



GCAA NEWS

Newsletter of the Golf Course Allotments Association

Summer 2014

www.golfcourseallotments.co.uk

Annual Show

The Annual Show will take place on Sunday 7 September starting at 1pm. Entry to the Show is free to ploholders and their families. Others can come in as guests of the National Gardens Scheme (£3.50, children free). If you can, please contribute cakes, savoury items and plants for sale to our guests on the day.

Our crops are thriving after having had a good start this year. We all have something worth displaying: not just vegetables, flowers and fruit but also photographs, jams and other cooked items! So let's get ready! Full details of the competitions and the rules are in the Show Schedule. You will find this on the website under Special Events.

The judge for this year's Show is Stella Winskell-Moore from Whetstone who is the competition secretary for Barnet allotments. She has wide experience of exhibiting in shows and, for many years, has acted as a



local show judge and as a steward at the Chelsea Flower Show. The Domestic Judge is May Grace of Dunns Bakery, Crouch End.

This year, the prizes will be presented by Dr John Briffa, an expert on nutrition and Muswell Hill resident. John's professional life has been dedicated to helping patients take control of their own health. He has seen at first hand - and with countless individuals - how a diet of unprocessed, natural foods can help overcome illness while

enhancing patients' wellbeing and vitality.

Finally, a few reminders. Those taking part in the 3 potato competition should put a marker to indicate their location. Please buy a raffle ticket from the Trading Shed and, if you won a cup last year, drop it off there (very carefully).

Sunflower alley!



This year, the road verge towards the Young Gardeners plot is covered in sunflowers (including those in the photo). Thanks to the Royal Horticultural Society for their gift of seeds.

Bees are back

During May, beehives came back to Golf Course

Allotments after many years of absence (during which the bee population fell markedly). The GCAA Committee and Haringey's Allotments Officer recently agreed that plot 119 - which is next to the pond and regularly flooded - can be used for keeping bees.

Under the guidance of Geoff Hood, a local resident and chairman of Barnet Beekeepers, the area has been fenced off. The plot has been protected by bee netting and only qualified beekeepers are allowed inside. Bernita, a plotholder and qualified beekeeper, recently brought in her bees.

Within a few days of their arrival, an inspector from DEFRA's National Bee Unit came to check that they were in good health and not carrying diseases which could spread to other bees.

The inspector was satisfied and commented that the siting of the hives and the nature of the enclosure were ideal: the bees cannot fly through the netting but have to rise above it. By then, they are flying above the height of anyone who happens to be standing outside the bee enclosure.



On plot 119: Geoff, Bernita and the bee Inspector

Now that bees are kept on our site, what does it mean for the rest of us? Most likely, it will result in better pollination and bigger crops all over our site. Over the past few months, the bees have been flying around our plots and adjacent gardens. They pollinate our crops and carry nectar and pollen back to their hives. The first honeycomb was removed from a hive in early August and honey drained from it.



Bernita has the first taste of "Golf Course honey"

But this story is not just about honey! Having bees flying over our plots is crucial for good pollination. The UK's honey bee population has declined rapidly in the last 60 years. Diseases have taken their toll. Bernita, along with other beekeepers, has been told to watch out for the Asian Hornet. These hunt in packs and will kill honey bees, often targeting the adults outside the hive or eating the offspring inside.

A final plea from the bees: if you must spray your crops, do so in the evening when the bees have gone inside their hives.

Young Gardeners

After school on a fine June day, fourteen children turned up for a "bug walk" around our site. The walk was led once again by local entomologist Edward Milner (who is also known as "Spiderman for London"). He explained how to identify different insects. A spider, he told us, is an insect which has eight legs and two parts to its body (head and abdomen). Insects with 6 legs include ants, beetles and mosquitoes. And so on.

Then off they all went,

walking purposefully down the road towards the golf course, with Edward swatting the hedge with his large net.

After a few yards, he would stop, tip the contents of the net onto a large blanket and put some of the insects in a small tube so that they could be inspected without any chance of escape!

