

July 2006

ISSUE 18

THE GROWER

Information for Chesham Town Council Allotment Holders

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NEW ALLOTMENTS

THE Town Council has recently released the remainder of the land on the Cameron Road site and the plots have been allocated. We are pleased to state that most of the tenants have made a very good effort to cultivate their plots. Well done and we extend a warm welcome to everyone. Should you need any advice, your group members are on hand to offer support.

Britain in Bloom Competition

AS you know, Chesham Town Council has agreed to enter the competition for the second year. Last year we won a silver award and are hoping to do better this year. The allotments are being included this time round and we hope to contribute towards the gold. The majority of the allotments have been well maintained but a small minority could do better. Please make that special effort to help us in achieving that gold. The judges will be visiting the Town on Wednesday, 12th July, 2006, and the allotments will be included in the programme.

Oh What a Beautiful Baby!

WE wish to extend hearty congratulations to Ivan and Anna on the birth of their daughter Martha. She has already made several visits on the allotment and it is wonderful seeing her sleeping peacefully in her carrycot as mum and dad get on with the job in hand. We wish mum, dad and Martha well.

Allotments Open Day Saturday, 12th August, 2006

WILL everyone please note that the Allotments Open Day will be held on Saturday 12th August, 2006, commencing at 10.30 am. It will be opened by the Mayor. Venue is the Horticultural Hut, Cameron Road. Come along, make it a family event and extend an invitation to your friends. Refreshments will be provided at a small cost. There will be guided tours of the allotments by members of the group (last tour at 2.00 pm) plus fun for the children and a display of vegetables grown on the allotments. Information and advice will be given by group members. PLEASE SUPPORT YOUR EVENT.

Our Best Friends

IT is said that dogs are man's best friends. We are aware that a number of dog owners wish to take them on the allotments with them. We wish to remind owners that they must keep their dogs under control and not to let them wander onto other plots. Would you also clean up if your dog fouls the path? Thank you.

CHEESE AND WINE EVENING

SATURDAY, 29TH JULY, 2006

WE have worked very hard and it is time for us to relax and have some fun. The group has therefore decided to hold a cheese and wine party on Plot 38a (enter through gate by car park), Cameron Road on Saturday, 29th July, 2006, commencing at 6.30 pm. Please bring along your contributions of wine, juice, biscuits, cheese etc.

This will be an opportunity to socialise and exchange tips on how to grow the best vegetables. Feel free to bring along husbands, wives and partners. We have taken into account that some tenants may wish to take their young children with them and would want to return home at a reasonable time to put them to bed, hence the 6.30pm start. We look forward to seeing you.

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
Bellington Road

Lyn Magennis
Plot 6b
Bellington Road

Co-opted Members:

Kate Folly
Plots 218 and 219
Cameron Road

Sarah Bowden
Plot 96
Cameron Road

Council Representatives:

**Councillor Elaine Bamford,
Councillor Alison Pirouet
and Councillor Chris
Spruytenburg**

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE - Part 1

By an established allotment holder – Plot 40b

DON'T panic! – Clearing an overgrown plot. Starting an allotment can be very daunting. You find yourself faced with a no-man's-land of waist-high grass, thistles, brambles or nettles, with no indication of where it ends. You turn up on the first day and your heart sinks. But don't panic. It is not going to be easy to deal with, but it is do-able with some patience and persistence. First ask yourself a very important question: do you want to grow vegetables and fruit which are free from pesticides and herbicides, i.e. organic, or are you happy to use chemicals? How you deal with the plot depends very much on your answer!

To rotavate or not to rotavate

Rotavators are often seen by new allotment holders as a marvellous way of clearing the plot. They do have their advantages but not as many as you think. To use one, you have to pull and push it backwards and forwards, which is very painful on the shoulders, even if it saves backache from normal digging. It will not dig as deep as traditional spade digging (especially if you double-dig) and more annoyingly, will chop up the roots of any plant it meets. For normal grass this is probably fine, but for couch grass, anything that can regenerate from tiny root sections like thistles, bindweed, dandelions, docks and ground elder, it simply makes the problem many times worse. So unless you are sure you don't have any of the above or are willing to go through the ground after rotavation to hand-remove all roots, beware!

