

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2006

H.A.S. quick guide to composting

You can never get enough compost for your allotment and the best thing we can do is make it ourselves - that's why H.A.S. are encouraging all members to start a compost heap on their plot and join in with the Community Compost projects under way at Spring Hill and Aden Terrace. There's heaps of information available on composting (see the website) but the most important thing to remember is getting the mix right. Composting depends on bringing the right 'green' and 'brown' compost materials together in approximately equal proportions.

'Green' - wet, soft green materials (high in nitrogen)

- grass
- weeds (avoid persistent weeds ground elder, bindweed)
- raw fruit and vegetables
- plant matter
- peas and beans

Do not put in cooked foods, meat, etc. because it attracts rats and foxes. Avoid potatoes and tomatoes with potato blight disease as it spreads it.

'Brown' - dry, hard, absorbent materials (high in carbon)

- dead leaves
- cardboard
- wood chippings
- dry plant stems
- twigs
- crunched up paper
- egg boxes
- crumpled cardboard
- straw/hay

Use it don't lose it... your plot that is

Last year the uncertainty of soil contamination meant the Committee took a lenient view on the use of the neglected plot policy. This year we have no such worries so site reps will be checking plots to ensure work is underway as the season commences. The waiting list is at an all time high with 145 waiting list members itching to get started. So, plot holders, if you can't work your plot, do the right thing and pass it on to someone on the list, contact the Secretary.

VACANT POST

Site representative

We currently need a site rep for St Kilda's. All you need to do is keep an eye on the plots on your site and liaise with the committee as necessary. Please help us to enable the work of the allotment society to continue

Aden Terrace

The flowerbeds at Aden Terrace have in the past been let as a separate plot. However this has not proved worthwhile. Would it be possible for all plot holders at Aden Terrace to cultivate the piece of flowerbed adjoining their own plot? We shall review the success of this at the end of the year.

Composting

The Society has now received confirmation of our successful grant bid to NLWA to purchase a shredder and construct compost bins at Spring Hill and Aden Terrace. Site reps will be arranging events on sites shortly to clear space and construct bins following the successful bin-building workshop in November. If you'd like to help contact: Martin or Sue for Aden Terrace Joss or Eugene for Spring Hill

New SOCIETY BYE-LAW

The following policy to optimise plot usage, by occasionally splitting under-used plots, was agreed at the last AGM. Minutes of the AGM are given at the end of this newsletter.

1. Criteria for initiating and enforcing plot sharing:
 - A documented continued neglect or insufficient planting/cultivation (to have been monitored over one or two growing seasons, *Neglected Plot Letters, committee minutes*). The Byelaws give one third of plot uncultivated as insufficient cultivation.
 - There is no acceptable evidence that the neglect is of a temporary nature due to an acute illness, family crisis, etc.
 - Circumstances do not merit a Notice to Quit letter.
2. A final Neglected Plot Letter is sent not as a notice to quit, but as an announcement to divide the full plot in half, a move which would only be avoided by the plot holder doing the necessary cultivation and work on the plot. The incumbent plot holder will have one month only to avoid having the plot divided in two.
3. Full plot to be divided into two equal half plots taking into account light, growing conditions, site layout and access, with the site reps and/or committee determining the boundaries.
4. Resident plot holder given 2 weeks to move any plants over to the designated half plot they want to keep. If there is no reply from the plot holder, the site reps will decide which half of the split plot each party should cultivate. (Informal sharing may be arranged between resident and newcomer, but is entirely discretionary and only between the two parties involved.)
5. Next appropriate member on the waiting list to be offered the half-plot with the possibility of upgrading to a full plot on same site: either the other half of the original whole plot should it become available, or another on the same site when one becomes available.
6. Both parties to pay half rent: resident to pay from next billing period; incoming member to pay on completion of HAS Tenancy Agreement.
7. Established (now half-plot) holder to be eligible for upgrade to full plot if noticeable improvement is recorded over a growing season.

Hackney Allotment Society committee

Chair	Maggie Wilkinson	chair@hackneyallotments.org.uk
Secretary	Sue Carling	secretary@hackneyallotments.org.uk
Treasurer	Jackie Breakwell	
Site Reps:		
Aden Terrace	Martin Klurowicz	adenterrace@hackneyallotments.org.uk
Church Walk	June Lancaster	churchwalk@hackneyallotments.org.uk
Leaside	Ian Dick	leaside@hackneyallotments.org.uk
	Lou Crisfield	l.crisfield@thlc.co.uk
Overbury Street (Vice Chair & Newsletter)	Sarah Mott	overbury@hackneyallotments.org.uk
Queensbridge	Keith Osborne	queensbridge@hackneyallotments.org.uk
Spring Hill	Eugene Clerkin	springhill@hackneyallotments.org.uk
Joint reps	Joss Bany	jossreiverbany@btinternet.com
Spring Lane	Gavin Everall	springlane@hackneyallotments.org.uk
Springdale Road	Annie Wilson	springdale@hackneyallotments.org.uk
St Kildas	VACANT	
Others	Mary Connolly	maryconnolly@blueyonder.co.uk
	Guy Dehn	guydehn@mac.com

