



MENSES PARK ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Newsletter November 2020

Issue 1

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Issue No 1

Welcome to issue No 1. In this, our very first issue, you will find a vast collection of useful information. Information about the Association and how to look after your plots over the coming winter months.

We will be telling you about the events that are planned for 2021. .

The COVID situation has prevented us from running the planned meeting on 28th November, so we hope producing this Newsletter will make a suitable substitute.

Chairman's report

Another period over. Not much happening in the outside world. Joking aside, COVID-19 is still with us. Let's keep to the basics until we are told otherwise. Social distancing, washing hands and sanitising.

I would like to welcome all the new comers to the site, over the recent months, and wish you well with your plots. Do not forget that there is a wealth of knowledge around, so do not be hesitant in asking for help. Please have a look at the website as there may be some useful information there to get you started.

Security has not been an issue during this period. However, with Christmas approaching we need to be on our guard as this is the time that theft increases. So, please ensure that any expensive items are taken home and removed from your sheds, unless you want to buy them back from some bloke in the pub in the New Year - COVID permitting.

People have asked about which pathways between plots that they are responsible for, left or right?

The answer is in your Allotment Rules booklet:

9.1 Paths between two allotment gardens/plots must be a minimum of 500 mm in width and must be kept trimmed and free of weeds up to the nearest half width by each adjoining tenant.

9.2 All site paths and tenant's allotment garden/plot paths must be kept clear of obstructions at all times.

So, each of you is responsible for the nearest half of each path separating us from the next plot(s).

There are approximately six vacant plots at the moment. This does not include the school plot... the beast that will not die!

Keep safe and keep growing.

Treasurer's report

I would like to personally thank everyone for the positivity and support when we need support in raising money for our allotment fund.

We have raised a total of £1,160.53 this year, through Raffles, tool sales, compost bins as well as compost sales and competitions. This has all helped to support the completion of the Communal Greenhouse, the toilet and the ramp to the communal area.

Our balance sheet shows a positive of £469.33.

Events to Christmas

A seed sale from the **21st November** in the communal greenhouse.

Seed packets @ £0.50 or donation per packet.

Christmas Raffle will take place on the Sunday 20th December.

1st prize £50

2nd prize £30

3rd prize £20

There will be some additional prizes TBA. **Please see Peter, Graham or Alistair for your tickets.**

What's happening on-site

Work to be undertaken this autumn winter

The footpaths around the communal garden are to be laid to stone, like the orchard path.

The stone is being donated by Gary at St Helens Council on the understanding we move it to the paths. Once down, Gary will have his lads Wacker plate it down for us.

We will need some help from strong backs and wheelbarrows to move the stone, when we are ready a message will appear on the WhatsApp group.

Repainting of the picnic tables will need to be done as well.

There are a number of trees to be taken out very soon.

3 cherry trees from between plots 5A/5B. The chippings to be left on site for members' use

1 willow tree from plot 26A has to be removed. This tree to be taken down from the Mesnes Park side. There will be no chippings from this tree.

1 conifer from plot 18 as this has been taking light away from the house behind.

November gardening tips

Wash greenhouses or spray with a light disinfectant.

Manure or feed this season's potato bed, as they are very heavy feeders, which could affect next year's rotation crop.

Dig and cover beds.

Grease band your fruit trees to stop wingless moths laying eggs in the branches.

Wash/spray fruit trees in November and February with either a commercial tree wash. A less costly treatment is a dilution of 1/10 Jeyes Fluid to kill bugs and their eggs.

Things to watch out for

Potato and Tomato Blight

Probably the worst enemy of the humble potato. The same disease affects both crops but is usually spread first by the potatoes or by infected tubers that have been left in the soil. The first signs of attack are brown patches on the tips of the leaves, eventually spreading to the stems and killing the plants. Warm, wet weather is normally the trigger for blight. The spores are airborne and spread quickly. They also wash down into the soil and infect the potato tubers, which end up rotten and foul smelling. Unfortunately, by the time you have spotted the signs it is usually too late for treatment.

Blight can be prevented provided you act in time. Spray foliage including the underside with a fungicide, available from garden centres. Repeat applications at 3-week intervals from mid-June/beginning July. If blight persists on your potatoes, cut down foliage straight away, put into a separate bin bag and take to the Council tip; do not compost. Potatoes should be fine underground for up to 3 weeks.

