



Grass Cuttings



Newsletter of Sale Horticultural & Allotment Society –August 2009

Chairman's Report

Well we are two thirds through 2009, how time flies, this years mixed weather has benefited most plants in our gardens and allotments, it has been an exceptional year for most vegetables, apples, plums and weeds, the latter has commanded a lot of our time and patience.

We have had our downs with several plots affected by infected manure causing mal formed top growth on potatoes and beans. Fortunately the vegetables themselves remain edible, also recent research has found that potato blight can be spread by old potato tops, these should not be composted but should be bagged immediately and put in your grey wheely rubbish bins!

Wildlife appears to be more evident on our allotments, several less common birds, the goldfinch, wren and blue tits have nested. One of our plot holders had several of her potatoes dug up by a fox on two occasions.

Despite the dominance of weeds on our allotments several plot holders have won awards for their efforts from Trafford MBC, these awards will be presented at TMBC Gardeners evening at the John Alker Hall in Flixton on the 9th September. It is open to all.

For those who missed Hugh Begg's very interesting talk on Clouds, Sylvia has arranged another Hugh Begg talk next Spring.

Best regards Don Jackson

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Society Website		www.shas.org.uk

Congratulations!

Following Trafford's Inspection of all the Borough Allotments, the following were awarded Highly Commended Certificates:

Community Plot 9	Maggie Lavelle Pathways South
Plot 27	David Taylor
Plot 36	Louise Black
Plot 37	Paul Howarth



The following received Letters of Commendation:

Plot 3	Paul Starling
Plot 13	Mike and Sylvia Steer
Plot 55b	John Miller
Plot 58	Peter and Ann Webster

Our own regular inspection of the plots will be made in early September. As usual the criteria we use are the terms of your tenancy. If you have been unable to keep to these terms for any reason please let Linda know or you may get a letter of non-cultivation.

We always find paths which are in need of upkeep. Please be warned. Maps will be published on the notice boards highlighting those which are overgrown and difficult to walk along.



Gardeners' Evening

Trafford's annual awards and Certificates will be presented on

Wednesday 9th September

at

Flixton Ex-Servicemen's club
(John Alker Club)

Flixton Rd Flixton at 7.15pm.

The guest speaker will be

Ian Greenhalgh



The Organic Kitchen Garden'

Followed by Gardener's question time

Plant Sale

We made approximately £250 from the sale in May. Thank you for your support.

Manure Contamination

I'm sorry to say that some of our plots this year appear to have been affected by manure contaminated by the hormone weed killer **Aminopyralid**. The foliage of affected potatoes appears fern like and clumpy. Tomatoes, peas, beans, carrots and lettuce may also be affected.



Fern-like leaves of affected potato

The following advice and information has been gleaned from a variety of sources on the internet. (Defra, Dow, Allotment Growing diary)

The active chemical, aminopyralid, is present in:

Banish

Forefront

Halcyon

Pharaoh

Pro-Banish

Runway

All are marketed in the UK by **Dow AgroSciences Ltd.**

Dow AgroSciences:....

'grassland herbicides are used by livestock farmers for the control of injurious weeds such as docks, thistles and nettles. It has long been known that it is possible for low levels of product to be found in manure and that the use of such manure as a fertiliser or compost may, in some circumstances, cause damage to sensitive crops.

The residues are getting into the manure by two routes.

1. Where grass land has been treated with aminopyralid-containing herbicides and cattle

or horses grazed on it, the chemical is excreted in manure.

2. The other route is direct from straw used as bedding where the crop has been treated.

The net result is that we now have to treat manure as a potential problem. Stables and many cattle farmers buy in their bedding straw and, although they may be able to state they have not used the product on their grass, they may not know that Aminopyralid has been used on the bedding.'

How do I deal with the affected areas to help remove the risk of plant damage for future years?

