

Extension

The extension is now almost completed and nearly all the plots let, however, this still leaves a waiting list of 70, so please make good use of your own. We would like to extend a warm welcome to our new arrivals and wish them lots of fun and success on their new plots. We would kindly ask you not to drive any vehicles on the new paths until the end of June when the reinforcement should have bedded in. Also please take extra care in wet weather, as the path will be very slippery underfoot until the grass has grown over it. Well done and many thanks to all those who made this extension possible.

Donations

Many thanks for all the additional amounts that people gave with their rents, all of which will help with the on going costs of the association.

Fun Day

"Fairfield Fun Day" on the 4th of July is a great opportunity to help the allotment association raise funds. Last year we had three stalls and made a profit of £200! This year we are aiming to do even better. There are all sorts of ways you can help:

- Pot on spare seedlings or split bigger plants. Herbs sell very well but also flower cuttings, tomatoes, peppers etc. If you want more space, leave them in the greenhouse of allotment 12b.
- Donate some spare produce from your allotment- last year we could have sold much more rhubarb, new potatoes, soft fruit, sweet peas, cabbages, courgettes. If you aren't around on the morning of July 4th, let me know your allotment number and we'll collect. If you are, please leave produce at one of the gates.
- On the day itself we need help in the morning to collect produce and carry it over to the marquee
- We also need helpers to sell the produce- it can be a bit hectic, but is great fun. If you can spare an hour, let me know and I'll put you on the rota
- We also need a couple of people to organise the children's competitions- creating the most ugly creature from a vegetable, and making a miniature garden in a tray or biscuit tin
- If you are a little person, start thinking about your ugly animal or miniature garden design

If you want to know more or want to help, please contact me on 01524 64997 or leave a note in the greenhouse at 12B - Jean Laurie

Garden Competition

The garden competition has returned and will take place on Fun Day, so please make sure your plots are in good shape. There will be two judges for this year. The rules are loose but the judges will look at the overall appearance of the plot, the health and variety of crops; general maintenance; weather there is water collection and composting. The judges will choose the top three full plots and the top 3 half & quarters, there may well be something for the best of the new plots (although that might have to wait until next season!) The judges will have free reign to make any special commendations they wish. We won't be awarding prizes, just the acclaim! It helps the judges enormously if the number of your plot is clearly marked (which it should be).

Paths & Tracks & Cars

Some grass paths which divide plots, are looking a little unkempt so please make an effort to keep them tidy. Over the last few weeks there have been a number of vehicles left on the plots while members have been visiting, please can you only bring vehicles on for loading and unloading for as short a time as is necessary.

Water Supply

Please keep a close eye on the water tanks as they have signs of wear, such as ball cocks failing. Taps should not be left open. Water storage will be are next big expense which we will have to raise funds for. We would appreciate the return of any blue barrels that are not being used so please, connect and collect or if not return to John L as he can find good homes for them.

Vandalism

Unfortunately the allotments sheds were broken into a couple times earlier this year and some damage to property occurred. Please report this to the police, as this is necessary for the authorities to recognise there is a problem that needs to be addressed. Please also ensure you keep the gates locked for security and peace of mind.

Mower

Since the theft of our last mower we have been storing our new mower in a members garage, unfortunately this option is no longer available to us so we have nowhere to store it. Does anyone have secure but accessible storage near to the allotments that we could use? If so please get in touch with John Lambert.

Natural pest control

There are many good reasons for growing our own food and when we work in harmony with nature instead of against it, allotments can become havens for wildlife as well as rewarding us with safe and tasty food.

So, what is wrong with pesticides? Well, for a start pesticides can make the pest situation worse. Some pests build a resistance to the chemicals. Secondary pests that are not affected by one chemical may then need another type of chemical. So more and different chemicals have to be applied and before you know it you have a cocktail of powders, liquids and pellets being released into your allotment harming plants, soil as well as pests, but also, in time, kills the very life that you need in the soil and environment to grow your food safely. (Charlie Rylie soil assoc)

So what can you do to control pests safely?

- Start to think in a different way. We share the soil with many different living creatures most of which help us, so we do not want to kill them.
- Learn to identify the friends and foes. For example the hoverfly and its larvae eat aphids; the centipede is the predator of soil dwelling insects and small slugs: the ground beetle eats cutworm, leather jackets and other pests; the lady bird does a wonderful job at controlling aphids. There are many books available with photos or artwork that will help identify the friends and foes of the allotment. The Soil Association has produced a book "Pest" which is very useful. ISBN1-85675-127-9 .The Internet is also a great source of information.
- A good soil rich in organic matter will make your plants stronger and reduce pest attack on plants.
- Test your soil to ensure it is neutral and choose plants that wont get too stressed by wind or wet weather.
- Grow a wide variety of plants, rotating your crops thus ensuring you don't deplete your soil of nutrients weakening future crops.
- Grow plant that attract predators and provide them with conditions they prefer.
- Devise barriers such as collars cut out of plastic bottles to stop cabbage root fly. Net your fruit bushes to prevent bird damage.
- Use organic pesticide, as they are safer than chemicals sprays because they are natural occurring substances that are non-systemic and none residual. In other words they neither harm the environment nor enter the food chain and break down harmlessly once they have done there work.

Here are some useful websites if you need to know more.

Garden Organic www.gardenorganic.org.uk ; Soil Association www.soilassociation.org ; Organic Gardening catalogue www.organiccatalog.com

Website

The allotment web site has changed. If you would like anything adding or have any suggestions or comments they would be welcome, as would any articles or ideas for inclusion in the newsletter. Just get in touch:

<http://www.fairfield-allotments.co.uk>

Committee

The committee meets every other month at The Borough at 7.30pm. Next meetings - 09.07.09, 03.09.09, 07.01.10, 04.02.09 AGM. Your allotment committee is: Acting Chair: Caroline Eames, Secretary: John Lambert, 6 Carr House Lane, Lancaster LA1 15W Tel: Tel. 01524 849371 secretary@fairfield-allotments.co.uk, Treasurer: George Burnett, 94 Westbourne Road, Lancaster LA1 5JX Tel. 01524 62585, Gillian Allen, Jon Barry, John Weedy & Sid Duncan . New members or observers always wanted. If any member does feel like helping out on the committee, or just coming to the meetings, you will be welcome.

Please note new contacts for the association: secretary@fairfield-allotments.co.uk for general comments, or for ideas or articles for the newsletter: newsletter@fairfield-allotments.com