

SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2006

PLOT TAKEOVERS.....

Due to the high demand for new plots, the committee will be enforcing the 'neglected plot policy' and 'half plot policy' strongly this year. 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 168 waiting list members itching to get started. So, plot holders, if you can't work your plot, do the right thing, contact the Secretary so the plot can be offered to the next person on the waiting list

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.

RENT INCREASE

As advised by the treasurer, Jackie Breakwell at the last AGM in October 2005, there will be a rent increase this year. This will come into effect from 1st October 2006. The society still has the lowest rent throughout all the London boroughs, but due to a substantial rise in rent from the council to the society, we have no choice than to pass on some of this cost to society members. The new rates will be:

£16 Full plot

£8 Half plot and concessions

£4 Membership

Brown bins

Have recently arrived at all sites. These have been distributed by the council and are emptied every two weeks. They are invaluable for allowing us to dispose of problem weeds, bindweed, horsetail, couch grass and also more bulky woody material, which is difficult to compost on-site.

Please do not over fill these bins or they will become too heavy for the council to empty.

Ten Top Tips on how to conserve water in the vegetable garden

1. Mulch the soil surface with materials such as leafmould, grass clippings, sheets of newspaper, straw, composted bark chippings, which will all help to reduce moisture loss and suppress weeds. Apply when the soil is moist and has warmed up and the plants are established. Water if soil is dry before laying down the mulch.
2. Remove weeds; they will be in competition for water resources with the plants/vegetables you want to grow.
3. Windbreaks are good for sheltering plants from drying winds.
4. Shade seedlings in hot weather.
5. Digging increases water loss from the soil, particularly in dry hot weather.
6. Increase the water-holding capacity of the soil, by digging in organic matter such as compost or leafmould. Organic matter as a mulch will reduce water run-off.
7. Watering early morning and late afternoon will reduce loss of water through evaporation.
8. Apply water directly to the soil, not plants.
9. Collect as much rainwater as possible by using water butts.
10. Soak plants well if you are watering. Check that the water has penetrated down into the soil, not just the surface layers.

Site visits

Site visits will take place in July this summer. Plots will be judged on creativity, variety of crops, most improved, productivity. All members are invited to attend the site visits, which start at 7pm on the following dates:

Wednesday 5th July: Aden Terrace, Church Walk, Springdale, St Kilda's

Wednesday 12th July: Spring Hill, Spring Lane, Overbury, Leaside

Please contact your site rep for further details. Prizes will be announced at the AGM.

Help to attract beneficial creatures to your garden and allotment.

One way of doing this is to grow flowers to provide pollen and nectar for insects, such as hoverflies and lacewings. Below is a list of easy-to-grow annuals which both you, and the beneficial insects, can enjoy. Grow them all over the garden or allotment - to help keep flowers, fruit and vegetables pest-free.

- **Buckwheat** *Fagopyron esculentum*
- **Californian poppy** *Eschscholtzia californica*
- **Candytuft** *Iberis amara*
- **Convolvulus, annual** *Convolvulus tricolor*
- **Corn chamomile** *Anthemis arvensis*
- **Corn marigold** *Chrysanthemum segetum*
- **Cornflower** *Centaurea cyanus*
- **Dill** *Anethum graveolens*
- **French marigold** *Tagetes patula*; *Tagetes signata*

- **Golden marguerite** *Anthemis tinctoria*
- **Nemophila** *Nemophila spp*
- **Phacelia** *Phacelia tanacetifolia*
- **Poached egg plant** *Limnanthes douglasii*
- **Pot marigold** *Calendula officinalis*
- **Sunflower** *Helianthus annuus*
- **Sweet alyssum** *Lobularia maritime*

You can find seed of most of these flowers in the **Organic Gardening Catalogue** www.gardenorganic.org.uk

Allotment News Via E-mail

If you have received this newsletter by pigeon post, but would be happy to receive it electronically, then send your email address to: newsletter@hackneyallotments.org.uk. Please help us cut down on administration costs.

NEMASLUG – the organic slug control

Lots of allotment holders will have used nematodes to combat slugs – but for any who don't, here is my experience. I had been concerned about using slug pellets for some time but the danger was brought home to me when I visited a friend's garden and we found the exploded bodies of frogs which had eaten slug pellets – not a sight I would wish on anyone. Birds can also eat pellets, and cats (unfortunately) eat birds...

I now get three orders of nemaslug a season and apply the first batch in April or May, then at six week intervals. Available from Green Gardener, www.greengardener.co.uk, 01603 715096, three deliveries costs about £30. (This is quite a sum, but then 12 lettuce plants, 12 courgette plants and 24 runner bean plants come to quite a sum and would be eaten at one sitting by the slugs of Church Walk.) The squillions of living organisms come in a small pack, you keep them in the fridge till you are ready, and then you apply them. You need to have cleared the ground of weeds sheltering the slugs, and the soil needs to be reasonably warm and wet – not a problem just at present. You dilute the contents of the packet – instructions are very simple – and water them on to the vulnerable areas.

What happens next is that the nematodes kill the slugs (don't ask) and you dispose of the dead bodies. Not my hobby of choice, but better than having to catch and kill the great slimy things. The treatment doesn't really have an impact on snails but they are easier to pick up and "deal with", let's face it.

I still add the protection of organic-friendly gritty barriers, especially for the precious basil and courgettes, and slug traps are also useful. It would be interesting to hear of other successful methods, for the website. So far, no nematodes for squirrels.

from Maggie Wilkinson (Chair)

Hackney Allotment Society committee

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