

The FHS Grapevine

Newsletter of the Finchley Horticultural Society Autumn 2011

All change for allotment sites?

London Borough of Barnet has for some time expressed a wish for allotments to be run on a self-management basis. A new lease, which will be the basis of the arrangement with the Council for all sites, is now almost agreed, with the Federation of Barnet Allotment and Horticultural Societies playing a key part in ensuring that a fair and workable agreement has been reached. The Finchley Horticultural Society now has to make up its mind about whether it wishes to take on full management of its allotment sites – which will mean setting the rent and keeping all of it, but paying for all maintenance and support previously provided by the Council. It is likely that a hand-over, if agreed, will be sometime early in 2012. A meeting to explain the implications and seek your approval for self-management, which the FHS Committee supports, is to be held on 24th October. We look forward to seeing you there.

Finchley Horticultural Society SPECIAL MEETING

8pm Monday 24 October

Who will run our allotments?
A new agreement with the Council
Changes in subscriptions and plot rents
New FHS Constitution

**These matters affect every plot holder
and member. It is important that you
come and have your say.**

**Committee Room,
St Mary's Church Hall,
Hendon Lane, Finchley, London N3**

FHS Events

FHS Special Meeting and EGM

Monday 24 October - Don't miss it!

See below for details.

Guy Fawkes Party

Sunday 6th November, 4pm at Gordon Road Allotments

There will be a bonfire, Tony's wonderful pumpkin soup, baked potatoes, mulled wine and good gardening company! Bring your own fireworks.

Christmas Social

Sunday 18th December 2011, 11am-1pm

in the Green Room, Gordon Road Allotments

Come along for an end of year celebration to enjoy mulled wine and mince pies with fellow FHS Members and plotheholders.

Trading Hut

The Hut will close for the winter **9th October**, re-opening next **March**.

Autumn Fete is a Great Success

Our Autumn Fete, held on 11 September, raised over £400. Many thanks to everyone who contributed produce and helped on the day, and particularly to June who organised it all. We look forward to more contributions next year! A good selection of jams, chutneys and honey are still available at the Trading Hut on Sunday mornings.



A Bit on the Wild Side

Gardens and allotments can be a lifeline for wildlife and provide micro habitats for many species, such as frogs that thrive in small ponds. In London as a whole there are 3.8 million gardens covering nearly a quarter of the whole land area. But, over the past ten years vegetation cover in London's gardens has fallen by 12 % - and only just over half of London's garden area is now given over to plants.

So 'green' gardens and allotments sites, where we still grow many and varied plants, are especially important - and Gordon Road is a particularly good area with the Dollis Brook forming one of its boundaries (our site here runs right to the bank of the Brook but the immediate bank side is not cultivated).

You may be surprised to know that at least a dozen different types of butterfly have been recorded here, buzzards occasionally fly overhead, frogs, newts and toads hide in damp patches, and kingfishers live along the Brook.

Our friendly young fox, which was around all summer, sadly died in August possibly from poisoning. Rat poison should not be used on the allotments - but if you see a rat please report it.



Hedgehogs (good for gardeners as they like to eat slugs) have been seen recently after an absence of many years. If you have to use slug pellets,



be sparing and only apply those which are wildlife friendly (Growing Success Advanced Slug Killer is recommended).

We would like to keep a record of wildlife at Gordon Road - please put a note of interesting sightings on the Noticeboard in the Green Room.

The Wildlife Plot at Gordon Road

This allotment (8A next to the Gordon Road fence - see map in Handbook) is managed as a sanctuary for wildlife to protect, encourage and enhance native plants and animals which occur naturally at Gordon Road Allotments and in the London Borough of Barnet. No chemicals are used here.

The open compost heap and log piles provide a sheltered home for many creatures. Frogs breed in the small pond (created from an old bath abandoned on another plot) and dragonflies visit it in summer.



There is a thriving colony of slow worms (completely harmless, legless lizards) which are commonly found on many plots here. Protected by law, it is forbidden to harm or handle them. There are six 'refuges' - metal sheets under which they like to bask, hidden from predators such as foxes and birds. Seventeen individuals were counted here one day this summer.

A number of native plants have been introduced to encourage butterflies and bees. Many 'weeds' have been moved here from elsewhere on the site, including wild garlic (ransoms) rescued this spring from the paved raised beds area. Snowdrops, primroses, bluebells and cowslips flower early in the year.

Apples from the two old trees are harvested for the benefit of all ploholders. These are in or in front of the Trading Hut when available.

Notices

Can You Help?

The Society urgently needs more people to help with some key jobs (not hugely time consuming but important). Ann Brown or June Brookes would love to hear from you if you can take on any of these roles:

Publicity: Producing and distributing posters, notices and flyers, contacting the press.

Events: Organising events at Gordon Road (not Plant Sale) including socials, autumn fete, Guy Fawkes.

Piggery: Maintenance and management of this communal area including its surrounds.

Treasurer: Is there anyone interested in taking on managing our money from March 2012?

Members

A big welcome to new members - Bozena Zielonka and June Paddock who have joined the FHS since July 2011. Congratulations to Valerie Marsh on winning the Rita Levy Bowl for best exhibit in the vegetable section at the Friern Barnet Show.