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting Held Thursday 6th October 2005 St Mary's Community Centre N16

Present: Maggie Wilkinson (chair MW), Sue Carling (secretary, minutes SC), Jackie Breakwell (treasurer). Committee members: Joss Bany, Eugene Clerkin, Sarah Mott, Ian Dick, Mary Connolly + 32 ordinary members of the Society.

1. Report from the Chair

This year has been an interesting one. Soil contamination issues dominated the year. A full report is available on the website, a summary follows:

By August, after repeated soil tests and meetings, Donal Fitzgibbon attending a committee meeting to present results of quantitative risk assessment tests. It was a struggle to understand the figures, but it became clear that the tests indicated that the majority of the contaminants could not be absorbed by the human body, and so presented a lesser threat than was first thought. Any remaining risk could be countered by improving the soil by addition of good compost, to be provided by the Council between September and February. A letter saying this has now gone out to all affected, copy available.

It has been a year of doubt, worry and delay. Some continued as before, some – especially those with young families – stayed off their plots. No-one knew when or whether to plant; the committee was in regular debate as to procedures over letting and neglected plot letters. Not to mention the science, and which results of which tests to believe. At the resolution the council has agreed no rent should be charged for 2006 as a gesture of compensation for a year of uncertainty and worry. In 2007 the new agreed rent will begin, which the Treasurer will speak about later.

Thanks on remediation work to Joss and Ian for understanding the science and the context, Malcolm and Martina for exhaustive web surfing research, site reps for frequent attendance on sites and most of all Sue for continual, terrier-like chasing and questioning.

We all look forward to less interesting times when more effort can be devoted to other more creative developments. And fewer meetings.

Achievements

Tenancy agreement – heads of terms have been agreed copies can be supplied on request we are currently awaiting a response from the Council's legal department. Agreed rent of £560 per year, agreement to last for 12 years. Negotiation took place whereby Council suggestion of £8 per plot was beaten down to £5 per plot. Two other useful points:

The Council will continue to provide and maintain the perimeter boundary fences of the site.

Use enshrined:

The land is not to be used other than as classified as allotment sites. The land is Statutory Allotment Land and protected by the conditions of the Allotment Act, 1925 and subsequent related Acts of Parliament. This gives us protection against any future council development but also commits the Society to ensure proper use of the plots. Our thanks to Sue Carling and John Hudson for pursuing this long drawn out process to a successful conclusion.

During the year a good working relationship has been built up with the Council's Commercial Manager in Property, Tim Douglas, who will be in charge of supplying the compost promised to those on affected sites. It is hoped this relationship may lead to other benefits such as investigation of new sites for allotment use.

Website – set up by April. Big thanks to Bob Geater for setting this up and updating it. Please visit www.hackneyallotments.org.uk Much more regular **Newsletters** on a well organised basis, thanks to all concerned in getting them out, especially Sarah, the editor.

Sites: main development work was a group clear up achieved at Overbury Street, leading to building of new raised bed, led by Sarah and Gene. Ivy trimmed at Church Walk. Site reps at Spring Hill have coped with blocked drains, sub-letting, queries over boundaries, rubbish dumping and break-ins, at Leaside with plumbing problems and at Spring Lane with pump repairs. New site reps at Springdale and Queensbridge.

Aims for next year

- We should save money and time by sending Newsletter out by email whenever possible. Let's try to achieve 80% by this time next year.
- We should conserve the Society's funds by saving money on tree work by professional tree surgeons. Plot-holders are urged to take early action by removing seedlings themselves and by cutting back or digging up while it is still possible. For example, a sycamore at Aden Terrace between 20 and 21. Professionals must of course still do major tree work.

The Society will then have more money for more creative projects.

- We should be mindful; following the contamination debate, of what can damage the health of the soil, and avoid importing treated or painted wood, for example, as edging, or burning it. Old paint can contain lead, old wood preserver can contain arsenic.
- Work needs doing at St Kilda's on the damaged wall of a raised bed, which looks unsafe.
- The Committee needs to find a way forward over regular recipients of Neglected Plot Letters who annually neglect their plots and then do the bare minimum to stay on board. There is a motion on the agenda regarding this issue.
- The Deputy Mayor Jessica Crowe has invited the Society to make bids on capital expenditure with a recommendation that modest bids would meet with more success at this early stage of assistance. We suggest therefore that we bid for help with three or four old problems, providing water at Queensbridge, and improving perimeter fencing at Spring Lane, Springdale Road and Spring Hill. All of these have been discussed at committee meetings for a long time.

