

Monday, October 16th, 2006
Issue 14

The Plot Thickens...



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

Introduction to issue 14

Autumn is well and truly here with heavy rain and high winds. Hopefully this will mean there will not be a water shortage next year. Having said that we seemed to be OK here in Portsmouth and

did have rain from time to time during the summer. My runner beans have taken on a new lease of life and look really green and are flowering prolifically again! Other plot-holders have

remarked on the same thing too! It must be something to do with the weather but I'm not complaining and my neighbours will be happy to have some more succulent runners!

Allotment News

The Autumn Show has taken place again and is all over for another year! Despite the bad weather it was a great success, the punters turned up in force and £450 profit was made. The produce looked very good and congratulations to everyone who won rosettes and trophies, especially Trevor Stark who won the spade for the most points for his vegetables and well done to the ladies who all did brilliantly! Thanks again to everyone who helped, it was really difficult putting up the new marquee in the wind and rain and everyone was brilliant! Trevor has assured me that next year it will be

much easier as they have drawn a plan and are now familiar with the layout of the tent. As the tent fell down a few times they have had plenty of practice and hopefully the weather will be kinder to us!

Thanks to Coco in Marmion Road for the donation of the two lovely chocolate cakes which really "went down well" and also the chocolates for the raffle. Also many thanks to Bob and Jean for making the excellent cake for the raffle and also Shirley who made one of her lovely fruit cakes. The cakes made for the cake stall were also excellent

and if you could get near the stall to buy one you were lucky! It was all a bit manic in the tea tent as everyone was squashed in there and I felt sorry for Sheila and Alan who couldn't lay out their tables and flowers as usual but Sheila said it was really good fun, a bit like the war spirit, and they had lots of help. Thanks also to Bob, a new plotholder, who went round with the collection bucket and collected over £50. The Security (night shift) are to be commended for staying put when it seemed the tents would be blown down! It was reported that Brian's snoring could be heard above the howling wind and rain!

Allotment News continued

*The new seeds will
be in the shop in
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good value.*

The Harvest Supper went well with lots of lovely food. There were not as many people as usual, I know of at least 10 people who were on holiday, so there were seconds and thirds if you could eat it! Andrew showed a short film about allotments during the war which was very well received! Everyone collected their trophies and if anyone has some spare silver polish to lend Hilary she will be very grateful! (Whilst on the subject of Hilary she should be thanked for getting a sail maker friend to repair the new marquee which was ripped when it blew down!) Thanks also to Stephen Bannister for his excellent chilli and to all the ladies who made those mouth watering sweets.

Some sad news to impart – Brian Whitehouse a plot-holder for many

years has recently passed away. Brian donated the cup for Best Dahlia and our condolences and thoughts go out to all his family.

Wasn't it nice not to have tomato blight this year? The first time for 3 years – I have noticed it about just this last week. We've had tomatoes coming out of our ears and been making chutney and soups etc. Also I was told that you can freeze tomatoes – just wash and pack into bags – when they defrost they lose their firmness but can be used in soups and to flavour stews etc. The tastiest this year were some very small yellow ones that my neighbour grew and I was told that St. Pierre from Kings are also very tasty.

The new seeds will be in the shop in

November from Kings and are very good value. On sale in the shop for planting out now are Japanese onion sets and shallots and Brian is hoping the garlic will be in shortly. Also on sale are Broad Beans and Peas for overwintering. My Broad Beans went in at the end of October and I had a lovely crop, with no blackfly, but was disappointed to note that I have nearly used them all from my freezer. A bigger freezer would be nice if I had anywhere to put it! To think I had never eaten a broad bean until I got my allotment! Do try them, they are lovely!

Stop Press – just heard on the news about a new potato called Mayan Gold which has been bred to taste like the potatoes first brought to these shores by Sir Walter Raleigh! Watch this space!

Pumpkin and Goats' Cheese Gratin

900g whole pumpkin
25g butter, salt and pepper
225g firm goats' cheese log, sliced
50g Parmesan, grated

Preheat the oven to 200c/400f/gas mark 6.

Peel, seed and chop the pumpkin, then cook in boiling water until tender. Drain, mash with the butter and season.

Put half the pumpkin mash into a shallow,

ovenproof dish, cover with the goats' cheese then top with the remaining pumpkin and the Parmesan. Bake for 30 minutes or until golden brown. Serve with a crunchy seasonal salad.

