

grass CUTTINGS

NOV:2016

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Hello again. As we are coming towards the end of 2016 I would like to recap on our SHAS year.

This year has been unusual with inconsistent weather variations, starting with a mild winter, then wet, then dry, then cold, then wet and repeating... each causing confusion to our plants and the pollination regime, all this resulting in both heavy and poor cropping. I pruned one of my Bramley apple trees in late August and to my surprise some blossom has appeared — now! Let us hope 2017 returns to a normal weather pattern?

Despite all these weather variations the majority of our plot holders have persevered and satisfactorily maintained their plots, there are a few exceptions which have required warning letters; we still have a waiting list for plots should they become available!

ITV/Coronation Street have used our allotments again for two new story lines and could be returning again later this year. The large amount of equipment and staff needed to produce their story has surprised both our plot holders and the passers-by. Your committee have decided to spend some of the additional funds received from ITV on an extra manure bay at the Hoe-Down end, decorate the Hoe-Down and buy soil for our allotment plots that suffer badly with flooding. We are also planning to use the Probation service people to create

a small nature area on the unusable land by Plot 62.

I have, regretfully, to advise that over the past three months, four plot holders have had their crops stolen, we have asked our plot holders to be vigilant and report to a committee member if they witness any thieving or wrong doing, we have been forced to place additional notices on each gate to request that each gate be locked on entering and leaving.

As normal, I must on your behalf, offer thanks to your committee and all our helpers for their efforts and help during 2016, without them our Society would cease to exist!

In closing may I wish you and yours an enjoyable festive season and let us look forward to a healthy 2017.

Regards, Don Jackson



NEWS FROM THE TRADING HUT

Our supplies of over-wintering onions flew off the shelves this year, sorry if you weren't able to get some from the Trading Hut hopefully you were able to source locally. Your Trading Hut has had another successful year and is now closed for the winter months, re-opening the first weekend in February. **MANY THANKS TO ALL THE VOLUNTEERS FOR THEIR HELP.**

BURNING RUBBISH

We have reached the point in the year (1 October) when we are allowed burn allotment rubbish on the site, we ask that when having a fire you are mindful of the local residents and do not leave any fires unattended.

SITE SECURITY

Please remember to lock all gates when entering or leaving the site.



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CHARITY PLOT UPDATE



For several years now SHAS has granted a small area of the allotment site charitable status whereby the allocated area has served to provide educational, leisure or therapeutic rewards to a range of charitable organisations who have tended the area. In previous years this has been the organisation Pathways and more recent Life After Stroke charity. Unfortunately, due to a lack of volunteer support these groups have sadly relinquished the plots and as such the area was unused and became extremely overgrown. Towards the end of the summer a working party gathered to reclaim and tidy the area and the committee decided on a new plan for the future of the plot. The area has been divided into three plots, two of which consist of four raised beds each which give the new owners the opportunity to experience the commitment of managing an allotment on a small scale without being overwhelmed by taking on a traditional plot. Many thanks to all those who helped clear this area and good luck to the new plot holders.

BEWARE - LEEK MOTH!

Some of you may have noticed recently your leeks looking a bit despondent, unfortunately for the first time on the site, we are all experiencing the leek moth. See below for details on its life cycle obtained from the RHS website.

The adult leek moth is a very small (5-6mm) brown moth. Caterpillars feed on leeks and similar crops.

Damage from leek moth caterpillars appears as:

White patches developing on the foliage where the caterpillars have eaten the internal tissues.

Tunnels in the stems of leeks and bulbs of onions, shallots and garlic.

Affected plants often develop secondary rots and young leek plants may be killed.

Leek moth caterpillars are creamy-white with brown heads and small legs.

Non-chemical control

The female moths can be prevented from laying eggs by covering susceptible plants with horticultural fleece:

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile.aspx?PID=923>

or an insect-proof mesh such as Ultra-Fine Enviromesh:

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile.aspx?PID=124>

Crop rotation should also be practiced to prevent potential build-up of moth populations under the fleece. Look for the white, net-like silk cocoons on the foliage and squash them.

Chemical control

None of the pesticides currently available to home gardeners for use on leeks and onions will give effective control of leek moth.

Biology

Leek moth has two generations during the summer with larvae damaging the plants:

From the first generation in May-June.

And the second generation in August-October.

The second generation is the more numerous and damaging.

Initially the caterpillars mine the foliage but the older larvae bore into the stems and bulbs. When fully fed, the caterpillars are 11mm long. They come out of the plant and pupate within net-like silk cocoons that are spun on the foliage.

Adult moths emerge in autumn and overwinter in sheltered places.

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MR AND MRS...

We all know the feeling, you turn your back for just a few seconds and those delicate, manageable courgettes morph into an unwieldy shaped marrow that you just can't find a home for... until now. Chatting with one of our plot holders, Judith Gilder, she relayed a wonderful story of how one of these oversized marrows became the 'must have' toy for her granddaughters during the summer. Judith retells the tale here:

Mr Marrow's summer holiday activities included winning Olympic Gold medals for swimming and trampolining. He enjoyed visits to the park and particularly loved the roundabout. Each night Mr Marrow was lovingly washed and polished, enjoyed a bedtime story before snuggling down in bed.

Unfortunately all good things must come to an end and eventually Mr Marrow began to feel unwell, his insides were feeling squashy and nothing Mrs Marrow could do made him feel any better. He took to his bed and was tenderly nursed, but sadly, the end came. He was buried with lots of love and care in the plot where he had been born. Mrs Marrow could not bear the thought of life without her husband so she chose to be buried next to him.

They are fondly remembered as they gave Ellie and Rosie so much pleasure over the summer holidays... not forgetting the little boy on the roundabout who asked if he could hold Mrs Marrow which he did with great care.