

Cheltenham and District Allotment Holders' Association

**President: Councillor
Christine Ryder**

www.cheltenhamallotments.org



Affiliated to the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Limited and the Gloucestershire Federation of Gardening Societies.

NEWSLETTER

Winter 2015

CHAIRMAN: Mr M D Hunt 6 Arle Close Cheltenham GL51 8JZ Tel: 01242 230609

VICE-CHAIRMAN: Mrs D M Ashdown 20 Cromwell Road Cheltenham GL52 5DW Tel: 582008

SECRETARY: Mrs R Boase Tel: 01242 802777 (and leave a message)

TREASURER: Mr C A Smith 15 Dunster Road Cheltenham GL51 0NL Tel: 01242 523740

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Mr S Boase Tel: 01242 802777 (and leave a message)

Annual General Meeting

The 39th Annual General Meeting will be held at 7pm on Monday, December 7th 2015 at the Municipal Offices Promenade Cheltenham. All members are invited to attend.

Agenda

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the 38th Annual General Meeting held on 1st December 2014
3. Matters arising from the minutes
4. President's Address Mrs Chris Ryder
5. Chairman's Report Mr Michael Hunt
6. Secretary's Report Mrs Ros Boase
7. Treasurer's Report Mr Colin Smith
8. Election of Officers, Committee Members and Auditor
9. Competition awards; presentation of cups and certificates
10. Questions and Open Discussion; members' chance to raise issues they consider important
11. Any Other business
12. Refreshments. You are invited to stay for refreshments and meet the committee and fellow members of the Association.

Dundry Potato Festival

This will be held on the weekend of 16th - 17th January 2016. A date for your diary! For members who do not

know about it, this is your opportunity to experiment with new varieties in small numbers.

You can buy just one tuber (or as many as you like) selecting from over 100 varieties. Members are entitled to a 10% discount so do remember to take your membership card. The Association hopes to have a stand so do come and say hello.

Access to the National Allotment Society Website

Members of affiliated clubs and societies can have access to the members' area of the website. Some sections are relevant only to individual members of NSALG such as the availability of the seed catalogue from Kings Seeds. Our seed scheme continues and you will already have received your catalogue via Colin.

There is other information in the members' area which may be of interest to you including the informative advice leaflets. Go to www.nsalg.org.uk click on 'members area', enter s9327 in user name and nsalg12 in password. Members' area pages should then appear.

Riding for the Disabled

The Cotswold Riding for the Disabled Association contacted us recently to ask whether any of our members would be willing to help with the gardens

that border two sides of their centre at Prestbury Park Racecourse.

An email to members identified several kind souls who were prepared to help out. Our special thanks to them for the time and effort that they have put in to help this worthy charity. If you would like more information see their website <http://www.cotswoldrda.org.uk/>

Cheltenham Horticultural Society Spring Show 2016

This show to be held on Sunday April 3rd at Pittville Pump Room and four classes are open to our membership.

Section H - Vegetables (open)

- 100 Three stems of forced rhubarb
- 101 A pair of leeks - trimmed
- 102 Three winter stored vegetables - 1 variety
- 103 1 full sized Seed Tray (not modular) of pricked-out Vegetable/Salad Plants

Some classes are also open in Section A; daffodils are also open if members are interested.

The full schedule can be found on the Cheltenham Horticultural Society website

<http://www.cheltenhamhorticultural.co.uk>

Note from Cheltenham Borough Council Allotment Officer:

A couple of Association members have expressed concern about there being no 'official' allotment site warden at some sites so I thought I would send an update.

Site wardens are volunteer plot-holders who help the Council run the allotments service by showing the vacant plots, notifying of any infrastructure problems, putting up notices, offering advice to new plot-holders etc.

Sometimes people want to help out but don't necessarily want to stand out. They are happy to help the Council deliver the service but are not looking for a

job title or to have their phone number on the noticeboard. We are very grateful for assistance in whatever form it comes.

Midwinter, Asquith Road and Warden Hill sites currently have volunteers (rather than 'official' wardens) who are helping with lettings, notices, issues and more. They are doing a great job. The volunteers at Asquith Road have re-let 25 plots so far this year and at Midwinter, it is over 30.

I just wanted to reassure anyone who was concerned about a lack of 'official' site warden. We have some super volunteers doing the job.

As always, if you have any queries about the Council's allotment service, please contact Hannah or me directly on 01242774672, alternatively email me at allotments@cheltenham.gov.uk

Fiona Warin. Allotment Officer

Bird-proof cage

Prompted by an idea from Rosemary Smith I used a bag of old tennis balls and some canes to construct a cage to keep the pigeons off our brassicas.

I used a 1cm drill bit to make three holes through each ball; North to South, then East to West and finally another at right-angles. Each ball could then be used to form a corner or a joiner.



It was a bit of a struggle sometimes to force the cane into the ball but I wanted the ball to grip tightly to the

cane and form a strong structure. I covered the frame with plastic netting and *voilà* a bird proof cage!

