

Monday, July 10th, 2006
Issue 12

The Plot Thickens...



Introduction to issue 12

Summer is upon us once again and all our time seems to be spent in picking and watering, although we have had some very welcome rain today! It

always amazes me how much everything grows with a bit of rain. It is so much better than watering from the tap. The Southsea Show will be on soon and

then it will be time for the Autumn Show. The schedule is now up in the shop so you can start preparing for it!

This month's articles...

- Introduction
- Allotment News
- Wildlife
- Chairman's Chatter
- Recipe
- Top Tips
- Thought for the Day
- Allotment Chronicles
- ...and finally

Don't forget if you have any articles to contribute for the next Newsletter, please leave them in the shop.

Allotment News

The Plant Sale went very well so many thanks to everyone who supplied plants and made cakes. The shop is doing well too thanks to the hard work of Brian and everyone who helps out in there. Of course the shop is not there to make a profit but just as a convenience for allotment holders, but every little helps.

I have been asked to have more Newsletters printed as some people have been missing out, so have ordered more this time. I am always mindful with the Society money as everyone works hard and gives freely of their time to help to swell the funds. Anyway we are solvent at the moment, even after having purchased the new marquee!

Can we ask again for cakes for the Southsea Show. These are cut up and given out as tasters to help sell the cookery books. Also any spare produce to make a good show of the stall. This is very worthwhile as it helps to raise awareness of allotments and while there we also advertise the Autumn Show. Any cakes should be from the cookery books and with any spare produce should be taken to the shop on the Wednesday before the Show which is the 2nd August after 6 O'Clock.

There seems to be a problem again with rubbish on the allotments and the Committee are trying to come up with ideas to solve this. The skip was filled to overflowing and the man who collects it

refused to take it all. This was compounded by the fact that plot holders had taken up bags ready for the empty one. There is a problem with old wood on the allotments and perhaps this could be stored somewhere in preparation for bonfire night when we are allowed to burn it. Also green stuff which is good for composting should not be put in there. Perhaps we could build some large compost bins at the end in the car park for 'good' compost and also for bindweed etc. If anyone has ideas about this please let the Committee know as something has to be done. We are all very fortunate to have our allotments and must all take responsibility for the rubbish which is generated.

Allotment News continued

*We love our compost
and it is all free too!*

On the subject of composting we built on our plot, and John next door to us also built, two very large compost bins. Everything goes in there except bindweed and they are brilliant. In the winter it all gets dug out and goes back on the plot and the soil is lovely now. We haven't quite got it hot enough to kill all the weed seeds but they are good too as they grow and then get pulled up and put back in the compost. It goes round in a circle which is nature's way! We love our compost and it is all free too!

Wildlife

We were discussing the wildlife on the allotments and it is surprising what a wide variety of birds, mammals etc. there are! There are foxes, wild rabbits and rats and many types of mice, including voles and shrews.

Many amphibians including frogs, (which hopefully eat some of those slugs), lizards, newts and slow-worms. Two weasels were seen playing at Eastney Lake last year. There are many kinds of birds, Jeff Hayward

has a wren nesting in his shed, they are very tiny and can look rather mouse-like. They are very territorial and Jeff has been chased off more than once. He says she has five eggs, which should hatch out

soon. The wren has a loud and warbling song ending in a trill and has a rattling alarm call. Other birds seen are Great Tits, Blue Tits, Greenfinches, Goldfinches, Robins, Blackbirds, Swifts and House Martins swooping about, and Shirley has seen a Green Woodpecker and spotted a Song Thrush last week. There are Crows and of course our resident Kestrel which can be seen hovering and then swooping down for its prey! There are many sparrows,

which are becoming rare in the garden – we have tree and hedge sparrows at the allotments. We must not forget to mention the butterflies (the white ones not popular with cabbage growers of course) and the dragon flies if you are lucky enough to have a pond. We must protect the wildlife as we are lucky to be able to see it at first hand. It's lovely for all the children to see and the sound of the birds sometimes is amazing!

Have you noticed any other wildlife on the allotments? Please tell us about it!



Chairman's Chatter

I have contacted Trevor Stark and we have agreed that Sunday 16th July at 9.00 am will be a good day to erect the new marquee. The object is to erect the marquee (and take it down) prior to the Autumn Show in case of any problems, which will make for an easier job on the Saturday before the show. We would like as much help as possible. For those new to the allotments the Autumn Show is the day of the year when you have a chance to enter your produce and win rosettes and cups. This is a "fun day" where newcomers are not only welcome but often surprise themselves by winning a class. Note,

no entry fee to enter, no prize money, just a good day with lots of fun for all the family. (It costs just 50p to come to the show on the Sunday.)

