

HUNTS POND ROAD **SPRING 2017 NEWSLETTER**

Its official, spring is here and we plot holders start to think about getting things planted and prepared for the coming season. Some are ahead of the game and their plots are already in production ready to fill the hunger gap. The bad weather in Southern Europe recently has caused shortages of fruit and veg on the supermarket shelves, highlighting the importance of growing your own and self sufficiency wherever possible. The news has also talked about pollution from road vehicles so hopefully we are doing our bit to reduce food miles to yards.

Things have gone on year to year with little change at our allotments, but that is about to change. Our lease with Fareham Borough Council (FBC) ran out over a year ago and we are now negotiating a new one. Things are not finalised yet and we do not have space to explain it all, but I will try to précis how things will change next year. Our allotments are run in partnership with FBC and in the past any minor repairs were the responsibility of WWAA and any major work was attended to by the council. There have been a lot of cuts in local government recently, staff and budgets etc which have affected every aspect of the services provided by the authority. Over the last few years there has been less and less assistance from the council due to lack of funds. Ironically our own funds have shown quite a healthy surplus, but we have been reluctant to spend too much in case a major cost should suddenly present itself. Also our plot rents are some of the lowest in the area. When the new lease is agreed, likely to be by October, the rents will rise over a three year period to bring us in line with our neighbouring councils. But the good news is that we will have the funds to carry out any necessary repairs and maintenance ourselves without having to go cap in hand to the council. We will have to stand on our own two feet or more specifically our own eight hundred or so feet. If we work together we will have a much better allotment gardening experience, no more collapsing hedges or broken mowers, perhaps improved facilities like cleaner toilets etc.

Boundary Fence

There have been a series of unseasonal break-ins into sheds recently that seem to be due to the poor state of the hedge in places. This is more apparent in the winter months as there are leaves to cover over the damage. Keith Johnson recently did a survey of the boundary along with a member of FBC's Parks and Recreation team. The council has agreed to help us to get the boundary secure again and we have had several quotes to do the work. The quotes were to remove any damaged, diseased hedging and place fencing on the inside of the boundary, then plant new hedging in the autumn. In order for the work to be carried out any stored items of rubbish in the hedge will have to be removed. The contractors also quoted for clearing the rubbish as well, but this increased the price considerably. It was pointed out to us by the council that the hedge is dying because of toxins in the rubbish smothering the roots of the bushes. Hawthorn and brambles are pretty tough bushes and seem to grow almost everywhere, except our hedge. We wouldn't cover our crops in rubbish and expect them to grow so we must not do the same to our boundary. It is a living thing and must be treated as such. If you are asked to remove the junk in your hedge please comply. Just to re-iterate, this is in the tenancy agreement. We are happy to get help for those who are unable to do this due to health or mobility issues.

Gate

You may have noticed the gates have now all been numbered. This should make it easier to identify specific areas of the site. All gates now have a combination lock. The codes on each padlock are different to improve security. Please check with your site manager if you are not sure of the code so that you can gain access to your plot.

Gate to the recreation ground

The padlock to the gate between our allotments and the recreation ground has been replaced, due to the old one falling apart. The gate is to allow access by the football club to our site to retrieve footballs on match days. If any plot holder uses this gate for access, copies of the new key are available for a refundable fee of £10.00 from the site manager's shed, or contact your site manager.

Manure Bin Repairs

Work has just been completed on repairing the courtyard area by the manure/mulch stores. The old surface was removed and 12 tons of scalping laid down. The base and foundation of the manure bin has been shored up to give it many more years of service. The work was carried out by volunteers, at a fraction of the price quoted by contractors. It is amazing the talent there is on our site. Many thanks to Alastair, Keith, John, Norman and co. for all their hard work.

Manure deliveries will now be able to start again.

Sunflower Competition

We've had the Spud Bucket Challenge and I think those that took part got a lot from it. Now let's see who can grow the tallest sunflower. The competition is open to the children and grandchildren of HPR plot holders. The seeds are free and come with a starter pot. Just drop us a line to express an interest. If the response is good enough we can get this growing in the next few weeks.

Fareham in Bloom

We did quite well in this last year as several plot holders have prizes and the site got Silver Gilt. I know that not everyone wants to take part but it does tend to bring the standards of the whole site up when some people participate.

Occupancy

There has been a steady take up of vacant plots, so we now only have a few free plots remaining. Most enquiries seem to come from the website, which is proving to be a great shop window for us. If the trend continues at its present rate we will be full by Easter.

Plot inspections

The spring plot inspections will be carried out after the Easter break. The site generally looks good but there are still some vacant plots and those can impact on the neighbouring plots. Please ensure that your plot number is clearly displayed for all to see. Also make sure that your boundary is defined, so it is easier to see where one plot starts and another finishes.

And finally

On a lighter note, I was fortunate enough to go to a talk given by Bob Flowerdew. He was very entertaining and spoke without notes for well over an hour. The talk was in quite a leafy part of Surrey and I don't think all his methods were appreciated by certain sections of the audience, but they listened intently and responded warmly at the end. But, I thought that he might like this quote from Dave Hamilton:-

*What's the use of spending gold
On potatoes, seeds or kale
Money is always better spent
On a night of real ale*