

February 2008 Newsletter

COMMITTEE NEWS

New Chairman for the Society

Ralph Pursell has stepped down as Chairman of the Allotment Society and will take on a more technical role in future. Ron Hale has taken over as Chair.

At its last meeting the Committee paid tribute to the tremendous amount of hard work put into the Society by Ralph during his years in office. A Committee member since the early 1970s, Ralph became Chair in 1978. As has happened on a number of occasions during the Society's history, Ralph has undertaken dual roles, as Chairman and Treasurer in the 1980s and more recently as Chair and Secretary. Recent developments have increased the work of all members of the Committee and stepping down will allow Ralph to spend more time on his plots.

Ralph has worked hard at keeping the Society together through the years, work with a large number of different committee members and overseen the changing times from when Allotments were not in vogue to when you could not find a plot to work because the field was full.

Thank you, Ralph for your efforts and continuing support.

Welcome Ron we are sure the Society is still in safe hands.

Constitution and By Laws

The constitution of the Allotment Society was registered in October 1920 and has not been revised since! As explained last month, we were advised by the National Allotment Association to review the

constitution and bylaws. The Committee has now completed the final drafts and taken legal advice. These draft documents will be sent out by post to all registered Members during March. Please let us have questions and comments so that we can put them on the web site.

Register of Members, Plots and Shares

There are currently 109 members of the Society and a waiting list of about 10. The map of the field shows where all the plots are and which member has each plot. This information together with the full register of members is being updated and will be available at the AGM.

A View from the Field

This will be a regular feature from long-time allotment holder Peter Leadbeater.

If you have not already done so it is worth making a rough plan for your plot. That way you can ensure nothing is in the way of a load of manure next winter! It also enables easy crop rotation in the future.

Complete most of the digging as the weather allows, though there is still time for some wintery conditions to set in. Try to leave the ground fairly rough, the weather will break it down and in that state it will dry out and warm up more readily. If you rake it down to a fine tilth the soil on the field pans out with heavy rain and tends to crust over when it dries. (If this has already happened, try to break the surface with a three or five prong cultivator.)

The soil on most plots is slightly on the acid side and somewhat sandy, the heavier land being nearer the Bow Brickhill road. Club root in brassicas is quite a widespread problem. It helps to add a little garden lime in seed drills and at each planting position. Do note that lime can cause scab on potatoes.

Work on the field for February and March

{ Protect brassica crops from pigeons and similar pests.

{ Prune autumn fruiting raspberries by cutting all existing canes to the ground.

{ If you want to plant fruit trees or bushes there is still time to plant them providing the soil is not too wet or frozen. Make sure you stake any newly planted trees as the field really catches the wind at times.

{ Seed potatoes are now available and should be stored until planting time on trays in a cool frost free place.

{ If you are willing to take the risk, you could set a row of early potatoes which should be ready by May (try varieties 'swift' and 'rocket').

{ If conditions allow, broad beans may be sown towards the end of February and into March.

{ Shallots can also be planted in February /March. It is worth trimming the wispy ends of the shallots to prevent birds pulling them out.

{ Continue to harvest parsnips, leeks, winter cabbage and sprouting broccoli.

{ If you have a greenhouse, onion seed, early cabbages and lettuce can be sown to plant out in April/May.

There is no rush to sow a lot of seeds early in the year. Soil temperatures will be low so the result would be poor germination which is disappointing. (You wouldn't put a baby into a cold wet bed!)

Peter Leadbeater

Future issues will have items on weed and pest control so if you have any questions on these or any other matters please let us know.

Contact for questions/comments:

Marie's new contact details for any questions and comments: secretary@wsallotmentsociety.co.uk

Website

Although not all pages are complete, the website is now live. Many thanks to Graham for the hours of work he has put into the site which looks great.

www.wsallotmentsociety.co.uk

From the website you will be able to submit your questions to the committee, through the Secretary, ask questions about the proposed new Constitution and Bylaws and generally be in-touch with the Society. The site consists of the Home Page where, at the moment there is an article about the Society and an aerial picture of the field. There is also a three day weather forecast.

There is a Contact Us page and on the Committee page you can see what we look like and read a little about us. Committee agendas will be published on this page. The two pages still under construction – Seed Purchase and What's New will come on line during the year. Links to other sites will also be added during the next few months.

Do let us know what you think about the website and let us have suggestions for what you would like to see there.

Gardeners Question Time

To celebrate its 50th Anniversary the Garden Club will be hosting the BBC programme Gardeners Question time on 27th May at the Open University.

Please contact Christine Chalk on for tickets.

Issues on the Field

Driving

From time to time most of us need to collect or deliver items to our plots. In the summer when the field is dry this is not so much of a problem. However, recent wet conditions have caused problems both with cars getting stuck in mud at the bottom end of the field and with ruts being made deeper on the very wet tracks. It would be helpful if everyone could avoid driving to their plots. However, if you do need to do so please avoid the ruts.

Water Leak?

The Committee are waiting for the ground to dry out at the bottom end of the field before investigating whether or not there is a problem with the drain pipes and or water mains. Car parking at the Brickhill Road entrance may be part of the problem so, for the time being would you please park along Woodland Way instead.

Security

PLEASE CLOSE AND LOCK THE GATES WHEN YOU LEAVE THE FIELD.