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Notices

Allotment Plot Waiting List

Plot inspections are still ongoing. 13 unworked plots were re-let to 10 new & 3 existing Tenants in October. The current waiting list is now at 18.

Site Security

The committee has been informed of a number of new thefts from plots during the last few weeks. See later in the newsletter for more about Site Security.

Bonfires.

Please remember that from 1st Oct. 2019, you can now have a bonfire from 4pm. However, from January 2020, new WTC rules mean that **NO** bonfires will be allowed onsite after the 1st May 2020 until the 1st Oct. 2020.

Plot holders still need to be considerate to our site neighbours & should look at strength & direction of prevailing winds before lighting their bonfires.

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Important Housekeeping Points

The Main Gate – The Allotment committee would like to remind all allotment holders that you must always close and lock the main gate after entering or leaving the site.

Speed Limit – The speed limit of 5MPH seems to have been ignored by a number of Tenants recently. All Plot holders will have received a copy of a letter sent out by the council a copy of which has also now been attached to the Front Gate entrance.

November – Some To Do's

You would think that winter is a quiet time on the allotment. However, there's just enough daylight to clear and tidy up the allotment of old crops in preparation for next year, as well as making any structural alterations you want to carry out. In the meantime, here are some other jobs to be thinking about for November.

- Net brassicas – Use mesh and make sure that it lifts clear of the brassicas; otherwise birds will be able to peck through it
- Stake Brussels sprouts – They can blow over in heavy winds when laden with crops, so stake them now to prevent this
- You can harvest a surprising amount of crops in November, including main crop carrots, cabbages, Brussels sprouts, celeriac, celery and cauliflower
- If you haven't already, sow some winter hardy peas & broad beans now
- Cut down autumn-fruiting raspberries
- Prune fruit bushes – Blackcurrants, redcurrants, whitecurrants and gooseberries can be pruned any time between November and March, while they are dormant
- Take hardwood cuttings from fruit bushes
- Clear up the remains of summer crops and compost where possible
- Now is also a good time to sow a green manure over any earth that is going to be left bare over winter – it will suppress weeds and will add nutrients when dug into the soil in spring
- Dig up and compost any plants that have finished their season.

Items of interest

Site Security

Thefts – As mentioned previously, the committee has been informed of a number of new thefts from plots during the last few weeks. Sadly the committee have to report that they have not been able to detect the thefts passing through the main gates.

As was agreed at the last AGM, we have begun to make use of a number of strategically positioned additional cameras to try and understand what is happening around the site. We will be increasing the number of cameras shortly.

We believe that by announcing this action in the newsletter, it will help deter any future thefts of Produce (one cherry tree was stripped back in early summer) & Tools and will hopefully make the whole site a safer environment and free from future thefts.

If you think you have suffered a produce theft, please let us know via the normal email address and it will be looked into. If it's not reported, we can't act.

Site Access – A lorry was recently seen on the site trying to 'dump' tree chippings onto one of the plots in accordance with that plot holders request. When challenged as to how they had gained access to the site, they simply said that they had a gate key!!! It had been given to them by a plot holder.

The committee would remind all plot holders that the Gate Keys remain the property of Woodley Town Council (WTC) and should not be given to any non-plot holders. If any plot holder needs to receive a 'normal' delivery by an outside company, they should meet that delivery company at the gate and ensure that the gate is locked after they enter and again when they leave.

Because of this recent event (plus a number of past issues) and after a period of investigation, it would appear that there seems to be many more keys in circulation than would seem appropriate (even allowing for 'watering' assistants) for the number of plots that exist.

With that in mind WTC are now considering a complete change of Padlock/Keys to try and get back to a more reasonable 'key' population. The committee will keep Plot Holders updated as this discussion progresses.

Fly Tipping – In line with the item above about Gate Keys, it would appear that a small amount of 'Fly-Tipping' is taking place.

Also as mentioned previously, the committee will be reviewing all images from the variously placed cameras to see what more can be learned about this. The committee would remind all plot holders that as part of their Tenancy Agreement they must not bring 'other' people's garden waste onto the site.

The committee apologises that it has had to announce these items in the newsletter, but we all want and deserve a well-run allotment site that is a welcoming & safe environment; we hope that all readers will agree.

Plots L1/L2 – Pond Update

Our timetable has slipped a bit; however, we hope to have the base sand delivered shortly and the liners installed during November.

As has been recently noted, there is water already in the pond, however this is from the recent downpours and with no proper liner currently installed it will need to be removed. When we have finished the install, we expect the pond to fill quite quickly with the next batch of clean rainwater. We are also in the process of planting daffodils for the rear bank which will bring a bit of Spring colour to the setting.

