

## Chairman's Corner

Welcome to the spring WAA newsletter. I really hope you find it informative and newsworthy.

It was great to see so many of you at the AGM and although I didn't get to speak to you all I'm hoping to see more of you over the summer in better conditions.

To be honest I've been putting off my small contribution until the weather warmed a little. However, at the time of writing it's still too cold to consider anything other than wrapping up in warm clothing and heading for the pub, but on the 1st April, I cannot put it off any longer. Spring is officially here – summer if you add the summertime clock change – even if the climate doesn't know it yet.

All that said, I have been out and about and spent some time at HPR to understand first hand the challenging flooding conditions for allotment holders. It has been an exceptionally wet winter and a good number of allotment holders have been pulling together to clear drainage ditches. The committee will be working with FBC to try and help alleviate this problem, though recognizing that there may not be a simple solution.

At the last committee meeting we also discussed Netley Rd fencing replacement plans and possible solutions to the water runoff from Hunts Pond Road bus stop. All the sites report waterlogging but HPR has suffered particularly badly.

At Sarisbury, Allotment Rd, the committee approved storage container roof repairs to ensure the safe storage of equipment. The committee will also be working with John Parsons in the run up to Posbrook's lease renewal in early 2014.

Waiting lists remain for all sites, although not at previous years' levels. HPR 35, Posbrook 19, Sarisbury 15, Warsash 6, Lodge Rd not known. Could be the weather?

We are slowly making improvements to the website, beginning by improving the contact details and I'll be posting the AGM minutes. The newsletter will also be posted and I would like to encourage you all to visit the site regularly. If anyone has suggestions, please let me know. Email address on the site.

Soon I hope to be writing about hedge cutting, weeding... and the progress of my own seedlings, instead of drainage. I live in hope.

Bob Hughes

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## GENERAL HOUSEKEEPING

- \* Keep deer out by shutting gates
- \* Check when bonfires are appropriate
- \* Cultivate 80% of your plot
- \* Keep paths and hedges tidy
- \* Take rubbish away
- \* Encourage more pollinating insects

## FAREHAM IN BLOOM...

We are hoping to have more entries this year so please submit your entries now. Contact Fareham Borough Council for an entry form.



## GOOD LUCK



### ASK ARTHUR—allotment dilemma's in detail:

There are, as we all know, a huge number of "help" resources available to the interested plot holder some of which are listed below. The advantage of Arthur for the WWAA is a distillation of all available information tailored to site specific best practice application. In particular where an individual plot holders action or inaction adversely affects the site overall, it is hoped that the site manager will be the keeper of site best practice providing the lead on current thinking AND A CO-ORDINATED cooperation in dealing with the matter .

Where this is not the case both sides of the argument are presented to allow the plot holder to experiment and hopefully share what is the most beneficial method for them.

Example:- What to do about marestail?

Overview courtesy of RHS

Field horsetail is also known as marestail. Once established, it has roots that extend to 2m deep, and spreads by means of creeping rhizomes. The plant produces light-brown stems in late spring, topped with cone-like structures, and these are followed by light-green shoots up to 60cm in height. The plant spreads among cultivated plants, making for a messy appearance and competing for water and nutrients.

A solution is provided courtesy of RHS website but I believe that this is a site specific problem over which strong feeling exist and comments are invited in advance of publication so that the preferred solution can be adopted.

Marestail do I have it?

A deep-rooted, herbaceous weed, with tough, light-brown or green shoots that resemble pine needles. It dies back completely in winter.

Organic

Remove rhizomes by digging as deeply as possible. The deep roots of established horsetail colonies will re-grow. Regularly removing the shoots and rhizomes as soon as they appear will weaken the plants, but total eradication requires determination over a number of years. Where horsetail is growing in grass, regular close mowing will cause it to die off, although it may persist in borders at the edge of lawns.

Chemical

Spray shoots with glyphosate in summer. Tread down the shoots before spraying to bruise and crush them, which will allow the herbicide to enter the plant and be taken down to the roots.

Useful sites please add;

<http://www.allotment.org.uk/newsletter/>

The National Association of Allotment Holders ( [nalg.org.uk](http://nalg.org.uk) ) and The Allotment Growers Association [www.allotment.org.uk/](http://www.allotment.org.uk/)

[gardeners@web-clubs.co.uk](mailto:gardeners@web-clubs.co.uk)



### HUNT's POND ROAD:

There is a good supply of manure at Hillbrow, 403 HPR, the owner is Lesley Good. This may be convenient for people on the South end of the site.

## GOOD PRACTICE—not so common, common sense.....

So you've finally got your plot and you're raring to go! Hold on just a few more moments while I give you some hard earned advice about safety on your allotment.

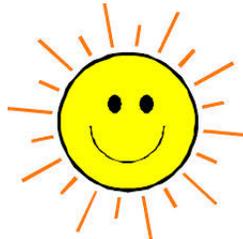
- Warm up first before filling your wheelbarrow full to the brim. Our soil is clay-based and can be very heavy when wet. Start out easy and take breaks often.
- Wear gloves. There are lots of glass shards hidden in the soil (I've collected a bucket full over 10 years on HPR).
- Watch your step, it's easy to trip as I found out last year when I tripped going into my shed and strained my calf muscle badly.
- It's a good idea to have a Tetanus jab if you can't remember when you last had one. Bacteria lives in the soil, especially manured soil, and can enter the body from the tiniest abrasion, scratch, puncture or cut.
- Don't lock the gate behind you when entering in case you do have a nasty mishap. The emergency services will not be able to get to you.
- Take your mobile with you and tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return.
- Wear suntan lotion and a hat as it can get very hot during the summer.
- Wear sensible shoes. An allotment is no place for sandals.
- Take a drink and some food for energy. I usually take some fruit and a snack bar. Try to have a break every hour. When your food/drink's gone, it's time to go home.
- Keep a first aid kit in your shed, if you have one. Just a few plasters and sterile wipes will do.