Defra advises:-

In our view, rotavation is by far the best practice. This incorporates plant tissue into soils where it will decompose and allow the associated chemicals to be degraded by soil microbes. Once degraded, the chemicals should pose no further risk to crops. Ideally, thoroughly rotavate, or fork over several times as soon as possible, then repeat in late summer / early autumn. Plant tissues generally break down most rapidly in warm, moist soils.

Decontaminating the Manure

We know the Aminopyralid is eventually broken down by microbial action in the soil and this is what we need to encourage.



If you have a manure pile and just leave it stacked, or even turn it over, the relative lack of the right microbes means it could be two or three years before it becomes safe to use.

The best way is to select a patch of ground and spread the manure a few inches thick on the surface and then rotavate it well into the soil. **Don't bother sowing anything in there because it could be counter productive as the chemical**

will be taken up and bound to the lignin in the crop. When composted, the problem cycle starts again as the Aminopyralid releases.

After a month, rotavate again, and again, and again, and again. After six months or so it's probably OK and worth testing with tomatoes or potatoes grown in the soil. Don't just test soil from one place. Ideally test five points - imagine a number 5 on a dice.

What we are seeking to do is to ensure no lumps of contaminated manure remain and the microbes have had chance to do their job thoroughly. That's why multiple rotavations will help. If you don't have a rotavator and can't borrow one, then chop up the manure with a spade, and fork it into the top six inches. Turn it over with your fork each month, incorporating any weeds so they rot down as well.

How do I avoid spoiled crops in future?

At Grosvenor Rd we have a source of manure from the stables on Little Ees Lane. This is delivered by the stable owner in bags to the manure bays. It is very fresh and needs stacking for **at least 6 months**. The owner assures us that the straw used for bedding is from an organic source. The evidence on site seems to corroborate the safety of this source of manure. The affected plots seem to be the ones using Glebelands Rd bay manure one load of which, it appears, was contaminated.

Please do not be put off manuring your plot as it is vital that the humous content and soil structure should be maintained. There is no sadder sight than soil like dust, fed only with chemical fertilisers.

July Talk

'In Celebration of Clouds', Hugh Begg's talk in July held the interest of all members present. Some mind boggling statistics on the vastness of the sky, the dispersion of droplets in a cloud and the comparative sizes of those droplets when they combine to form rain, were demonstrated with diagrams and slides.



The dewpoint, the point above which clouds formed, is affected by the terrain. The

Pennines are responsible for us receiving most of our rain. Ever wanted to flatten them?

Growing news

Sunflowers. Don't make my mistake of tying sunflowers to a stake when they are small and then forgetting them. As you may imagine the stem grows...not only up but sideways but the string doesn't. Result: the sunflower stems are cut in two and fall ingloriously to the ground! Good job there's no society for cruelty to sunflowers...yet.

A fox has been active digging up potatoes. I assume it is a fox as the tubers were deeply scratched. Perhaps young foxes have been learning their earth making skills.



Pigeons have also been around. Has any one else found that pigeons leave certain brassicas alone and decimate others? Sprouts seem to be their least favourite, something they have in common with my grandchildren. The problem with netting brassicas against attack is that birds may become ensnared in the netting. Not nice when there are crows around to take advantage.

What to do now

Buy your Autumn onion sets from the Trading Hut. Don't put them in the same plot of ground as earlier onions or shallots but rotate to prevent disease.

Early Raspberries can have the fruited canes removed to the ground leaving new strong canes to fruit next year.

On vacant ground sow a crop of green manure seeds to dig in later.

Overgrown Courgettes? Why not try making

MARROW PUNCH

A great way of using up big marrows!!

This mildly alcoholic juice is drawn from the marrow's flesh by osmosis and ferments inside the skin, with the sugar and ginger adding flavour.

