

MAIDSTONE ALLOTMENTS NEWSLETTER



BOWER MOUNT ROAD SITE

SUMMER BAR-B-QS

OTHERS TOOK PLACE TOO

Lots of allotmenters in Maidstone had fun last year participating in site barbecues --- socialising, playing boules, swapping hints etc

FOR NEXT (WE HOPE DRY) SUMMER!

BBQs were enjoyed on several sites last summer – remember how hot it was, not easy at this time of year! It was a great chance to relax, meet fellow ploholders, eat and perhaps enjoy the odd drink! Food was inspiring from produce grown on the plots and prepared/cooked in many ways thanks to enthusiastic cooks - [Chairman not amongst that group!]. And thanks to the various nationalities now on our sites for some new recipes and new styles of growing.

There was also the Big Lunch again at Sandling Road, although weather wasn't quite as kind as last year. It was a great event.

At all events there were shared produce, stories, tips and good music. Quizzes, boules but mainly a lot of fun and lots of photos, which



we will post on the website.

If you would like to have one this year, get some fellow ploholders together to help you do the organisation. It's fascinating to learn what skills folks have - even live music perhaps.

Let your site rep or manager know what you plan and they can help. But having a great time is the aim. Pictures of even more having just that are awaited!

Young Allotmenters

We love to see children/young people learning about growing vegetables. For the very young ones, please make sure they stay on your plot and within your sight & control. Allotments are not play areas and can contain hidden dangers - so please be careful.

WAITING LIST

This stands at about 150 just now. All these folk are waiting for the opportunity to grow their own produce. We are (wherever possible) clearing unkempt areas to create or recreate plots. However, if you are finding it difficult to maintain your plot for whatever reason please let us know. If you have a full plot we could reduce it to half.

Change of Financial Year

Next year, 2013 we are changing the invoice date for payment for your plot. Currently 31 March it will change or rather revert to 31 October. This is to enable us when plots are given up at the end of the 'year' to relet them when they can easily be prepared for the new growing season. So in March 2013 you will receive an invoice for 6 months and then in October 2013 an invoice for the following complete year.

If you have anything to contribute to the newsletter - news, hints, photos, event dates etc - to Anna please (see page 2).

Also contact her with history. We are hearing of relics being dug up on plots - clay pipes, bits of ancient pottery, lead toys, bullets, etc. Have you found anything?

Committee



After many years of sterling service Malcolm Wimsett has stood down from the committee for health reasons. He has been site manager based at Loose Road (but he remains as a site rep). We thank him for all his efforts and wish him really well for the future.

Bryan Yates, the site manager & rep. based at Rocky Hill, has also stood down.

This means two vacancies were created, and the committee has decided to co-opt Louise Tarleton-Hodgson (based at Loose Road), and Sandra Walker (based at Sandling Lane). These positions are co-opted and will be up for confirmation by election around the time of the AGM in June.

Update:-

- * Loose Road - managed by Louise T-H.
- * Rocky Hill - managed by Chris Di M. and Bob P.
- * Sandra W - a new role responsible for competitions, shows, projects and possible grants.



COMMITTEE CONTACTS

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|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
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SHOPS

Do visit the 4 allotment shops - **Sandling Road, Glebe Lane, Upper Fant & Loose Road**. These sell general fertilisers, compost, food supplements, some chemicals and much more. Seeds to order through the Kings catalogue from August, + potatoes & onions in January. Excellent preferential prices. Open Sunday mornings, and other times when possible. Ask your site rep or manager for details.

Shortly a fifth shop will open (we will advise the date) at the **Rocky Hill** site, but we would like some help please manning this on Sunday mornings. If you're interested, speak to Chris Di Marco (details below).

Did you know?

1. Sweetcorn is a monocot so there is always an even number of rows of kernels.
2. Squash is one of the most versatile of all vegetables as they can be used in any way that a potato can.
3. Onions and leeks can be traced back to ancient Egypt.
4. Smaller leeks can be used as an alternative to spring onions.
5. Young beetroot leaves can be used like spinach and cooked or used raw in salads.
6. Growing garlic chives with cabbage may deter cabbage root fly.
7. If you bend cauliflower leaves over the head it may help to prevent scorching in the summer and protect from frosts in the winter.
8. When cutting cabbages, cut a cross in the remaining stem and up to 4 new mini cabbages may grow.
9. Spinach is high in lutein.
10. Unlike many vegetables, turnips retain their nutrients when cooked.
11. All types of lettuce contain Lactucarium which is a mild opiate-like substance. Both the Romans and Egyptians took advantage of this by eating lettuce at the end of a meal to induce sleep.
12. There are almost 4000 varieties of potato.
13. Sweet potato is a dicotyledonous plant that belongs to the family Convolvulaceae, known commonly as the bindweed or morning glory family.
14. There are almost 7500 varieties of tomato.
15. The newest vegetable is Petit Posy (Flower Sprout) which is a cross between the brussel sprout and kale and was only available commercially from 2009.

Louise T-H



Two Budding Allotmenters?

OPEN MEETING

The first Open meeting held at Maidstone Hockey Clubhouse on Tuesday 6th December was really well attended.

