

SUNNYSIDE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

4/2001

Harvesting of crops and produce has come and gone, but we are still looking at green trees, finding late growths and added extras to an already prolific and prolonged season. We have experienced sunshine and rain in abundance, but nature never lets us have too easy a time of it! This year's battles have been with creepy crawlies, caterpillars and slugs. Cabbages are well formed but very lacy patterned and young green shoots of beans and courgettes have disappeared before our eyes!

Daniel Bartlett, a welcome visitor from Australia and now a current Sunnyside Allotment holder has written an interesting comparison of gardening in the UK and Australia. Reading his appreciative thoughts makes us realise how lucky we are with this fertile land, relatively free from nature's real nasties. No wonder we enjoy our allotments so – a place where we can cultivate our individual interests, without too much hard labour. I have read that the local well known author, Richard Mabey sees 'Greek' allotments on the hillside above Berkhamsted. Perhaps he has sat outside the tea hut on a gloriously warm September day!

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The society's AGM will take place on **Saturday 24th November 2001**, commencing at 10.30am in the Sunnyside Rural Trust Training Centre, Sunnyside Old, Ivy House Lane.

We are grateful to the Trust for allowing us to use their facilities and your committee hope that our meeting will be well supported. Please make the effort to come along to the meeting and make your views known to the Committee, particularly if you feel that the Society is not being run as you would like.

The agenda for the meeting is included with the Newsletter and it would be appreciated if you bring it along to the meeting.

Your present committee are prepared to continue in office for another year if it is your wish, but this does not preclude anyone else standing for office. Nominations for any position should be given to Jenny Sippings, our Secretary at 82, George Street (tel: 865890).

It is expected that copies of the audited accounts of the Society will be available at the meeting and the Treasurer will be available to answer any questions which you may have.

SOCIETY SUBSCRIPTIONS

The £2.00 annual subscription to the Society will be due at the AGM

for the year 2001/2 and the treasurer will be pleased to receive your subs at the meeting.

At the present time about 50% of tenants at Sunnyside contribute to the running of the Society and are able to participate in the seeds scheme through the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners. We have negotiated a discount for Society members wishing to hire tools or equipment from Berkhamsted tool Hire and a number of Tenants have used this facility. Any comments or problems which anyone may have with these schemes can be passed on to your Committee.

ALLOTMENT RENTS

A reminder that Allotment Rents are now due and should be paid as soon as possible, as failure to do so results in unnecessary work for the Town Clerk in chasing folk who do not pay promptly.

Non payment can, of course, result in tenancies being terminated with the Allotments Management Team having to determine the outcome of appeals. Don't be caught out – pay up promptly. If you have not had your invoice it is possible that the Council do not have your current address. If you have a problem please contact the Town Council on 228945 and I am sure they will be pleased to hear from you.

ALLOTMENTS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Council's Finance and Policy Committee has decided to reform the Allotments Management Committee. It will now be known as the Allotments Management Team and will consist of an increased number of Councillors, both Liberal Democrats and Conservative. There will be a representative from each site together with three other non-specific site members, nominated by the Council, from tenants.

The team will be chaired by the chairman of the Council's Environment Committee, currently Betty Patterson, who has plots on all three sites.

This proposal was passed at the meeting on the 15th October. Our site representative is Peter Chapman and Ted Dyer and Angela Wheeldon are nominated members.

The rent levels remain unchanged and no allotments have been taken for separate management by the Council.

WELLIES IN NEED OF A HOME!

Ladies Green Wellies – Size 8, available from the Tea Hut (815) donation to SAS funds.

ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

by Daniel Bartlett

Just to set the record straight, Australia doesn't actually have any allotments, our first was in Sutton, Surrey near our old flat – Kylie and I have spent quite some time gardening in Australia but the country has never been a need for allotments, probably because until quite recently the standard house came with a quarter acre block of land. Now that high density housing is becoming more popular (mostly with building companies) that may change.