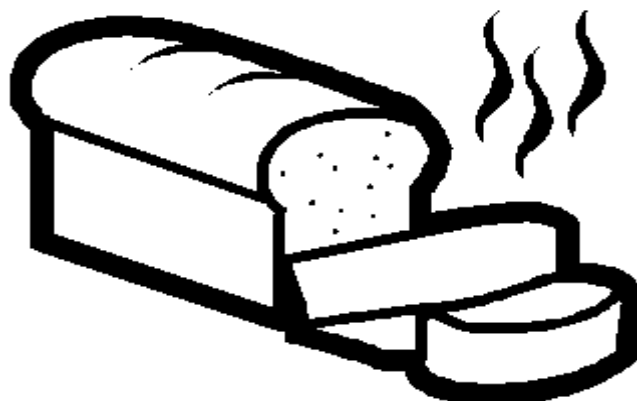
On a more sober note, the skip, or "lack of skip". The last skip was overloaded to the point that the driver knocked off a huge amount. The skip was not returned and despite many calls to the Council I have still not got an answer as to what has been going on! The skip came back on Monday the 3rd of July at 6.30 am and Lindsay Murday took it upon himself to load it. By 7.30 he had cleared up all the rubbish left by selfish

persons! Who do they think will load their rubbish? Lindsay said many black bags were full of materials that could be composted plus items that were not from the allotment. With the Council's new policy of not collecting garden rubbish it will become worse, so please take down the numbers of any cars tipping rubbish in or near the skip. Two car numbers have already been forwarded to the Council so we will see what happens.

As I write this we are having the first rain for many days, much needed, and I am sure it will help with the growing.

Come and help us erect the new marquee on Sunday 16th July at 9.00 am - it will be a good day!

Recipe for Rich Fruit Bread



Overnight:

Soak in 1 cup of tea, 1lb of mixed dried fruit and 1 cup of brown sugar.

Next Morning:

Add 8 oz of self raising flour and 1 well beaten egg. Mix well. Pour into a well greased loaf tin. Bake for 2 hours on middle shelf at 300F/150C. Take out and leave until the next day. Slice thinly and butter.

There is no fat in this recipe for those watching their weight and for those not having to worry, butter lavishly.

The beauty of this recipe is that you can do the first step when you are tired and ready for bed (after a hard day at the allotment) but at the same time you are committing yourself to

finish it the next day. It is packed with fruit and delicious! (Note: there is no fat in this recipe for those watching their weight and for those not having to worry, butter lavishly.)

Top Tips

*Spray your tomatoes
against blight NOW!*

From John Peach at Eastney Lake. He says to spray your tomatoes now against blight! We had blight last year on all outside tomatoes. If you spray with Bourdeaux Mix as described on the tub it can stop blight. John thinks it is started when the weather is damp and humid and found last year that spraying them did the trick. If you cut back any blighted stems you can probably save the plant. John also says to plant them well spaced to allow the air to get in. If you have black fly on your runner beans put a whole clove of garlic in water with Comfrey and Nettles, leave for just three days and spray, this should do the trick. Of course you can use washing up liquid but the organic way is better! Of course, we may not get blight anyway as John Caws tells me that it has only occurred for the last two or three years!

Thought for the Day

*This little paragraph
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This little paragraph was taken from the "Christian Observer" of 1832:
"When the labourer has his little plot of ground, from which he feels he shall not be ejected as long as he conducts himself with propriety, he has an object on which his heart is fixed; he has something at stake in society"

The Allotment Chronicles

*They are selling this
book for £9.99 or if
we order 5 copies or
more at £7.99.*

I had an email about the following paper back book, called The Allotment Chronicles, from the publishers of The Nostalgia Collection who had spotted our allotment web site, they advertise their book thus:-

more than 250 years countless tenants have found economic benefit, comfort, relaxation and salvation while tending their little plots of earth, and the social history of allotments forms a rich part of the nation's cultural heritage. In short, there is no other feature of the British landscape quite like the allotment garden, and here is the full story of its evolution from the land enclosures of the mid-18th century through two World Wars to the present day."

They are selling this book for £9.99 or if we order 5 copies or more at £7.99. If anyone is interested I have an order form and if you bring your order to the shop in the next couple of weeks I will send off for them for you!

...and finally

*Fires are not
allowed on the
allotments and dogs
must please be kept
on leads*

Another reminder that fires are not allowed on the allotments and dogs must please be kept on leads. Also the Council have asked that no notices be put up on the gates unless authorized by the Committee. Thank you.