

# Hackney Allotment Society

[www.hackneyallotments.org.uk](http://www.hackneyallotments.org.uk)

## Winter / Spring Newsletter 2007

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### **IMPORTANT** **NEW NEGLECTED PLOT POLICY**

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Our neglected plot policy has been lengthy and takes a minimum of 14 weeks to complete, most of a growing season. The current waiting list stands at 202 due to current popularity of local food production and the web site. From last year's site visits it is obvious that there are underused and neglected plots. Other areas e.g. Croydon use a six week warning period.

**At the AGM a new six week policy was discussed and approved unanimously.**

Site reps will be encouraged to report on their sites at the first meeting in April. **If no work has been undertaken, neglected plot letters will be issued.**

A notice to quit will then be issued if no improvement occurs.

Contact your site rep now if you know you will be unable to start working your plot before Easter.

Don't lose your plot. Use it. Start early this spring and reap the rewards of a bigger harvest.

For further details on the AGM discussion, see the minutes at the end of this newsletter.

### **Local campaign to save Manor Gardens Allotments**

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100 year old Manor Garden Allotments lies in the middle of the Olympic Park site. These beautiful, productive vegetable gardens are due to be demolished to make way for a four-week footpath during the 2012 Games despite the land being given in perpetuity. A campaign is underway to protect the allotments and encourage a more imaginative Olympic development which includes this special place with its healthy, green lifestyles and vibrant community. For further information visit: [www.lifeisland.org](http://www.lifeisland.org)

**Sign the petition here deadline 2/4/07**

<http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/manorgardens/>

### **Spring Hill & Spring Lane Fencing LATEST news**

Contractors are expecting delivery of the fences, the start date for replacement is 19<sup>th</sup> February

Due to the boundary changing (thanks to the Council and agreement from the park user group) we will gain 5/6 plots which is great news for the waiting list.

### **Things to do in the vegetable garden this month**

*Get organised: Once the growing season starts, it is nice to have all the necessary equipment to hand. This is a good time of year to:*

- *Collect plastic bottles and make bottle cloches*
- *Buy plant labels, gather together supports such as pea sticks for climbing plants and other essentials*
- *Check fleece, netting and other crop covers for holes and buy more if they are in tatters*
- *Clean seed trays, modules and pots with hot soapy water*
- *Buy your seed potatoes now if you haven't already got them.*
- *Rhubarb plants can be 'forced' in January and early February to produce a crop of delicious, slim, pale pink stems.*
- *Start to dig in overwintered green manures such as grazing rye and winter tares.*
- *'Top dress' overwintered crops, such as autumn planted onions, broad beans and spring cabbage, to give spring growth a boost. Use a good rich garden compost or chicken manure pellets.*
- *Feed the soil. What you feed your vegetable plots with will depend on what you are going to grow next, what was there last, and the basic fertility of your soil, consider:*
  - *Well-rotted strawy manure ready to dig-in*
  - *A dressing of manure, well rotted compost or an organic fertiliser.*

- *Compost trench: add raw vegetable kitchen waste to your compost trench. The trench should be one spade deep, preferably where your runner beans will grow this year. Cover the waste with soil, as soon as you add it, to prevent foxes or other animals from scavenging.*
- *Bury stems and stumps of overwintered brassicas as they finish cropping. Bury them in a compost heap, or in a trench in the ground. This will help reduce the population of mealy aphids and whitefly which otherwise would simply move on to your spring planted crops.*
- *Clear up any plant debris, and remove diseased leaves from overwintered crops; put them on the compost heap.*

### Sowing outdoors

If the soil and growing conditions are right, now is the time to start sowing the earliest vegetable crops. If the grass has started to grow, that's a good sign that the soil is around 5-6°C - warm enough to allow the hardiest seeds to germinate and grow. To help the soil warm up more quickly, pull back any organic mulches, then cover with cloches or sheets of clear or black plastic. Put these in place a couple of weeks before sowing.

- Broad beans
- Parsnips
- Salad onions

### Planting outdoors

- Garlic
- Shallots
- Jerusalem Artichokes
- Chinese artichokes

### Direct sowing under cover

Hardy crops that are usually grown outdoors can be sown under cloches or in the soil beds of a greenhouse

- Lettuce - loose-leaf or seedling variety
- Carrots
- Radish
- Rocket
- Baby beetroot - early variety
- Spinach
- Salad onions
- Peas - mangetout or sugar snap
- Potatoes - compact early varieties
- Turnips

### Sow in trays and modules

Raising plants to transplant outdoors (or under cloches or in a greenhouse) gives you a head start on the season.

