

Monday, March 15th, 2010
Issue 29

The Plot Thickens...



Spring 2010

This month's articles...

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- Allotment News
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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 29

The seed potatoes are now in the shop and if the weather bucks up a bit Spring, hopefully, will be on the way. After the coldest winter for 30 years, we have had the wettest

February. Also the onions are in and peas and broad beans etc. Plenty of time yet to get it all planted! I noticed my neighbours broad beans have been suffering from the frost

which has killed some of them. Just goes to show not to get them in too early so they get too big before the winter sets in (the end of October seems to be about right.)

Allotment News

It seems the Council are cutting new allotments to just three rods! Is this enough room to grow veg and have a shed? Let us know what you think! The Council are doing this because there is such a big waiting list. Also they are still trying to find the money to create the new raised beds in the car park and also for some top soil for the ones where they removed the old compost heap! (I heard on the grapevine that they are going to start soon!)

A most welcome new member of the Allotment Committee is Gerald Vernon-Jackson, the leader of Portsmouth City Council. Gerald was very helpful at last year's Autumn Show and it is great to have a voice for the allotments

on the Council.

The Council have suggested that allotment holders could help them by letting them know the numbers of dirty plots. If you know of any please write down the plot number and put it in the suggestion box at the front of the shop. (Obviously at this time of the year some people cant even get onto their plots because of flooding, but we all know of ones that aren't being used!) Also to make things easier for the Council please put numbers on plots so they don't send out letters to the wrong people.

For those of you who might not be aware, Portsmouth City Council use 3 plots on the Milton Piece site

near the toilets as a Community Allotment site. The Community Allotment is supported by the Health Pompey project. The project was set up in 2001 to provide an accessible and welcoming site to demonstrate and allow people to experience growing food organically and to take gentle exercise in the open air. The aim over the coming year is to get more people involved, learning where food comes from and picking up tips for growing their own. This could be anything from a group of school children sowing seeds, members of the local community group turning the compost or a group of older people watering the polytunnel.

They welcome visits

The Plot Thickens...

Allotment News (continued)

from anyone who is new to growing and would like some advice or would like to find out more about organic gardening. If you are an old hand at allotment growing then please stop by and give them your top tips. There are usually staff on the community plots on Monday to Thursday mornings. Charlotte, Jenny and Alasdair are the people to see on plots 5,6 and 65 Milton Piece.

If you would like to volunteer to help out when groups visit or have links with any schools or other organisations that might be interested in visiting then contact Charlotte Walker,

Community Development Officer, Portsmouth City Council Tel: 023 92688704 or 07939 124610 or email charlotte.walker@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

There have been several instances of glass being stolen from greenhouses at the allotments. If you have been the victim of this crime please report it to the police, however minor it may seem. A crime number is allocated to the police map and action is undertaken when a cluster of crimes appear in a certain area, watch this space. The NSALG do operate an insurance scheme which is designed to cover

sheds, greenhouses and contents. If you are interested John Caws, the treasurer of the allotment Society can obtain forms for you via the shop. Please leave a note in the shop or the suggestion box.

At the Annual General Meeting, which was fairly well attended, it was agreed to donate £100 to the earthquake appeal for Haiti. The minutes of all the meetings are left in the shop for anyone to read also a copy of the latest newsletter if anyone misses it. Don't forget copies of all the newsletters are to be found on the web site at eastneyandmiltonallotments.co.uk which is well worth a look.

Chairman's Chatter

Elsewhere in the newsletter there will be dates for the Plant Sale in May and the Autumn Show in September. Please make sure you have the dates so that you can help or enter as time flies and before we know it will be upon us!

You may have noticed the main car park has been covered with tarmac and the areas of new raised beds are

being produced. Funny how the Council suddenly find they have money to spend! The new year budget starts 6th April!

The skip contract has been given to a new company. When I rang to say we hadn't had one the Council then rang the new company who didn't know anything about it!! Please don't tip the

rubbish if the skip is not there, as the notice says, someone has to clear up the mess when it does come. Also the person who tipped a load of plastic in the metal store, perhaps you could take it home or can't you read?

At last the snow and rain seems to have passed even if it is still frosty at least we can make a start.

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Curried Parsnip and Apple Soup

Ingredients:

1½ lb of parsnips
1½ oz butter
1 tbsp oil
2 medium onions
chopped
2 cloves garlic chopped
2 pints of stock
1 medium bramley
apple (6 oz)
1 heaped tsp coriander
seeds
1 rounded teaspoon
cumin seeds
6 whole cardamom
pods, seeds only
1 rounded tsp turmeric
1 rounded teaspoon
powdered ginger
Salt and freshly milled
black pepper

Method:

You will need a large
saucepan of about 6
pint capacity.

Heat a small frying
pan and dry roast the
coriander, cumin and
cardamom seeds. After
2-3 minutes they will
change colour and start
to jump in the pan.
Then crush them with a

pestle and mortar.