Strimming

You might be able to borrow a decent trimmer from another plotholder, though if you don't know anyone, the local hire shop will probably be delighted to rent you one for a day. If you do this, make sure they give you (or you buy) a face mask or goggles, and earplugs/defenders. And wear stout shoes, gloves and full-length clothing. Flying debris can include slugs, snails, animal excrement, nails, stones or pieces of glass, so you want to make sure you are well protected. Fire up the trimmer and then gradually work your way across the patch, cutting it down to a height of a few inches. Do the strimming gradually – too much at once leaves you with vibrating fingers which can take hours to calm down. And keep your mouth shut!!

Digging

The usual method of plot clearing is dig it in sections, covering them over as soon as they've been dug until the time is right to

plant up a crop. There are two main digging types: single digging and double digging.

Single digging

Single refers to the depth of the dig, measured in spits, which is the depth of a standard spade or fork. In this, you dig out a trench, throwing the soil forward onto the soil in front and then hitting it with the spade or fork to break it up a bit. This also reveals the roots or any perennial weeds and allows you to remove them as you go. Have a bucket or wheelbarrow next to you while digging to put the weeds in.

Double digging

Here you dig the single spit trench as before, putting the soil either on the ground or in a wheelbarrow, then dig another single trench in front of it, putting the soil on top of the previous or in the barrow. Then dig another spit, incorporating manure or compost into the soil. This deeper soil is known as subsoil and should not be brought to the surface. When you have finished with the trench, dig your next trench, throwing the topsoil on top of the manured subsoil, then do the next deep trench, etc etc. When you have worked your way across the whole plot, you barrow the topsoil from the original trench across to the final one and use it to fill in the hole. This is very hard work, but sets up the soil fertility extremely well for several years. It also means you get deep enough down to get out a lot of the really pernicious weed roots. Rotavators cannot get deep enough to get into the subsoil, which is as well since you don't want it at the top.

Hand weeding

If you have been lucky enough to inherit a plot which has bare soil visible and scatterings of weeds, then working your way across with a hand trowel or fork will allow you to get rid of a lot of the smaller weeds into the compost heap. Then when you dig over the plot, you can just dig rather than having to keep bending over to pick out the weeds. It also allows you to be more confident about using or not using rotavators, since by forking it over to 3-4 inches you'll have a good idea if there are perennial weeds lurking.

Glyphosate

This is an herbicide often called Round-up or Tumbleweed. It acts by penetrating the leaves of actively growing plants, and then working its way down to the roots (systemic action). This kills the whole plant and not just the top

growth like most herbicides. Because it takes time, the effects are often not seen for 2-3 weeks after spraying. But beware: it is very powerful and you must NOT use it if there is even a slight breeze. If you do, you may well accidentally destroy neighbouring crops, and your fellow plotheolders will not be pleased! It drifts a lot further than you think! It does become inactivated once it hits the soil, so

the ground can be planted up as soon as the weeds die back. Use a lit match to decide if it's calm enough to use, and be careful: some perennial weeds need two or three treatments.

Bear in mind that you still have to dig out the dead roots and weeds even if you do use weedkiller!

- Part 2 will follow in next issue.

BEST ALLOTMENT COMPETITION

A report by Mike Allenby – Secretary of Chesham Horticultural Society.

THE first round of judging the allotments managed by the Town Council took place on Monday 5th June.

The allotment holders have made an excellent improvement over the last two years in particular to the overall impression given to anyone viewing the plots, especially Taylors Farm. Standing at the top of the allotments and looking down to Cameron Road is a wonderful sight.

The season started late this year and now the hot weather is adding to the extra work that the allotment holders have to do to keep their crops growing well.

The judges were very impressed and have marked 14 plots on the Cameron Road sites with 70 or more marks (out of 100); these plots form the short-list for the second round of judging that is scheduled to take place on 31st July.

Four plots on the Asheridge Road/Bellingdon Road allotments caught the eye of the judges and they will be re-judged on 31st July.

In reality, there were more plots of winning standard than mentioned above, but the rule is that the winners of the 2005 and 2004 competitions are ineligible this time.

If a plot is not on the short-list it doesn't mean that it won't be looked at in July. What it does mean, however, is that there is a lot of work to be done between the two judging dates to catch-up with the leading plots.

We look forward to the second round of judging.

A few notes from one of your council representatives on the allotment group and allotment holder of plot 44 on Cameron Road – which incidentally is unlikely to win any prizes!

FIRSTLY, I would like to thank everyone on all allotment sites in Chesham for their hard work and perseverance. Allotment gardening is testing but rewarding and on behalf of Chesham Town Council and the Chesham Community a big "thank you" to you all, particularly those new allotment holders on Cameron Road who have made such a difference to the appearance of the land. If anyone needs advice or has questions or queries you only have to ask a member of the allotment group or leave a note at the Town Hall and they will pass it on to one of us.