You will need:-

- Large marrow
- Net sack or stocking
- Electrical tape
- 1-2 lbs Demerara sugar
- 2 heaped tablespoons grated fresh ginger

1 Slice off the top of the marrow and scrape out the seeds taking care to leave the marrow flesh intact.

2 Pack the marrow with the sugar and ginger and stand in a bowl for a few hours.

3 Top up the marrow with more sugar, replace the top then fix it in place using the electrical tape.

4 Put the marrow in a net or stocking and hang it over a bowl in a cool dark place. Drape a cloth over it to keep out flies. As the flesh softens, alcoholic liquor will drip into the bowl.



If filtered and drunk straight away, its aromatic flavour works fine in a punch. But it is at its best when allowed to fully ferment. Decant and seal it in a demijohn along with yeast, orange juice and boiled water that has been left to cool. After a year it will be ready to drink. Just be careful – it's very strong!

(from an article in Gardeners' World magazine)

PUMPKIN PARTY 2009!



Saturday

31st October

6pm



The Hoe Down

Fancy dress and Jack o' lanterns add to the spirit of the evening

Home made soup, hot dog, baked potato and cake soft drinks, (bring your own wine or beer).

Prizes!

Heaviest home-grown pumpkin.

Fancy dress

Guess the name of the pumpkin

Jack O'Lanterns:

(Child only and Adult)

Apple bobbing



Sack, Potato & Spoon Races

Sunflower prizes

Voucher Award for plot holder!

Who knows? It could be you!

Entry is strictly by ticket only

We must restrict the numbers to 80 so get your tickets early

£2.00 adult £1.00p child

£5.00 Family ticket of 2 adults 2 children

Tickets available from the

Trading Hut or

Sylvia Steer Tel: 282 8664



Disclaimer

Please note that the games and races will be competed in entirely at the participants own risk

Trading Hut

We have Winter hardy onions for sale.

RADAR is an excellent white onion with good flavour, resistance to bolting and is very hardy.

ELECTRIC is a red onion with excellent flavour that produces a symmetrical globe shaped onion.

ONLY £1 FOR 250 GRAMS
(approx 50 sets)

Opening Dates

6, 13, 20, 27 September,

11, 18 October

1 November



Don makes his point to Alf Trading Manager

Members of the committee help a great deal but we are always looking for more help in the Trading Hut.

Thank you to

Brian Snelson, Brian King, Clare Baker, Eve Norris Edna and Marjorie Carline Pat Kelly, Hazel Pritchard, Sylvia Fantom and Olga Odabashian, who have all helped this year.

The Hut is open on 33 Sundays during the year.

At the moment helpers do about 4 sessions each over the year so who out there can spare an hour and a half on a Sunday morning to take the strain?

We operate in pairs and Alf or a committee member is always on hand to collect the takings. If you have spare time please volunteer. It's not arduous and can be a good opportunity to meet other members.

Do use the Trading Hut for your supplies for home and/or allotment gardens as we run it as a service to all members.

King's Seeds

at a discount

One of the benefits of being a member of the NSALG (National Society of Allotment & Leisure Gardeners) is that SHAS can take advantage of the discount seed scheme which gives marked savings on your outlay at the beginning of the season

Order your Catalogue for next season from Peter Baggaley 51 Barnfield Crescent tel: 962 5642



Talking of seeds....



Leek seed heads

The Onion family always produce attractive globes of seeds.



Poppy seed heads

Poppy seeds have become unavailable in the shops (the troubles in Afghanistan) so why not collect your own for free. Children will delight in shaking the 'pepper pot' heads into paper bags. Sieve them free of debris, dry them thoroughly and store them in small containers ready for use in cakes and breads.

Date for your 2010 diary

Tuesday 20th April

for

Hugh Begg

'Hedges round Edges'

I'm pleased to say our own Jean Robertson Memorial Hedge planted in 2007 is doing really well.

Planted with hawthorn, blackthorn, field maple, guelder rose and wild rose, honeysuckle and holly, it is thickening out and the wild roses are producing hips for the birds.

No sign of any sloes for the gin yet though..patience!

Colourful spots

Do you recognise yours?



Please don't make me feature 'Grot Spots' in the next issue. Get those paths cut!

