

# fairfield allotments

newsletter 29 Summer 2014

## SUMMER FUN

We look forward to the Fairfield Fun Day which will be on Saturday, 5<sup>th</sup> July and which is our next major event. This takes place every two years and involves the whole local community. It takes place on Fairfield Green from 12 'til 5, although we start setting up from 9 in the morning. It is a great opportunity for us to get to know one another, and it would be wonderful if lots of members are able to take part. The Fun Day is organised by the Fairfield Association and this year Rose Garvey and Julie Goodacre have kindly agreed to organise and coordinate our own display. They can be contacted by email: [roseandjulie@gmail.com](mailto:roseandjulie@gmail.com) or on plot 55A. We need as many volunteers as possible to help with putting up our stand in the early morning and/or giving an hour or two of your time during the morning or afternoon to help with selling etc. We would particularly urge new members of our Association to come and join in; it will be a great day and you will meet lots of fellow 'allotmenters.'

This year we are particularly excited because it will be the first time that we will use our newly acquired smart event shelters and tables - Many thanks to everybody who contributed time and produce to the Surplus Produce Sale last August making it possible for us to raise the funds for these purchases. In August last year we borrowed some event shelters and they proved to be a great success not only in enabling us to present our produce well but also in attracting people to come in and buy our produce.

We need donations of fruit, flowers, plants, vegetables, jams and chutneys. So please bring as much as you can spare. You can either bring these on the day or contact Rose and Julie to arrange previous delivery; either way please come and join us on the day and have fun.

## NEW MEMBERS

We would like to extend a warm welcome to new members and we very much hope that you will enjoy the allotment experience. We have quite a large number of new members this summer, and we expect that many of you will already be friendly with your neighbours. Last year the Committee set up a mentoring system to ensure that a friendly face, help and advice is available to all new members. Ruth MacKenzie and John Weedy have kindly taken on this role, and we would like to thank both of them for their valuable contributions. If you would like to talk to John or Ruth please contact our Secretary, John Lambert, who will be pleased to put you in touch with them. Also as always we would ask all members to give a friendly welcome to new faces, especially those who have become new neighbours.

## MOWING

Once again we thank Martin Luke for the excellent way in which he mows our paths and keeps our borders tidy. Martin tells us that he would like to be contacted by any plot holders who would like some grass cuttings on their plots for composting or mulch. Please look out for Martin when he is mowing and show him where you would like the cuttings placed.

## CHILDREN

Once again we would like to remind parents and guardians that children must be supervised at all times and must not be allowed near power tools. Most parents are fully aware of this and being very responsible, but we have had some worrying incidents.

## SLUGS

We all suffer from slug damage to some extent and some plots seem to have a very serious problem. Of course we have all tried various methods to eradicate the little demons but for many of us the end result is a resounding victory for the slugs. Now at last help may be at hand in either of two organic forms. Nematodes have been available for quite a few years now and undoubtedly have an impact on the slug population without harming birds or animals. There is also another solution approved by organic organisations across Europe and which has been used by farmers for many years but has been available to the public for a shorter time: ferric phosphate slug pellets kill the slugs underground and so the dead slugs will not be eaten by birds or animals. We have looked at a lot of reports about these slug pellets (with the help of Google), and the consensus seems to be that they are harmless to animals and birds. Obviously extreme consumption of thousands of pellets would be harmful but improbable. Additionally these slug pellets break down over time into iron and phosphate, both naturally occurring substances which do not poison the soil. There is one published paper which suggests that these pellets may cause some harm to earthworms in terms of their rate of growth, but the sample of earthworms was very small and we have not found similar results elsewhere. This suggests that the results are inconclusive and that further research is required. Meanwhile the manufacturers claim that they do not harm earthworms and ferric phosphate pellets are approved by the German regulator. They are widely used by growers in the UK and the packaging bears the logo of the Organic Farmers and Growers with the subscript, "Product Approved for Use in Organic Systems."

Until this year these pellets were quite expensive, but a large tub costs between £4 and £5 in most garden shops this year and a little goes a long way because the recommended dose is very sparing. A few members are using them this year and finding them very effective. Unfortunately these slug pellets are the same colour as the harmful metaldehyde pellets.

It would be interesting to have some feedback with members' views and we will try to publish a representative selection of responses in our next newsletter.

## DIARY DATES

1. The next **SITE INSPECTION** by the Committee will be on Saturday, 28<sup>th</sup> June commencing at 11.00am. New members should not be alarmed. The Committee is concerned to see that the plots are being actively cultivated, reasonably tidy and no rules are being broken. If you have recently inherited a very overgrown plot we would like to see evidence of improvement but we do not expect miracles.
2. **FAIRFIELD FUN DAY AND KEY EXCHANGE: Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2014.** Volunteers willing to set up and run stalls will be very welcome, and of course everybody is invited to contribute: fruit, vegetables, flowers, potted plants, jams and chutneys. More information in the article above.
3. **SURPLUS PRODUCE SALE: Saturday, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2014.** Volunteers and contributions as above plus loads of home-made cakes both for the refreshments table and for sale for taking home please.



## PATHS AND TRACKS

Please would everybody take especial care to keep the paths and tracks free of stones. It is only too easy to chuck the odd stone on the tracks and paths when digging or weeding and then to forget to collect them up afterwards. Unfortunately this causes tremendous problems for the lawnmower. Martin tells us that the blades have been quite badly damaged at times. The lawnmower is an asset of our Association – Please look after it.

The Committee has decided to invest in more of the plastic webbing to strengthen our tracks. This is very expensive and so we can only do a bit at a time. The Committee would like to point out that, although the webbing vastly improves the tracks, it is still imperative that vehicles are not brought on to the tracks when the ground is wet. A lot of damage results.

## NEW PADLOCKS AND KEYS - IMPORTANT

Our existing padlocks and keys have become very worn and difficult to use, and so the Committee has purchased replacements.

We're going to change three of the locks on Funday, leaving only the vehicle gate at Sunnyside end with the old padlock (This will remain in place for a couple of weeks to ensure all members have the new key!). **We would like to issue as many new keys in one day if we can, it seems sensible for that to be Funday as hopefully most people will want to come along to that. So if you head to our stall on Funday (12-5) you can exchange your old key for a new one.**

Once again we must remind everybody of the importance of locking the gates at all times. Not only does this deter 'uninvited guests,' theft and vandalism but also we would face insurance issues if an accident was sustained by a non-member who had entered through an unlocked gate.

## COMMITTEE AND CONTACTS

Your allotment committee is:

**Chair:** Manjeet Lamba

**Secretary:** John Lambert, 6 Carr House Lane, Lancaster LA1 1SW. Tel: 01524 849371.

Email: [secretary@fairfield-allotments.co.uk](mailto:secretary@fairfield-allotments.co.uk)

**Treasurer:** George Burnett, 8 South Road, Lancaster LA1 4XD. Tel: 01524 840715

Email: [georgeburnett52@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:georgeburnett52@yahoo.co.uk)

Members: Gillian Allen, Philip Atkinson, Val Burnett, Ian Fraser, Ruth Mackenzie, John Weedy

New members or observers are always wanted. If any member does feel like helping out on the Committee, or just coming to meetings, you will be most welcome.

Proposed dates for meetings next season:  
15.03.14 (Site), 08.05.14, 10.07.14, 13.09.14 (Site), 08.01.15 , 12.02.15 (AGM).



## AND FINALLY.....

Congratulations to our members. The warm spring has favoured us and most members have taken advantage of the conditions to do early sowings and plantings. Most plots are tidy and looking really productive.