WEB SITE

WE are pleased to announce that the Allotment Group web site link is up and running. Have a look for yourself and let us have your comments and views. To access go to www.chesham.gov.uk. –

services, allotments and at the second paragraph click on here.

HOSE PIPE BAN

THERE is some understandably some confusion over the permitted use of hose pipes on the allotments. As some of you will have seen on Three Valleys Water web site the use of hose pipe on allotment gardens does not come under the ban and is permitted. However, your Allotment Agreement does state that hose pipes can only be used from the communal water supply to fill up water butts and not used directly on the allotment, be it hand held, a sprinkler system or surface irrigation. Obviously on council owner land, to set an example, it would be preferable that no one use a hose pipe at all even for filling up water butts but we cannot enforce this we can only ask for your co-operation in saving water as much as is practical.

Should there be a drought order issued, which has not happened as yet, but is possible this summer, we will promptly advise all allotment holders of the affect this will have on allotments. Thank you.

FEEDBACK

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 to:

*Chesham Town Council
Town Hall
Chesham HP5 1DS.*

If you would like a reply please supply your name and address.

We will, of course, still consider all comments or suggestions made anonymously.

Information for Chesham Town Council Allotment Holders

Chesham Town
Council
Town Hall
Chesham
HP5 1DS

Phone:
01494 774842

Fax:
01494 582908

Email:
admin@chesham.gov.uk

Web:
www.chesham.gov.uk

Our thanks are due

THANK you to Bob and his team for clearing the new allotments and for speedily putting up the brackets on the Cameron Road site for the hanging baskets. Your co-operation is much appreciated.

Allotment holders would have noticed the display of flowers under the allotment sign at Cameron Road. The box container is the work of Larry and the Council donated the money for the compost. The flowers were donated and planted by Lorraine and Vince. The hanging baskets were donated by the manager of Garden Scene. Our thanks are due to all these people.

Where have all the scarecrows gone?

LAST year we had an exciting scarecrow competition. The Bucks Examiner was so impressed that they sent a photographer and published the pictures in the paper. Please get the children involved in adorning your plots. The judges will select the best scarecrow when they carry out their next allotment inspection on 31st July, 2006. A small prize will be awarded to the best dressed scarecrow.

Parking

PLEASE note. People who bring their cars on to the allotment site do so at their own risk. The Council can not take responsibility for any damage done to vehicles while on the site.

Updated Tenancy Agreement

THE Allotment Group has recently been involved in the updating of the Tenancy Agreement for approval by the Council.

Tenants will shortly receive a copy which should be signed and returned to the Town Hall. Each tenant will also receive a copy for retention.

Early Summer Show

THE Chesham Horticultural Society and Allotment Holders Association will hold their early Summer Show on Saturday, 1st July, 2006, at the Trinity Baptist Church, Red Lion Street, commencing at 2.45pm. Refreshments will be available at a reasonable cost and also a raffle.

What To Do This Month . . .

COMPLETE the planting of purple-sprouting broccoli, brussels sprouts, winter cabbages and leeks. Sow globe beetroot, round-seeded peas and spinach beet. Sow calabrese, chicory, endive and other salad crops, winter radishes and swiss chard. Continue to sow chervil, dill and parsley seeds. Pinch out side shoots of tomatoes except bush varieties. Continue to lift early potatoes. Lift shallots and spread them out to dry; lift onions at the end of the month. Pick herbs, including lavender, for drying. In windy situations, earth up or stake broccoli, brussels sprouts and calabrese

Recipe – Carrot & Potato Mash

350g carrots
350g potatoes
1 tsp salt
25g butter

1 large Spanish onion, peeled and sliced
into thin wedges
125g of cheese such as Cheddar,
Lancashire, Edam or Gouda

USE a peeler to pare off the carrot skins as thinly as possible, then cut them into small chunks. Peel the potatoes and cut them into large chunks. Put the the two vegetables into a pan of cold, salted water and bring to the boil. Boil for 10-15 minutes or until the carrots and potatoes are very tender. Drain well and then return to the saucepan and cover with a lid for 5 minutes

While the carrots and potatoes are cooking, melt the butter in a large frying pan and cook the onion over a medium heat until soft and golden brown.

Mash the carrots and the potatoes and cheese leaving the mash quite speckled and rough. Add plenty of freshly ground black pepper. Serve the mash with a spoonful of caramelised onions on top.