

Monday, February 28, 2005
Issue 4

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. Hopefully this will be produced sometime

Introduction to issue 4

Well it's the 1st March tomorrow and planting time is just around the corner. I'm sure some of you keen plot holders already have

seeds growing in the greenhouse or on your window sills! I have heard of more than one keen gardener who already has a row or

two of potatoes in! The frog spawn has been in the pond and ditch for a couple of weeks now and spring is on the way.

Allotment News

Potatoes and onion sets are selling well in the shop. There are still plenty of potatoes left, a good selection at very cheap prices! Brian seems to have eradicated the mice from the shop, which he caught in humane traps and then set them free at a distance.

Welcome to Peter Spreadbury, the new Treasurer who has

taken over from John Caws. Volunteers are still needed for 2 hours a month to help in the shop!

The plant sale is being held on 22nd May, where plants may be bought and also a nice cup of tea and a home made cake. There will be a raffle which will be drawn at 11.00. The sale will start at 9.30

am. As seed planting time is coming up, perhaps everyone could grow a few extra plants to donate to the sale.

Sunday the 4th September has been agreed as a good date for the Autumn Show. Mike Simpson, the Chairman, is going to try to purchase a new (second hand) show tent by then!

Vandalism on the Plot

On Tuesday the 1st March, our resident unpaid security guard, Dave Hilder, spied a gang of youths wandering through the allotments and heard the sound of breaking glass. He promptly phoned the

police and they came and actually caught some of the gang! What happens now, I think, depends on you! If you have had damage, each item must be reported to the Police at Southsea

Police Station (number in the shop). Well done to Dave for his prompt action and to the Police for coming so quickly! Lets hope this will put the gang off further raids!

*Val Peach is
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Coach Trip to Kew Gardens

Val Peach is organizing a trip to Kew Gardens on Saturday the 16th April. The tickets will cost £14.00 each, including the coach and entry into the gardens. The coach will pick up at 9.00 and we hope to arrive at Kew by 11.00. There is plenty to see at Kew and we will leave there at 5.00 unless the weather is inclement! The tickets may be purchased from the shop.

Portsmouth Farms

When Andrew and I were researching the history of the allotments, we came across the following interesting paragraphs, in a Corporation book, which relate to Portsea Island before it was urbanized in the late 19th Century:-

Fawcett Road, one at Milton near the Asylum and Beach Farm in Jews Lane, afterwards called Beach Farm Road.

The fertility of the soil is thus referred to in Charpentier's Guide : "A large part of the island is laid out in kitchen and fruit gardens, from which crops of vegetables are grown much earlier than in most other parts of the kingdom. The island is celebrated for the finest kind of broccoli, single heads of which have been grown on it that weighed 25lbs. each. (This must be an exaggeration!) The soil and climate are also peculiarity adapted to the vine, especially at Southsea, where is a fine vineyard, from which the owner's table is supplied with a wine nearly equal in flavour to that of the Portuguese islands. At a suburb, called Newtown, Fratton, is also a fine vineyard belonging to Mr. Mearns, who has so much improved his vines that the grapes are equal in size and flavour to the finest foreign fruit, some of the bunches being upwards of 5lbs. in weight, eighteen inches long and nineteen in girth. To this it may be added that no market in London can produce finer meat than can be had in and near Portsmouth ; and that bread is at all times 2d. the 4lb. loaf cheaper than at London or Brighton.

Which just goes to show that our climate in Portsmouth has always been very good!

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Top Tip for Pruning

Annual pruning encourages new growth shoots and continual fruiting spur development.

Prune your apple trees if you haven't already done so and also damsons plums, pears and quince. Annual pruning encourages new growth shoots and continual fruiting spur development. Large vegetative growth may indicate too heavy pruning. A large crop of small fruit indicates too little pruning. Pruning involves cutting off unnecessary branches so that light can reach all parts of the tree. Also remove all crossing and rubbing branches. Peaches and Nectarines should not be pruned in the winter due to the risk of infection by silver leaf and bacterial canker.

MP's Wish List

MP Ben Chapman has presented the Government with his 'allotment' wish list. Here is a summary of his key demands.

MP Ben Chapman has presented the Government with his 'allotment' wish list. Here is a summary of his key demands:-

Greater protection for allotments from property developers;
An image change, possibly involving a new name for allotments;
Better security measures that would help to deter vandalism and cut crime levels;

A big promotion of the health benefits of allotment gardening that would encourage people to grow their own fresh fruit and veg;
More improvement in current plots, particularly in improvement of toilet facilities;

He also states that more allotments are needed to meet demand from future generations and he thinks (along with most allotment holders)

that there is no better way of keeping fit and getting the satisfaction of growing your own healthy food!

The MP's comments received a response from a Government Minister Paul Clark who stated "measurable improvements should be made by 2008 which would bring about cleaner, safer, greener public spaces!" We shall see!

Recipe

Butternut Squash and Sage Soup

Like me you are probably running out of Butternut Squash now but this soup is so delicious the recipe is worth keeping for next season or try substituting parsnips or celeriac for the squash:-

1 large butternut squash, 2 medium

onions peeled and sliced, 4 cloves of garlic peeled and sliced, 2oz unsalted butter, 2 pints of water, 5 fl oz of whipping cream, salt and freshly ground pepper, 10 large leaves of sage finely sliced. I made twice the quantity of soup and only added 5 fluid oz of cream. This freezes well.

Peel and deseed the

squash. Chop into 1 inch chunks and put into a large saucepan with the onions, garlic, butter and 1 tsp salt. Sweat for about 7 minutes, pour over the water and bring to the boil. Boil for about 15 minutes until soft. Puree in a blender, add the cream and heat through. Add the sliced sage and serve.

Butternut Squash and Sage Soup

Caption Competition

The name of the winner of the Caption Competition will be put on the notice board at the shop and the end of March - so you have another couple of weeks to get your entries in.

Win a bottle of whisky! You have until the end of March to get your entries in.



Photo courtesy of Mike Montgomery, who took all the photos at the Autumn Show and can be reached on 023 92346771, email: mrmontgomery@ntlworld.com

...and finally

Please grow a few extra plants for the plant sale on the 22nd May and come along for the raffle and tea and cakes!

Don't forget to book your places on the Coach trip to Kew Gardens, it will be a lovely day out and loads to see!

Please grow a few extra plants for the plant sale on the 22nd May and come along for the raffle and tea and cakes!

Don't forget if anyone has views or tips they

would like to share with other allotment holders drop a note into the shop, also any problems they need help with! Also if you have a couple of hours to spare to help out in the shop once a month it would be most helpful. Don't forget we are all voluntary helpers doing our best for the Association which in the end benefits everyone on

the allotments. It is hard getting the Corporation to put things right as they never have any money to spare but we do liaise with them on a regular basis!

Now for the best bit - happy seed sowing and planting - here comes summer, look forward to seeing you all down at the plot!