

Contaminated Manure

If you've been looking at the website you'll know we've posted a couple of things about problems with weedkiller/ herbicide contaminated manure on allotments across the country.

Unfortunately it seems that the problem has arrived at Fairfield.

At least one manure delivery seems to be contaminated. We are in the process of contacting the supplier to make sure they stop offering manure to allotments and veg growers. (At the moment we do not think the free bagged stuff is the problem, but you should test it.) The best advice we can find is available through the following links.

<http://apps.rhs.org.uk/advicesearch/Profile.aspx?pid=477>

<http://glallotments.co.uk/default.aspx>

<http://www.growyourown.info/page164.html>

<http://www.manurematters.co.uk/gardening.htm>

It is essential that you test any standing manure you have on your plot before using it. Here is the recommended method:

- Thoroughly mix 1 part manure with 1 part multi-purpose compost in a clean bucket. Prepare enough to fill four 5-inch pots.
- Fill another four clean pots solely with multi-purpose compost. These will be the untreated comparisons.
- Place each of the pots in a separate saucer to prevent water from one pot reaching another.
- Water the pots and leave to stand for 24 hours.
- Plant each pot with four broad bean seeds
- Observe subsequent growth for four-week period and note any ill effects in the pots containing the manure mix, such as cupped leaves and fernlike growth on new shoots.

We will test some of the free manure, but please do it yourself as it can only help us be more confident about it.

Let's hope it's just an isolated incident and with care we can avoid further issues. We won't be able to do any more than the websites we've mentioned say to do, but we will alert the NSALG, chemical company and government about how we've been affected.

surplus sale, 28th august

There will be a sale of surplus produce, Saturday 28th August, 11am – 2pm, by the Sunnyside entrance. Donations of the following items are particularly welcome – or come along and buy:

- Fruit and vegetables
- Cut flowers
- Herbs and other potted plants
- Jams and chutneys (get making!)
- Home-made cakes and biscuits

All proceeds will go to the Fairfields Allotment Association. Please contact Ruth MacKenzie (Plot 10A) or Gillian Allen (Plot 52B/53B) if you are able to help in any way. Check your sheds and the notice boards for more contact details!

fairfield funday

A huge big thank you to Jean Laurie and her team who reared a great total of £350. Jean writes:

Thanks to everyone who donated produce and plants for the allotment association stall at Fairfield Family Fun Day. The stall looked stunning, with many people commenting on how gorgeous all the produce looked. Many people bought plants - everything from little pots of aquilegia to purple basil and spare tomato seedlings. Some people donated unlabelled plants so we even sold 'pot luck plants' at 30p a pot!

Special thanks to everyone who helped sell on the stall too. The banner and aprons looked really professional. Lots of time was taken up telling people how to pot on plants and it felt a bit like Gardener's Question Time!

We raised a whopping £345.50p which should help with the water bill after the dry spell in May/June.

The competitions we usually run for children weren't advertised, so we have book token prizes in hand for next year. We would also have held the allotment competition as part of the Fairfield Funday, but one judge has moved back to Australia and the other was not contactable... so we will try and reschedule.

Now we're at the end of the growing season, the produce sale at the end of August ought to raise even more.

Thanks again - your donated plants and produce really do make a difference.

jam jars

For one of our fundraisers later in the year some volunteers will be making jams, preserves and chutneys. They'd like your donations of suitable jars (clean, with lids). So if you've got a few spare, please put them by either gate and we'll collect them from there.

water use & collection

Unfortunately the water tanks are showing signs of wear. Please help us by closing unused taps, and reporting any problems immediately.

Repairing and replacing the main water containers is high on our list of improvements for the next year.

As part of winter maintenance can all plot holders please try and connect water butts to all sheds and greenhouses. This helps us to cut down on water use, which is one of our biggest expenses. **Covering water butts makes them safer for wildlife and children,** and please do ensure that butts are stable, as they are very heavy when full.

bonfires

For some, plot-clearing means bonfires. If you are going to have a bonfire please respect our neighbours. We've already received one complaint from a normally very tolerant neighbour and would not want this to escalate.

- Keep fires small if possible and do not leave them to burn unattended
- Make sure the wind is blowing away from houses
- Try not to light fires when people are likely to have washing out, or windows open
- If other people have fires lit, don't join in!

Here's a link to where we stand legally on bonfires. There's also advice on how to get rid of waste rather than burn it.

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/WhereYouLive/Streetcleaninglitterandillegaldumping/DG_4018684

committee

Welcome and a big thank you to new committee members Manjeet, Catherine, Ian, Mike and Anne.

The committee meets every other month at The Borough at 7.30pm. Next meetings 9th September 2010, 6th January 2010. **AGM 8th February 2010** – all welcome, we'd like to see as many allotmentees as possible come along.

Your allotment committee is:

Acting Chair: Caroline Eames

Secretary: John Lambert,
6 Carr House Lane,
Lancaster LA1 1SW
01524 849371
secretary@fairfield-allotments.co.uk

Treasurer: George Burnett,
94 Westbourne Road,
Lancaster LA1 5JX
01524 62585

Gillian Allen, Ian Fraser, Manjeet Lamba, Catherine Fatkin, John Weedy, Mike Brandwood and Anne Stewardson.

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 most welcome.

shed break-ins

Sorry to say, some more sheds have been broken into. The culprits used bolt cutters strong enough to cut through clasps and some padlocks. Please check your shed and contents. We strongly advise that you do not keep expensive or powered equipment in your shed.

If your shed is broken into, we urge you (and it must be you as an individual plot holder) to contact the police and at the very least get a crime number. This the only way that these events will be included in crime statistics.

pond safety

A pond is an excellent wildlife feature, but they can be dangerous to children and small animals such as hedgehogs. To reduce the chance of an accident, you can:

- Cover ponds with a rigid metal mesh (this however prevents animals from drinking), or
- Ensure that ponds have a shallow, beach-like slope with a 'grippy' bottom surface (such as pebbles), so that animals that fall in can clamber out again easily.

A steep, slippery slope is even worse than a vertical edge, as animals in the water can't reach the edge to pull themselves out, or push themselves out from the pond base.

Drowned hedgehogs eat no slugs.

paths & hedges

Some of the small grass paths which divide plots are looking a little unkempt, so please make an effort to keep them tidy. This should be a shared task with neighbouring plots.

If you are on the new plots please could you also help us out by chopping down the weeds under the new hedge opposite your plot. This will really help the hedge to get established.

bees

The bee plot is now up and buzzing! If you need to talk to anyone about the bees or have a closer look (we do have adult- and child-sized suits), please contact Ruth Mackenzie (Plot 10A) or Barbara Mauthe (23B)...or Contact John Lambert who can pass on contact details.

website and forum

Share hints and tips, ask for advice, and generally spend time on the plot even when it's raining!

To join - go to the forum page (<http://www.fairfield-allotments.co.uk/forum.html>) and register. You'll need an email address (which remains invisible to other users) and to choose a user name which others will see. Most users of discussion forums use a 'nickname' rather than real names, but that's up to you.

As this is a private forum your 'application' to join will need to be approved. If we don't recognise your email address then we can't approve your application. If we don't have your email address then get in touch with John Lambert.