

Monday, March 16th, 2008
Issue 25

The Plot Thickens...



This month's articles...

- Introduction
- Allotment News
- Chairman's Chatter
- Top Tips
- Fox Mange
- 2 Recipes
- ...and finally

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

Editor: Carol Bannister
Design: Andrew Leonard

Introduction to issue 25

The Spring Issue is here again! We have had some lovely weather after the cold during the winter. Having said that we have also had more rain, which must

be a problem for those plot holders who have been flooded! The grass is growing which must be a good sign and the potatoes are chitting well, so it must be

getting warmer! The keen gardeners among us have already put some potatoes under cloches to have an early crop!

Allotment News

A bit of sad news is that one of our oldest plot holders, Annice Fisher passed away last week. I don't think she would mind if I disclose her age and tell you that she was 94 and has had an allotment for nearly 50 years. Those who saw her regularly will remember her riding her bike up until a couple of years ago when she bought a mobility scooter. She will be sadly missed by all who knew her, for her cheery smile and chatter and also her knowledge of allotment gardening. Her children have said that she spent many hours on her allotment and used to swim in the creek on hot days then carry on planting and sowing. Mrs Fisher's family are purchasing a seat to go outside the shop which will match up nicely with the one

placed there by David Farmer and his family to remember his parents. It will be a nice reminder of her! A collection was made to buy some flowers which were sent on behalf of all her friends at the allotments. Thank you to all who contributed, I am sure she would have been very pleased.

An article was passed on to me commenting on how popular allotments now are! Apparently the waiting list in East London is 5 years and in Dorset up to ten years and there are approximately 100,000 across the country waiting for a plot. Across the country everyone is trying to turn unused waste ground into plots, including Network Rail and British Waterways. Unused gardens are

being put into use and even rooftops and car parks. Its not the answer for everyone, some plot holders find it too much hard work weeding and watering, life is just too busy for some. So, if you can't manage your plot, please give up half and let someone else have the benefit.

In a booklet issued by Milton Neighbourhood Forum it mentions the bonfires held on bonfire night. It appears that the locals are on our side about the fire so hopefully this will be reinstated. The skip was full of wood again so if this could be all piled at the top car park again it would be great! Mike Simpson, the chairman is still waiting for a meeting with the Council to see if we can do this!

Chairman's Chatter

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As I write this the sun is shining, the birds are starting to nest, it must be spring! Still it's only just March so we could still have snow! Its nice to see people back working their plots, even mowing the grass. It's a pity that we still have a lot of plots that are not used, even some that have recently been allocated. You would think that having waited so long to get a plot they would be keen to get started.

Having spoken to the Council, we are no nearer solving the problem of the wood heap or the compost

heap. It all seems at a standstill despite local councillor's getting involved. What I have been told is that they are already three months into next year's budget, which doesn't start until the 6th April!

Some good news from the Committee meeting which was held on the 12th February. Deb Prytherch has said she will undertake the job of show secretary, so its up to every body to give her all the help we can. I am sure she will make a good job of it! Also Gina Chambers is to take on running the various raffles which

take place through the year. Carole Bannister has done this for the last five years and would like a break. The scrap metal run resulted in £50 for the funds. Keep it coming, no gas bottles or fridges please!

The shop is well stocked and Brian tells me potatoes and onions are selling fast. Whilst on the subject of the shop, Lindsay could still do with help for Tuesday and Sunday mornings for two hours once a month. It's good fun, not like work and you get to meet all sorts of people.

Top Tips

3 Top Tips in this issue!

1 If your rhubarb is beginning to poke through the earth pop an old bucket or dustbin over a clump to force it and provide tender pale pickings by early April.

2 Don't forget to keep topping up the compost heap and also remember that seaweed is free and there for the taking and is full of minerals and goodness. I put it on my compost heap but my neighbour puts it straight onto the soil.

3 A tip for early strawberries in pots! Bring them into the greenhouse to molly coddle them a bit – they need winter cold to flower well but could now do with some warmth. Feed them with tomato feed - this could also be good for outdoor ones too!

