

Monday, September 28th, 2009
Issue 27

The Plot Thickens...



Autumn Show 2009

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

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Introduction to issue 27

Autumn once again and time to tidy up the plots a bit after the busy season of picking and cooking etc. It has been quite a dry summer for us here in the south and some things were slow to get going i.e. butternut squash.

Lets hope we have a nice Indian Summer. The Harvest Supper takes place on Wednesday the 23rd September. The Cockleshell Centre was unavailable this year so the Nelson Bar in

Melville Road Caravan Site has been booked. They do basket meals, which have to be ordered before hand, so no cooking this year!

Chairman's Chatter

Well, that was the show that very nearly didn't take place! For those new to the allotments, the Council (Parks Department) wanted to dig up the show ground for more plots. After a meeting with two councillors and two Parks Department people, plus at least seventy plot holders, it was quashed, well done!

Many thanks to all the helpers who came to the Show on Friday night, Saturday and most important on Sunday after the show finished. Without this help the show could not take place. As it was, a record crowd

(including the Lord Mayor and the Chairman of the Council) enjoyed the fine afternoon! Regarding the stalls, many thanks to all those workers who toiled non-stop. Our money man, John Caws, has yet to reach a final figure but I am sure it will be OK after we take out payments for the tents, insurance and all the other costs involved. In case you don't know the E&MAA has subsidized the Harvest Supper so that is where some of the money has gone.

We have lots of new faces, so the council have let lots of plots but

there are still plenty to go. We have councillor Les Stevens doing his best to get results regarding 'dirty plots' etc. but its not easy. Remember if you have any complaints ring the Council, the more people who ring the better. The same goes for the Police, if you have any damage report it!

A note to new people (and old) please keep your dogs on a lead, no matter how good they are, as not to chase a cat or fox over other peoples plots isn't what is wanted!

Regards, Mike Simpson,
Chairman

Allotment News

The Allotments Society Autumn Show was held last Sunday 6th September on the show ground at the allotments. A bumper crowd attended and the weather was excellent!

Terry Hall the Lord Mayor visited and was very impressed with the proceedings and Gerald Vernon-Jackson, the leader of Portsmouth City Council was a great help in the refreshment tent serving teas. There was also a plate smashing stall which proved to be popular as was the wellie throwing competition. Also the home made cakes and raffle were other popular attractions. There was also bric a brac and a lucky dip for the children.

There was a good showing of produce and the judges were very impressed with the standard. Mrs Elena Baynham won the overall points and

several of the cups and trophies with a magnificent display of fruit and veg. There is a full list of prize winners outside the shop on the far right hand side in the new notice enclosure. The largest pumpkin and longest runner bean categories were hotly contested and also the best bucket of compost and the baskets of displays of vegetables were impressive too. There were some beautiful floral entries and the cakes, pickles and jams were of a very high standard. The children made some lovely gardens in seed trays and the animal sculptures were fantastic.

It was a good afternoon enjoyed by locals and allotments holders alike, also visitors from further afield and it is hoped to continue the Show for many years to come.

We have been asked by the Council to tell

everyone to please make sure your plots are numbered! It makes it very difficult for the Council to differentiate between them and 'dirty plot' letters have been sent to the wrong plot holders! It is one of the Council's rules on taking up an allotment so please make sure you number them. Also it has been noticed that people are still putting compostibles in the skips. This is strictly not allowed by the Council and the Council have also said you must compost as much as possible and take responsibility for your own rubbish. It is most important for the quality of the soil that you make your own compost and it is surprising how quickly stuff rots down (as seen by the buckets of compost produced at the Autumn Show), so please have a go!

If you are spraying weed killer on your plot please be very careful not to affect any nearby as a lot of people want to be as organic as possible.

Top Tips

Broad beans for overwintering are in the allotment shop now and also Japanese Onion Sets. They should not be planted out too soon as if they grow too quickly they can be

susceptible to frosts. A good guide is somewhere at the end of October depending on the weather. The beans seem to do better than the ones planted in spring as they are not as

susceptible to black fly. If mice do eat your sowings just put some more in, there is plenty of time! Brian says that garlic should be in the shop soon and also shallots!

There is only room for one Top Tip in this issue!

Autumn Show Report 2009

A bumper lot of entries for the Autumn Show – well done everybody who took part! It is not easy for anybody to juggle harvest timings, make time to collect and display the entries, and try to follow the RHS guidelines for each category, but it is very rewarding. I hope more of you, especially newcomers, will give it a go next year.

Our judges were very impressed with the standard of entries, and have left some tips for us to pass on to you all for next year – these won't be news to any old hands, but may help new entrants. They also very much enjoyed their fresh salad lunch, provided with very little notice by Sheila and Shirley – thank you very much for that!

