



# WEST WICKHAM ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION

[www.wwallotments.org.uk](http://www.wwallotments.org.uk)

**Newsletter - September 2015**

## Social News

### SUMMER BBQ - July 2015

A change of time and day this year as we have never had the BBQ on a Sunday lunch time before but from the feedback it seems to have been quite a success. It did not bode well at the start of the day as the weather was suspect but thankfully by the time we sat down to eat it had improved. We managed to arrange the chairs with sufficient tables so no need to be balancing a plate on our knees - making eating and drinking a fair bit easier!

The food had everyone's seal of approval particularly the huge cakes for dessert!

We had a little too much of everything but for every minus there is a plus and the helpers who took food away with them at the end of the day donated generously to

St Christopher's - which also benefited from a very generous raffle collection of £109.

Thank you to all who bought tickets.

An enormous amount of work goes on behind the scenes to bring a day like this together and this is an opportunity to thank all of the helpers for the setting up, for the generous donations of a variety of salads and other foodstuffs, the "serving staff" and, most importantly, the cooks for slaving over the hot coals!

We learnt a great deal by doing the BBQ a different way and next year it will be even better so those who did come please encourage your fellow plot holders to join us next year.

**Claire**



### WINE TASTING EVENING

A small group of allotmenters met in the early evening of Tuesday 11th August to take part in a wine tasting run by Graham Reavell, one of our plot holders. Graham has worked in the wine trade for a number of years and was keen to pass on some of his knowledge. We started on his plot where he gave us a history of the Riesling grape and how the vines are cultivated. We sampled one wine and then moved to the trading shed as it began to rain. We spent a very pleasant and informative evening sampling five other wines, all made from the Riesling grape but very different in taste. Graham was able to answer our questions and dispel some of the mystique which often surrounds wine. The evening was of interest to the novice as well as the connoisseur of wine. A small charge was made as Graham held the event to raise funds for the site - what a great way to raise funds! We hope to run another evening later in the year.



## OPEN DAY

Our Open Day preparations started on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> August when the marquee and the gazebos were erected and the produce was weighed and bagged up ready for Sunday 16<sup>th</sup>. The weather forecast for Sunday was good, unlike last year when we had monsoon rain! Although the sun hid behind the clouds for most of the day it was dry and mild, perfect weather for an outdoor event. We had a slightly different arrangement this year with the stalls spread out to encourage visitors to move

further into the site and this seemed to meet with their approval as many commented on it. We had a steady stream of visitors all day, many coming back from previous years. We have a reputation for excellent refreshments and quality produce. Many people commented on the peacefulness of the site and how attractive it was looking.

One stall was 'Guess the weight of the Cake'. It weighed 3lbs 2oz (we haven't gone metric yet!) and as 3 people guessed the correct weight their names were put in a hat and a neutral party (my husband) pulled out the winner - it was Tom Brown.



The day was a great success and has raised just over £800 for our funds. Thank you so much to all who helped to make the day so successful - setting up, providing produce, cakes and plants, serving on the stalls and finally clearing everything away at the end of the day. It was a lovely day with everyone working together to ensure all went well.

**Marian**



## Notes from the Trading Shed

Trading has been quiet during the summer but it has been steady. We are about to return the Johnson's Seed packets and have reduced the Country Value range to clear.

Seed potatoes for 2016 have been ordered and details will be available in the shop shortly. The range is virtually the same as last year but we have dropped Pink Fir due to a poor response last year. We have substituted with another "salad", International Kidney.

Autumn planting onions and garlic are on order so watch out for them arriving.

All the renovations in the shed have now been completed and we hope you all agree that it looks a lot brighter and fresher. During the Open Day, we had a few visitors from other Allotment Societies and garnered a lot of compliments about the way our Trading Shed looked. Many thanks again to Ron and Dave, our multi-talented maintenance team.

**Keith**





## PRE-SCHOOL VISITS TO ALLOTMENT SITE 2015

Once again during June and July we have had various pre-school groups, plus a holiday club, visit our site. The total number of children this year was 131 together with 44 parents and teachers who accompanied them.

I was very thankful to have the assistance of Dawn and Sally (plot holders from H9) who helped me with some of the larger groups as trying to talk to a group of 31 small children (aged 4yrs) and 9 parents/teachers **and** keep them all interested, is not an easy task. We split them into two groups and each one took a different route around the site finally meeting up on the green where the children had their picnic and play time before going home. Thank you to all the plot holders who were working on their plots and took the time to talk to the children and let them sample some of their fruit and vegetables.

July 1<sup>st</sup> was the hottest July day on record and a visit to the site was scheduled for that day but we decided to cancel it at the last minute for the safety of the children. The visit was re-booked for the following week and guess what! - it was cloudy with light drizzle - so no worry about sunstroke or sunburn. Oh, the great British weather!

I have estimated that over the last 10/11 years that I have been doing these site visits, over 1,300 children and 500 teachers/parents have visited us. It is always nice to see some of the same parents coming back with either a brother or sister of a child that had previously visited the site. This year we had our first triplets - two girls and a boy.

Interesting the children and their parents about the benefits of growing fruit and vegetables has obviously paid off as now we are seeing families taking on plots and their remembering being taken around the site.

Just before the schools broke up for the summer holidays, the children of Greenhayes Pre-School invited me to their school to see their garden and play areas. Andrea Heard, who runs the school, said it would be nice for them to show me around for about 20 minutes. Have you ever tried to get away from 15 four year olds who want to show you everything they had been growing, they were so proud. Needless to say I was there for over an hour but I did enjoy it!! When I was leaving one little boy wanted to know where I had parked my tractor, he was so disappointed when I said that I had come in a car . . . . .

