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ISSUE 13

THE GROWER

Information for Chesham Town Council Allotment Holders

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GREETINGS

MEMBERS of the allotment Group wish to extend to you and your family a Prosperous and Healthy New Year. We look forward to seeing you at some of the events we propose to arrange.

Allotment Inspections

WE understand that a few tenants were unhappy when they received letters informing them either to quit or tidy up their plots. We did not intend to offend anyone but we have a criteria by which we carry out the inspection and we must be seen to be fair to everyone.

We hope that tenants who have received letters would make the effort to tidy up as we intend to undertake a further inspection in March. If you are struggling to keep your plot tidy please let the Council or a member of the group know.

GARDEN COMPETITION:

Best Kept Allotment

IT has been an interesting year for allotment holders with a great deal of competitive spirit. The judges commented that the standard was higher than in 2003. Let us therefore strive to make 2005 a better year.

The winners for 2004 were as follows:

Mrs Maria Schembri - Cameron Road.

Mr Brian Wilkins - Asheridge Road.

They were presented with the awards at the Annual Meeting. We extend our congratulations to the winners.

Spring Opening of the Trading Hut

Chesham Horticultural Society and Allotment Holders' Association

CHESHAM Horticultural Society and Allotment Holders' Association runs a Trading Hut on Plot 3 of the allotments in Cameron Road. The goods offered are for members only. Annual membership costs £1 and may be paid at the Hut.

The first series of days when the hut will be open in 2005 will be 19 & 26 February and 5 March (from 9.30am to mid-day) when we will be selling seed potatoes and loose fertilisers.

There will be 15 different varieties of seed potatoes; examples are Arran Pilot, Red Duke of York, Swift, Kestrel, Cara, Picasso and Charlotte. We sell these in any weight that you want from 25 kg sack - but it is first come, first served; we don't have the opportunity to re-order during the sale period so we have to use our judgement and our crystal ball to decide how many to buy. We've committed to buy 20 x 25kg

sacks. The price for 3kg (actually 7lb!) will be £2.

There will also be onion sets (Sturon) and shallots (Golden Gourmet) for sale as well as fertilisers such as Growmore (£1 for 3kg), Fish, Blood & Bone (£1.90 for 3kg), Bonemeal (£2.50 for 3kg), Sulphate of Ammonia (£1.25 for 3kg) etc etc. 6X fertiliser, Arthur Bowers Seed & Potting Compost, Vermiculite, Perlite, Horticultural Sand and Horticultural Grit should also be available.

Please note that the prices quoted for fertilisers are prices charged in 2004; we haven't placed our order for 2005 yet and so don't know if the prices have changed. However, we would expect 2005 prices to be very similar to those charged in 2004.

**Mike Allenby
(Secretary)**

Welcome to our new tenants

MEMBERS of the group are encouraged by the number of new tenants who have taken on plots.

We wish to extend to you a very warm welcome. Many of you may have little or no knowledge of gardening but are prepared to give it a try.

Do not despair as members of the group will be happy to assist and offer advice. We are a friendly bunch of people and are understanding and approachable so feel free to contact us.

A Working Party

Are you interested in assisting the group to improve the outlook on the allotment sites. We invite you to join us in the Cameron Road car park on Sunday, 13th March at 10 am. Please bring a fork or spade with you. It will be an opportunity to meet your representatives.

Our first year on the plot

Sarah and Holden – Plot 96

MY partner and I took our plot on Cameron Road in March 2004. At the time we thought that it was probably a rather silly thing to do, as we were already very busy with our jobs and our two very young children. As March is a bit late in the season for taking on a disused plot, we found ourselves having to do some pretty rapid digging, weeding, and manuring. We were lucky because the plot had been used in the past few years and was not a total tangle of couch grass. However, we were in a race against time to plant our onion sets and potatoes.

Happy hours

During the year we have spent many happy hours on the plot, as a family. During the warmer months we always took a picnic blanket and a selection of snacks and children's tools with us.

Since the raspberry season, our young son (aged 2) has prowled around the plot tasting everything, hoping to discover something equally tasty. So far, one of his favourites is cornflower seed pods. His other gastronomic adventures have included snail eggs, garlic seed, and worms.

Both the children have become very aware of where vegetables actually come from and we are convinced that this has led them to be more willing to "eat their greens". In fact, up until we were picking brassicas from the plot, the children would have nothing to do with them. Now however, they eat up their sprouts and even some cabbage too.

Moderately well

So, we managed to get our onions in on time and they did moderately well. I know we should have been more diligent with the weeding as onions do not like weed competition, but we can only do what time will allow.

Having survived our first year on the plot, I can now offer some advice – wait until you are sure that there will be no more frosts before you plant out any tender plants (unless

you want to run the risk of losing them).

Rather too boldly, I planted our courgette plants out in the last week of May thinking that down South that should surely be OK – but to our dismay, they were killed off by a late frost. Slightly disheartened, I returned to my seed collection and bag of compost and re-sowed. In the end, our courgettes produced an excellent crop – more than we could eat ourselves and that was from only 6 plants.

