



## Byelaw Men's Field newsletter

Spring 2010

### A Different way to grow strawberries



Sisters, Barbara and Janet of Plot 6s have come up with a novel way of growing strawberries by planting into florist buckets. Apparently these buckets originate from Holland, where they are manufactured using recycled plastic and are used to transport flowers. Currently the 'going rate' is £1.00 for eight and I understand most supermarkets and florist sell them. An obvious advantage is that strawberries will be above the ground. It is too late to establish plants this year but I will be watching the progress of Barbara and Janet's plants with the intention of trying this method next year.

### **BEES.**

At the time of writing the bees seem to have successfully come through the winter but the month of April will be a crucial time for them as their store of honey is depleted but no nectar is available to replenish it until the spring blossom arrives. If this is late we may have to feed them fondant to avoid them starving despite leaving more than the recommended amount of honey to start the winter.

We have obtained a further grant to buy two more bee suits and a honey extractor. The extra suits will enable anyone interested to 'get up close' and watch Julie and Tony carry out the various beekeeping tasks when they open the hives. We are grateful for the grant to buy this equipment which was awarded by the North East Divisional Community Safety Partnership from the Proceeds of Crime Act Funding.

For a short period, probably in May the three hives will become six. As the colonies grow in the late spring the bees' natural instinct is for the Queen to take off with half the colony to form a new colony elsewhere: that is how we obtained a colony last year when a swarm set up home in one of our empty hives. To avoid losing half a colony and a honey crop from that hive an artificial swarm is created. The bees are fooled into believing they have swarmed by placing half the colony in an empty hive and at a later date reuniting the two halves. Julie and Tony are optimistic they will be able to carry out the artificial swarm process!

Unfortunately one colony 'made a run for it' on Saturday 24th April and we do not yet know if we have lost them .

## ALLOTMENT COMPETITION.

Can our success of last year be repeated when we came third or can we improve on it and increase the prize money of £50.00 we received? Already the site is looking good and would be greatly improved if brightened up with flowers so donations of summer bedding plants would be greatly appreciated.

Each year in late September early October the Leeds and District Gardeners Association hold a presentation evening to present prizes to the winners of the allotment competition. For a minimal cost there is a buffet and an enjoyable social evening. This year we should consider attending, perhaps hiring a mini-bus paid for out of our current and anticipated winnings.

## TOOL SHED.

Please check when you return your tools to the shed if anyone left on the site wants the door to be left open. Otherwise please lock it up. If in doubt please lock the shed so there is no risk of it been left open when nobody is on site.

**WEBSITE.** [www.byelawmensfield.org.uk](http://www.byelawmensfield.org.uk)

Our website is up and running being generously provided by Phil, the partner of Helen [plot 9n]. If you have not visited then please do so, also if you have any planting and growing tips to share please let Tony have them for inclusion. Peter [plot 28] and Fran [plot 9n] have already contributed.

## WAITING LIST.

There are now 53 people on the waiting list.

**A.G.M.  
SATURDAY 1ST MAY  
10-30A.M.**

**This year it will be later than usual due to difficulty getting the relevant committee members together but mainly because the Chair is on holiday at the end of April. Unfortunately the holiday was cancelled.**

## WATER BUTTS.

We have been successful in obtaining another grant from Leeds Community Foundation for two more water butts which means that we are able to harvest rainwater from almost all the site buildings. When full our five butts will hold 5250 litres [approximately 1200 gallons] which should considerably reduce our water bill as the water is used and replenished by rainwater. Rain water is regarded as superior to mains water when used to water plants.

Once again Harvey has installed the butts and Martin [plot 15s] connected them up. Martin has also added a novel feature; an electric pump. A car battery is trickle charged by a photoelectric cell and this provides the power for the pump. On the three connected water butts a hand pump has been attached. These two pumps will enable watering cans to be quickly filled. We need to establish how far water can be pumped through a hose pipe and which plots it can reach. If this is viable and we can pump water some distance then we could consider applying for a grant to install water butts on the plots reached. This would be a useful way of avoiding using mains water.