Judges tips:

RHS judged vegetables and fruits.

Generally, in the fruit and vegetables, they are looking for a good uniform size (not too big or too small) and perfect ripeness (not too old and not immature). The vegetables should also be reasonably clean. The requirements of the RHS guidelines need to be followed to the letter – the number specified, the correct presentation (eg onions individually tied with a little raffia,

plums presented with a small amount of stalk) and so on (check in the book kept in the shop). To keep runner beans fresh after picking, wrap in tissue and keep in the fridge.

Apples should not be polished – it removes the bloom. Also, leaves should not be included. The apples and pears were much admired generally this year.

RHS judged flowers

Where a specific number of flower blooms is required, remove any extra buds. Carefully check the size of container or vase specified.

Top Tray

Display the produce with a thin border of the base – do not let anything overhang.

Cookery

The judge was very impressed with the standard of cleanliness and presentation of the chutneys – clean, unsmearred jars are taken into consideration in judging preserves. Chutneys should be at least 3 months old if possible, as the flavour improves. The jams had nice flavours and were well set.

For the cakes, it is important to stay within the size of the tin specified – not over- or under- size. When cooling, there should be

no markings on layers from the cooling rack. Read the instructions carefully – for instance, the Victoria sponge should have sugar on top.

Junior section: The judges were very impressed with the efforts and good ideas of the children who entered these categories, and would have given them all prizes if possible.

Biggest and heaviest categories : The length of carrots and parsnips is measured from the top of the bulbous root to the bottom of the fine hair root.

Finally, I really enjoyed my stint as Show Secretary this year, but it would not have been possible without lots of help from Janet, Lindsay, Andrew, Carole, Sue and Jenny. Many thanks to all of you, and anybody else I've forgotten!

Deb

PS We have a new award this year. Paul Miles from the Parks Department had a walk round the site on Sunday morning, and selected the plot that in his view was the best plot at that time. So well done Dave and Vera Dowdell, at Eastney Lake 64, Winners of Best Plot September 2009!

*Show Secretary
report by
Deb Prytherch*

Baked Butternut with Cinnamon and Ginger

Ingredients:

1 large butternut or two medium, peeled, deseeded and sliced into thick slices.

A little oil

4 medium onions

½ tsp paprika

½ tsp cinnamon

½ tsp cumin seeds

2 handfuls of raisins or sultanas

a walnut sized knob of fresh ginger

Method:

Set the oven to 200C/400F/gas mark 6.

Drop the slices of squash into a bowl and

season with a little oil, some salt and black pepper, then place on a baking sheet. They will cook more evenly if spread out in a single layer.

Bake for about 35-40 minutes until soft enough to pierce with the tip of a knife.

Meanwhile peel the onions, slice them thinly into rings and cook in a shallow pan with a little olive oil until they are soft and translucent but not

coloured. Season them with a good pinch of each of paprika, cinnamon, cumin seeds and the raisins or sultanas. Peel the ginger, grate it coarsely, then stir into the mixture, add salt and pepper to taste.

Put the onions on top of the squash and continue cooking for 15-20 minutes or until the onions are golden when the effect of it all should be tender and sweetly fragrant.

A sweet and fragrant recipe using Butternut Squash

Have a look at our website



Autumn Show 2009

Have a look at our website:

www.eastneyandmiltonallotments.co.uk.

for pictures of all the first prizes and more

...and finally

We agreed it would be nice to next year have a 'gathering' of plot holders sometime in the summer! Nothing hectic, just book a time and turn up with our own food and drink and have a chat with other like minded people. Whilst working in the shop you get to know others but it would be nice to have a get together. Of course it would be reliant on the weather so cannot be booked with certainty too far ahead of time. A barbeque was planned last summer but rained off. Perhaps if the weather is settled we could just put up notices up and see who turns up on the day! We still have the coals bought for the barbeque last time, so watch this space.

The next social item on the agenda after the Harvest Supper will be the Christmas raffle which will be drawn on Sunday the 13th December. This is the last day of trading in the shop for the year! There will be free home made mince pies and mulled wine to sup and it is nice to see other plot holders, have a chat and feel a bit Christmassy.

I have just read in the Observer that there is a 40 year wait in Camden for an allotment. We are very lucky here so lets make the most of it and if you are not using your space fully please let someone else help.

As we were eating lunch which was provided for the helpers on the Saturday of the show weekend, we all commented upon how lovely it was sitting at the Show Ground with the view etc. The tide was in and the sun was shining and it was very pleasant.
