

Byelaw Men's Field

newsletter

Autumn 2011



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

The A.G.M. this year had an attendance of four people plus the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. A total of seven out of a possible forty. What would have been the outcome if those present had voted to increase the water charge to £25 and banned the use of hosepipes? Nothing could have been done until the next A.G.M.! Next year, once again there will be ample notice of the A.G.M. please try and attend.

COLTON AND WHITKIRK GARDENERS' ASSOCIATION.

For many years the Associations' fertiliser and sundry store has been on our site and when Peter Binns [plot 30] was the storeman it was possible to easily obtain goods. Since Peter ceased to offer this valuable service the use by members of our site has stopped also. Nonetheless being a member of this organisation is still worthwhile particularly as prices are competitive but also because there are monthly meetings with interesting topics from guest speakers. All this plus discounts from several nurseries for a cost of only £2 a year. If you would like to join then contact the Shelagh Freer, 0113 2648028



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AN ALLOTMENT!

An allotment should not be a place where one can sow and grow vegetables and flowers in isolation. At a recent meeting of the Leeds and District Allotment and Leisure Gardeners the president, forty years an allotment gardener, commented that 95% of plot holders just wanted to get their head down, cultivate their plot, leave taking no interest in the overall maintenance and involvement with their site. A cohesive site should be a vibrant community of people of all ages, people with many different life experiences and skills to offer.

Traditionally its core has been the retired members usually found on the site during the week with those working usually being seen at the weekend. Common to all sites seems to be a 'cliché' spending time sitting and drinking tea and putting 'the world right.' These groups can have either a negative or positive influence on an allotment. I think most would agree that Harvey, Reg and Peter are such a group with a positive outlook ready to take on arduous tasks, for example the major project to tackle the drainage problems. It was they, helped by Fran, who dug out the huge soak ways, removing a large amount of soil and replacing it with bricks then connecting it all with drainage pipes; work that is now largely forgotten. There are other people who undertake regular

tasks such as Mick [plot20n] who cuts the grass on the headland and communal areas and Steve [plot27n] who regularly take away the rubbish bags people have stacked in the corner of the site.

In our last Newsletter attention was drawn to the fact that Reg Gledhill was no longer in a position to continue repairing our machinery and it would probably mean having to be pay for them in the future [we would still need a volunteer to transport and collect them from repair]. Harvey has been the one who as foreseen problems, proposed projects and taken the lead in carrying them out, all for the improvement of the site. Regrettably this year, due to mobility difficulties he has been unable to undertake tasks and a consequence has been that the appearance of the site has suffered. Obviously some members have more time to spare than others but surely all would have either an hour or two to spare when we organise a 'working party' or grow extra plants for the flower tubs. Whether or not we enter the allotment competition next year we should consider putting in place a 'working party' group who would organise the occasional few hours required to keep our site looking good. It will probably mean 'twisting arms' because membership of this group will be a thankless task.

SQUARE FOOT GARDENING.

For several years now I have involved my grandchildren in my allotment but as two live in Sheffield and two live in Newcastle this has not been easy. Nonetheless they have a few raised beds in their gardens. I have one 9 year old grandson living in Leeds who sometimes helps especially when the strawberries, raspberries and peas are ready for picking. This year I came across the concept of 'square foot gardening' by Mel Bartholomew and decided to try it out although I had to call it '30 centimetre gardening' so my grandchildren could understand the idea. On my allotment plot I divided a four foot square bed [120x120cms] into sixteen and my Leeds grandson planted these up with lettuce, radish, carrots, beetroot, a cabbage, a cauliflower, a broccoli, a tomato, a cucumber [this grew up a frame rather than along the ground], French beans, a sunflower, and runner beans. To maintain a steady supply of produce more than one bed is required but a regular contribution of salad proved worthwhile.

This is an excellent way to introduce children to gardening and I will be continuing with it next season. Apart from the French beans everything grew amazingly well and would have grown even better if I had watered frequently. I have been gardening almost 60 years and the pleasure of hearing a grandson say to his mother 'here you are mum lettuce and radish I have grown' is beyond measure. Perhaps as they grow older they might leave gardening behind for a while but hopefully it will be there for them as adults.

To find out more details about this method it is well worth visiting:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Square_foot_gardening



BEES!

This year has been yet another disaster with no honey been extracted from the two hives that survived the winter because they entered the spring very weak and they did not store a surplus to extract. We had honey salvaged from the hive that blew over in February which was stored in an airtight plastic box with the intention of extracting it with the honey we anticipated collecting in August. Not so! Unknown to us the frames contained honey moth eggs which hatched out in the warm weather of June and the larvae having no bees present to deal with them began to eat the wax capping the honeycomb contaminating the honey. At small amount was obtained to emphasise what might have been. That is 'beekeeping' once more another learning curve for Julie and Tony.

ALLOTMENT LEASE.

Leeds City Council and The Trustees of Byelawmensfield Allotment Association have signed the allotment lease for a period of seven years. At the end of this period it will have to be signed again. Our Trustees are: Peter Binns [plot 30], Colin Bulmer [plot 7] and Reg Gledhill [plot 19s].

WAITING LIST

There are over 40 people on the waiting list with very little movement. A full plot is 300 square yards but it has become custom and practise over the years to only let half plots. Then if the adjoining half plot holder leaves the remaining plot holder is given the opportunity to take over the full plot, if they so wish. I think this should hold still. A development in recent years has been to have another list for plotholders who have had to give up their plot for either health reasons or a change in their circumstances. Should their circumstances change they can again be offered a plot; although not necessarily the plot they have vacated.

Some allotment associations have divided a few plots into quarters and this has worked very successfully. It means that each plotholder has six beds 4 feet wide by 12 feet long which for many, such as young families is sufficient. Of course not for all and some might want more space and graduate to a larger plot. I think it is something we should consider by perhaps making the next half plot that becomes available into two quarters. If you have an opinion about this please let Tony know.