Spiderman would then ask the youngsters what they were. The kids were able to identify a surprising number of them!

The most interesting insect found was a lacewing fly: this can consume over 200 aphids or other prey per week. There's no better predator on the allotment! And the most beautiful insect? Surely it's the crane fly!



This is a crane fly (not a spider!)

Some relatively rare insects were found on the walk including a crab spider and a cucumber spider. About a dozen different spiders were

identified in all. Edward estimates that there are about 100 different spiders on our site in total and around 650 in the whole of the UK.



Question and answer session

Another open day

Last year, George and Serge's wonderful plot was open to the public under the National Gardens Scheme. In response to public demand, it was repeated this year. A large number of admirers came along again and nearly £1,000 was raised for the charities supported by the NGS. The GCAA's own funds also benefited from the sale of refreshments.

Clobbered!

Those of us who were hoping to harvest wonderful onions again this year will be feeling disappointed by now. Many of the onions grown on our site have been attacked by the allium leaf miner. This is a tiny brown insect

which first appeared in Britain in 2003 and is doing untold damage across the country to crops of onions, leeks, chives, shallots and garlic. Its maggot-like larvae tunnel into the leaves of these plants in winter and early spring. This results in distorted leaves and rotting of the bulbs.

There is no suitable chemical remedy to solve this problem. The best way to defend your plants is to cover them with insect-proof mesh. Also, it would appear that crops raised between May and September have a better chance of surviving.

If your plants have been infected, they should be taken up and disposed of. Next year, do not plant onions etc in the same place.



Infected onions

If your onions do survive, they could easily go bad while being stored. So check them regularly!

Chickens

Golf Course Allotments is once again home to chickens. The Allotments Act 1950 makes it lawful to keep hens or rabbits on allotment sites so long as it is not done as part of a business. Eight chickens recently arrived at their new home in N10! The law also allows for putting up the buildings required to house them. Their new home is sturdily built and designed to repel any fox which might come looking for its supper!

The chickens are clean, well-behaved and all of them are laying eggs. There are several types. The Blue Haze, a pretty champagne coloured hen with rich gingery brown flecks, can lay up to 300 plum coloured eggs each year.



Spacious accommodation

The Amber Star hens are a pretty shade of champagne with rich gingery brown flecks; they are easily tamed and mix well with the rest of the flock. They are perfect for families with children as well as first time chicken keepers.

Chickens need to eat small pieces of grit to break down their food. Sand meets this need and also provides a well-drained area for their run. The chickens scratch around in it which keeps them occupied. Chickens also need to eat some shell so that their eggshells will harden; oyster shell seems to work best.

AGM conclusions

The Annual General Meeting was held on Sat 24th May. Jeff Cloke was elected as chair (and will also continue in his Treasurer role). The new Committee members are Shane Coyle, Linda Soyka, Susie Helme and Jonathan Brenner. Also re-elected were Tullio Moglia, Jeff Cloke, Sean Lambert, Mick Gerrie, Tim Hunt, Tania Nelson, John Newman, Alwyn Pritchard, Helen Pritchard and Marc Zihler. Linda Doughty, Ann Hunt and Debby Rossiter stood down and were thanked for

their many years of service. It was announced that the Council had decided to ban bonfires (but not barbecues) from April until the end of September. Winter bonfire days would continue to be on the first Saturday in the month.

Plotholders were urged to find alternative ways to dispose of waste, either by composting or including it in their own domestic green waste collection (where it was important to remove all soil). Bonfire piles should be kept dry. The site was entitled to two general (not green) waste collections each year.

State of the plots

An inspection of plots was carried out by a Haringey Council official in July. Most plots are, of course, well maintained. The focus of the inspection is on those plots which are not up to the required standard. This can be for a number of reasons, including illness or unforeseen absence. As always, a few of our plots did not reach the standard required and action will be taken. This will inevitably take some time.

Contributions etc to:
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