He makes regular visits to look for eggs and hopefully, baby birds. Not all are in use but he reports that there has been activity in about 50per cent, including a robin who has made herself at home.

Grass mowing

Its grass mowing time again and all tenants are again asked to make sure that the paths round their plots are kept mown and tidy. We especially request that those of us who find this too hard a task should make an arrangement with some fitter person to see that it is done! Or ask a member of the committee for help.

Rabbits, rats and other pests

Network Rail has ratted on its promise to provide fencing along the railway on Sunnyside New. We are still hopeful and Ted Dyer is negotiating with the person who made the original promise so please keep the area along the railway clear for the digger which will be used if Ted is successful.

Spring has brought baby rabbits and Stripey the cat has been bringing his half eaten

breakfast to the tea hut. Just to prove that he has caught them himself he has a fine load of rabbit fleas which love to drop and transfer to the next best thing.

He also has been catching rats for us as well as mice.

Stripey enjoying a rest after his labours



Manure Suppliers

Below is a list of manure suppliers which we hope you will find helpful.

St. John's Farm, Ashley Green

Ted Lake at Cholesbury 01494 758494

Phil@Dunsley Farm Tring (opposite Tesco's)

Nigel Durrant Potten End 01442 403351
nigeldurrant@yahoo.co.uk

You will find these details in the Tea Hut.

Future Events for your Diary

Saturday, 27th June from 4pm onwards...
Sunnyside Annual Barbeque. Everyone is invited especially children. Please bring your own food to cook.

Sunday, 16th August Sunnyside Allotments Open Day. Our allotments will be on show to the public and refreshments will be served. This is a very special event in the gardening year and we hope it will be very well supported.

Annual Town Meeting

Our Chairman Freda Earl attended this meeting and she made sure that the Sunnyside tenants, who do the lion's share of the work of running the allotments, received a few words of appreciation. I am sure the rest of us in the Society would like to add our thanks.

Sunnyside Church Fete

Sunnyside Church is holding a fete in George Street on Saturday, 30th May, to celebrate its centenary year. If you are able to help or contribute, please contact Angela Wheeldon.

New tenants

Ms Fay Johnstone	N62B
Martin & Maya Moore	N12
Ms Anna Penning-Powell	B32B
Mr. Spencer Wilson	C5B
Ms Tracey Warr	C7A
Ms Kate Yeo	C7B
Ms Jacqueline Day	N68
Ms Julia Rogers	A28
Ms Cathy Sykes	A1B

Tenants who have left

Mr John Driver	B32B
Mr Philip Dobson	C7
Ms Anne Bland	A28
John Savage	A31B
Caroline Reid	C5A

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



Thanks to Strongs for printing this Newsletter.