



Newsletter

October 2009

Editor's Introduction

When I look at last Autumn's newsletter, I realize that the same themes are topical this year: rabbit proofing, seed orders, rent payments, bonfires, working parties....but then this reflects the cyclical nature of gardening. By and large we plant the same crops but try out a new one or two, or a new variety; our plants are attacked by the same pests each year but some are more persistent one year than others. This seems to have been a good year for beetroot, beans and raspberries but tomatoes have not been so prolific (just mine perhaps?).

Chris Locke

On the subject of tomatoes I'm printing an excerpt from a scientific journal which could be of economic interest to some of you.....

Results of the first study evaluating the use of human urine mixed with wood ash as a fertilizer for food crops has found that the combination can be substituted for costly synthetic fertilizers to produce bumper crops of tomatoes without introducing any risk of disease for consumers. In the study, Surendra Pradhan and colleagues point out that urine, a good source of nitrogen, has been successfully used to fertilize cucumber, corn, cabbage, and other crops. Only a few studies, however, have investigated the use of wood ash, which is rich in minerals and also reduces the acidity of certain soils. Scientists have not reported on the combination of urine and wood ash, they say.

The new study found that plants fertilized with urine produced four times more tomatoes than non-fertilized plants and as much as plants

given synthetic fertilizer. Urine plus wood ash produced almost as great a yield, with the added benefit of reducing the acidity of acid soils. "The results suggest that urine with or without wood ash can be used as a substitute for mineral fertilizer to increase the yields of tomato without posing any microbial or chemical risks," the report says.

Message from our Chair, Freda Earl:

Sunnyside has a character of its own. When people choose to come here it is the trees and variety and the way so many people create room for wildlife that they say they like. People gardening the old way with a plot cleared back every winter live happily alongside cottage gardens and permaculture. It is not one of those allotments where the thought police go round and apply the "Six weeds and you're out." rule. The system I use to decide who needs a warning letter is simple and has grown up over the years. If you are making good use of the space, getting reasonable crops or a neatish

lawn to sit on, keep your paths cut and are not annoying your neighbours you are probably ok.

If someone on the waiting list rings me when I am sitting in front of the television with the cat on my lap and says there is a neglected plot and why can't I have it, I want to be able to justify my decision so if you are having difficulties please tell me. You may need to reduce your holding which is very simple. If you have a short term problem and need to leave your plot in a bit of a mess while you have an operation or a baby, again please tell me. If you know in advance it might be a good idea to cover with mypex to keep the weeds from swarming back. DO NOT allow someone else to help you out without explaining that if you give up they have no right to take over. If you want to have your say please either come to the AGM on November 28th at the Sunnyside Rural Trust building or write or e-mail your views especially if you are a tenant on New. It is not good if the people at the AGM are 90% from Old. If you can't come then please contact us beforehand and tell us what you think.

RENTS ARE DUE.

LAST YEAR THERE WERE PEOPLE EVICTED FOR NON PAYMENT.

DO IT NOW.

The Open Day

This went well, and as well as being a great day out for a considerable number of visitors, it provided a boost for SAS funds. The scarecrow competition produced some imaginative constructions; I'm afraid there is only room in this newsletter to picture the winner. Looking ahead to next year's event the committee decided to hold a photographic competition; photos taken of or from the allotments would be eligible, with a maximum of three entries per person. There would also be a competition for the tallest sunflower. Most importantly we need an organizer for the Open Day – that does not mean a person who will do everything but someone who can persuade others to take on tasks. Please consider whether you would be prepared to do this.



The Winner - Surf's Up!

Can you help?

The Countryside Management Services will carry out work on Birchnell's Copse on December 2 between 10am and 3pm. Help from members would be greatly appreciated, even if only for an hour or two.

On December 6 there will be a working party to plant flowering shrubs near the Grantham Mews gate and also to clean/service tanks and stopcocks. Depends whether you prefer wet or dirty hands. Again, help for even an hour or two will be welcome.