- Baby beetroot
- Kohlrabi
- Early cabbage
- Early cauliflower
- Bulb onions
- Spring onions

## Hackney Allotment Society committee

<b>Chair</b>	Maggie Wilkinson	7249 5492	chair@hackeyallotments.org.uk
<b>Secretary</b>	Sue Carling	7254 8351	secretary@hackeyallotments.org.uk
<b>Treasurer</b>	Jackie Breakwell	7249 2051	
<b>Site Reps:</b>			
<b>Aden Terrace</b>	Martin Klurowicz	8806 1968	adenterrace@hackeyallotments.org.uk
<b>Church Walk</b>	June Lancaster	7254 5756	churchwalk@hackeyallotments.org.uk
<b>Leaside</b>	Lou Crisfield Diana Whitworth		leaside@hackneyallotments.org.uk
<b>Overbury Street (Vice Chair &amp; Newsletter)</b>	Sarah Mott	8986 2920	overbury@hackeyallotments.org.uk
<b>Queensbridge</b>	Keith Osborne		queensbridge@hackeyallotments.org.uk
<b>Spring Hill</b>	Eugene Clerkin	8985 5008	springhill@hackeyallotments.org.uk
<b>Joint reps</b>	Joss Bany	8806 6782	
<b>Spring Lane</b>	Gavin Everall		springlane@hackneyallotments.org.uk
<b>Springdale Road</b>	Annie Wilson	7254 0972	springdale@hackeyallotments.org.uk
<b>St Kildas</b>	Jeff Jeffreys		stkilda@hackeyallotments.org.uk
<b>Waiting List</b>	Amanda Scope		ascope@mac.com
<b>Others</b>	Mary Connolly Guy Dehn		maryconnolly@blueyonder.co.uk guydehn@mac.com

# **MINUTES of the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**THURSDAY 5th OCTOBER 2006**  
**St Mary's Community Centre N16**

**Present:** Jon Fuller (chair), Maggie Wilkinson, Sue Carling, Jackie Breakwell.

Committee members: June Lancaster, Joss Bany, Sarah Mott, Ian Dick, Mary Connolly, Martin Klurowicz, Annie Wilson + 36 ordinary members of the Society.

**Apologies:** David Shenton, Verity Hawkes, Sheila Webb

## **1. Report from the Chair**

The past year has been more positive than the previous year, now that the soil remediation issues have receded and the beginnings of good co-operation with the Council are being seen, these include:

- ◇ The leases have finally been signed.
- ◇ Council undertaking to maintain the perimeter fences.
- ◇ Delivery of compost for soil improvement.
- ◇ Regular collection of brown bins / bags
- ◇ Agreement on future work; fences in Spring Hill, Spring Lane and Springdale Road, paths and trees at Aden Terrace.
- ◇ Ongoing negotiations on provision of water for Queensbridge (The Committee are looking into water harvesting schemes and the possibility a grant)

Generally, the hosepipe ban has been adhered to and we all found the hottest, driest period of July a difficult period. We may find this ban is not a one-off and members will be investigating ways of coping with dry conditions.

Funding for a compost bin workshop was successfully obtained from the North London Waste Authority and the London Community Recycling Network. Ten bins were built at Aden Terrace and Spring Hill, with enough money remaining to buy a shredding machine and necessary tools and safety equipment. (Details from Jackie in Treasurer's Report) A training day was provided and the bins were then built at well-attended work days. Pictures appear on the website.

The annual plot inspections took place in July. Generally the standard was a bit of an improvement on last year with its particular difficulties, but one site was seen to be in poor shape with a high number of Neglected Plot Letters resulting (Spring Lane).

The Committee needs feedback when sites are failing. Large sites need more than one rep, and reps need to come to meetings if at all possible or to make regular reports. Leaside needs a rep who can attend, and Spring Lane needs an additional rep who can attend. Lou at Leaside has worked hard over the last year and a site barbecue was held in the summer which was successful. This site has a problematic area of shallow soil over concrete as well as a derelict corner section of the site – possibilities include raised beds, a communal sitting area or the erection of compost bins. Site members there will need to decide what to do.

We continue to urge all members (not just site reps!) to take responsibility for early removal of saplings, especially sycamores, growing on their sites, before the issue becomes an expensive one involving tree surgeons.

Those on the tour tried hard to bear in mind the views of those on the waiting list when looking at failing plots and imagine how we would defend their continued neglect – with difficulty. We urge members of the waiting list to join us on next year's tours and in the meantime to join the committee to make their voices heard more loudly.

