

NEWSLETTER JULY/AUGUST

I cannot believe that we are into the second half of the year already, where does the time go? Lots of plots are looking great and this is certainly the best season in a long while that I can remember. The weather is of course the best gardener and we can only exercise damage limitation. We are fortunate enough to have water on our site so on hot sunny days we can give our crops a welcome drink in the evenings. But; there is always a 'but', and in this case it's a water butt. Lots of plots have them, as the water is turned off in the winter. Our water is metered but the charge is nominal. Unfortunately that may be about to change, so if we can store as much rainwater as possible we will not get a massive bill in the future and rain water is probably better for your plants anyway, being free of chlorine and any other additives.

Community Spirit

Allotments are a community, even if quite often you do not see anybody else. I had a reminder of that recently, when I let a plot to some young people on the waiting list. Their new plot was waist high in weeds. The weeds were cleared and the plot was transformed over the next few weeks. I met them on site one day to discuss a shed application and they enquired about the plot next door that was in a similar state to theirs when they took it on. I explained that the plot holder was awaiting surgery and could not maintain the plot at the time, and that I was planning to strim and cover it before I got too many complaints. To my pleasant surprise they offered to do it for me. Permission was granted from the plot holder for them to go onto the plot and the weeds were tamed. So I would like to say a big thank you to those guys and everyone else who helps their fellow gardeners.

Mower Usage

We currently have three mowers in use and they are working hard. Norman Hatch, our volunteer mower manager, has rebuilt them for us over and over again taking him many hours. The HPR's spend on mowers and spares is already in the hundreds and we are only halfway through the year. Mowers may be a luxury we cannot afford and we may have to reconsider our mower siting and who uses them.

I know people have helped Norman keep the mowers going. Jonathan Grindon and Phil Campbell, just to name two, who have cleaned and help keep the mower on row 20 going, and that one was new in May! It must be remembered that the mowers will only cut grass and are not to be used in place of a strimmer or scythe. As a rule of thumb, if the grass is higher than the wheels, then the highest setting is required. Please ask for a training session if you are not quite sure how to operate, clean and maintain the mowers.

Strawberry Grow-Bags

A quantity of used grow bags are being delivered to us and are being left by the manure/chipping piles. These are a great source of fibre and nutrients for our soil and crops. The grow bags are not organic but a lot of folks swear by them and they are going fast. Thank you to Paul Spicer for arranging their delivery.

Security

We are still getting reports of gates being left unlocked overnight. This may be due to people using a different gate to go in and out of. If in doubt please lock the gate when leaving, ensuring that there is enough slack in the chain for the padlock to be accessed from the inside, should anyone be locked in. It is worth asking people who are still working if they can lock up after you, as they may use a different gate. A lot of time and money has been spent on padlocks and keys over the years and if gates are not locked then it is all for nothing.

On the subject of security it has been reported that some items have gone missing from plots, even when the gates have been locked. Produce or equipment should only be taken from the allotment with the plot holder's permission, otherwise left alone. Please keep your boundaries and paths defined and equipment safely stored.

Bee Talk

On the 10th June we were fortunate enough to be given a talk on bee keeping by our resident bee keeper, Sam Summersgill. The evening was clear, if a little chilly, but there was a good turnout and we had a chance to get up close and personal with these useful pollinators. No bees were out, as it was too cold for them but we saw a mini colony, behind glass, where we could see the queen and the worker bees busily storing the honey and learnt about the hives and honey production. Afterwards we tasted the honey, which went down well. The Hunts Pond honey is to be available soon on a Sunday morning. If anyone can think of a good name for our honey, that would be a good way to personalise it. Thank you very much to Sam for providing an entertaining, informative and tasty evening.

Paths and Boundaries

There was a problem recently whereby the fence from a neighbouring property had been damaged by ivy growing through from the allotment. Things got a little unpleasant, but have now been resolved. We also had a complaint from a plot holder that they could not get a loaded wheelbarrow from the gate to their plot. This should not have been a problem as a one metre boundary should be maintained between plots and boundary hedges and fences. These hedges need to be clipped from time to time as it is part of the tenancy agreement. Paths too should be wide enough to allow the passage of a wheelbarrow, traditionally 2ft, 60cms in new money. All rubbish should be removed or burnt and equipment stored in a safe compound and not propped up against the hedge. This is an ongoing problem and compliance with the rules is required before rent renewal time.

Spud Bucket Challenge

My four year old grandson's B & Q orange bucket has loads of leaves, and flowers have appeared. If you have any pictures of your buckets we can put them on the website and try to monitor progress of the spuds inside. When they are ready we can have a "tip and tot" day. This can either be on a Sunday morning by the Trading Hut or compare pictures of the bucket sent to us so we can compare notes.

Fareham in Bloom

Two plot holders have entered the Fareham in Bloom contest this year. WWA and HPR have been well represented in the winning categories in the past and we wish our entrants well in the judging on 23rd July. The site as a whole is also being assessed. Most of the site is looking really good with an abundance of fruit and vegetables on most plots, so let's hope we have a good rating.

Feedback and Communication

This newsletter is compiled by the three site managers, Linda Tomlinson, Phil Pyke and Martin Barnett. It is usually penned by me (Martin Barnett) typed and corrected by my wife Vivien, a big thank you to her otherwise it would not happen. It is then put on the website, notice boards and e-mailed by Phil Pike (the treasurer) because he has the e-mail addresses on his computer for rent purposes etc. Because of this he does get some feedback and queries sent to him about things that he did not personally write. People have also complained that their computer displays warning messages when they receive the newsletter. If people would like the newsletter by e-mail, perhaps they would like to opt in by registering on 'thehuntspondlot@gmail.com' website. Those that don't can read it on the website or notice boards in the future. Any feedback about the newsletter can also be sent to this e-mail address or by contacting the site managers on the phone using the numbers on the notice boards and website.

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