

Countesthorpe Gardens & Allotments Society

Newsletter: Autumn Edition

Successful season

The growing season is coming to an end and you will be looking to get your plot dug over and some manure down for the start of next year. Some of you will still have winter veg in and possibly even planting some hardy veg for next year, see Tips and Techniques for ideas.

Trophy awards

There were a number of trophies sitting idle in the container. These were in regular use and presented to worthy winners in previous years. The main ones are for Best in Show, Most improved allotment and Best kept allotment. They nearly blinked when Gill decided to drag them out and decided that they should once again be awarded to those plot holders who deserved recognition for their commitment and hard work. However, due to the committees' idea, at one of their earlier meetings, to have a Summer show being scuppered by the Corona virus, the Best in Show award has had to stay in 'quarantine' for another year. It is hoped that the Summer show will continue once things are back to as normal

as possible. So this year two cups were awarded for Best allotment and Most Improved allotment. A short list of seven plots was compiled, and from this the committee then decided which two were worthy winners. With a unanimous decision the Best allotment was awarded to Alex Cassi, plot 28, and the Most Improved allotment went to Karen and Alan Wilson, plot 24. Well done to both winners. The cups were presented at a small gathering, with drinks, at the top of the allotment on Saturday 1 August.



Alex with her 'Best allotment' cup



Alan and Karen with their 'Most Improved' allotment cup



Your Committee Members

Chairman—Chris Davidson

Treasurer—Maggie Mason

Seeds Officer—Fiona Richmond

Allotments Officer—Gill Postlethwaite

Secretary—Dave Merrick

Attention

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Manure

John Houghton is able to supply horse manure for those who would like it. It is free to all and can be picked up from the back of the car park area. John has said that he is able to supply the manure on a regular basis.

There is also another outlet for cow manure at a very reasonable price. If you would like some then please contact either the secretary or allotments officer via the website, email or in person who will be able to place an order.

Rental items

For those newer members of the society there a number of items that can be rented to ease the burden of preparing the ground. There are 2 rotovators that can be rented for £15 per half day and for those who have electrical items, 2 x 240v power generators for plot holders to use and can be rented for £10 per half day. Should you wish to borrow any of these items please contact Gill Postlethwaite the Allotments Officer at gillposs27@gmail.com or via the website email link or see her at plot 32.

Birkett House and Bees

It has been a good year for the bees at the allotment. There are 5 hives, of various designs, 2 of which have been relocated from Judge Meadows school in Leicester for convenience as the school was shut. These have all been managed by Chris, the chairman, who also had to rescue a swarm from further down Glebe Drive at the beginning of the summer.

Moving on, it was arranged that Birkett House seniors would have a morning learning about the allotment bees from Chris. So, on a cool 30 June two of them donned suits and prepared to look in a bee hive and learn about the bees. Little did we know at the time that some of the bees were beginning to swarm. A frenetic flying display round the hedge by the orchard indicated that they were swarming, and sure enough they did. Into the hedge.



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So as an added bonus the boys got to see a swarm being collected in a 'skep', to be then recovered to one of the hives once all the bees had realised where the queen was. To get the swarm together certain bees raise their tails giving off a pheromone, and wafting their wings disperses the pheromone so that the others bees know where the queen is.



While they waited for the bees to collect in the skep the boys were then treated to looking in a hive.



This started off fine, until the bees started to get a little agitated. It was then that photographer and Birkett House teachers,

already stood at a distance, had to beat a hasty retreat to much further away. Injuries were sustained.

Burning Area

The burning area, down the track by plot 31, is for everyone's use. It is there to take items that can be burnt and has been used correctly for some substantial items that needed to be disposed of. This does not include such items as weeds, soil or stones. However, some plot holders think it is a dumping ground for anything that they don't want on their plots. This is not the case. Most recent was a bag with all manner of items that could not be burnt in the first place, and should have been either disposed at the plot holders home premises, or taken to the tip.



It should not be disposed of at the allotment. Any item disposed of in this way is classed as fly tipping and is illegal. If this continues then the convenience of having this burning area will be withdrawn.

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Allotment Tips & Techniques

If you have any tips and time savers that you employ on your plot either, for growing any particular veg or plants or ways and techniques for managing your plot why not share this information with your other allotmentees.

Tips & techniques

1. Plant garlic in autumn, ideally 3rd week in November. The reason is that the cloves benefit from a period of cold weather, helping the cloves split and form correctly early the next year. If planting in the spring, mimic the cold weather by putting the cloves in the fridge for a week before planting. Some Broad beans can also be planted October or November. Make sure they are the hardier type though, and planted while the soil is still relatively warm. Cover in severe weather.
2. Winter dig, preferably before the frost start, so the when the frost come the earth clumps are further broken up by them and kill off any exposed pests.
3. Covering the newly dug ground can help prevent weeds growing back, even during the winter months. Newspapers, cardboard or any weed control fabric will do. It will also help reduce the nutrients being washed out of the soil.
4. Use a bucket to force rhubarb in December or January. These stalks will be ready to pull 2 -3 weeks before the rest. Crowns used for forcing, though, should be left untouched for the rest of the season.
5. For those with fruit bushes, such as red, white or black currants, it can be a pain removing the fruit from the stalks. Try freezing them with the stalks on, and then when needed the stalks come away from the fruit much easier. No need for that fork and potentially squashing the fruit.
6. Nasturtium seeds are edible. Collect seed pods when they are green. Soak in salt water for 2 days, to mellow the flavour. Rinse and drain. Warm some White Wine Vinegar to dissolve sugar. Put seed pods in a clean jar add a bay leaf and cover with the warm vinegar solution, ensuring they are covered. When cool put the lid on and store in the fridge for up to 6 months. **Quantities are:** cup of seeds, cup of vinegar; tspn salt and tspn sugar.

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