First, the interim chairman, Judith Chappell explained how allotments are run by the committee, what improvements had been implemented in the first 3 months since her appointment, what else is to happen, and how everyone can help to move things forward.

Second, the Borough Council's Parks & Open Spaces Manager, Jason Taylor ran through Maidstone BC's ownership of the set up, but with the delegation of operating responsibility to the committee. In return, the Borough Council gives an annual grant to the committee - this year, £10,000.

Lastly, the committee's treasurer, Brian Prentice explained the elements of the annual income and expenditure. In future, he advised, the committee would draw up a budget for the forthcoming year based on our needs (rather than respond to income).

Afterwards there was some good debate. The general mood of which was to welcome the more open approach now being taken in the running of the allotments. Everyone was encouraged to contribute to works and initiatives, even on other sites.

Finally, we received a lively illustrated talk from Tessa Allen, a Hadlow College lecturer, on the sex life of bugs in our gardens and allotments, and how to deal with them - organically. The main thrust of her talk was to emphasize that all creatures have their uses and a live and let live policy is very often best [except for lily beetle!] as this then encourages the natural predators into the garden - for free

The evening was rounded off round the bar, with lots of opportunities for chatting, making friends - and nibbling & drinking!
A great event, to be repeated..



Comment

Website

The new site will be up and running by the time you receive this newsletter.

It has info on all our sites and how the allotments run, finance, contact details, links to useful sites, tips/ advice, our shops and what they sell, frequent qs, and hopefully soon what you are all doing, with pictures, events and much more. It is a source of information and communication route for you as plotholders and also for those seeking a plot - although there is still a long waiting list.

We think it looks great but it would be enhanced with your input/ideas/ activities and photos

If you've any, please feed them to Anna at -

maidstoneallotments@hotmail.co.uk

PLEAS(E) AGAIN!

Plot Numbers

We do keep requesting this - number your plots clearly.

E Mails

Let us know your e mail address - quick, free communication. To Anna please - with your site and plot number.

COMPETITIONS



Those at the last open meeting saw the cups which have been unused for many years - no longer!

Three are engraved and therefore for serious allotmenters, [again Chairman won't qualify!] but others will be used for more light hearted growing success.

And we plan some competitions for our young growers to enjoy.

Please look at your **notice boards** as well as on the website for details. We have some great ideas, but please let us know yours.

Contact Sandra Walker.

AGM

This will be on Tuesday 26th June at Maidstone Hockey Club in Armstrong Road. It starts at 7.30pm, with a pay bar and nibbles to finish.

We want it to be informal, instructive and enjoyable alongside the 'business' part.

There will be:-

- * The Chairman's report of what's been happening on our allotments over the last 9 months since being in that post and future plans;
- * A Treasurer's report to update us on finances, past and future;
- * A report from MBC, and hopefully some words from the Cabinet Member John Wilson;
- * Voting for any relevant positions to the committee;
- * And a 'questions and answer' session.

Plus, we are delighted that Andy Garland from Radio Kent's Sunday Gardening programme will be our guest speaker after the AGM part.

Radio Kent!

Many of you would have been surprised to hear the 'dulcet' tones of our Chairman on a recent edition of the local radio gardening programme. Judith was invited to be on the morning edition on Sunday 15th January. She talked about the allotments in Maidstone and how they are run, before appealing for any historic information. As she advised, the forthcoming website will have a history page for stories, memories, photos etc.

A nerve racking experience, but super publicity about our efforts. In so doing, she met the presenter Andy Garland and invited him to speak at our AGM. We're delighted to report that he's agreed - see opposite.

Carrots



(by Nick Pearman - Square Hill)

When it comes to growing carrots, 'the answer lies within the soil' as Arthur Fallowfield (Kenneth Williams) would say in the 1960's radio programme 'Beyond our Ken'! Carrots grow best in light, sandy soil that is rich in humus but free draining and without stones, so start digging over your soil in late winter. Incorporate compost that has completely rotted down to a fine black crumbly structure, turn it well in and then let the winter frosts complete the breakup of the soil. Don't use manure as this is too rich and causes carrots to fork. In the spring rake it to a fine tilth. Sow thinly on a dry sunny day in shallow drills. Once germinated, keep it watered if there is a long dry spell as otherwise the carrots go woody. Lift them as soon as they are big enough to eat; evenings are best for harvesting as less chance of attracting carrot fruit fly.

So, getting digging NOW, turn it over in big clods and harness the free power of nature's winter frosts



Rules & Regulations

These are very necessary for many reasons, not least safety for everyone and fairness for all our plottolders. If you are not sure of the dos and don'ts, they are all in your tenancy agreement.

So, please check from time to time. Alternatively, ask your site rep or manager (see page 2)

BEEES

Make your allotment bee-friendly. Bees help with pollination, essential for many plants such as pumpkins and sunflowers. Attract them by planting a wide variety of fruit, veg and edible flowers - nasturtiums and marigolds not only look great in salads, they are also great for attracting a whole range of beneficial insects and help keep some unwanted visitors at bay.