Now go and enjoy yourself on your own bit of paradise!

Mary Knight

### Editor's note:

Having gone through my list of things to get done by the beginning of the growing season, in some ways I'm glad it's been so cold because it's given me more time.



Anyway I'm all prepared now, just waiting for that yellow thing to warm things up to get the show on the road. I have bought my seeds from Garson's (89p) and the Range (50p) so hopefully I will have a bumper crop. Who knows, I might even have a go at Fareham in Bloom this year for fun.

There are a few of us who are contributing towards this newsletter and the aim is to produce 3 or 4 a year, depending on it's success. We will be walking around various sites letting you know when it's on the notice board.

If you want to receive it by email we will also collect your email address and send it to you directly. Alternatively contact me on [hazel.oliphant@yahoo.com](mailto:hazel.oliphant@yahoo.com). It will also be on the web-site so that everyone can access it at any time.

Hazel Oliphant

### Allotment Rd Site

Matt Wakefield from Fareham Council visited the site recently and as a result of the visit Ray with committee approval has decided that it is time for a skip.

The skip will be used to help dispose of some of the 'clutter' that has accumulated in parts of the site.

Help would be appreciated to make sure we get the best out of this overhead and that site housekeeping is maintained by encouraging plot holders to remove the clutter to a council tip in future.



## What to do on the allotment this Spring

The National Allotment Society (NASLG) advises us to 'proceed with caution when sowing and planting out on the allotment in Spring'. I know we are all raring to go but the recent weather has not been kind. Better to wait a while rather than risk losing time and effort as nature will always catch up – eventually!

Nevertheless, weather permitting of course, here are a few jobs that you can be getting on with - but be prepared to cover new shoots with soil or fleece if frost is forecast.

### On the plot:

- Keep an eye on stored crops and remove any that are rotten or sprouting.
- Continue to harvest last year's crops and prepare seed beds for outdoor sowing of main crop vegetables in May. Cover ground with fleece or cloches to warm the soil before planting early crops.
- Add a small amount of potato fertiliser to the trench before planting out early seed potatoes. Useful tip – potatoes are a hungry crop so if you grow comfrey, lay the first cuttings under your potatoes to help get them off to a good start. Alternatively, make comfrey tea to water onto your plants.
- Plant onion sets and celeriac grown on earlier and make successional sowings of beetroot, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflowers, kale, lettuce, kohlrabi, parsnips, maincrop peas, radish rocket, spinach, spring onions, turnips, Swiss chard. Make the last sowing of summer broad beans.
- Cover carrot and parsnip beds with fleece to prevent the carrot root fly from laying eggs. Protect early seedlings, and any crops for that matter, with netting to keep birds and animals out.
- Put up the runner bean poles and start to support the growing peas with sticks or netting.
- Plant out globe and Jerusalem artichokes but remember to lift any of the latter at the end of the season as they will quickly take over your plot!
- Plant up a new asparagus bed. Note - it will take two more years to before you can cut any shoots for eating.
- Plant out new strawberry plants and cover existing plants with cloches or fleece for an early crop. Remove flowers in the first year to conserve energy for growth and rotate plants every three years to maximise fruit production.
- Thin out and tidy blackberry canes then apply slow release fertiliser such as sulphate of potash to the base of plants (available from the hut at Hunts Pond Road). Mulch with well-rotted manure or compost to retain moisture and nutrients. Other soft fruit bushes should also be pruned to allow air to circulate around the branches.



### Continued.....

#### In the greenhouse:

- Make sure your greenhouse is clean and tidy at the start of the season to prevent pests and diseases. This will also let more light in to help your seedlings grow.
- Give leeks, summer cabbage, or any of the vegetables mentioned above, an early start under glass. Prick out seedlings into pots as soon as you see their first true leaves.
- Pinch out tips of sweet pea plants to prevent them getting too leggy.
- If you haven't already done this, sow, in pots and trays filled with fresh seed compost, the seeds of aubergine, runner beans, courgettes, pumpkins, squashes, outdoor/ridge cucumber, tomatoes. French beans, sweetcorn and lettuce can be sown outdoors under cloches.
- Transplant tomatoes into their final positions in the greenhouse - keep some frost protection handy.
- Don't forget to harden off greenhouse-grown plants outside before planting them in their permanent positions outside.

#### General:

- Check soft fruit bushes for aphids; spray the plant with diluted washing up liquid or squash the flies with your thumb and finger. Use pesticides if preferred, including a fatty acid soap which you can spray on the plants.
- Improve drainage and add lime to the soil prior to planting brassicas to help prevent club root. Club root can stay in the ground for 20 years so, to help avoid passing on the problem, clean and disinfect your garden tools and footwear after cultivation of any infected areas. For more information go to the RHS website – see link below.
- Grow companion plants such as marigolds and nasturtiums which can help deter aphids and other pests.
- Keep the weeds down on your plot by regular hoeing, mow grass borders and trim edges to prevent slugs and snails lurking in overhanging undergrowth.
- Get your children/grandchildren involved in gardening by helping them to sow quick-growing seeds such as salads, carrots, sunflowers etc. Maybe have a competition between other plot-holders?



#### Useful Websites:

<http://www.wvaa.org.uk/index.html>  
<http://www.nsalg.org.uk/>  
<http://www.allotment.org.uk/>  
<http://www.gardenersworld.com/>  
<http://apps.rhs.org.uk/advice/search/profile.aspx?pid=128>

Rona Neilson