This fungus also causes serious damage to tomatoes. Brown spots begin to appear on ripening fruit, when blight is spotted on potatoes, tomato plants should be sprayed also, spraying your tomatoes early will help protect the crop.

Club Root

This is a disease all gardeners dread finding. It is a fungal disease which affects mainly Brassica crops but sometimes other root vegetables as well. Once you have the disease it can stay in your soil for up to 20 years. Tell-tale signs are, wilting, even when plants are well watered. Dig up affected plants and have a look at the roots, these will be distorted and swollen, plants will eventually collapse.

There is no cure. If your crop is infected with club root, dig up plants straight away, put into a separate bin bag and take to the Council tip; to avoid the disease spreading. Avoid using the same patch of soil for brassicas in the future. Try to avoid the disease

in the first place by practicing crop rotation and trying disease resistant varieties.

Grey Mould/Mildew (BOTRYTIS)

Grey mould is a fungi and attacks almost every plant and vegetable in the garden. It covers foliage and stems with a soft grey fluff and is more common when conditions are damp. When infected plants are disturbed, clouds of spores are released infecting everything in the surrounding area. It thrives on dead and rotting vegetation and spreads rapidly among weak plants, often killing them.

To combat this problem, try not to overcrowd your plants, leave plenty of space between them, clear away any rotting matter and provide good ventilation. Try watering at the base of the plants rather than from overhead. Try to grow disease-resistant varieties, if possible.

Onion Neck Rot

This disease first appears as a brown softness at the neck of the onion bulb. It is a fungal disease made worse by wet weather and particularly effects stored onions. They become soft and develop a grey woolly growth. To help protect against this disease, add fertilizers, such as potash to the soil, allow plenty of air circulation when growing and storing. Do not store damaged onions and practice good crop rotation.

Rust

Rust is easily recognizable by yellow/brown patches on the foliage of plants, giving a rust like appearance. There are many different types of this fungi, which commonly affects leeks and beans. It is brought on by damp, warm conditions. Inspect plants regularly, pick off severely affected leaves and put into a separate bin bag and taken to the Council tip. Leave plenty of space between plants, provide good ventilation, water at base of plants, if possible, and try to keep the foliage dry.

Note: Our site is not permitted to have fires, hence the comments about '*put into a separate bin bag and take to the Council tip*'.

Activities for 2021

Graham hopes to provide a range of plug plants for everyone to buy next year. The plan is to grow a small selection of popular varieties in the communal greenhouse. This planting will start after Christmas.

It is anticipated that we will be growing Tomato plants next year, both greenhouse and outside varieties. There will also be Cucumber plants, greenhouse and outside varieties, as well as Leeks and Brassicas.

If you are interested in buying any of these, for your plot next year, please let Graham know so that he puts enough seeds in and you are not disappointed.

The money raised will go towards the Association funds, which we can then use for site improvements and further raffle prizes.

Using our fruit more productively

Alistair has been surprised how much fruit, particularly apples, that have ended up rotting under trees and on the pathways. He managed to make over two gallons of apple juice from his garden apples, plus a further gallon of apple wine and four bottles of cider, currently brewing. This all came from just 20 kilograms of apples.

In September 2021, it is hoped that everyone will bring together all their apples and windfalls to make apple juice, apple wine and cider. The Association has a masher and a fruit press to use make a really large batch of juice that members can take away what they can use in whatever way they wish. That way the fruit is not lost and is more productive.

It has been suggested that this **Big Mashing and Juicing Session** will take place on-site, during September, so all hands to the task. A date will be set later in the summer.

Copies in the greenhouse

Copies of this newsletter will be put in the communal greenhouse for those who do not access to the email or WhatsApp groups.

Site plan being updated

The site plan, showing all the names of tenants is in the process of being updated. Once it is complete it will be uploaded to the website for future reference.

There have been so many changes recently it is difficult to keep pace with them all.

Save money next year

At our meeting it was discussed whether we can offer further savings for you all. It was suggested that we have a link on our website to the Robb Lane website.

Robb Lane have a well-stocked shop, offering many essential items at considerably reduced costs compared perhaps to your normal sources. They charge a nominal £4 - £5 for membership but that gives you access to buy from their shop. Well worth a trip next year.
