

September 2008 Newsletter

Committee News

At the latest Committee meeting on 14th August the main item discussed was the Business Plan which has been produced by the Treasurer, Graham Porter. Members of the Committee will now be putting the final touches to the plan before it is put to members for discussion at a Special General Meeting on 23rd October at 7.30pm. This meeting will be held at the Institute in Woburn Sands.

The first phase of the drainage work took place on Friday 8th August. SJS dug out a new drainage ditch from the edge of the field to the ditch at the bottom end. Two sets of drainage pipes were installed in a herringbone pattern. SJS, the contractors discovered the original drainage pipes were broken and you can already see quite a water flow from the new drainage pipes into the ditch. We intend to see if this solves the problem further up the field before any further work is carried out.

Seeds, Potatoes/Onions and Manure

1. Seed Scheme. The Society runs a seed purchase scheme through the National Society of Allotment Gardeners which gives all members discounts on vegetable and flower seeds and various sundry items. The scheme also provides the Society with some funds. The catalogue for the seed scheme will be delivered to you if you get this newsletter by email or is enclosed with this newsletter if we do not have your email address. Please complete the order form with the catalogue and return as indicated below. If you prefer, you could use the order form on the web site.

2. Potatoes and Onions. Each year, in liaison with the Flitwick Gardeners' Association, we arrange for the purchase of potatoes and onion sets for members. The order form for this is also attached.

3. Manure. Ralph Pursell has offered to arrange for deliveries of manure for members. So you have an order form for this too.

For all orders, please make sure you include a cheque payable to the Society. You can combine the money for all three but we need separate order forms. Please send orders to the Treasurer, Graham Porter, or if you prefer, you can drop them in to any member of the Committee on the field.

Deadline for all orders: 30th September

Bonfires

Given the nature of the weather the Committee has agreed to lift the bonfire ban from the weekend nearest to 1st September so you may light a bonfire from this coming weekend.

However, bonfires can be a nuisance so the following MUST be observed (see item 20 of the ByLaws):

- You must take every precaution to avoid causing a nuisance by allowing smoke to drift across the nearby housing estate. – Please check the direction of the wind before you light.
- Bonfires must be kept to a minimum and must be fully supervised.
- The burning of plastic, rubber, and carpets or other toxic materials is strictly forbidden.

We do aim to be good neighbours so if there are several bonfires on the field, please consider keeping your until a later date.

Pumpkin Competition

This will take place on the morning of 4th October, on the field. If you intend to enter details will be in the next newsletter

Going Bananas?



Jane Roberts' ornamental banana tree is flowering and fruit are forming. Planted 7 years ago, this is the first time the plant has flowered. The fruit are small (but perfectly formed) as you can see from this photograph they are recognisable bananas.

If you grow any unusual crops - do let us know.

A View from the Field

- our monthly advice column from Peter Leadbeater

- Keep crops free of pests; caterpillars are a real problem at this time.
- Harvest onions. Dry them well and store. Use any that have bolted as they will not keep. Some onions are showing signs of white rot this year which shows as a white powdery fungus around the roots and base of the bulb. These onions should not be composted but ideally burnt. The disease can stay in the soil for 8 - 10 years so it is advisable to avoid growing onions, shallots, leeks and garlic on the contaminated area for that time.

- Cauliflowers have done well this year due to the cool damp conditions. As it forms, bend an outer leaf or two over the head to protect it from the sun and adverse weather. Variety 'Clapton' which is club root resistant has performed well.
- Harvest runner beans and water them regularly during any dry periods.
- Gather all vegetables as they become available.
- Sow spring onions eg. winter hardy 'White Lisbon' and sow overwintering onions. You can also sow winter lettuces such as Winter Density' and 'Valdor'.
- Plant a new strawberry bed. Allow 30 inches (75 cm) between rows, 20 inches (50cm) between plants. Plants should crop for three years then be removed.
- Pick autumn fruiting raspberries as they ripen. Remove the old canes from summer fruiting varieties by cutting off at ground level.
- Pick plums and other tree fruit as they ripen.
- Dig potatoes. Check to see if the skin rubs off. If it does, cut off the tops and leave in the ground for a week or so before digging. Allow them to dry and then store in cool, dark conditions. Use any damage tubers first.
- Compost all green waste material eg. brassica leaves, not the roots or potato tops as this can cause potato blight to be carried over to following years.
- Clear ground as it becomes vacant and keep it free of weeds ready for winter digging. I find this is best done from the beginning of November onwards, otherwise if the weather is mild weeds will grow.
- You should be buying broad bean eg. 'Aquadulce' & 'The Sutton' and onions sets for autumn planting (see Seed Scheme)

- Many of you will know that I use a 'Wolf Terrex Autospade' for digging. Mine is many years old and was, until recently, out of production. It is now being manufactured again and is available from Backsaver Garden Tools Ltd, Leeds 01943 870486 www.backsavgardentools.co.uk. It costs about £100, but it does cut down your level of physical work dramatically.

Pests: the next in our series of articles from our resident expert, Peter Leadbeater.

Leatherjackets (crane fly grubs) and Cutworms (soil dwelling caterpillars of various species of moths).

A sign of this problem is when a plant in the row suddenly wilts and dies as the stem is eaten just below ground level. Scratch carefully around the plant and the offender can often be found before it moves along the row.

Caterpillars

These are a particular problem this year. The larvae of the Cabbage White butterflies (Small & Large), they are laid in colonies of eggs especially on brassicas. The green caterpillars are of the Small White and the yellow caterpillars with black markings are the Large White. Make sure you continue to inspect plants and crush patches of yellow eggs. Cabbage moth caterpillars are green/brown without hairs and burrow into the hearts of cabbages.

Control caterpillars by hand or by spraying with a suitable insecticide; covering with fleece while the plants are small is helpful. There is a new biological control nematode now available.

Small Ads.

Water Butt: A neighbour in Hardwick Place has a water butt surplus to requirements. If you would like it, please contact Marie – no charge but you will need

to collect.

Pallets:

There is a further supply of pallets on Ron Hale's plot. Please help yourself – donations to the Society's funds gratefully received – 50p per pallet.