

## Trap Ground Allotments Autumn Newsletter

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### Railway update

Work on the new railway bridge is due to begin in December. Contrary to earlier assurances that the operation was simple and would be done over a couple of week-ends, it turns out that the works will last until next August during which time the path to Port Meadow will be closed. Our access over the level crossing is to remain open until all mitigation measures are complete. There are a number of operations involved, roughly as follows:

- The wall bordering Waterside houses will be rebuilt.
- The construction of the TGAA car park area, retaining wall and steps.
- Remediation of the land triangle for its incorporation into Phil & Jim school.
- Grading and surfacing the paths to the bridge.
- Installation of the railway bridge and the ramp bridge to the allotments.
- Security and acoustic fences for the school.

Because of restrictions of access to Port Meadow - a SSSI - cranes and other machinery have to operate outside it which will contribute to the lengthy timescale of the work. In the meantime, local public access to the Meadow will be via Walton Well Road.

### Trees

In the spring, the Oxford Tree Company did a really good job on the various trees within the allotment site. The work produced lots of logs and chippings. In addition, the council's tree team undertook very thorough pollarding next to the apiary and planned to do other pollarding outside the nesting season.

### Mowing

Many thanks to the dozen people who kept the place looking so well groomed again this year. The new mower does a good job but suffers from allotment obstacles like string, black plastic, nets

and similar hazards lying in its path, so please do what you can to keep these things off the beaten track. Thanks too, to the owners of compost bins around the site who accept the mowings we collect when at a distance from the main compost area.

### **Equipment shed**

Many thanks also to the people who hold keys to the equipment shed, which they will provide to you if you need access. They are listed on this web page, which also tells you what motorised equipment we have and what you need to do to get access to the equipment.

New this year are some basic (non-motorised) pieces of sharpening equipment – a file so you can sharpen your spades and hoes if you wish, and some small sharpening stones to tackle such things as secateurs.

### **Port Meadow Keys**

If you need to get across Port Meadow to make deliveries, you will need the Port Meadow keys which can be obtained from:

Jonathan Clark, phone 310273, email [jonathan.clark@whatho.net](mailto:jonathan.clark@whatho.net)

Tim Halliday, phone 512163, email [tim@hallidayfarndon.co.uk](mailto:tim@hallidayfarndon.co.uk)

Pete and Carol Jarvis, phone 553843, email [carol.jarvis@talktalk.net](mailto:carol.jarvis@talktalk.net)

### **Dealing with waste**

The allotment site has five ways of dealing with unwanted waste matter from plots:

**Communal compost** For unwanted weeds and other plant matter, we run the big communal compost heaps because: it reduces the amount of material burned; big heaps get hotter and destroy more weed seeds; and many plots are too small for a compost heap of their own. The benefit is that the composted material can be dug back in and enriches the soil. Please don't mix rubble or glass compostable plant matter and if you want to put loose apples on in the compost bin please leave them in a container of some sort otherwise they all have to be picked up by hand which is a tedious job. And please help yourselves to the compost from the central bin which is ready for use.

**Communal bonfire** For plant matter which cannot be put in the compost – eg thick branches and other wood – we have the communal bonfire to reduce the need for plot holders to have their own bonfires which can be a nuisance. We generally try to burn the communal bonfire in the evening when the weather is right and when we have enough mix of wood and plant material to ensure that it burns quickly. We need a volunteer to take over the bonfire.

**Rubble** To replace the one which used to be by the allotment shop, a new rubble bank will shortly be installed on the bee-friendly garden near the new pond and next to the communal compost and bonfire. Please save the bits of china, glass and bricks that you dig up to deposit at the rubble bank.

**Plant pot banks** There is a plant pot bank next to each of the allotment gates for plant pots which can be re-used.

**Skip** There is now a skip on the allotment site which is for waste material which cannot go on the communal compost, on the communal bonfire, in the rubble bank or in the plant pot banks or recycled in some other way. So please do not waste valuable skip space by putting plant matter, wood, plant pots or rubble in the skip.

### **Plant sale**

This year's plant sale made a very respectable £1,470. There were very few plants left over and the jams, jellies, chutneys and honey all sold out. So thanks to everyone who helped make it happen and/or who donated such high quality material. Let's hope we do as well at next

year's sale which will be taking place on Sunday 22 May 2016.

### **Allotment shop**

Many thanks to Vibeke Mannion who, after setting up the shop and running it for over seven years, has stepped down from shop duty. Tim Halliday has kindly agreed to take over running the shop and we also now have eight regular shop keepers and five volunteers willing to help out as and when. The shop now opens from 11.00 until 12.00 on a Saturday and from 3.00 until 4.00 on a Sunday but not in bad weather.

### **Seed discount scheme**

Dobies seed catalogues and special order forms are now available at the allotment shop or from Virginia Wallis on Hayfield Road. The order forms have a special code (which can also be used to order online) which means that you get a discount of 50% on packets of seeds and 15% on everything else. The allotment shop will make a bulk order of the following varieties of seed potato: Charlotte; Desiree, Lady Crisl and Pink Fir Apple. They will be on sale at the shop from mid-February at very competitive prices.

### **Harvest supper**

This year's harvest supper will take place on Saturday 21 November at 6.30 for 7pm at the St Margaret's Institute in Polstead Road. To book your place(s), which costs £5 a head, please e-mail [Stuart Skyte](mailto:Stuart.Skyte@polstead.org) or call/text 07981 521138, stating whether you will bring a main course or a dessert (or both).

### **Photo Competition**

The annual photo competition is open for entries until the end of October. Instructions on how to enter are given in the link. As always there are four prizes of vouchers to spend at the shop: first prize £20, second prize £10, third prize £5 and a people's prize of £5. The people's prize is voted for by the attendees at the Harvest Supper. At the time of writing there are only two entries, so your chances of winning are particularly good at the moment. The theme for this year's competition is 'Allotment Gardeners'.

### **Bees**

The six bee keepers have had a mixed season. Honey production was not particularly good. Cold weather came at the wrong time, and so unfortunately none of the bee keepers has any surplus honey. Apparently honey production in the UK has been down by 40% this year.

We have erected the green screen around the apiary to force the bees to climb above head height before heading in the direction of the allotments. This is because there have been a few incidents of people being stung, mainly quite close to the orchard area near the apiary. You should probably exercise caution in that area. If a bee bothers you, just walk away calmly, and do not wave your hands around to shoo it away from you. We don't think the green screen is pretty, so we intend to plant some barrier plants there to replace it, in time.

In the nearby area which is very low lying and prone to flooding, we have built a couple of raised beds which we intend to plant up with bee friendly plants. We will be asking for donations of plants or cuttings from plants for this area in due course, so if you are able to prepare useful cuttings or have suitable seeds, please save them. Meanwhile if you want to plant your own bee friendly plants, for all types of bees, not just honey bees, here is a page about pollinator friendly plants from the RHS.

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