Heat the butter and
oil in a saucepan until
the butter begins to
foam then add the onion
and gently soften for
about 5 minutes, then
add all the crushed spices
along with the turmeric
and ginger, stir and
continue to cook gently
for a few more minutes
while you peel and
chop the parsnip into
1-inch dice, Add the
parsnip to the saucepan,
stirring well, then pour
in the stock, add some
seasoning and let the
soup simmer as gently
as possible for 1 hour
without putting on a lid.

Remove from the
heat, then liquidize.
Return to the saucepan
and check the
seasoning. When you
are ready to eat reheat
very gently and as the
soup reaches simmering
point grate the apple
into it. Let the soup
simmer for only 3-4
minutes. Serve in hot

soup bowls garnished
with Parsnip Crisps.

Parsnip Crisps

1 med to large parsnip
(10-12 oz)
6 tablespoons
groundnut oil, salt

Peel the parsnip and
then slice into rounds as
thinly as you can using
a sharp knife. Heat the
oil in a 10 inch frying
pan until it is very hot,
almost smoking, then
fry the parsnip slices in
batches until they are
golden brown, about
2-3 minutes (they will
not stay flat or colour
evenly but will twist
into lovely shapes). As
they're cooked remove
them with a slotted
spoon and spread them
out on kitchen paper to
drain. Sprinkle lightly
with salt. If you like
you can make these in
advance as they will
stay crisp for a couple
of hours.

*A lovely soup with
the sweetness of the
parsnips sharpened
by the apple, and the
spices come through
beautifully. If you
would like to garnish
with parsnip crisps
instead of croutons
the recipe follows
this one!*

Top Tips

To prevent powdery
mildew on plants, mix
one teaspoon of Baking
Soda, five drops of corn
oil and one drop of
washing up liquid in
one quart of water. Fill
a trigger spray bottle
with the mix and spray
directly on plants. The
baking soda changes
the pH of the leaves,
inhibiting fungi growth.

Apply once a week for
approximately two
months and after rain.

I know I've done
this tip before but for
the benefit of new plot
holders, two cloves of
garlic, some nettles and
comfrey, left to infuse
for 3 days make a good
spray for green fly and
also a good fertilizer.
(Two for the price of

one).

If you haven't
pruned your grapevine
do so immediately as
they will bleed if left
too late. Once you have
a framework of primary
limbs, prune laterals
back to one or two
buds. Also wisteria
should be pruned this
month the same way!

*There are 3 Top Tips
in this issue!*

Notes on a Minor Plot

On reading the November instalment of *The Plot Thickens* a note caught my eye about seeking an article from a new plot holder! If it hadn't been for the recent snow and subsequent time spent indoors, this would never have been written, as it is I've risen to the challenge.

I think we are still new, we have had our plot for three seasons, enough to dwell on past success and failure and to plan for next season. Our plot has added a new dimension to our lives, shopping habits and meals have changed, depending more on what is available at the plot.

We were extremely lucky to inherit a small shed, an apple tree,

gooseberry and blackcurrant bushes, though not so lucky to have a huge pile of rubbish beside the shed where I wanted a picnic spot!

The last season saw a glut of tomatoes, failed spinach?? Good runner beans, shrivelled sweetcorn (at what stage do they need water?) and never enough raspberries and sweet juicy apples. We are still eating potatoes. I failed to get lettuce and tomatoes ready at the same time, a challenge for next summer.

Our plot is enjoyable, frustrating at times, more work than I ever imagined. Neither does it help that we own a campervan and seem to

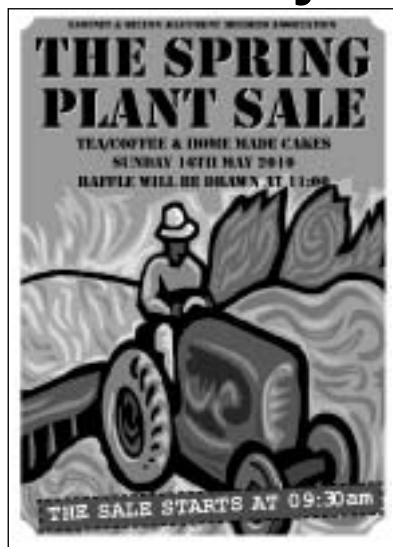
be away at crucial planting or harvesting times. I am totally committed to the gardening, however I was unprepared, surprised and pleased by the kindness, advice and humorous quips from our plot neighbours who have been "at it" for years!

Thank you very much Mr and Mrs Denny for your article. It was lovely to read of your experiences. I think you learn as you go along and we each seem to have our own way of doing things. We were novices when we got our plot and had a lot of help from people in the shop and neighbours on the plot. It is a great way of getting fresh veg and fresh air! Long may it continue!

Notes on a Minor Plot written by Mr and Mrs Denny

...and finally

Don't forget the Plant Sale will be held on Sunday 16th May and the Autumn Show will be on Sunday 5th September 2010.



Plant Sale Sunday 16th May



Autumn Show Sunday 5th September