This was an experiment and next year I intend to use a finer mesh net to try to keep out the white butterflies.
(Ed)

Inspiring Families Project

The Association was contacted by the Inspiring Families project run by the Council, requesting donations of produce. Several members contributed to the vegetable box scheme for which grateful thanks were received.

If you'd like to know more about this project visit their website at www.cheltenham.gov.uk/inspiringfamilies

Members' Discount

Cleeve Supplies in Tobyfield Road Bishop's Cleeve sells a wide range of hardware goods and also something that may be of particular interest to greenhouse owners at this time of year - Paraffin. There's a 10% members' discount if you take your card with you.

You can also obtain the same discount on the £25 chiropody fee from Louise Ferris Foot Care (0771 3209729). Again, don't forget your membership card.

Kings Seed Orders

All orders have now been sent to Kings Seeds. If you would like me to bring yours to the Annual General Meeting please ring me on 01242 523740 and leave a message. After this you can collect them from 15 Dunster Road Cheltenham. Please telephone before calling so I can sort out your package.

Thereafter they will be available at the Asquith Road site centre on Thursday 7th January 2016 between 11am and 2pm, of course subject to weather conditions.

Please remember that fruit bushes, strawberry plants, and asparagus crowns will be dispatched directly to your home address by April 2016.

Colin Smith

Website Report

We have an Ask a Question section on our website. If you would like some growing advice or have a question about how to run an allotment then submit your question and we will do our best to give you an answer. You need to have a Facebook, Twitter or GooglePlus account to submit a question. The link is on the homepage.

In the last six months the website has received an average of 275 visitors per month. During 2015 we have received 26 membership applications via the website and also applications using the form downloaded from the website. Popular articles include a monthly gardening column by Chris Evans of Dundry Nurseries, and the latest news and events available for members of the association.

There are also Members Pages with info about the association and back copies of the newsletter. If you haven't visited it yet, why not take a look. To access the Members Pages the password is **Romano**.

Robert Atkin

Consultation on the Proposed Allotment Strategy

A meeting between Diana Ashdown, Jean Powell and Dennis Sutton from the Cheltenham and District Allotment Holders' Association and Fiona Warin and Adam Reynolds from the Borough Council was held on Thursday, October 22nd at 2.00pm. Questions from Ros Boase and Colin Smith were also addressed at the meeting. Observations by a number of other allotment holders were presented to the meeting.

The C&DAHA members sought re-assurance on the use of the money "set aside" from the earlier sale of allotment land. They approved of the proposal to use some of that money to improve facilities for current allotment holders. Members stressed that the major part of the money should be retained for potential further future provision if demand increased. It was noted that it was not possible to give an accurate estimate of the cost of proposed improvements.

One uncertainty was a suggestion that Severn Trent water might require the Borough Council to secure the

water supply to sites by the fitting on non-return valves at the point of entry of the supply.

Other items discussed included the repair of allotment sheds, the provision of raised beds for disabled allotment holders and the provision of allotment space by major developers on new housing estates.

Overall, the document was thought to be a reasoned and appropriate set of proposals which took account of a number of possible scenarios in the borough over the next ten years.

Dennis Sutton

Homemade Vegetable Crisps

At this time of the year you may have an abundance of root vegetables such as carrots, potatoes, parsnips or beetroot.



Why not try to make a mix of those trendy vegetable crisps? Peel the vegetables of your choice and slice them very thinly, I used a very coarse vegetable peeler but you could use a sharp knife. If you have something called a mandolin then I understand this does the job very well.

Dry the slices to remove excess moisture. Brush or spray the oil onto the surfaces and lay them in a single layer on non-stick baking tray. Season with the salt and pepper and bake in a pre-heated oven (200°C) for 10 - 12 minutes or until crisp.

Check on them during the baking process to make sure that the thinner ones aren't over cooked. Let them cool and eat straightaway.

Ingredients

1 large raw carrot
1 large raw parsnip
1 large raw potato
1 large beetroot
2tbsp olive oil
salt
black pepper

(Ed)

Input From You

I'm keen to include any of your ideas, tips or advice on any aspect of allotment life in subsequent editions of the newsletter so if you could spare the time to write a short article or report I'd be most grateful.

It doesn't have to be lengthy or complicated; perhaps an idea or experiment that you tried on your allotment. By sharing information we can all become better allotment gardeners. The deadline for contributions to the Spring edition is 1st February 2016.

My email address is :-
newsletter@cheltenhamallotments.org

I look forward to hearing from you.

Stuart Boase (Newsletter Editor)

Allotment Gardening Can Boost Mental Well-being

A report on a recent study by Westminster and Essex universities showed that time spent on your allotment significantly improves your mental well-being. It seems that as little as half an hour a week on your allotment can produce the benefits. It reduces fatigue, depression, tension and anger whilst raising self-esteem and general health.

Co-author of the study, Dr Carly Wood, from the University of Essex, said: 'Allotment gardening might play an important role in promoting mental well-being in people residing in urban areas.'

So well done you for choosing a pastime that produces healthy crops and a healthy lifestyle!