

## June 2008 Newsletter

### *Committee News*

The next Committee meeting is on 20th July – just after this newsletter is published. At this meeting, the Committee will be splitting a few plots so that we have some 5 pole plots for a number of tenants. Details will be in the July newsletter.

In order to synchronise the newsletter so that there is advice for the coming month there will be no August newsletter. The September newsletter will be published at the end of August. (Thanks for all your comments about the newsletter – if you have any ideas about how to improve it or, if you can offer an item for it please contact Marie.)

The new Constitution and ByLaws should have reached every member by now. These have been sent to the FSA for registration, as is required by law.

Many thanks to ARLON Stationery Printers for printing both documents and to the Committee for delivering them.

Plot Awards Evening 7.00pm 18th July

The judging of plots will take place on Friday 11th July. Our judge this year is John Bates, Chair of the Garden Club. Four awards will be made: for the best three plots and a novice award for a plot holder who has been cultivating for less than two years. The awards will be made on the following Friday. This year we intend to present the awards on the field this means that we can admire the winning plots. It is also a chance to get together socially. If you can help by providing food please contact Peter & Tina Toogood on 01908 645670. If you can let them know what you are bringing they will coordinate the offerings. If you can help by lending gazebos and/or bringing chairs, or in any other way please contact one of the Committee members. Do try to come along.

### *Gardeners' Question Time*

Congratulations and thanks the Garden Club for arranging BBC Gardeners' Question Time as part of their 50th birthday celebrations. It was an interesting and enjoyable evening. The programme can be heard on Radio 4 on 13th June and 27th July with repeats the following Wednesday.

### *Trees*

During the last field inspection we noted that there are a few non fruit trees on the field. Of these trees most are self seeded and have now grown to quite a size. Having received the agreement of the plot holders concerned, we will be removing these trees in the Autumn. If you do have any tree seedlings growing, please remove them. If we have not contacted you and you have a tree that needs to go, please contact Marie.

### *A View from the Field by Peter Leadbeater*

June/July

- Keep crops free of weeds with regular hoeing. Weeds compete with crops for light, water and nutrients.
- Plant out Brussel sprouts and other brassicas.
- Remove the tips from broad beans – above the flowers- to minimise the risk of blackfly.
- Plant out marrows, courgettes, butternut squash, outdoor cucumbers and pumpkins.
- Plant outdoor tomatoes and put a cane or stake alongside for support. Even when planting bush tomatoes, I find it advisable to tie the plant just once, to a small cane to prevent wind damage. The same advice applies to peppers.

- Plant out leeks. These should be 1/8" (3mm) to 1/4" (6mm) in diameter at the base of the stem. Carefully remove them from the seedbed with a fork, trim the roots to approx. 3/4" (20mm) and also remove some of the leaf growth so that the plant is approx. 8" (200mm) in height. Using a good dibber, (one made from an old spade or fork handle is ideal), make planting holes around 5" (125mm) deep, 8" apart in moist soil. Drop one plant into each hole orientating the leaves so that they will grow pointing along the row – this makes hoeing easier. Leave the holes open but half fill with water – job done – there is no need to water again. Leeks are an easy and useful winter crop to grow.

- Plant out sweet corn. This should always be planted in a 'block' 16" (400mm) apart both ways, rather than in single rows. Sweet corn is wind pollinated, the pollen falling/blowing from the flower at the top to the tassles of the future corn cobs. It is important not to mix varieties, especially of the supersweet strains, as cross pollination may spoil the flavour.

- Sow or plant out more runner beans, French beans, beetroot, cabbages, lettuce and carrots for a succession of crops.

- Harvest early potatoes, broad beans, peas, cabbages, carrots, beetroot, lettuce etc. as they become available.

- Stop cutting asparagus by mid June and also leave rhubarb to recover by late June.

- Protect and pick soft fruit as it ripens.

- Watch for signs of pest damage, particularly on brassica crops, and treat if necessary.

- Firm in and water all plants when they have been transplanted to settle the soil around the roots. Water seed drills prior to sowing the seed in hot, dry conditions. I water once and never again and the plants don't die – the roots go down in search of moisture instead of remaining near the surface

waiting for the man (or woman) whose arms are getting longer to come along with the watering can. On our sandy soil watering pans the surface and when it dries it quickly forms a crust which can restrict good germination. An exception to this is runner beans, which, when cropping, I do water regularly as shortage of moisture produces short curly beans.

- As I mentioned in February, I planted a row of 'Swift' and a row of 'Rocket' potatoes on 13th February. Both were coming up and I pulled the soil over them before the Easter snow. Both varieties had a few open flowers when I dug one root of each on 17th May - not a good result; both were about the size of a 50p piece. I left them for another week or so. Everything is later than 2007 due to the cold April we experienced this year.

### *Track Mowing*

The tractor will be on the field to mow the tracks and generally tidy up on Sunday 6th July (weather permitting).

*Pests:* the first of a new series of articles from our resident expert, Peter Leadbeater.

### *Flea Beetle*

This small black beetle attacks the brassica family. Seedlings grown in outside beds are particularly at risk but quite large plants can also become targets. Damage shows as small perforations and light marks on the leaves. If not checked they can wipe out seedlings by reducing leaves to lace. Larger plants usually show these signs around the edges of their leaves.

As these beetles jump like fleas when disturbed, brushing over with a card smeared with grease can reduce numbers. Spray with insecticide eg. Provado

Ultimate Bug Killer. Protection with fleece also works well especially with 'set out' plants.

### *Drainage*

We still have some concerns that some plots or parts of plots are waterlogged. However, the following figures might help put this in perspective: Over the past three weeks we have had 5 inches of rain. If one inch of rain weighs 100 tons per acre and the total area of the field is 11 acres then we have had 5500 tons of rain or 1.25 million gallons of water falling on the field. No wonder we need the wellies!

We are taking further advice about the problem.