The biggest difference I first noticed when we took an allotment was that Britain has soil. I know it sounds strange but you have this incredibly deep, rich, black soil. I spent a large part of my childhood digging leaf mulch into the lifeless red dirt of our back garden so just having it as standard seems luxurious! This effort eventually paid off with our garden being about a foot and a half higher than our neighbours – but it took some digging. Kylie's family took the other route which involves arranging for a number of dumptrucks to bring topsoil in from somewhere else. It is worth noting that most of Australia's farmland only has two inches of topsoil, and that's not counting the 70% of the country which is desert.

The next thing one notices gardening in Britain is that when you plant something, by some miracle, it grows! It doesn't work like that in Australia. Pity those poor convicts from the slums of pre-Victorian London who were dumped in the god-forsaken, sandy wilderness that is now Sydney and trying to plant potatoes and lettuce – it's amazing they survived at all!

Of course, this is largely due to Britain's milder climate, rich soil and beneficial rain. Typical Australian gardening involves half of your plants dying with the soil-cracking



sun beating down constantly on them (one sunny afternoon) and those that survive have a pretty decent chance of being wiped out in a flash flood. I am continually amazed in Britain that the sun isn't really hot or at least doesn't blaze down, the rain isn't really wet although you do get points for consistency and it's the wrong sort of snow anyway (I can say that as I work/ed for Railtrack).

Naturally any commentary on Australia needs to mention venomous beasts. Heavy boots, tough trousers (preferably Kevlar) and thick gloves are needed for almost any garden activity. I've seen a snake in the garden on two occasions but don't be alarmed as they're shy and very rare in the cities. The most common hazard is spiders which can be quite aggressive if they're sitting comfortably in a warm pair of gloves and you wake them up by shoving your hand in. Bear in mind that these range from the gentle insect catchers an Englishman may be used to, through the "quite venomous but unlikely to kill you unless you are young, sick, elderly or unlucky" of the most common household spider the Redback (which is famous for having the most painful bite in the world) all the way up to "pray the ambulance doesn't hit heavy traffic" of the female Funnelweb which is quite wide-

spread in the coastal NSW (i.e. Sydney) area.

But don't be too alarmed, both of us managed to survive the hazards of Australian gardening and it really adds to the whole British experience to marvel at the prolificness that is Sunny Side (Old) and the tenacity in the face of nature's abundance (I'm writing mostly about nettles, bindweed, thistles and blackberries now) that our happy, friendly fellow allotment holders display while they are hard at work between cups of tea.

HAZEL COPPICE

On Saturday 17th November it is planned to carry out maintenance on the Coppice and this will include replanting a few trees to replace those which have failed to stay alive.

Please turn up and help from 10.00am. Other work needing to be done involves tidying up around the base of the trees and freshening up the woodchip mulch round each tree.

ALLOTMENT CLEARANCE DAYS

Further clearance days will be held this winter and the first of these will be on Saturday 17th November after the Hazel Coppice work. Subsequently there will be further Clearance Days as follows:-