## 'Farmer' Brian - (Plot K1 & K2)

## Continuing our Blast from the Past . . . .

Marian has a note from Les Alder (B10) regarding the longest serving plot holder. Les joined in March 1968 and paid 10 old shillings for his plot. He is not sure if this was a reduction as he took on the plot part way through the year. Can anyone else beat this record?



## Topical Tips from Paul

Some ideas/thoughts for the next few weeks.....



### Time to gather our crops

After a good start to the summer, we have had rather leaden skies for the past three weeks or so and this has slowed down ripening of some crops.

Looking around the site it seems that we have had mixed success this year. Roots, salads and brassicas seem to have done well - beans and tomatoes less so. Now is a good time to give crops a liquid feed, organic or otherwise, to prolong the season. This is particularly important for tomatoes. Also, it's worth paying attention to harvesting time - for example, potatoes won't bulk up once top growth has died off and leaving them too long in the ground can lead to slug and wireworm damage. Carrots will stand a bit longer but may split if over-watered. It seems that jackdaws like sweet corn cobs, so it might be worth netting them over.

**Raspberries** Now is the time to remove all the growth on which this year's early/mid raspberries fruited. This will encourage new cane growth for next year's crop and this should be tied in to supports.

**Salads** It's far from too late to sow lettuce, salad leaves and rocket. These will grow well into the winter months if you provide some cloche cover. Cut and come again leaves work particularly well and I have found Winter Density to be very reliable. You might also consider trying Perpetual Spinach.

**Discoloration of brassica leaves; mildew on courgettes; tomato blight** Not for the first time I have experienced red/yellow patches on brassicas. In the past, this seems to have been due to trace element deficiency and I have found a top dressing of Growmore/rose feed works well. This year, though, I have been affected by club root - bad news as it means that the bed concerned can't be used for brassicas for several years unless I try club root resistant varieties. On that note, we'd be pleased to know of any club root resistant varieties you have grown and also courgette varieties which have strong mildew resistance! If you grow outdoor tomatoes which are not blight resistant, then you may wish to spray with Bordeaux mixture (the last year it can be used) or Bayer's Fruit and Vegetable Disease Control - I've also heard tried spraying with dispersible aspirin (3 x 500 mg tablets per 2 gallons water) and it seems to help. Also, we'd like to know how you got on with the blight resistant tomatoes!

**Composting** Plants are starting to die back and the growth can be composted but you might want to avoid potato/tomato stems, rust covered onion/leek leaves, mildewed courgette leaves, brassicas infected with club root and pernicious weeds such as mares tail and bindweed. Keep your compost bin contents damp to deter ants from nesting.

**Onions and garlic** If you plant onion sets over winter, consider covering them with Enviromesh which is available from the Trading Hut. Not only will it keep out the allium leaf miner (around September/November and March/April), it also provides a micro-environment in which plants seems to grow faster.

**Green Manure** This can be sown now, overwintered and dug in in the Spring to improve the soil texture and replace micro-nutrients - a variety of green manures are available in the Shop. Remember that mustard is a brassica and may impact on your crop rotation plans.

**Strawberries** Heard a good tip the other day about growing strawberries in gutters well off the ground. Can't wait to try it. Here's a link to a video of a variation of the idea.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5pmv9EPGv64>

Happy plotting!



From the Secretary's desk

Here are some dates for your diaries:

**Plot Inspection:** Monday 5th October - please make it easy for the plot inspectors by having your edges tidy and cut back and your plots in good order.

If you have any issues please let us know in advance at

[wwallotmentsec@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:wwallotmentsec@hotmail.co.uk)

**AGM:** Wednesday 18th November - more details will be emailed in October

**Christmas Drinks:** Sunday 13th December - for all plot holders, again more details nearer the time.

If anyone - or who knows of someone - who would like to donate a self-propelled lawn mower to the site please do let us know as we are in need of replacements. Please email:

[wwallotmentsec@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:wwallotmentsec@hotmail.co.uk)

Regards

**Matt**

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We have been asked by St Christopher's to let you know about the following:

## **St CHRISTOPHER'S Will Week 7-11 September 2015**

Currently 22% of St Christopher's income comes via gifts in peoples' Wills.

Why not sort out your affairs and get peace of mind, AND help St Christopher's at the same time. Please contact one of the solicitors below, quoting "St Christopher's Will Week" during the above week. They are kindly donating their services to St Christopher's, but will request that instead of paying them a fee you support St Christopher's with a single gift for a non-complicated Will of £150 or £200 for two Wills. Any gifts to St Christopher's in Wills would be a wonderful bonus. Please contact Anna Somerset 020 8768 4573

[a.somerset@stchristophers.org.uk](mailto:a.somerset@stchristophers.org.uk) if you have any queries.

St Christopher's Free Will Week Solicitors:

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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Batchelors<br>Charles House<br>35 Widmore Road<br>Bromley<br>BR1 1RW<br>0208 768 7093 | Ewings and Co<br>148 High Street<br>London<br>SE20 7EU<br>020 8778 1126                    | Judge & Priestley<br>Justin House,<br>6 West St,<br>Bromley,<br>BR1 1JN<br>0208 2907354                  | Pishon Gold<br>1 Bromley Lane<br>Chislehurst<br>BR7 6LH<br>020 8 468 1032 |
| Thomas Dunton<br>217/219 High Street<br>Orpington BR6 0NZ<br>01689 822 554            | Wellers Law Group<br>1 Tension House<br>45 Tweedy Road<br>Bromley BR1 3NF<br>020 8290 7988 | Amphlett Lissimore<br>Greystoke House<br>80-86 Westow Street<br>Crystal Palace<br>SE19 3AF 020 8771 6465 |                                                                           |