

Harlow Hill Allotment Association

Spring 2019 Newsletter

For all Plot Holders and Associate Members

Hello everyone and a special welcome to all new plot holders. You have not only become an allotment plot holder but have joined a good club full of friendly people. Some new plot holders will be experienced gardeners and perhaps have had an allotment on another site; other plot holders may be new to allotment gardening and at risk of giving gratuitous advice here are three things to bear in mind. Firstly, most of us do it for fun, as an enjoyable hobby/pastime, for the sheer pleasure of admiring nice looking plants that we have grown, and perhaps eating them (or at least parts of them). I'm not entirely convinced that they taste a great deal better for being "home" grown, but they provide a great deal more personal satisfaction. Secondly, we all have failures; learn from the failures and enjoy the successes. Thirdly, be well organised and keep on top of the weeds and all the other jobs that need doing. Little and often is far better than always playing catch-up. *Happy gardening!*

WORK WEEKEND

Despite the appalling weather, which led to work being cancelled completely on Saturday morning, we managed to complete all the work in good time on Sunday morning. Drainage work around plot 6 has been completed and no further drainage work is scheduled. The strong winds had blown litter and a lot of broken glass around the site. We picked up as much as we could and retrieved several compost bin lids.

Grateful thanks to all those who helped and offered to help and special thanks to the plot holders who supplied home baking which went down very well at the coffee break. If you are able to help with hedge trimming and ditch clearing in July we will be pleased to hear from you.

Anne Ellis

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Ian Clarke, the Chair, reported on some of the highlights of last year. Harlow Hill Allotments Association has received a "Commutated Sums" award which the Committee is considering using for provision of an electricity supply for the shop. Ian reported on the Waste Not, Want Not project for surplus vegetables and said that the vegetables are always used. The project continues throughout the winter months with the donated produce collected every Monday morning. Harlow Hill Allotments won the President's trophy for Community Engagement at the Harrogate in Bloom Awards Ceremony, and came third (with a gold award) in the Harrogate Allotments Site Judging. Ian commended our excellent website and thanked Angela Dicken for developing it. Ian then mentioned site security and asked members to remember to scramble the lock when leaving the allotments.

Richard Wriglesworth gave the Lettings Manager's Report. All the plots are let, and 23 new people joined the waiting list last year. 13 plots were relinquished and re-let. Those on the list have to wait approximately 14 months before being offered a plot. New plot holders are required to make a £25 deposit.

Chris Dicken, the Treasurer, reported a healthy financial situation. There was a profit of £987 over the year, very similar to the previous year. The shop made a profit of £680 and the seed order a profit of £283. Major expenditure items were rent to Harrogate Council and Water Charges of £589. The net worth of our assets is £12,125.

The officers and committee were re-elected with a vacancy for one committee member.

The Harry Newport Trophy for the best leeks went to Sue Whyte, and Clare McKenzie was awarded the Roland Buckton Cup for the most improved plot. Congratulations to both.



Clare McKenzie receives the Roland Buckton Cup for the most improved plot



Espaliers at Harlow Hill

The AGM talk was by Rob Gooderidge of Ripon Walled Garden and Ripon Allotments, and the topic was Soft Fruit Growing. Rob is also one of the judges in the annual Harrogate Best Allotments competition. He said he was brought up with fruit, his grandfather having commercial apple gardens at Wormald Green. Rob reckoned that 90% of allotments now have either raspberries or strawberries on them. He commended autumn fruiting raspberries (as opposed to summer fruiting) as they fruit from July to November, and they suffer less bird damage. Rob said that as allotment gardeners we can “choose fruit that is flavoursome” whereas supermarkets “choose fruit that travels” (i.e. keeps fresh).

Blueberries, currently popular, like a very acidic soil and are “easy to grow in the wrong conditions” (thus leading to considerable disappointment). Rob also had some interesting comments to make on apples, one of which was to suggest that allotment gardeners should not grow apples as trees, because they grow big, and take moisture and light from neighbouring plots. He recommended espaliers and cordons which have the added advantage that they can be pruned in the summer. Cox's Orange Pippins not advised for the north of England, but Rob commended Ribston Pippin which originated at nearby Little Ribston. Rogers Nurseries of Pickering highly recommended for fruit. Thanks to Rob for an interesting, useful, and witty talk which led to a wide range of questions.

The AGM was held at Harlow Community Centre (The Green Hut) on 21st March and was attended by 29 members. Many thanks to Tricia Wilson and Angela Dicken for providing the refreshments.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

11th or 18th May (date tbc)

Harlow Hill Allotment Association Plant Sale

Early July

Allotment Site Judging

1st August

Britain in Bloom visit to Harlow Hill Allotments – we will be representing all the allotment sites in Harrogate, so we will need to make sure our site looks at its best.

3rd August (tbc)

Harlow Hill Allotment Association Open Day

18th August

Harrogate & District Allotment Federation Annual Show in the Sun Pavilion, Valley Gardens

PLANT SALE / OPEN DAY

We are considering separating the Plant Sale and Open Day this year. Our idea is to hold the Plant Sale in mid-May when we will have spare plants to sell, and then hold an Open Day with cakes, refreshments and children's activities in early August when the site will be looking productive and colourful for the community to see. More details will follow soon by email and on the website. If you would be willing to help with either of these two events, please contact the secretary, Anne Ellis, email: hhaasecretary@outlook.com

PARKING

If you come to the allotment by car, please make sure you park with consideration for local residents. We try very hard to be good neighbours and to be a valued part of the local community, so please make sure you don't block anyone's driveway or garage entrance, or park on the pavement. If you park in the cul-de-sac off Beckwith Avenue, only park on one side of the road to give residents and other users room to turn round.