There are now 241 people on the waiting list, probably the largest number so far. Though some waiting list members give up or move away, it will still be probably well over three years before those at the end of it see the chance of a plot. In the last year 11 sites were relet. 18 Neglected Plot Letters – first warning – were sent out, and four second warning ones leading to 3 Notice To Quit letters. Of course some letters result in an improvement of performance by the current plotholder, which is in itself a positive outcome. The possibility agreed at last year's AGM of enforcing shared plots under certain special circumstances has led to only one division so far, so it is too early to comment on its usefulness. However the subject of Neglected Plots will once again be discussed at tonight's meeting with a proposal outlined in the recent newsletter and on your agenda.

Committee members continue to suggest possible new sites to the Council for investigation - if any member of the society wishes to lead on this area of development, and the necessary liaison with the Council, we would be pleased to hear from you.

The Website has continued to develop with increased variety of material on it. Please visit it and send in photos, gardening tips, ways of dealing with our old

friends foxes squirrels and slugs, methods to cope with drought conditions, new recipes involving courgettes, all welcome. Email Sue with suggestions. Once again thanks to Bob Geater for his work on the website.

And thanks to all the members of the Committee for their work in sending in site reports, attending meetings, looking after the income and outgoings, doing the newsletter and all the work on sites. I think all the Committee would join me in thanking our Secretary, Sue Carling, once again for the huge amount of work she contributes to the Society from sending out neglected plot letters to the persistent work she does in chasing the Council for help. Neither make her popular, and yet she is!

### Questions to the chair

Diana Whitworth (Leaside) commented that the brown bins were not being emptied  
Overhanging trees at Leaside from British Rail land need pruning. BR have been contacted and we await their response  
St Kilda's site has problems with water running off a shed roof. We hope that the new site rep will undertake to resolve this problem

Thanks were given to Sue and Maggie from Jon Fuller.

### 2. Treasurer's Report

Jackie Breakwell presented the statement of accounts and reported an average year. The grant expenditure was on the compost / shredding work at Aden Terrace and Spring Hill.  
The council had given the HAS 6 months rent free period in lieu of the soil contamination issue last year.

### Questions to the treasurer

Could we have more detail of the rent increase? This has risen from £100 to £565 year  
Could we add finance information to the web site?  
Will the 2012 Olympics affect the rent / tenancy agreement with the council? No the tenancy agreement is for 12 years and so for review in 2018.

### 3. Election of Officers

See contact list above for current officers. All elected unopposed.

### 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 15** Catherine Willetts  
**Spring Lane best plot 12** Elsa Hamaz  
**Spring Hill best plot 25** David Harradine, special mention to plot 11 Patricia Hurley

**E5/E8 small sites best plot 8a** Veronica Charles  
**Aden Terrace best plot 5** Chris Coe, best newcomer plot 22 Helen Cosis Brown  
**N16 Small sites best plot 2** Springdale Road Yeviny Gammig

### 5. Neglected Plot Policy

The current neglected plot policy is lengthy and takes a minimum of 14 weeks to complete, the majority of a growing season. The first letter gives 6 weeks grace, the plot is then viewed again and a second letter sent. If after 6 weeks there is no improvement, a final 14 days notice to quit is served. This can be late autumn / early winter when no work would be expected anyway.

The current waiting list stands at 245 due to current popularity of local food production and the web site. From site visits it is obvious that there are underused and neglected plots. Other areas e.g. Croydon use a six week warning period and it may encourage more effective use of the Hackney sites if we were to adopt such a policy.

### Discussion:

Who would decide extenuating circumstances? – This would be the committee. For example, previous good use or a particular event may well be considered leniently.

How much is the half plot policy used? Has been difficult to enforce and this proposal is much clearer. There should be a suggested time frame for plots to look in order after winter. We could suggest that all plots should be in use properly by Easter. The plot holder needs to be in communication with the site rep if a period of absence is envisaged

The motion to reduce the neglected plot policy time frame from notice to eviction:

In favour	37
Against	0
Abstentions	1

### 9. A.O.B

Sarah Kissack outlined her plans for a collective seed order. All orders should reach her by end October. Kate Bowen informed of a plant sale at the Culpepper community garden (corner of Rectory Rd and Amherst Rd) this Sunday

Next monthly meeting: 1<sup>st</sup> November 2006, New Church Rooms, at the back of St. Mary's.

The meeting closed at 9.15pm