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**[Trap Ground] Spring newsletter**

1 message

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**TRAP GROUND ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION****Spring Newsletter 2014****Annual General Meeting**

The 2014 Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held at the St Margaret's Institute on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2014.

**Plot fees**

Invoices for plot and membership fees will be delivered shortly. Fees need to be paid by 31st March 2014 to benefit from the discounted rate. Provided you pay by cheque (made payable to TGAA), you can pay your fees at the AGM (see above).

**Plot inspection**

Once the water levels have returned to normal, the committee will be undertaking a plot inspection and will report back at the AGM. Plot holders who are not cultivating their plots to a satisfactory standard will be encouraged to give up their plots so that they can be offered to people on our growing waiting list. We will, of course, make allowances for the dreadful weather conditions and any health problems which have prevented plot cultivation.

**Plant sale**

The annual TGAA plant sale will take place at the St Margaret's Institute on Sunday 25th May 2014 between 10.30 and 2.00. You will be able to bring plant, and other, donations to the institute from 4.00 on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> May. Last year's plant sale raised £1,200 making it one of our main sources of income. Last year's sale was also the last to be brilliantly organised by Pete and Carol Jarvis so this year we will be looking for volunteers to take over various organisational roles as well as helping at the sale itself. Details and appeals for assistance will be sent out nearer the date. In the meantime, don't forget the plant sale when splitting garden perennials or house plants, sowing vegetable seeds or propagating cuttings. Last year's plant sale also saw the introduction of a jam and chutney stall so if you have surplus preserves as well as surplus plants to give, your donations will be more than welcome.

**Floods**

This year's inundation has lasted much longer than last year's so our impatience to get back to gardening increases. Last year's strange weather seemed to frustrate attempts to adhere to

conventional rules of tilling and planting the soil but, in the end, most crops did very well so let us hope that we will be able to catch up soon and the results will again be rewarding. For those who may not have experienced this type of flooding before, as soon as the soil is dry enough to fork over, this will itself help its aeration, and then application of fertilizer in some form will quickly enrich it enough for planting and successful growth of crops. Avoiding compaction helps too; using boards as walkways spreads the weight of our boot prints.

## **Railway Developments**

Network Rail's programme of work here has been delayed partly due to the floods. The planning application for their developments is due to be submitted in February rather than last November. After an eight week consultation period, if the application is approved, the new bridge should be installed in late August.

Other developments will occur around this time. The TGAA car park for twelve cars and a turning space, the improvements to the railway bridge paths and the bridge from the western path direct to the allotment site are all planned for the summer and autumn.

As part of their consultation process, plans will be displayed at Phil & Jim school at a date to be announced and railway and city representatives will be available to answer questions. The school hopes to get its land triangle in time for the start of the next academic year. In case works restrict TGAA parking, the school has offered the use of their car park during the summer holidays; keys would be made available.

Our bid for an access ramp from the western end of the railway bridge direct to the TGAA site was rejected on various grounds, not least, the expense. Designs for the alternative direct bridge mentioned above are invited, and Phil & Jim pupils are also being asked to submit ideas for it.

The western [flooded] end of the railway bridge path is to be raised by 400mm. This year 36cm depth of flood water was measured there during some of the worst flooding so this should allow access to Port Meadow hitherto denied to the local community in floods.

The unofficial path to the Trap Grounds Town Green will have gated access through the TGAA car park, and Network Rail vehicles will also be able to drive through to their rail-side facilities. We will try to prevent unauthorised parking by means of permits to TGAA members.

Plans and drawings of Network Rail's proposals will be available at the AGM (see above).

## **Harvest supper and photo competition**

Stuart Skyte has already set the date of the 2014 Harvest Supper, which will be on November 8<sup>th</sup>. I'm sure he will make sure it is the usual excellent blend of good food, good company, and a touch of humour. There will be a Photo Competition this year, and the prizes will be announced at the Harvest Supper.

The theme for the Photo Competition 2014 is "**Colour**", which should give plenty of scope. Details of how to enter will be announced by email later in the year, meanwhile as soon as the weather allows gardening to commence, remember to take your camera with you. Inspiration might be found by looking at the entries for previous years, for example: <http://www.trapgroundallotments.org.uk/photocompetition2013>.

## **Communal compost and bonfire**

The communal compost and bonfire are there to help us and John and Diana Ashby put a great deal of effort into managing the facility. Please help them by following John's notices and only putting compostable material in the compost bin and burnable vegetable matter for burning on the communal bonfire. Please do not add to John and Diane's workload by bringing waste from your home or garden (as

some people clearly do).

Please also do not put anything on the bonfire that is not burnable vegetable matter and so which should go in the skip. The most recent inappropriate item was fibreglass which was dumped on the bonfire, then covered by other burnable waste. When the fire was lit it burned in a most noxious way, spreading black smoke far into the surrounding area. It is also frequent to find vegetable waste with clumps of soil, dumped either on the compost pile or the bonfire. Neither pile is suitable, you need to remove the soil first.

### **Compost**

You can put almost any vegetable matter in the communal compost, including annual and perennial weeds, because it should get hot enough to destroy them. 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, because it will spread blight; and woody or thick things like brassica stalks, because they take too long to rot down.

### **Bonfire**

The purpose of the communal bonfire is to save you having to burn things on your plot. We wish to discourage fires on plots, especially at week-ends, to minimise the smoke nuisance for other allotment holders. Soil analysis of the site has also shown that there are traces of polyaromatic hydrocarbons, which are likely to be from Victorian ash but could also come from bonfires. They are not thought to be worrying but we are advised to use the communal bonfire rather than have bonfires on our plots. If you want to take ash from the fire to feed your fruit bushes and trees, please do so.

### **Mowing rota**

Tony Hollander has taken over from Jonathan Clark in organising the mowing team. If you would like to join the mowing team, please let Tony know.

### **TGAA Apiary**

There are now three pairs of bee-keepers - Liz Greenhalgh and Penny Tordorff, Leonie Bennett and Rebecca Jenkinson, and Howard Cox and Jonathan Clark - each with a pair of bee colonies in the apiary, which we hope will over-winter successfully. When the swarming season begins in late spring, there will be more colonies, at least temporarily.

Four of the colonies were new last year and so gave only minimal honey, but from the other two, something like 150 lbs of honey was harvested in total. Generally, last year turned out to be a good year for bees after a slow start. Let's hope this wet weather ends soon and we get another good season.

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