*Here is the first of
two suggestions for
using up those
Halloween pumpkins.
Butternut Squash
could also be used!*

Chairman's Chatter

Well the show that nearly wasn't is long over, and the Harvest Supper and prize giving. I must again thank all those who helped in foul weather on Saturday to put up the marquee in what was the worst weather the show has ever had. On the Sunday I thank the people who went and got produce to sell, needless to say the public couldn't get enough of fresh vegetables and all sold. Thanks also to the producers of cakes, quiche and pies, again they all sold. Thanks also to the people who manned stalls, they did a great job under very difficult conditions. After the event nearly thirty people, male and female got the whole show down and packed away in the dry, a brilliant effort!

On the Harvest Supper, not so many people, due to a number of

reasons, the main one being holidays. So the people who provided the feast, (which it was), had more than enough food and I think the evening went down well.

There were lessons to be learnt at both events for next year, the main one being lights for the new marquee. We managed to save the three small gazebos but the largest which John Caws bought at a B & Q Sale was wrecked. The frame and fittings would I am sure make a good fruit pen. I've already turned down £5, get in touch if you want it! Also if anyone sees a large Gazebo going cheap at an end of season sale please let us know!

The skip seems to be working. But, a big but! Some people are putting in bags of material that needs composting, metal i.e. a

wheelbarrow and sheets of corrugated which should go on the metal heap. Also a lot of wood which needs to go to the far car park for burning on November the 5th. We had a case on the 23rd and 24th of September of fly tipping, a white pickup truck was seen in the afternoons tipping tree cuttings on the wood pile. Two people took the registration number which has been forwarded to the authorities. If they get away with it we could be plagued with them! Another good reason for locking the gates!

There are lots of new people taking plots, the Council have even been seen clearing them. I'm told by Roger Young that the huge heap of leaves and rubbish is to be shredded so it should be good compost. Keep up the good work!

We had a case of fly tipping, a white pickup truck was seen in the afternoons tipping tree cuttings on the wood pile. Two people took the registration number which has been forwarded to the authorities.

Here is the second of two suggestions for using up those Halloween pumpkins. Butternut Squash could also be used!



Pumpkin Roasted with Red Onions and Sage in a Balsamic Glaze

600g whole pumpkin
2 red onions
12 sprigs fresh sage
2 garlic cloves, crushed
2 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp balsamic vinegar
2 tsp maple syrup
Sea Salt

Preheat the oven to 200c/400f/gas mark 4. Peel and deseed the pumpkin then cut into slender wedges about 1 cm wide. Peel the onions and cut into sixths. Put the vegetables and sage

into a roasting tin. Mix the garlic, oil, vinegar and syrup, pour over the vegetables and stir to coat. Roast for 30-40 minutes, or until the vegetables are tender. Scatter with salt and serve hot.

Autumn Show Statistics

(2005 results in Brackets).

1. Participants:

29 (27) from Eastney Lake (236 plots in total).
0 (1) from Hope Cottages (31 plots in total).
25 (26) from Milton Piece (421 plots in total).
In total 54 (54) entrants from 421 plots (a total of 12.8%).

2. We had entries in 63 classes in the following categories:

Vegetables	288	(240).
Flowers	38	(45).
Fruit	41	(44).
Wine	6	(5).
Junior	21	(22).
Plants	7	(8).
Photography	13	(14).
The Master Gardener	5	(3).
Total	467	(425).

The most popular class with 20 entries was '31 - Any Other Vegetable - as RHS Rules'.

3. We had the following number of prizes awarded:

65 (61) First prizes.
54 (57) Second prizes.
47 (48) Third prizes.
30 (24) Highly Commended.

We also awarded 26 (28) Trophies.

Anthea Haseler (Anthea Haseler) got the most prizes 15 (14) and Miss Hilary A M Thomas got the most trophies 4.

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4. For those of you who like numbers:

Longest Runner Bean	58cm	(54cm).
Longest Carrot	no entries	(40cm).
Longest Parsnip	not measured	(141cm).
Heaviest Cabbage	not measured	(24lb 9oz).
Heaviest Onion	2lb 10 oz	(3lb 2oz).
Heaviest 3 Onions	7lb	(8lb).
Heaviest Marrow	27lb	(22lb 12oz).
Heaviest Truss of Tomatoes	3lb 12oz	(2lb 3oz).
Heaviest Pumpkin	95lb 8oz	(98lb).
Heaviest Root of Potatoes grown in a 9" Pot	11lb 12oz	(3lb 4oz).
Most Tomatoes on One Truss	32	(30).