To do this we need more committee members and particularly, more site reps!

Questions to the chair

Sarah Kissack asked when the promised compost would be delivered. SC reported that a meeting with the Council was arranged for 12/10/05. Tim Maby thanked the Committee for their dogged work and their success in resolving the matter.

2. Treasurer's Report

Jackie Breakwell presented the statement of accounts and reported there were no major issues of concern except that rent is likely to be increased from October 2006 as a result of the new tenancy agreements currently being agreed with the Council.

Questions to the treasurer

Aleja Gomez-Quintero asked about the possibility of felling trees at St Kilda's site that are shading her plot. The Chair pointed out this was a matter for the Committee to discuss and invited representation from St Kilda's to attend the next Committee meeting on November 3rd.

Accounts agreed. Moved Joss Bany, seconded Mary Connolly.

3. Election of Officers

Auditors: Maggie Henton & Bob Geater

See contacts list above for full list of committee members

4. Plot Awards

Plot inspections were held in July, criteria for the awards were variety of produce, creativity, productivity, most improvement.

Leaside Road best plot 8 Christine Wildhaber
Special commendation for neatness,
plot 1 Mr Saha

Spring Lane best plot 12 Elsa Hamaz

Spring Hill best plot 31A Emily Mytton

E5/E8 small sites best plot Overbury 6 Jane Christie

Aden Terrace best plot 11 Martin Klurowicz

Special commendations Plot 1 Fran Walker & Plot 5 Chris Coe

N16 Small sites best plot St Kilda's plot 1 Marie McShea

Special commendation, most improved plot
Springdale road plot 3 Rosanna Preston

5. Neglected Plot Policy and Use of Half Plots

(see new SOCIETY BYE-LAW above)

It was reported there has been leniency on the neglected plot policy due to the soil contamination, however this was not an issue at OS site, where one plot holder had consistently not maintained their plot year on year. The current neglected plot policy is lengthy and means it is not easily completed in a single season, thus the situation has continued. It was proposed that the Society offer half of such a chronically neglected or under-used plot to a member on the waiting list, where the neglect did not yet warrant a Notice to Quit. It was asked if there was a mechanism for the plot holder to regain a full plot at a later date. It was clarified that if the other half fell vacant it would be offered first to the new half-plot holder.

It was also clarified that if a waiting list member accepted a half plot, they could remain on the waiting list for a full plot once available.

The motion was carried by a clear majority of hands and the Committee were asked to clarify the detail of the policy at the next Committee meeting before publication.

6. Bee Keeping

David Shenton asked if it was possible to keep bees on allotments. SC said the Society did not currently have a policy and referred to DTLR guidance.

“Bee keeping is allowed on some allotment sites but not all will be suitable. You will need the Council’s consent. You should also consider joining the bee keepers association and taking out insurance.”

Diana Whitworth informed the meeting that Guy Dehn, plot holder at Leaside, had experience of beekeeping and mentioned that flight paths can affect bees. Queries were raised about bee stings, allergy and liability.

SK asked if the Council could be asked for information. SC felt it unlikely they would have such expertise.

Agreed David Shenton & Guy Dehn to investigate the possibilities.

7. Cultural Diversity

The member who raised this item was not present at the meeting.

However SC reported that most new contacts come via the Council or the website and the Council has facilities for interpretation and translation. There are also community organisations that will provide this support on request.

It was asked if we had a sense of the cultural make-up of the Society and SC reported that we did not request or record this data currently.

8. Green Waste Collection and Composting

SC reported a plan for green waste collection (brown bins or biodegradable sacks) from the sites, she was currently liaising with the Council’s recycling officers to achieve this. Currently only Spring Lane site have brown bins. Collection could be made from within the site if the contractors had keys. SC and JB have applied for a grant from the NLWA to fund compost bins and a shredding machine in order to develop community composting on two sites. Hopefully this funding bid will be successful.

9. A.O.B

A **waiting list** member asked how they could find out where they were on the waiting list. SC reported that the renewals were currently being processed, once this was complete – in about two weeks – accurate information would be available. Some waiting list members drop out at this time of year. Anyone enquiring should email the secretary on **secretary@hackneyallotments.org.uk**

One member asked how **tree work** was agreed. MW reported this was discussed at Committee and funding agreed on a priority basis once three quotes had been obtained. The next Committee Meeting

would be on Wednesday 2nd November 05 at St Mary’s Community Centre, Defoe Road. MW informed the meeting that any member of the Society is welcome to attend the monthly Committee meetings.

The meeting closed at 9.20pm