Mixed success

Our beans provided us with a mixed success rate. I certainly wouldn't describe our broad beans as any sort of success. From an April sowing, they germinated well and grew quite encouragingly until they were attacked by black fly. We weren't quick enough to deal with that, and the result was a very poor harvest. The same cannot be said for our French beans (which provided us with more beans than we could eat) or our runner beans (which cropped madly until the wind blew them down towards the end of September).

Simple approach

I wasn't sure that the French beans and runners were going to like the early treatment that they had: we weeded, dug, manured, and sowed all on the same day (at the end of May). However, that simple approach worked very well and the French beans cropped early and for a long time. When the runner beans started to crop, we stopped picking the French beans, and then in September picked and podded and used them as haricot beans in thick vegetable soups.

Complete failures included non-germination of parsnips, a total of only 3 carrots from a whole row, a cauliflower measuring 2 inches across, and calabrese demolished by an army of flea beetles. Nevertheless, we have very much enjoyed our first year as proud allotment holders. We have managed, just about, to keep on top of the watering and digging, and we are looking ahead to hopefully greater successes in 2005.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting was held at the Town Hall on 28th September 2004. The guest speaker was Sergeant Buckland who gave a short speech on Anti-Social Behaviour and Crime Prevention. This was followed by a question and answer session. He recommended that in the event of vandalism or if we consider someone is acting suspiciously the matter should be reported to the Police on 0845 8505505.

Recipe: Carrot Cake

APPARENTLY, carrot cake originated in Switzerland. It is very moist and filling and keeps fantastically well. This recipe is very simple to throw together, once you have assembled the ingredients. I have included the addition of ground cardamom. If you don't have any, do buy some. It has an exotic perfume and gives a beautiful warm aromatic depth to the cake.

I am listing the ingredients to make two loaf shaped cakes: one to eat now and one for the freezer - because it also freezes brilliantly. If you only want to make one cake, halve the ingredients.

For a special tea, top the cake with a lemon or orange flavoured butter cream, but it is just as delicious without! Some of you may be lucky enough to have a store of your own-grown carrots, if not, use shop-bought ones.

300ml sunflower oil
225g soft brown sugar
4 eggs
175g golden syrup
350g self-raising flour
2 tsp ground cinnamon
2 tsp ground cardamom
1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
225g grated carrot
50g desiccated coconut
1 tbsp chopped walnuts

Preheat oven to 180 degrees Centigrade, 350 degrees Fahrenheit, or Gas Mark 4. Grease two 2lb loaf pans.

Whisk together the oil, sugar, eggs, and golden syrup. Beat in the flour, spices, and bicarbonate of soda. Stir in the carrots, coconut, and walnuts. Pour the mixture into your prepared tins.

Bake for 50 mins (testing with a skewer - when it comes out clean they are done). Rest the cake for 15 mins then turn out of the tin and onto a cooling rack. Enjoy your cake!

Dumping of Rubbish

THERE has been a further complaint from one of the residents whose property borders one of the plots on the Cameron Road site. Vince has seen the rubbish that has been dumped on a site which had been cleared by the Council earlier in the year. The resident stated that he will formally raise the matter with the Council again and is prepared to identify the tenant/s.

Improved Security

TENANTS on the Cameron Road site experienced a spate of vandalism over the Christmas period. The matter was reported to the Police and Vince held a meeting with Bob to address the problem. It is proposed to install higher gates in the hope of deterring the vandals.

Thank You

TENANTS on the Cameron Road site would have seen that the blackberry bramble, which occupied the whole of an unused plot, has been cleared. Thank you Bob Ayres for your quick response to our request.

Rodent Control

ARE you suffering or have suffered from rodents on your plot? If so please let us know; we will discuss any problems with Bob Ayres so that appropriate action may be taken to control the pests.

Allotment Forum

A MEETING will be held on Thursday, 7th April at 7.30 pm at the Town Hall to give tenants the opportunity to air their concerns or to put forward suggestions for improving the allotments. We hope to have a guest speaker at the meeting.

Vacancies

IT was not possible to fill the posts of the Vice-Chairman of the Group or a representative from Asheridge Road. We would be grateful for nominations/volunteers. The task is not onerous and does not take up a lot of time. Contact Alison Pirouet: 079524 33378.

Your Group Representatives

Vince Crompton (Chairman) – Plots 36a, 36b, 36c and 36d Cameron Road
Jim Abbott – Plots 31 and 32 Cameron Road
James Bole – Plots 9a and 9b Bellingdon Road

Co-opted Members:

Kate Folly
Mick Walker Plots 100a and 100b Cameron Road

Council Representatives:

Councillor Elaine Bamford, Councillor Alison Pirouet and Councillor Chris Spruytenburg



FEEDBACK FORM

Please return to: Chesham Town Council, Town Hall, Chesham HP5 1DS

Information for Chesham Town Council Allotment Holders

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WE hope you have enjoyed reading this issue of The Grower. Now we would like to hear your views. Please write in with your suggestions, comments or tips for allotment holders in the space below:

Suggestions / Comments / Questions / Advice

If you would like a reply please supply your name and address below.
We will, of course, still consider all comments or suggestions made anonymously.

Name: _____ Address: _____