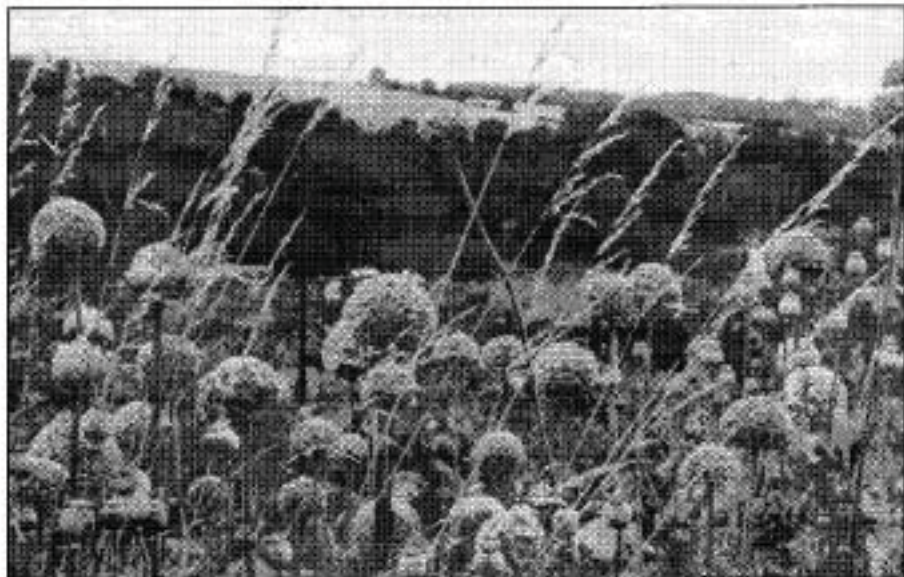
Saturday 19th January 2002
Saturday 16th February 2002
Saturday 16th March 2002

Please make a note of these dates in your next years diary. Posters will be put up on all site notice boards prior to each clearance Day to advise tenants where the working party can be found. Initially we shall be seeking to consolidate the work carried out last winter and tidy up plots cleared which remain untenanted, after which, depending on resources available, efforts will be made to clear further plots on both old and New sites. Many hands really do speed the work and even if you can only spare us a few hours your presence will be most welcome. we look forward to seeing you.

UNWANTED GLASS, METAL & PLASTIC

Over the past few years we have been able to improve our sites at Sunnyside by getting rid of unwanted clutter. This winter further collections will be arranged from the following locations:-

- Adjacent to the Societies Car



The fine results of a productive growing season!

Park on sunnyside Old near Grantham Mews (Netherfield)

- Adjacent to the Church car Park on Sunnyside Old
- Adjacent to the bottom gateway on Sunnyside New

All three locations will have a peg to indicate where the rubbish should be left, and as before no plant waste should be left on the dumps,

FARMYARD MANURE

Supplies of manure can be obtained from Leigh Newman (Tel 864366 or mobile 07860 301043) at the rate of £20.00 approx. per trailer load. If you are wishing to have a load and have somewhere for it to be dumped please contact Leigh direct to discuss your requirements

During the day use the mobile number as he is an agricultural contactor and is out and about.

COMMUNITY FAIR

On saturday 13th October, the Lions Club sponsored the first Community Fair in the Town Hall,

which gave local organisations the opportunity to publicise their activities and attract new members.

Sunnyside Allotment Society was one of the participating groups and we put on a photographic display showing some of our activities, together with a display of autumn produce. The stand was manned by Sunnyside volunteers who talked to visitors about the pleasures of allotment gardening. Several gardeners from the other allotment sites in the town were interested in our display.

We were pleased to be asked to participate in such an event, as it helps to raise the profile of allotment gardening in the town.

FINAL THOUGHT

A quote from Germaine Greer – "Heaven is like Sissinghurst, with turnips"!

SUNNYSIDE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY

AGENDA

AGENDA FOR THE FIFTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING TO BE HELD ON
SATURDAY 24TH NOVEMBER, 2000 AT THE SUNNYSIDE RURAL TRUST,
IVY HOUSE LANE, BERKHAMSTED AT 10.30 A.M.

- 1 Apologies for absence
- 2 Approve the minutes of the last AGM
- 3 Chairman's report
- 4 Consider and approve the Society's accounts
- 5 Hazel coppice
- 6 Clearance of gardens
- 7 Allotments' representative on Town Council's Allotments Committee
- 8 Hire Shop discount scheme
- 9 Open Day and barbecue
- 10 To receive any nominations for officers/committee members
- 11 Election of officers and committee:
 - Chairman
 - Vice Chairman
 - Treasurer
 - Secretary
 - Committee members
- 12 Rule amendment re: Committee meetings
- 13 Any other business