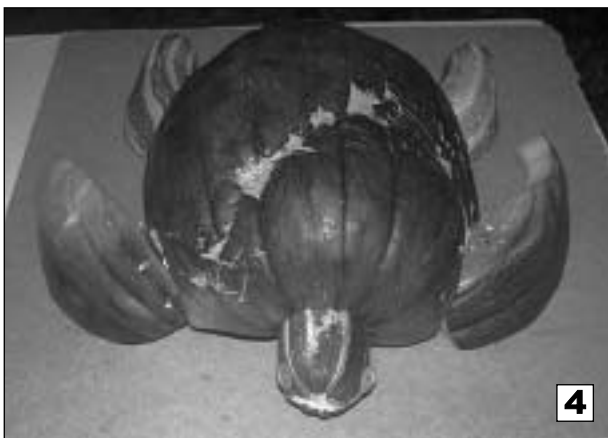
5. Each year, after the judging, we ask the judges for their comments on the Show:

Junior: First 3 in the 'Funniest Vegetable Sculpture' all deserved a First Prize.
Cakes etc.: Where tin size is specified, entrants must abide by the rules. Make sure the greaseproof sheet is removed.
Plants etc.: where plant pot size is specified, entrants must abide by the rules. No fruits are allowed in the 'Foliage Pot Plant' class.
Photography: only British 'Pond Life' was acceptable.
Vegetables: 'The Master Gardener' entries were all of good quality. Cucumbers should still have their flowers on. 'Five Cherry Type Tomatoes' should be under 35mm diameter.

Recommendations:

Change: 'Five Coloured Potatoes/Five White Potatoes' to 'Three Coloured Potatoes/Three White Potatoes'.
'Three Squashes' to 'Two Squashes'.
'Five Onions Below 250gm each/ Five Onion above 250gm each/ Five Cherry Type Tomatoes' to 'Three onions...'
New class for shallots.

Pictures from the Autumn Show by Mike Montgomery



1. Am I in time!
2. Jean, still smiling!
3. Is this seat taken?
4. Anyone for Mock Turtle Soup?
5. This is the life!
6. A basketful of goodness!
7. Anything on the table Mabel?
8. And the sun came out and all was well!



Top Tips

Comfrey is another plant that can be used to increase fertility. It has long roots that tap into stores of nutrients that have leached deep into the soil, the result being that comfrey leaves contain nearly as much nitrogen as farmyard manure and twice as much potassium. Some plot-holders maintain a patch of comfrey and

use its leaves to make a liquid manure. To make your own steep the leaves in water under cover for four weeks, then use undiluted. The same can be done with nettles which you should use diluted. I found this combined with Organic Rooster bought from the shop had all the nutrients needed to grow

excellent crops throughout the year. Sprinkle potash round garlic three or four times during the growing season until the potash is about 3 inches deep. Use natural potash from bonfires or if buying proprietary potash which is much stronger follow instructions on the packet.

Comfrey is another plant that can be used to increase fertility.

...and finally

On the 10th December it is the last day of trading in the shop until the New Year. There will be a raffle, tickets on sale now, and free mulled wine and mince pies. Everyone is welcome. Don't forget if you need an extra Christmas present the recipe books are on sale in the shop. Now up to number 9 and at £1 each copy. The whole set can be bought at the special price of £7.00.

I was having a chat with Bob Tompkinson who tells me that he has been working on the

allotments since 1947. He was sent to work in the pits for 3 years during the war and then helped someone with their allotment afterwards. He still has a plot at Eastney Lake. It was nice to talk to him about his experiences and if anyone has any interesting anecdotes please let me know!

Also if anyone has any spare time we need new committee members!

An excerpt taken from a book published in 1918 which shows that things don't change much on allotments. 'When I began

to dig I found the soil rich with iron bolts, sheet iron, brickbats, broken bottles, china, old boots, oyster shells and rags. I hacked my way through, and now, with winter coming on I thank God for the abundance he has given me'. *T W Butcher, Allotments for All 1918.*

And finally, finally if you are having a bonfire on November the 5th please make sure there are no hedgehogs or other wildlife underneath your bonfire. They are lovely creatures and will eat all your slugs as will Shrews and of course frogs!

