

Allotment Association Newsletter Spring 2013

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Posted in group: **Trap Ground Allotments**

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The 2013 AGM will be held at the **St Margaret's Institute at 8.00 pm on Tuesday 26th March 2013**. An agenda will be sent out before the meeting. The committee will be standing for re-election but if you would like to stand for election to the committee, please let the TGAA Secretary know which of the following posts you are interested in taking on: Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Lettings Secretary (of which there are two), Pest control, plant sale, machinery, website.

Plot fees

Invoices for plot and membership fees have been delivered by hand and need to be paid by 31 March 2013 to benefit from the discounted rate. If you haven't had an invoice, it's probably because you changed your address and forgot to tell the TGAA Secretary. Provided you pay by cheque, you can pay your fees at the AGM on 26th March 2013.

Plot inspection

The committee will be undertaking a plot inspection before the AGM (see above) and will report back at that meeting.

Plant sale

The annual plant sale will be held at **St Margaret's Institute on the morning of May 26th** between 10.30 am and 2.00 pm.

Please put this in your diary. In the past few years we have raised around £1,000 which constitutes one of our main sources of revenue.

The past twelve months have been about the worst growing season in memory so hopefully people will be trying to catch up in 2013. So if you are splitting garden perennials or superannuating house plants, sowing your early vegetable seeds or propagating cuttings please remember that we have a ready market for any surplus. Our experience is that everything will be snapped up so long as it is reasonably priced and looking healthy. We have grown to become a well reputed fixture in the North Oxford social calendar.

We will be sending out details and appeals for assistance nearer the date.

Seeds, potatoes, onion sets etc

Marshalls have withdrawn their online discount garden club but if you put in an order (and paid for it) before February 2013, your order will be honoured. If you are still in the market for packets of seeds, bargain-priced seed potatoes (look on the notice boards for the varieties) and red and brown onion sets, they are available at the allotment shop (open 11 – 1 on Saturdays and 2 – 3 on Sundays) along with the usual stock of ground cover, pest protection, canes, fleece, horse manure and lots more. See the [website](#) for the price list.

You can also order seeds etc at any time during the year from Dobies but to benefit from a 30% discount on seed prices, you will need to use the special order forms available from Virginia Wallis and/or the allotment shop.

Access

You may by now, have seen the reports in the local press of the closure of the level crossing to our site.

Oxford City Council's Executive Board (EB) decided that they had to acquiesce to Network Rail's demand that the crossing be closed if the proposed "Oxford Corridor Enhancements" are to go ahead.

Network Rail's argument is that their planned increases in train frequencies and speeds, combined with the complexity of the junction to the Bicester line and the new siding to the west, will increase the crossing's danger to an unacceptable level where its presence would make the improvements impossible. The present rate of 12 trains per hour is to be increased to 22 per hour as goods and passenger services are improved and electrification is introduced.

Jim Campbell and I did what we could to defend the use of the crossing at the EB meeting but, in the end, could not effectively counter Network Rail's case.

There are some safeguards for our requirements in that closure will only occur when all the mitigating measures are complete. These have to be agreed but we will seek as a minimum improvements to the bridge path, the replacement of the bridge itself, the raising of the western path to the meadow above flood level, and the provision of a car park for at least a dozen cars.

Gate code change

Although we intended to keep Network Rail's gate code in step with our own, Network Rail have still not given us the instructions for changing their code. It is probably safe to assume the Network Rail code won't change. Our gate locks currently have the same code as last year. We'll be changing the codes in May, and we will inform you of the new codes a couple of weeks beforehand by email.

Vermin

The combination of trapping, fences, foxes and flooding seems to have solved our rabbit plague problem. If during the coming season you find signs of renewed bunny activity on your plot please tell Peter Jarvis on plot 88 or telephone 553 843.

There was nothing we were allowed to do about badger damage but the new railway track clearing will have wiped out several setts. We will see if this diminishes our local infestation.

Rats will have survived the floods and probably taken refuge in or under sheds and compost heaps. If you find a nest on your plot let us know. There is a number of plastic bait boxes placed across the site which will now have become empty of poison bait. If you find one on your plot please bring it to the shed on plot 88 for redeployment.

Communal compost and bonfires

We heard lots of good comments about the quality of the last two lots of compost, so a big thank you to John Ashby who puts lots of work into providing the facility. Please help him to help you by following these guidelines:

- If there are notices by the compost bins, obey them
- Don't bring stuff from home without explicit permission. People seem to be forever dumping large branches from shrubs which don't live on the allotments. It is very anti-social to dump them for somebody else to deal with, and very unfair to John.
- The bin to fill at the moment is the easternmost bin (nearest the pond / bees / railway).
- Please no turves, no earth, nothing woody. If in doubt, ask somebody knowledgeable if it is compost-able / burnable and put it in the appropriate place. If you really don't know whether to add it to the compost, and there is nobody about to ask, then leave it in front of the bin and John will have it looked at it and sorted it into the appropriate place.
- The communal bonfire is for burnable vegetable matter. No plastic, no soil, no metal etc.

Floods

The melancholy sight of our plots and crops under water persisted longer this winter. Low temperatures seem to reduce the damage to plants compared to the very destructive summer floods which, fortunately, are rare. A few days of dry and sunny weather lowered the water table and allowed the soil to breathe again and be ready for cultivation. Let's hope we have a better season this year.

Machinery

The communally owned machines - mowers, strimmers etc. - are currently being serviced ready for the season. A list of what is available and how to access it is on the [website](#).

Bees

There are currently two hives in place in the apiary, and the committee has given permission for the six current bee-keepers to expand up to a total of six hives, which means the apiary is currently full. Let's hope the weather is better than last year, and we reap the benefit of our local pollination service.

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From Tony Hollander on behalf of the committee

If you need to contact the committee, email contact details are on the [website](#).