

Woburn Sands Allotments Newsletter

March/April 2009

THANK YOU!

Thanks to the 25 people who turned out for the drainage working party on 7th March.

We managed to dig a trench across several plots, insert a drainage pipe and backfill the lot – all before 3.00pm! Thanks also to those involved in providing refreshments during the day.

See the website for photographs.

Committee News

There has been a great deal of activity in the past few weeks with regular checks on the state of the field, the Drainage Working Party, a skip on the field for each of the first two weekends in March, plot measuring, tree removal and several new tenants joining the Society. The Committee has also been seeking various sources of funding and preparing for the AGM.

AGM

The AGM takes place on 23rd April in the Memorial Hall. **Please join us for a drink prior to the meeting.** The agenda for the AGM is with this newsletter. We would welcome new members of the Committee which currently has 7 members rather than the ideal of 8 or 9. *Ladies are especially welcome as the 6:1 ratio needs changing!*

This will be the first year we have tenants who will be invited to the meeting as observers.

Pole charge letters are currently being sent out by Graham and you may wish to pay your pole charge at the meeting. Tenants will be able to pay their rent at the AGM.

Members who joined the Society this time last year will be able to collect their Share certificates at the end of the meeting.

WORKAID tackles poverty in developing countries by supplying disadvantaged people with the tools they need to earn a living. They collect unwanted items, repair them and send them to vocational training projects, mostly in East Africa.

Pauline Byrne has offered to collect tools for this worthwhile project. Please contact her on 583478. Further details on the noticeboard - also see www.Workaid.com

Field Matters – and a bit of a nag!

1. Driving

As the ground is drying out a little, the Committee has agreed to lift the ban on driving on the field. However, please do not use your vehicle on the field unless it is absolutely essential. This is particularly relevant to heavier vehicles (4 x 4s) which compact the ground. If you must use your car, please just unload/load and then park in the carpark.

2. Water

The water has been turned back on and most of the water tanks have now been cleaned. Please don't use them to wash tools or vegetables.

3. Dog Walking

There seems to be an increase in the number of dogs on the field and many members have complained about the consequent increase in dog fouling. If you do bring your dog onto the field please clear up as necessary.

4. Gates

On a number of occasions recently gates have been left both open and unlocked. We have also had at least one shed broken into and tools taken. The gates act at least as a barrier and do need to be locked. Please ensure the gates are shut and locked when you leave the field – don't assume someone else will do it.

Events

Field Inspections will take place in May and July – dates will be agreed later in the year.

The annual judging for the 'Best Plot' will take place on 10th July and the Awards Evening will be on 17th July. This will be held on the field again this year.

We intend to have a Pumpkin (biggest girth) **and** a Sunflower (tallest and widest seed head) competition this year. There will be a best child's entry for both. Judging will take place over the first weekend in October – so start planting.

Following the success of the last working party we intend to have another to help with hedges and ditches in late October early November – dates to follow.

Membership News

Tim Holden and Malcolm Cook have both relinquished their plots this month.

We have several new tenants who have taken on 5 pole plots. Welcome to Mary Davies, Bob Gregory, Roger Hansard and Lorraine Blythin who have all taken on 5 poles. We wish you many happy hours cultivating your plots.

The waiting list has now reduced from over 20 at this time last year to 6.

A View from the Field

(Peter Leadbeater's Advice Column)

For information about what to do at this time of year please look at the newsletters from this time last year which are on the website.

Peter Leadbeater's series about pests finishes in this newsletter. Next time he will be writing about weeds.

Slugs and Snails.

Many crops are subjected to damage caused by slugs and snails and this is most noticeable during the early stages of the plant's growth when leaves are eaten away.

Some slugs however, spend most of their lives below ground and will attack root crops, particularly potatoes, generally in the late season. Holes can be seen in the potato when harvested which can become hollowed out inside. Some potato varieties are more susceptible to damage eg. Picasso, Cara and Pentland Crown, although none are immune. Control can be achieved by various methods:

- **Pellets**, these are usually small blue pellets containing metaldehyde and a repellent to reduce their attractiveness to animals and birds. These can help reduce potato damage if used in warm conditions after heavy rain when the slugs come to the surface.
- **Biological Control**, using nematodes (beneficial eelworms. These can be obtained from a number of suppliers, mixed with water and applied to the plot. They seek out and kill slugs above and below the ground.
- **Granules**, crushed shells, soot or other material over which the slugs and snails do not like to crawl, can offer some protection to small areas or individual plants. If pests are trapped inside the area they cannot get out!
- **Beer traps**, probably more commonly used in the home garden for local protection.

Pea Moth. The caterpillars of the pea moth are the maggots found inside the pods. The moth lays its eggs between June and August on flowering pea plants and so, if the peas are sown early or late, they can escape some of the damage. Spray plants

thoroughly at dusk a week after the start of flowering with a suitable insecticide.

Mice. These can be troublesome as they take the seed of peas and broad beans when sown, small scratched holes along the row are an indication of mice at work. Dipping seed in paraffin is said to help. Mousetraps set with a pea or peanut as bait under a wooden tunnel to prevent birds being caught usually eliminate the problem.

Moles. In many cases these animals cause little or no real damage, however, they can uproot a row of plants or seedlings which have been watered during dry spells. Earthworms, on which moles feed, tend to come to the moisture and the mole inadvertently loosens the soil when hunting them. To just move the mole various methods can be tried. Windmills stuck into soil, empty plastic bottles upturned over a short cane and battery operated devices. If trapping them becomes the only answer, find a spot where their run goes alongside a path or firm ground and place the trap there. Moles can be quite difficult to catch especially in light sandy soil.

Small Birds. The main problems caused are related to seedlings and fruit. Protecting with suitable netting is really the only solution.

Larger Birds and Animals. Pigeons are the biggest nuisance throughout the year. They attack brassica plants and may cause major damage. Small plants can be protected by netting or fleece during the summer months. If you use netting, make sure the birds cannot settle close by and walk beneath. Pigeons can ruin fully grown brassicas during the winter months and netting over in winter is the only answer. Plastic bags and CDs etc. do keep them off for a short time.

Crows and jackdaws will take shoots off broad beans as they emerge and pheasants, which occasionally visit the plots will take out peas and can damage sweet corn. The use of wire netting around your plot with netting over the top will stop birds, rabbits and deer. The problem this creates is that it is difficult to keep weeds down and gather crops.

I am experimenting with "GRAZERS", a nutrient based spray that, it is claimed, makes plants unpalatable to pigeons, rabbits and deer for a while. Although not a pesticide, it is absorbed by the plant. It will be interesting to see if it works – I'll let you know.

Small Ads.

Personal Insurance Scheme for NSALG members – see noticeboard for details.