Bonfires

Not a new topic but one that continues to provoke varied emotions: the joy of an occasional good bonfire is appreciated by most people (and, yes, the wood ash could come in useful, see above). Unfortunately, some members' bonfires are neither 'good' nor occasional. If your burning material is dry and the day calm your occasional bonfire should burn quickly and without too much smoke. If you have green material and no compost heap, please offer it to a neighbour who composts.

Sunnyside New rabbit netting project Saturday 7th November

(from Angela Wheeldon)

NetworkRail has now, as promised, supplied anti-rabbit netting for Sunnyside New, to complete the job of protecting the allotments from ingress of rabbits from the railway embankment.

Those tenants most affected (ie those with gardens abutting the railway) should already have been written to asking them to remove all obstructions to allow access for a digger to excavate a trench along the fence line. (Access for the digger from the roadway will be via plot 3 and between plots 12/13) Clearance needs to be completed before 2nd November. Offers of help might be appreciated by tenants on plots 1-13. The digger will be in operation during the week 2-6 November.

Installation of the netting and backfilling of the trench will take place on Saturday 7th November (and Sunday November if necessary). We will need as many helpers as possible on 7th November to complete the job, especially tenants from Sunnyside New who will all benefit from the project. Work will start at 10am and a light lunch will be provided. (editor's note: it could even be fun!)

The netting will be laid out on the bottom roadway for cutting into manageable lengths so there will be no vehicular access. We will then insert the fencing into the trench and attach it with plastic ties. The trench will then be backfilled by hand. Gloves, spades, rakes required. We are looking for someone from Sunnyside New to oversee the project on 7th November – if you can help with this, please contact John Driver, Project Coordinator on 01442-862734 or jdriver@dsigns.freemove.co.uk

Allotment watch

(from Ted Dyer)

The police have requested that we find a deputy to the existing co-ordinator (Ted Dyer). If there is anyone out there who is prepared to volunteer to fill this role please contact Ted

(872684) for information. In terms of your time the job is not very onerous but the police will need to have your name, address, telephone number and e mail address if you have one.

Water supplies

We all need to be vigilant so far as the water tanks on our sites are concerned. The Town Council pays the bill and if tanks overflow or taps are left on significant water loss can occur. This can mean the Council will seek to increase rents to meet the increased water charges incurred. Perhaps there are tenants who are prepared to adopt a tank near their plot, keep an eye on it on a regular basis and report any problems to John Eaton (eatonj@btinternet.com) or Ted Dyer (872684) or at the Tea Hut SSO B15. Please get in touch if you are prepared to help in this way as it could save you money.

The SAS loo

In case you are unaware of its existence there is a splendid loo on Sunnyside Old (not much use if you're on the other side of the road and caught short, it must be said). It has a combination padlock and the number can be obtained from Ted or Angela (and many other users)

Annual General Meeting - 28.11.09

This will take place as usual at Sunnyside Rural Trust, on Saturday, 28th November at 10.30 am. There will be the usual election of officers and as always more volunteers are needed to fill vacant posts.

John Powell, the treasurer will be present to collect annual subscriptions (£3.00) and one of the great advantages of belonging to Sunnyside Allotment Society is being able to enjoy the benefits of the low prices offered in the Seed Scheme.

Jenny Sippings, the secretary, would like to receive any nominations for the committee, before the meeting, if possible. If you have any thoughts which you wish to air, please come along to this meeting.



**AGENDA FOR THE THIRTEENTH ANNUAL GENERAL
MEETING TO BE HELD ON SATURDAY 28TH NOVEMBER,
2009 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. Vermin update
6. To receive any nominations for officers/committee members
7. Election of officers and committee:
 - Chairman
 - Vice Chairman
 - Treasurer
 - Secretary
 - Committee members
8. Election of Allotments' representative on Town Council's Allotments Management Team
9. Future developments
10. Any other business

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Please send in any nominations for officers, the committee and allotments site rep to Jenny Sippings, 82 George Street, Berkhamsted, HP4 2EQ or email to jenny.sippings@ntlworld.com. Please make sure your nominee is willing to stand.