

# SUNNYSIDE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

4/2003

The tone of this Autumn newsletter reflects the fact that these past many weeks since June have been, according to radio reports, the second driest since records began. The continual sunshine has brought its gardening problems, as you will read below. Daniel Bartlett reports on the success and setbacks he and Kylie have had with their companion planting over the summer, Fiona Duck writes enthusiastically about their deep bed planting and Angela Wheeldon gives details of our first Open Produce Day. The photographs, taken by Jeanne Woodcraft and Simon Heywood, show how, while tending your allotment you can entertain children and study wildlife!

## **Companion Planting –End of season report.**

by Daniel & Kylie Bartlett

It seems like only yesterday that we embarked on another spring's planting, full of grand ideas on companion planting and the usual detailed plan of what to plant in which beds. Then – the greenhouse, full of companion seedlings, fell over; slugs attacked in force our marigolds and tagetes; a cold snap did its worst and our beautiful cherry tree (thank you again Angela and Chris) lost its blossoms. Still we persevered with the survivors, bought some marigolds and ended up with a number of projects, including; marigolds amongst the tomatoes at home, onions amongst the lettuce (few lettuce, many onions), peas, corn and pumpkin.

Of course we had a bumper crop of everything which didn't demand constant watering so the tomatoes towered over the marigolds, the lettuce was prolific (although I think the slugs were using them to shelter from the sun), our onions cropped magnificently, the corn went well (humans 11, badgers 4), but the peas gave up and the pumpkins grown in that bed were disappointing.

Now we are feeding the ground with copious quantities of well-rotted manure, leaf and kitchen compost and will be seeding our root crop bed with green manure. Next years projects include catnip to keep flea beetle away from our radishes, more flowers with everything and slug repellent copper rings. We may even consider a sturdier greenhouse– happy gardening!

## **Autumn Open Day**

A second open day was held this year as an experiment. The June event is lovely but visitors are unable to appreciate fully the abundance and variety of crops we produce. It was felt that an autumn open day might demonstrate that abundance better. Normally of course the harvest would still have been in full swing at the end of September, but the unusually hot and dry summer meant most crops had already finished and there was less to see! But there was still a creditable amount of produce for sale and preserves and jams went well. We had a good number of visitors (including six town councillors)

enjoying our hospitality and appreciating the things we enjoy about allotment gardening at sunnyside. Patrick's two guided tours of Birtchnell's Copse proved popular.

Our thanks to him and all those who provided cakes and produce. We added £150.00 to SAS funds. The committee would be interested in your views on the timing of future open day or days.

## **AGM Saturday 29th November – 10.30am**

The AGM will take place on Saturday 29th November in the Rural Trust Training Centre on Sunnyside Old at 10.30am. The agenda is enclosed with this newsletter.

Please come along to the meeting and support your Society. Copies of the last AGM minutes and our audited accounts will be available on the day. With the exception of John Savage all your committee are prepared to continue but if you wish to put yourself forward for election please advise Jenny Sippings (865890).

## **Community in Action exhibition**

This annual event, organised by the local Lions Club, acts as a showcase for local clubs and societies. The SAS had a stand for the 3rd year, promoting our sites and allotments in general.

There was a lot of interest, with several people referring to Monty Don's recent TV programme on allotments. We have let more gardens as a direct result of face to face contact at this event.

## **Volunteers required – tree planting**

As many of you may have seen, the area for the Sunnyside Rural Trust orchard on SSN has been cleared, ploughed and levelled. It has been covered with Myplex to keep weed growth down and to help the young trees get established.

The first tree planting will take place this autumn and anyone who could spare a couple of hours to help will be welcome. The dates are:

Wednesday November 26th 10-3.30pm and

Wednesday December 10th 10-3.30pm.

Please bring a spade and gloves.



### **Communications**

We now have a letter box on site in case you wish to contact any of the committee. It is attached to the shed on B17. There is also a covered notice board on the back of the tea shed on B15 where notices of future events are displayed.

### **Allotment Clearance Days**

We are intending to clear and cover more gardens this winter to make them more attractive to new tenants. Its a question of the more the merrier. A snack lunch is provided, so why not come along and help?

**Saturday 6th December**

**Saturday 10th January**

**saturday 7th February**

**Saturday 6th March**

We meet at 10am. The meeting point is posted on the site notice boards.

### **Sunnyside Church Car Park**

The church has received full planning permission and we understand that the project will be phased with the roadway area being done first.

Fortunately the position of the soakaway has been changed and will now be constructed under the car park rather than by excavating 'B' road at the car park end.

When the car park is dealt with it is intended to mark the parking spaces with setts and to cover the area with bitumen binder and pea

shingle. This is likely to give a more urban appearance which in our view is a retrograde step.

### **Sunnyside Rural Trust Sheds**

The sites on both Sunnyside Old and New have now been levelled and will be covered with paving slabs onto which the sheds will be erected. As yet the tool store has still to be acquired but when this is obtained it will be sited next to the shed on 'C' road on Sunnyside Old.

