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[Trap Ground] TGAA Autumn Newsletter

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TRAPGROUND ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

Autumn Newsletter 2014

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Railway works

After delays caused by the winter floods, unforeseen physical obstacles, and planning oversights, the programme of works is still further delayed. The enlarged railway bridge – now to be 3.5m wide because of its status as a bridle way – will probably not be installed until next summer; a more complicated operation because of its greater size. The access paths will nevertheless remain about 3m wide as Natural England and others regard their enlargement unsuitable for the SSSI status of Port Meadow. Details of the ramp bridge to our site are still to be finalised but a simple design and an appropriate green colour seem to be acceptable suggestions.

Plots

Despite some of our plots being submerged for several weeks, the soil recovered in the spring as if by magic, and its fertility, probably enhanced by the flood's nutrients, has yielded excellent crops for many of us and, for many others, an exceedingly healthy mass of weeds. The lettings secretaries have had the rather dispiriting task of warning a record number of plot holders whose weeds are causing a nuisance to fellow plot holders that they risk losing their plots if the weeds are not cleared or covered over. Plot holders who have a chicken-wire fence around their plot are reminded that they are responsible for keeping weeds at bay on both sides of the fence and not just the plot side. Plots should also have a clearly displayed number – something which is lacking on a number of plots.

Paths

With thanks for all their hard work over the summer, the mowing team has been putting the new mowers through their paces. To help the mowing team, please keep paths clear of debris, building materials, nets, and any other matter. And please don't let your crops encroach on the communal paths otherwise they won't be wide enough for the ride-on mower to go down. Narrow paths between plots are too small for the mowing team to deal with so plot holders are responsible for keeping them mowed. A new self-propelling mower is available from the shared-equipment shed.

Composting and bonfires

The communal compost heaps are intended as a service to all and are looked after by Michael Wheale. The big heaps get up to quite a high temperature and rapidly break down plant material into good compost to go back into the soil. You can put almost any vegetable matter in the communal compost, including annual and perennial weeds but what you must not put in are: weeds with large amounts of soil, because soil will stop the composting process; potato and tomato plant remains (take them home to put in the food waste); and woody or thick things like brassica stalks, because they take too long to rot down.

For organic matter that can't be composted there is the communal bonfire that we organise so it burns up fast and hot and only when the wind is away from the railway line, the local houses and ourselves.

For matter which can't be composted or put on the bonfire, such as plastic, old netting, metal waste and so on, there is the skip by the Port Meadow gate. If there is no skip, please keep waste matter on your plot until there is.

Harvest Supper and Photographic competition 2014

The Allotment Association's annual harvest supper will be held on Saturday 8 November 2014 at 6.30 for 7pm at the St Margaret's Institute in Polstead Road. The format is similar to that of previous years; everyone brings a main course and/or a dessert to share with others – hot or cold – and you bring your own drinks, also to share. There will be a welcome drink on arrival.

The evening's entertainment is up to you. The winners of the annual photographic exhibition will be announced (and all entries shown) and, if desired, there will be an allotment quiz, fruit and vegetable charades or just polite conversation. To book your place(s), which costs £5 a head, please e-mail Stuart Skyte at skytes@tiscali.co.uk, or call on 01865 559618, stating whether you will bring a main course or a dessert (or both).

To enter the photo competition, just follow the instructions you can find on the website at <http://www.trapgroundallotments.org.uk/photocompetition2014entryform>.

Discount seed scheme

Seed catalogues and the special allotment order forms will shortly be arriving from Dobies. This year, you will be able to order direct from Dobies – including online – but to benefit from a discount of 50% on seeds (up from 30% last year) and 15% off everything else, you must quote a special code. All will become clear when you pick up your seed catalogue.

Pest control

There's nothing we can do about the badgers but if you find rats on or around your plot, Pete Jarvis (plot 88) can provide you with bait boxes and poison.

Dates for your diaries

The **TGAA Annual General Meeting** will be held at the St Margaret's Institute at 8.00 on Tuesday 17th March 2015.

The **TGAA Plant sale** will be on Sunday 17th May 2015. Please keep it in mind when taking cuttings, splitting plants and/or making jams, chutneys and other preserves.
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