

The FHS Grapevine

Newsletter of the Finchley Horticultural Society Autumn 2012

Allotments Competition 2012

Every year the Barnet Federation of Allotment and Horticultural Societies (BFAHS) organises a competition for the best site and best plot in the London Borough of Barnet. This year our Nethercourt Avenue site won top prize in the Small Sites category and Ray Clarke of Gordon Road Allotments won third prize for the best plot. Hearty congratulations to both!

The best allotment site was won by Hendon Grove, a delightful site and a well deserved winner. Sites are judged on a variety of criteria which have recently been reviewed and updated. From the FHS, June Brookes and Ann Brown have been members of a Federation working party which considered updating the Competitions, which are still being reviewed. For sites, judges now look to find evidence of good gardening (quality of cultivation), the condition of paths, the visual appearance of the site, information available to ploholders and the facilities provided. For individual plots, crops, soil, evidence of weeds, state of structures and paths are taken into account. For next July at Gordon Road we will need to improve our paths and the state of some of our plots if we are to be amongst the winners – we have been there before!

Barnet Federation of Allotments 2012 PRIZE GIVING AND SOCIAL

Monday 15th October, 8pm

Presentation of cups to winners.

All ploholders very welcome.

Come and celebrate!

**Rathbone Allotments, Oakleigh
Road North, London N20 0DH**

FHS Events

Wisley visit

Saturday 13th October

Wisley, in Surrey, is the flagship garden of the Royal Horticultural Society, gifted to the Society in 1903 and now a world class garden. It includes a state-of-the-art glasshouse, a series of model gardens, countless identified flowers and vegetables, a huge alpine collection and an arboretum. A spectacular display of autumn colour is predicted at RHS gardens this year due to the wet summer and recent warm sunny weather. We will be going by coach as an Affiliated RHS Group, departing at 9.30am from outside Finchley Central Library, Hendon Lane, returning early evening. Cost only £15 per person (this covers the cost of the coach – entrance as an RHS Group is free). To reserve your place, please return the booking form to June Brookes as soon as possible. Contact June (0208 346 4026 or jayemjaybee@btinternet.com) if you need further details.

Guy Fawkes Party

Sunday 4th November, 4pm

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. An event not to be missed.

Trading Hut

The Hut will close for the winter on Sunday 7th October, re-opening on 24 March 2013.



Beekeepers First Year

Louis Zweig reports

We started last July with three bee colonies generously given to Mei Ling and myself by my bee mentor Geoff and another colony given to Fred by his friend. All we had to do was feed them and get them through the winter. It was very quiet and pleasant as we relaxed and enjoyed watching them 'busy as bees'.

The Gordon Road Bee Group (Louis Zweig, Tuuli Taylor, Mei Ling, Fred Mouchous) joined various bee keeping societies, so we felt ready for when the spring came. But nothing could have prepared us for what happened next.

The first hive to swarm was mine. Swarming is when the workers decide to raise a new queen. They then depart to make a new colony, leaving the new queen to be raised by the young bees left behind in the hive. It is quite normal for bees to rapidly procreate, except that they're not supposed to do that in the queen's first year. I lost my queen and half my colony with most of the honey (they fill their stomachs with the honey to feed the new colony). Then, a few weeks later, both Fred and Mei Ling's colonies swarmed. Fortunately we managed to catch them and put them in 'nucs', which are half size hives.

Chris Ouseley joined us in April after finishing his course at Capital Bees who gave him a hive and a colony: these also swarmed! Then my newly mated queen swarmed, but this time we caught her. So it went on and on till we had caught at least eight swarms. We don't know how many bees were lost.

According to the text books, this is all highly unusual behaviour. But it wasn't all down to our inexperience - we heard from all sides that other beekeepers were having the same problems. Then the weather turned wet and the new queens in our colonies didn't get mated properly. We had 'queen laying drones' and 'laying workers' which meant we had to find and destroy those queens and in my case buy two new queens [which come by post!].

We ended up with 12 hives and a couple of nucs, but we have now combined the weak ones with the strong ones and have 8 hives, two each, and a couple of nucs to go through the coming winter. The consequence of all this is that our honey crop is pitifully small for 2012, as is the case all over the country. Mei Ling's hive produced 23 lb. and Chris's 12 lb. Fred and I had none.

We've all been on a huge learning curve and hopefully the weather will be kinder next year. We will certainly be better prepared for the swarming season and look forward to a good crop of honey.

About Compost

Throwing away garden and domestic refuse which could make compost is wasteful and unnecessary. It can be transformed into healthy fertiliser and soil conditioner for your garden or allotment. All vegetable waste eventually rots down and returns to the soil. A compost heap is simply an environment where this natural process can be speeded up. Composting is not difficult and will not take up a lot of space. Here are a few tips.

What sort of Compost Heap?

The most basic is just a simple heap on or in the ground, where green waste is piled up. This 'open heap' is friendly for wildlife such as slowworms who have easy access to it and it works perfectly well, if rather slow to rot. Limiting the spread of the heap with wooden pallets or a wire cage may be desirable. Enclosing the heap and insulating it with say carpet or straw will retain more moisture and heat which speeds up the rotting process. This can be a home-made job or one of many commercial bins available in all sorts of shapes, sizes and prices with all sorts of claims to quality of compost. Bins can be obtained cheaply from the London Borough of Barnet (for residents). All heaps benefit from turning over so that all the material spends time at the centre and rots properly.

What can go on a Compost Heap?