COMMUTED SUMS

As reported at the AGM the council have allocated £3,700 in commuted sums to Harlow Hill Allotment Association following housing developments in the Otley Road area. The money needs to be spent in the next 10 years and in order to access the money we will have to provide quotations from different suppliers and seek council approval. Ideas for how the money could be best used include a power supply for the shop, a new toilet, a more secure gate and recycling initiatives on site.

If you have any ideas for other uses we would be pleased to hear from you. The council has clear stipulations for how the money can be used and these can be found attached to the minutes of this year's AGM which were emailed to plot holders and associates earlier this month. You can pass your suggestions to the committee member responsible for your group of plots or email them to hhaasecretary@outlook.com

Anne Ellis

ANYONE SEEN MY WORMS?

I've lost all the worms on my plot and it's very worrying, though, to my knowledge it hasn't affected the growth of any of my crops. A few years ago my allotment was crawling with worms and so was my manure heap. I regarded them as my friends and treated them with care and courtesy. Even when digging I tried to avoid chopping them. And now they've all gone, and I don't know why. I don't think garden chemicals are the culprit, simply because I don't use any apart from a bit of slug-bait and I've cut down on that. Perhaps all my worms have been eaten by marauding flat worms, but I haven't seen any and would have expected to. I don't blame the local blackbirds: they take their share but always leave plenty. Another possibility is that I starve the worms of food through weeding too thoroughly and not leaving anything to rot.

Does it matter? Well, it didn't as far as I know affect the quality of what I grew. But on the other hand I'm uncomfortable with a loss of any species. Gardening, whether we like it or not, is messing about with nature, but I try to work with it.

If other plot holders are experiencing a worm loss, please let me or a committee member know.

Keith Wadd

WATER

The water is back on at the taps now. Last year our water bill was much greater than the previous year because of the hot dry summer. Please think about your water usage and if you have a shed or greenhouse, fit a water butt to harvest the water from the roof. It is amazing how much water you can collect from a small shed. If you want to use a hosepipe to water your plot, please remember that you need to purchase a water licence costing £10 from the allotment shop. If you use a hosepipe, please don't leave it unattended and make sure that the butt beneath the tap is full before you start (this is to provide water for watering can users whilst you are using your hosepipe). Watering can users please fill up the butt again after you have used it, or else the next user will have to do it (or scrape the barrel) which is hardly fair.



Please do not use the taps to wash your tools, hands, or vegetables as this may cause transfer of disease or other problems into the butts. **Make sure you turn the taps off when you've finished watering.**

ALLOTMENT SHOP

The shop sells a wide range of products that plot holders and gardeners find useful. These include fertilisers and lawn care products such as Growmore, pelleted poultry manure and Spring & Summer Lawn Feed; a wide range of peat free and John Innes composts and sundries such as environmesh, weed suppressant, fleece, canes (from 4' to 8'), netting and twine. If you want it, almost certainly, we will have it. An increasing number of the products are environment-friendly. All the products are at very competitive prices and any profits go to our allotment funds. The allotment shop is open on Saturday and Sunday mornings from 10.30 – 12.00.

FIRST AID

It's a good idea to have a first aid box in your shed in addition to your tools. For example, a small selection of adhesive plasters, antiseptic ointment, sting relief cream, a pair of tweezers for removing thorns etc. and a gauze or lint pad to use as a compress to stop bleeding if badly cut.

There is an accident book in the shed next to the shop for you to record any accidents that occur on site. You can also record any Health & Safety issues that you notice around the site.

SPRAYING WITH WEEDKILLER

Weed-killers are designed to kill unwanted plants. Unfortunately, it is all too easy to damage or even kill desirable plants if care is not taken when applying weed-killers. **Wherever possible we would ask you to find an alternative method for removing weeds** – digging them out, roots and all, is the most effective way.

However, if you do resort to using weed-killer on your plot:

- Make sure that you do not allow it to damage plants on neighbouring plots or damage the rides around your plot.
- Do not spray on a windy day.
- Do not take weed killer to the tap to dilute it. The danger is that the weed-killer falls into the water butt and then is scooped up by someone coming to water.

REACH FOR THE STARS – 2019 ALLOTMENT COMPETITION

In association with Harrogate Autumn Flower Show, the Harrogate & District Allotment Federation are asking plot holders to plant up a container with an imaginative support, fashioned from anything around the allotment, to create the highest plant or climber possible. It could be a giant sunflower, or a wigwam of runner beans. It should include a container no higher than 40cm – the rest is for plant growth only! The height attained will be a key factor - measurement will be taken from the base of the plant stem. But also taken into consideration will be your resourcefulness finding a suitable container, in constructing the plant supports and how well it serves its purpose. The winner will receive a pair of tickets to this year's Harrogate Autumn Flower Show! To enter, please submit a photo of your plant in a pot with an 8' cane positioned on the top of the pot near the base of the stem. On the back of the photo, give the height of the plant measured from the base of the stem to the top of the plant together with your name and allotment site. Entries should be submitted to Angela Dicken, 74 Otley Road, Harrogate HG2 0DP by Friday 9th August. The entries will be judged by Nick Smith, Show Director of the Harrogate Flower Shows.

Angela Dicken



Primulas brighten up an allotment in early

NEWS ITEMS AND COMMENTS THAT MIGHT BE OF INTEREST TO PLOT HOLDERS

These are always very welcome for consideration for inclusion in the newsletter. Please email them to me at tansley22@btinternet.com

Keith Wadd