Pallets & Wood Chip

We continue to receive regular supplies of Pallets & Wood Chip. Pallets can be found either by the 'Shed' or next to the Launchpad project plots. You will also find the Wood Chip pile there which is free for all Plot holders to use on their own Plots. Please do **NOT** take this off site.

Launchpad Charity – Update

from Carolyn Davies – Lead Coordinator for our Allotment site with Launchpad.

We continue to host corporate volunteers on our site from various companies including a great group from Pega Systems. They were one of the first companies to send volunteers earlier this year so they saw lots of changes.



They responded to our challenge and made a hedgehog hotel. Meet Hew/ Hugh our Hewlett Packard scarecrow, who's waiting for his face to be painted. We also harvested the last of our pumpkins.

To date we have had 27 corporate volunteer groups on site, ranging from a group of just three up to our largest of forty!!

We are expecting more groups during November, but as the growing season slows down, this will be more about harvesting current produce.

We have also made 14 deliveries to; Readings Food Bank.

The donated poly-tunnel, shipping container and other items are in full use and are proving very useful for the visiting corporate and onsite volunteers.

We continue to seek to help with this project, including any donations that plot holders can make of produce from their own plots that they are not going to use themselves.

You can either take it to the Launchpad Plots (located on the corner of Jersey Knoll/ Meadow Way) & leave it next to the Polytunnel or send an email with your plot number & what you have collected to readingrdallotments@hotmail.co.uk and it will be collected.

Finally, if you can come along for a few hours to help with this project, please let us know via the same email address as above.

Plot Volunteers

We are also still looking for volunteers who may have some spare time to help other plot holders? We are compiling a list of 'helpers' that can assist other plot holders when they are struggling with their plots due to ill-health etc.

Let us know if you can help via the normal email address.

Seed Catalogues

The Dobie Catalogues are now available from the 'Shed' and the 'box' by the gate.

Your orders with Money (Cheques) need to be back to Teresa Buley by the end of November.

Please see the recently issued Special Bulletin which also includes an Order Form for you to use when ordering your seeds.

Fruit Trees and Bushes Sale

This sale has netted the Allotment Funds £50.00, many thanks to Teresa for organising this.

Bee Hives Project

Proposed policy has been approved by WTC. Initial area has been agreed and now ready for protective/security fencing.

The fencing will be erected in the New Year in time for the beginning of the new Bee Keeping season in April.

Carolyn Davies is currently contacting interested parties to confirm final numbers.

Bee Roadzz Project

A steering group is now up and running. WTC has cleared the various designated areas and wildflower seed has now been scattered over them. The re-wilding has started and we await the spring appearance of the flowers.

More updates in the coming weeks.

Onsite Toilet – update

The committee had received a number of comments about the Onsite Toilet (*located nearby the Shed in case some Tenants don't realise we have one*).

This is an 'Aerobic Digester' toilet and is a facility that not many other Allotment Plots have at their disposal.

We would again ask all Tenants that use this facility to leave it in a clean and decent state ready for the next user.

Notice Board

The Notice Board at the entrance gate will be replaced in the coming months with a bigger version and more space for events notices.

Summer Events

We have mentioned this in past newsletters and as we now have a number of new tenants joining us, we would like to ask again for suggestions for possible community events on site in 2020.

In the past we have had suggestions about holding a 'Bring & Swap' day for Seeds & Produce; a Produce Competition Day and of course an Apple pressing day.

We would of course hold a BBQ on these events days as well.

Let's have some other suggestions (via the normal email address below) and see what we can do together.

Rotavating Service

We have been asked a number of times if this can be provided. The committee would like to hear from Plot Holders that would be interested in sharing the cost of this.

Clearly the more that are interested, the lower the unit/plot cost. Emails please to the normal address below.

Disposal of Allotment Weeds/Plant Waste

It would appear that a number of Plot Holders are disposing of weed/vegetable waste that they have dug up on their plots into the roadways on the site.

This is not only 'not allowed' per the Tenancy Agreement (para 4.18), but with the recent heavy rains it has made for quite a mess in parts of the site with cars passing by and pressing the waste into the roadway.

Please compost all waste on your own plot, if it cannot be composed or burnt, then you should use the local council facilities to dispose of it. The committee thanks you.

... and Finally

"It was such a pleasure to sink one's hands into the warm earth, to feel at one's fingertips the possibilities of the new season."

— *Kate Morton, The Forgotten Garden*

Our Contact Details

If you have any suggestions for items that you would like to see covered in further editions of this newsletter, please do contact us at:

readingrdallotments@hotmail.co.uk