### **Balfour Beatty Works**

Because of an unfortunate accident to one of our tenants, the double gates have been changed to one large five metre gate and a wicket gate for pedestrians.

The situation is being carefully monitored but we must be doubly careful ourselves. It is of course the intention to restore the site to wooden main and wicket gates with the hawthorn hedge being replanted, at the end of the railway works.

### **Toilet Facilities**

The Town Council has been provided with a scale drawing of the proposed block but it wishes to obtain further costings to ensure the expenditure is within budget. It is hoped the planning application will be processed soon.

### **Bonfires**

We have all received the leaflet from the Council regarding Bonfires, so please be considerate when thinking about having a fire. Yet another complaint has been received, this time from a lady who hires Sunnyside Church Hall.

### **Site Representation**

Since the last AGM Ted Dyer has covered this position on a temporary basis but wishes to stand down at the next AGM. It is important that the position is covered and if there is any tenant who would be willing to take on this task they should contact our secretary, Jenny Sippings (865890). Ted will be happy to explain what is involved in the job.

### **Society Treasurer**

John Savage, who has served as the Society's Treasurer since its inception, with dedication, wishes to stand down as treasurer and a committee member. We are all grateful for the successful work done by John in looking after our finances and we thank him for all his efforts on our behalf.

There is therefore a vacancy on our management team and if anyone is interested in becoming our treasurer please let Jenny Sippings know. John will happily meet with anyone who is interested, to explain what is involved



*From left:*

**Sebastian having fun and helping Jeanne & Simon – every little helps!**

**Beautifully marked frog relaxing in the strawberry patch on B4.**

**The deep bed system on B43**

### **Allotment rents**

A possible increase in allotment rents will be discussed at an additional meeting of the Allotments Management Team in December.

Rents have been maintained at £1.00 per pole for several years and it is now suggested that they should be increased to £25.00 for 10 pole plots and £12.50 for a 5 pole plot. It is proposed that the additional revenue should be used by the Council for improvement projects. WHAT DO YOU THINK? Your Committee and Site Representative need to know, before the end of November.

### **Our Deep Bed System**

by Fiona Duck

When we took on our allotment ten years ago, we had very little idea of how to tackle the 150ft of weeds that we had taken on. We were fortunate to be the neighbours of a keen organic gardener, who seemed to be gardening in small beds with paths in between them –so we copied him!

We managed one small bed in the first year and in subsequent years moved down our plot in the same fashion.

The turning point for us was when we had developed enough beds to realise that we needed to manage the whole garden in the limited time that we had available

(both working with two small children) and that if we could cut down on the weed/grass growth on the paths that was invading the beds, then we could spend more time tending the crops and therefore improve our produce. It wasn't a cheap option – the reclaimed timber, weed suppressant and pea shingle all added up, but slowly over a couple of years we boarded each bed and laid weed suppressant and pea shingle on the paths.

According to the text books the deep bed system of cultivation requires large amounts of organic matter being dug in initially, but then in subsequent years, if compaction of the soil is avoided (not easy with children and their wellies) then little further digging is necessary. Organic matter is then added as mulches and top dressing. They suggest that the beds are no more than 1.5metres (5 feet) wide to allow for easy access and also say that deep weed seeds are kept at bay and only wind blown surface weeds need be removed (not so sure about that). A natural soil structure should develop with all the organic material incorporated and a high worm population helps. (We definitely have plenty of worm 'pets').

So although we may not be 'text book' gardeners, the system has

definitely worked for us and our tenth year has given us our best and most diverse harvest yet – mind you the sun has also played its part!

### **Another date for your diary**

Christmas drinks will be held again this year on B15 on Sunday 21st December 12-3ish. Please bring a bottle/sausage rolls/mince pies etc to add to the festive spirit.

### **Garden Calendar**

Hopefully a garden calendar with planting tips will be on sale at the AGM, so bring your purses.

### **Website**

A Sunnyside website is being set up. Visit us at:  
[www.sunnysideallotments.org.uk](http://www.sunnysideallotments.org.uk)

### **Don't Forget**

**AGM – Saturday 29th November at 10.30am in Sunnyside Rural Trust building.**

# **Sunnyside Allotment Society**

**Agenda for the seventh Annual General Meeting to be held on  
Saturday 29th November 2003  
at the Sunnyside Rural Trust, Ivy House Lane, Berkhamsted at 10.30am**

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. Open days and barbecue
6. Future projects
7. Publicity for allotments
8. To receive any nominations for officers/committee members  
(vacancy for treasurer – John Savage is retiring from this post).
9. Election of officers and committee:
  - Chairman
  - Vice Chairman
  - Treasurer
  - Secretary
  - Committee members
10. Election of Allotments' representative on Town Council's Allotments Management Team (Ted Dyer is retiring from this post).
11. Any other business