Fox Mange

As you might or might not be aware, a couple of the foxes on the allotment have mange, one quite badly, this is some information that I read in the Telegraph last week.

Thousands of urban foxes are infected with the disease that could spread to pets and even humans, according to animal welfare groups.

Canine mange leaves foxes suffering bald patches and can kill young cubs, the disease can also be picked up by dogs and humans, causing an unpleasant rash.

A senior veterinary surgeon at PDSA said the mange is widespread in the urban fox population. It passes between foxes

through a mite that burrows into the skin and can cause an allergic reaction in humans who come into contact with an infected pet.

(I have since been told that dogs can also pass it onto foxes. If a dog has it they are taken to the Vet and cured whereas the poor fox has to put up with it!)

This article was sent in by Janet Howarth

Spicy Parsnip and Apple Soup

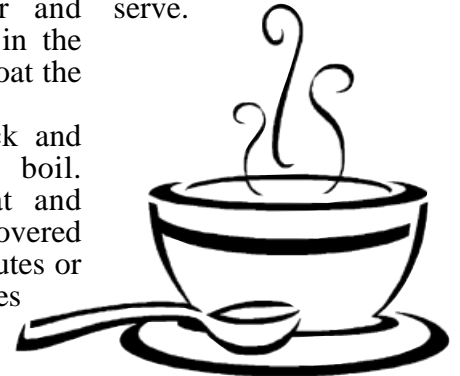
A delicious thick, sweet and spicy soup, this is a good way to use up the last of your parsnips and any stored apples. You can substitute Cox's orange Pippins if you have some you need to use up.

Ingredients:
2 oz Butter
2 onions roughly chopped
1lb Parsnips roughly chopped
1 large 8oz Bramley Apple peeled cored and chopped
1 tbsp curry paste
1 ½ pints vegetable or chicken stock
200ml cup low fat crème fraiche
salt and freshly ground pepper
Parsley sprigs to

garnish, optional

Method:
Melt the butter in a pan and cook the onions for 2-3 minutes until they begin to colour and soften, then stir in the curry paste and coat the vegetables.
Pour in the stock and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat and simmer, partly covered for about 39 minutes or until the vegetables are tender.

Reduce to a puree in a blender or processor, return to the pan and stir in the crème fraiche. Reheat, check the seasoning and serve.



Soda Bread - (makes one loaf)

You can't get a much quicker bread to make than this. No rising needed and the less the dough is handled the lighter the result will be. It's also great with a chunk of cheese and pickles. Best eaten on the day it is made but I doubt if, once tried, there will be a crumb left anyway.

Ingredients:
12 oz plain flour
½ tsp salt
½ tsp bicarbonate of soda
½ pint of natural yoghurt (not set)

Method:
Pre-heat the oven to 200c/gas 6. Mix together the flour, salt and bicarb in a bowl. Make a well in the centre and tip in the yoghurt. Mix in quickly and lightly with a large fork until the mixture forms a soft dough. Turn out on a lightly

floured surface and knead briefly until you have a rough dough. Liberally sprinkle a baking sheet with flour and place the dough on top. Press out to form an 8in round.

Cut a cross in the top of the dough and bake for 25 - 30 minutes until well risen and golden. Tap the bottom, if it sounds hollow it is done. As soon as it comes out

of the oven, wrap the bread in a clean tea towel to keep the crust soft.



...and finally

The Autumn Show will be held on Sunday 6th September. Further details will be in the shop soon for those wanting to enter their produce!

Just a word about subs. These have remained at £2.50 but the treasurer says that this does not cover the money sent to the NASLG and insurance for those working in the shop, so they may have to go up next year! Paying subs allows plot holders to use the shop where discounted seeds etc. are on sale, and also to

enter produce in the show in the Autumn, where you can win rosettes and trophies. So it is worth keeping up your subscription. Brian makes a wonderful job of keeping the shop well stocked and it is nice to have a point of contact for new plot holders and also to find out information of what to

plant and also what is happening on the allotments.

Dates for your diary are the plant sale, which will be held on Sunday 17th May so please sow some extra seeds and bring along any surplus on the day. There will also be a raffle and refreshments.