Compost heaps are all about green waste and can take any of it. Woody material needs to be finely chopped or shredded. If you can't do this, put it on the fire site (at Gordon Road). Let perennial weeds shrivel up in the sun before going on the heap. Plants which have been infested with diseases or blight can also go on, but after they have been thoroughly rotted in a large plastic bag beforehand. If you have a lot of grass clippings (or a large quantity of anything else) mix with other materials or the heap might get unbalanced and start to smell. Never put meat, fish or bones on the heap - this will attract rats.

Green Waste on Allotment Sites

All FHS allotment holders are required to dispose of their green waste on their plots. This means that everyone must have some sort of compost heap. But not everyone does and this is leading to misuse of the green bins at Gordon Road which are getting filled up with weeds, soil and other material for which they are not intended. This can make life difficult and unpleasant for the volunteers who manage these bins on your behalf, and leave no space for the pernicious weeds they are currently intended for. There is a communal fire site provided for woody material. Please respect the green bin rules and please start a compost heap if you don't have one.

News

Sunflower Competition

Congratulations to Clarice Hitner (aged 8), the winner of our Tallest Sunflower in Finchley Competition. Her plant reached the great height of 228 cms (7ft 6 ins). All children who succeeded in growing a sunflower to maturity were given a prize at our Autumn Fete. They were: Dylan Pavlo, Archie Pavlo, Zehra Ali, Mia Sayir, Isabelle & Scarlett Winter, Oliver Cowlshaw and Zadie Defoite.



Clarice with her winning sunflower

Pear Rust

Pear rust has been seen on a number of pear trees at Gordon Road Allotments. Once a rarity, European pear rust is now one of the main rust diseases occurring in UK gardens. It is easy to spot - round orange spots 5-10mm in diameter appear on the leaves. It is caused by a fungus which overwinters on juniper. Pear trees require new infections each year to get the disease. The fruit and health of the tree is not usually affected. The



RHS with the Sylva Foundation is encouraging gardeners to get involved in a survey of the rust. Get in touch at www.TreeWatch.com/pearrust if you have this on your tree.

Log Cabin Arrives

A splendid log cabin has arrived at Gordon Road Allotments as part of the Raised Beds Project (courtesy a grant from Awards for All/Big Lottery). This 'hut' will provide shelter for disabled gardeners and schoolchildren. It has no electricity or water supply, but will be a traditional gardener's resting place from which to admire one's patch! It will not be in use for a while because the floor, walls - both inside and out - must be painted several times. Help with this would be much appreciated.

New Lease from the Council

There has been no progress (or indeed anything at all!) from the Council about our new self-management lease. We very much hope and expect to have made progress with this in the next three months - by the end of 2012.

Notices

Can You Help?

The Society urgently needs more people to help with 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:

Outings:

Organising a few outings every year to places of gardening interest.

Events:

Running events at Gordon Road (not Plant Sale) such as socials, autumn fete, Guy Fawkes, barbecue.

Website:

A website for the FHS is long overdue. Do you have the skills to create and manage this for us, or know someone who could?

Green Room/Toilet Monitor:

These places do not look after themselves. This is not an onerous task, but needs to be done on a regular basis - checking up on supplies, plus a bit of cleaning and tidying up.

Members

A big welcome to a new members: Young Mi Oh and Philip Lang.

Please inform Christine Williams, chrysw@hotmail.co.uk if you received a paper copy of this newsletter and are now able to receive it by e-mail. This saves us time and money.



Claudine Fear with winner of the Guess the Weight of the Marrow Competition at the Autumn Fete on 9th September. The Fete raised over £500 for the Society.

This issue of The Grapevine has been generously sponsored by Winkworth Estate Agents.

T: 0208 349 3388
www.winkworth.co.uk

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The Finchley Horticultural Society

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Next Newsletter:

Winter Issue - December 2012

Member of
Barnet Federation
of Allotment and
Horticultural Societies



**Remember FHS Members can get a
10% discount off seeds and plants
at Finchley Nurseries Garden Centre**

Coming Attractions

- Secret Spaces of Finchley -

**Martin School, East Finchley High Road, N2
Thursday 27th September 2012, 7.30pm**

A slide show presentation by Mike Gee (Finchley Society) which promises to take you off the beaten track to every corner of Finchley - you might be amazed at what we have on our doorstep.

- Long Lane Pasture Exhibition -

**Arts Depot, North Finchley
5th - 31st October,**

10am - late (to 5.30pm on Sundays)
This is a display of competition pictures and photographs of Long Lane Pasture taken during 2012 to celebrate the centenary year of its purchase. Many are for sale to benefit the Pasture.

- Dig for Victory -

**St John's Church Hall, Friern Barnet Lane
(next to Whetstone Police Station)**

Wednesday 24th October, 7.45pm

A talk to the Friern Barnet and District Local History Society by Russell Bowes.

- Beale Arboretum -

**West Lodge Park, Cockfosters Road,
Hadley Wood, Barnet, EN4 0PY
(2m S of Potters Bar, on A111)**

Sunday, 28th October, 1-4pm

This is one of the last Open Days in 2012 for the National Gardens Scheme: Admission £4, children free. It is a wonderful place to visit in the autumn with a collection of over 800 tree and shrub species, most of them labelled. Refreshments.

- RHS Dig Together Day -

24th - 25th November

Watch out for community tree planting events. You can obtain a 50% discount on wildlife friendly native hedging from www.buy-trees-online.co.uk/rhs and enter the code RHS01 at the checkout. The deadline for ordering is 5 November 2012.

