



2014 AGM – a Night to Remember

Positive changes for the Society and increased responsibilities for ploholders

The October AGM was notable for several reasons. First, we had a speaker, Stephanie Irvine, from Urban Orchards, who talked about the things that could happen on your allotments over the winter – green manures, overwintering cabbages, spring greens and other brassicas, growing lettuce and other salad vegetable under protection, getting an early start for spring. Stephanie also spoke about encouraging wildlife on allotment sites, and how important this is in an urban environment. Perhaps not totally new, but well organised, good slides and a lot of encouragement. Stephanie's presentation slides are now on our website under News.

Secondly, the motion to raise the plot rental fee after ten years of no change was accepted almost unanimously. The full plot rental fee is now £21, an increase of £5 (the price of two cups of coffee, as one member pointed out). The motion also stated that an increase of £5 would come into effect for each succeeding year until our income and expenditure on allotment

Plot Awards 2014

ADEN TERRACE

Best plot:

Sue Carling

Most improved:

Richard and Susan Kay

LEASIDE

Best plot:

Patsy Hans

Most improved:

Liz de Monchaux

SPRING HILL

Best plot:

Joint: Jon Fuller and David Harradine

SPRING LANE

Best plot:

Roweena Altheer

Best newcomer:

Joanna and Desmond McAllister

SMALL SITES

Best plot:

Anna Harding
(Overbury Street)

Best newcomer:

Kerry Morgan
(Overbury Street)

sites was in balance (we are now about £1500 in the red each year). Concession rates still apply at 50% of full fees. Membership fee has been left unchanged.

Lastly, a lively debate was had on a motion proposed by Sarah Kissack. The motion stated that HAS should no longer pay towards the cost of the removal of rubbish from allotment sites, and that any expenditure required for this purpose should be shared by the ploholders of that site. Discussion showed that there was broad agreement but some concern over costs of rubbish removal which was not the instigation of ploholders – removing the remains of a fence blown down in bad weather, for example. The motion was not passed, but we all recognised that only in unusual circumstances should the Society's funds be used to remove rubbish. All agreed that it was the clear responsibility of each ploholder to remove from site all their non-compostable rubbish.

A list of Best Plot awards is left, and big congratulations to all winners.

FREE ADVICE

Members are reminded that they have access to the advice section of the Garden Organic website available to Garden Organic members only. Access is via www.gardenorganic.org.

uk/members. To log in, the user name is hackneyallotments@hotmail.com, password HAS2014. I believe that Garden Organic also operates an email advice service.

The Royal Horticultural Society also has a less exclusive advice section: www.rhs.org.uk/gardening/grow-your-own.

SPANISH SLUGS

In 2012, Dr Ian Belford, of the John Innes Centre in Norwich, reported an "invasion" of the Spanish Stealth Slug, about 8-15 cm long when fully grown, varying in colour from bright orange to reddish-brown. These slugs eat not just your vegetables and flowers but dead animals, dog excrement and crops not normally susceptible to slug damage. They reproduce in greater numbers than our normal friendly British slugs and may ingest up to 20 slug

pellets before they are start to die. Advice on how to get rid of them is to use gloves or a piece of wood to put them in a bucket of water, add some detergent to ensure they sink to the bottom. When dead, bury them in a deep hole in the garden and disinfect the bucket. Sounds quite lethal. Further advice from www.slugwatch.co.uk or the John Innes website. Do NOT cut them in half because you may be spreading bacteria from the slugs.



Sofia's tomatillos

Hi there, I'm Sofia and a fellow food grower! I am from Mexico and although I have been here long enough not to miss the vegetables of my childhood, I do grow some items that are difficult to get here. I have had success with black beans, I want to have a go at amaranth and epazote and I also like to grow tomatillos.

Tomatillos are native to Mexico and are closely related to the cape gooseberry. You can easily grow them from seed but you need to be quite careful and kind when germinating and at early stages as they like to be warm and semi-moist. They are ready to go out once they develop into little plants – just like tomatoes. You will need at least two plants so they cross-pollinate. When you

plant them in the allotment allow about 45 cm between plants. Water regularly but not too much at first, treat them just like tomatoes. After they flower you will see that they develop beautiful pouches (husks) that look like lanterns and at this point you need to water and feed so the fruit develops. A tomatillo is ready to be picked when the fruit has grown to fill its husk. I usually like to leave the ones I pick on the windowsill for a couple of

days and then either cook with them from fresh or I freeze them for later use. It is quite good to leave them to thrive so don't bother much with tying them and I don't bother with pruning new shoots, I leave them and I am able to harvest lots!

Tomatillos are a staple of real Mexican cooking and although they don't have much flavour except that they are a bit sour, if you char-grill them, or use them fresh to make a salsa, they are delicious!



Here is a recipe:
Tomatillo and Coriander Salsa /Salsa Verde
Makes 500ml
If you have fresh tomatillos, you must make this salsa, the combination with coriander is fantastic. For extra body add avocado.

Ingredients
2 ½ teaspoon salt
2 garlic cloves
4 green Thai chillies, start

by adding one or even half, taste and add more according to taste
500g tomatillos, husks removed, fresh or frozen
1 small bunch of coriander
½ onion, finely chopped
50 ml water

Blend the garlic, chillies, tomatillos and just enough water to help the blender to work. Add the coriander and some salt.

Puree briefly. Taste and adjust seasoning with coriander, chilli and salt. Transfer to a bowl. If the salsa is too thick, add a little water or vegetable stock. Stir in the chopped onion and, if desired, add extra coriander.

Refrigerate for up to 3 days. It is very nice with grilled minute steaks, grilled halloumi or on scrambled eggs.



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