Allotments Handbook: 2011 edition

This updated version, now available, will be given to all new ploholders, and e-mailed to existing ploholders. If you require a replacement hard copy, please contact June Brookes.

Place Your Order for 2012 Seeds Now

As part of an FHS Group Order, members can get **45% off** the retail price of **Suttons Seeds** (and 10% on other items). Please contact Catherine Schmitt (see back page) if you would like a catalogue and Group Order form. Catherine will deliver these to local members, but for those of you who live further away a copy will be left in the Green Room at Gordon Road allotments. It's well worth taking part- and the more who do the greater the discount!

Kings Seeds catalogues are now available in Green Room - orders can only be placed via the Society (June Brookes) at very reasonable prices.

Our Recycled Compost

At Gordon Road we regularly receive a huge mountain of recycled compost. It is free to ploholders, and now much valued to improve both soil and crops.

The compost derives from all the green waste put into Barnet's green wheelie bins. This is taken to the LondonWaste Eco Park at Edmonton, where it is processed in a series of stages:

1. Reception: The green waste is loaded onto a conveyor belt, shredded, and thoroughly mixed. A compost activator is added to ensure that there is a broad range of bacteria and fungi to break the material down. This is the only additive.

2. Stage one tunnels: The shredded material is taken to one of eight tunnels, where it remains for three weeks in conditions of up to 60°C.

3. Stage two tunnels: The compost is removed and by now is partly decayed and completely odourless. It is then put into a second tunnel for a further three weeks in conditions of up to 60°C.

4. Maturation: The compost is piled up in an open area and is left for up to 10 weeks to mature - where it cools from 60°C to 40°C.

5. Screening: Finally the compost is put through a large sieve to remove items such as partly decomposed wood and stones. It is stored for a further two weeks. Large items such as wood are put back into the process again to decompose further.

Both the 0-10mm and 0-20mm compost produced at the LondonWaste EcoPark is BSI Pas 100 Certified - a baseline quality standard for compost ensuring it is consistent, safe and reliable to use.

We have two 'green' recycling bins at Gordon Road and now one at Nethercourt. Note that plastic bags must never be put in the green bins as there is no opportunity to remove these and they cannot be composted. And, please don't put soil and bricks into the bins as this will make them too heavy for the binmen to handle and so will not be emptied.

For ploholders:

Next compost delivery Gordon Road: Friday 7 October.

For all gardeners:

A load of free compost will be available at the Civic Amenity and Recycling Centre, Summers Lane, North Finchley, N12 0RF on Saturday 22 October. Get there early to avoid disappointment - it may be gone by Sunday mid-day! Ask for more deliveries if you are disappointed not to get any or not enough: Telephone 0208 362 0752.

The Finchley Horticultural Society

1 Princes Avenue, Finchley, London N3 2DA

For all Finchley gardeners and for plotheolders at Gordon Road and Nethercourt Avenue.

President

Catherine Schmitt 0208 346 4359
catherine@schmitt1.demon.co.uk

Chairman, Newsletter Editor & FHS Enquiries

Ann Brown 0208 346 5011
annbrownster@gmail.com

Allotments Secretary & Allotment Enquiries

June Brookes 0208 349 2253
jayemjaybee@btinternet.com

Membership

Beverley Perkins 0208 346 4026
bev.perkins@btopenworld.com

Treasurer

Michael Case 0207 607 2885
michael.case@dsl.pipex.com

Meetings

Valerie Marsh 0208 455 4143
ppetere@aol.com

Security & Break-ins

Tony Ingram 0208 349 1265 or 07967 274 739
tonyngam@aqp.co.uk

Member of
Barnet Federation
of Allotment and
Horticultural Societies



Remember you can get a 10% discount off seeds and plants at Finchley Nurseries Garden Centre if you are an FHS Member

Coming Attractions

Barnet Federation of Allotments - Prize Giving and Social -

Monday, 17th October, 8pm

Meeting Room, Rathbone Allotments, Oakleigh Road North, London, Barnet, N20 0DH
All plot holders very welcome. Come and celebrate Nethercourt Avenue winning Best Small Site in the in the 2011 Barnet Allotments Competition.

- Beale Arboretum -

Sunday, 30th October, 1-4pm

West Lodge Park, Cockfosters Road, Hadley Wood, Barnet, EN4 0PY (2m S of Potters Bar, on A111)
This is one of the last Open Days in 2011 for the National Garden Scheme: admission £4, children free. It is a wonderful place to visit in the autumn with a collection of over 800 tree and shrub varieties, most of them labelled. Refreshments.

- Geffrye Museum: Christmas Past -

29 November 2011 - 8 January 2012, Tuesday

- Saturday 10am-5pm, Sunday 12noon-5pm. £5, concessions £3. Kingsland Road, London E2 8EA.
The magic of Christmas is recaptured in eleven period rooms decorated in authentic festive style, with a profusion of flowers and plant material. See how Christmas has been celebrated in English homes from 1600 to the present day. For further information: www.geffrye-museum.org.uk

- Big Garden Birdwatch -

28th and 29th January 2012

Spend an hour watching the birds in your garden to record the highest number of each bird species seen (not flying over) at any one time. Be part of a nationwide census to find out which birds visit our gardens, which ones are the most common and which ones are increasing/declining. For more information and to submit your results, contact: www.rspb.org.uk/birdwatch

