

The FHS Grapevine

Newsletter of the Finchley Horticultural Society

Spring 2013

Lease Developments

The Finchley Horticultural Society has not yet been able to finalise and sign new leases for its Gordon Road and Nethercourt Avenue allotment sites. We expect to do so shortly as there is now only one outstanding issue to resolve: the precise boundary of our land along the Dollis Brook. The lease will be backdated to 1st October 2012. The Council have still not sorted out their legal landholding position for the Brent Way site, but we will be taking over management here from 1st April.

Because the new leases contain conditions and restrictions which are changes to our current agreement with the Council, we will be issuing a new plottolders Tenancy Agreement and Handbook.

Our sites have been inspected and their condition at handover noted. Where there is existing Council management responsibility and outstanding health and safety concerns, the Council have agreed to carry out works to make safe within two years of the lease start date. At Gordon Road dead trees will be felled along the Dollis Road boundary, five leaning and cracked fence posts along Gordon Road will be replaced and concrete by the main entrance removed. No works will be undertaken at Nethercourt, and Brent Way has yet to be inspected. More information at the AGM – plus what additional changes will be in the Tenancy Agreement.

Finchley Horticultural Society AGM

Thursday March 21st at 8pm

Report on 2012

A New Tenancy Agreement for Plottolders

Plans for 2013

Drinks and Refreshments

Raffle – RHS tickets to be won

Dining Room, Avenue House

East End Road, Finchley, London N3

FHS Events

Gordon Road Allotments Work Day

Sunday 17th March, 11am – 4pm

All Gordon Road plottolders are needed to tackle lots of tasks around the site from clearance around our boundaries to shop spring clean.

VISIT: *Gardening Which?* and Capel Manor Gardens, Enfield

Thursday pm, 18th April

A specially arranged tour of the Gardening Which? trial grounds led by Researcher James Robbins (one of our plottolders), followed by a guided visit around Capel Manor Gardens. Travel is by own car (lifts available for those without), meeting near Rocklands Flats, Gordon Road, at 1pm for tour at 2pm. Cost: FHS Members £2, non members £5. Please contact Ann Brown: annbrownster@gmail.com or tel 0208 346 5011, to confirm if you are coming. A real treat just for us!

The Plant Sale: Gordon Road Allotments

Sunday 19th May, 10am – 1pm

There will be lots of top quality plants including vegetables, herbs, annuals and perennials, plus refreshments and bargains in the Allotments Trading Hut. Come early to avoid disappointment.

Social: Cheese & Wine Party

Gordon Road Allotments

Sunday 16th June, 1pm – 4pm

A chance to meet and mingle with fellow members and plottolders. Bring your own wine. Cost: £3 members, £5 non members.

Trading Hut

The Trading Hut at Gordon Road will re-open on Sunday 24th March, 10.30am - 12.30pm.

Advance Notice

Saturday 20th July

Visit by coach to Brogdale Cherry Festival, National Fruit Collection, Kent, with orchard tours.

Growing Pains

Slugs

With all the wet weather, slugs have had perfect conditions. B&Q reported a 74% increase in sales of slug pellets last year. We have now heard of a big alien slug, known as the Spanish Stealth Slug (*Arion flagellu*), whose numbers are increasing. It is a sickly olive-green colour, grows to more than 10cm (4ins) and has a rampant breeding cycle that produces hundreds more eggs than the typical British slug. It is getting a foothold in the UK and spreading. Be alert to this invader and let us know if you find any at our allotment sites.



Spanish Stealth Slugs

British slugs each produce about 50-100 offspring which is more than enough to decimate our crops. It is important to control the population from early spring and this year, having enjoyed the high rainfall, numbers are likely to be very high.

There are an enormous number of recommended methods for getting rid of slugs and snails. Some, such as liquid coffee or vinegar might affect the taste of your crops. Others such as keeping chickens, a regular night patrol to pick them off your plants, or traps which need checking every day are not practical for most ploholders. Some methods are disgusting such as stamping on them, putting them in boiling water or killing with salt – but the brave might try these for limited control. Nematodes, sold under the name of 'Nemaslug', can be effective for up to 6 weeks but find clay soil difficult to move in and cost about £8.95 to treat 40 sq metres. Natural predators such as frogs, hedgehogs, slowworms and thrushes are a great help and should be encouraged. Slug pellets work, but should be used sparingly. Please use organic pellets (Gardening Which? tests show they are just as effective as chemical ones and pose no threat to people, pets or wildlife). The Trading Hut at Gordon Road will have plenty in stock for you when it opens at the end of March.

Ash Dieback Disease

This disease is threatening the UK's 80 million ash tree population.



Infected ash trees

Infected trees usually die. There are ash trees around the boundaries of our allotments and it will be very sad to lose any of them. So far, there have been no reports of the disease in Barnet – but it is only a matter of time. Ash dieback is caused by a fungus *Chalara fraxinea*. It causes leaf loss, lesions on the bark and dieback of the crown. The disease is spread by spores from the fruiting bodies of the fungus on dead leaves. The spores are carried on the wind to infect more ash trees. Further information can be found at The Woodland Trust (www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/treedisease). Please report any sightings of the disease (wherever you may see it) immediately to: planthealth.info@fera.gsi.gov.uk

Pigeons

Pigeons are a pest which destroy our crops, particularly during the winter and early spring. They seem to be increasing in numbers and attacking anything green when food is scarce.

Found throughout UK the feral (town) pigeon is descended from the wild Rock Dove and racing pigeons. Unfortunately, they nest all year round usually laying two white eggs which hatch 18 days later. The young leave the nest about 4-5 weeks after hatching. Feral pigeons often nest in or around buildings - under eaves, bridges or anywhere else at all where there is shelter.

Some folk swear pigeon control works by intimidation through models of predators. Success stories include wooden cat and fox heads with large eyes and teeth in vivid colours, artificial owls, and life-size plastic herons. Some reports say these only work for a limited time. Others claim shiny CD discs on string waving in the breeze are effective. All might be worth a try. But netting or covering with mesh is really the only way to give your crops long term protection.

News

Sylvia Elkington



Sylvia died at the end of December. She was a very dedicated member of this Society, who made an outstanding contribution over many, many years - one of the key people who tirelessly helped run our allotments at Gordon Road, where she and Ron had a plot for over 30 years. Her knowledge and enthusiasm for gardening was huge, and put to very good effect when she was in charge of our annual Plant Sale. She was a great member of our 'grow your own' community - and is greatly missed. Ron has now moved from Elm Park Road and is living in a retirement home.

Ken Allison

We are sad to report the death, last summer, of Ken Allison, who had been a familiar, but quiet, dignified figure at Gordon Road for many years. He was working his plots, aged over 90, until last summer when he was taken ill. Ken was particularly known for the rather unusual crops he grew, including wheat and other cereals, which he fed to his chickens.

Revellers at the Christmas Social 2012



Notices

Recycled Compost

The next compost delivery at Gordon Road will be on 21st March. Free compost will be available for collection from the Civic Amenity and Recycling Centre, Summers Lane, North Finchley, N12 ORF at the end of March or first week of April. Contact the Centre mid-March to get an exact date (Telephone 0208 362 0752) and then make sure you get there early to avoid disappointment - it goes very quickly.

Sunflower Competition 2013

We are again running a children's competition for growing the tallest sunflower in Finchley. Young sunflower plants will be available for 50p at the FHS May Plant Sale and can be grown on in the garden at home or on the allotments (with permission of the plot holder). Photographs and measurements will be required in early September. There will be a prize for the winning sunflower at our Autumn Fete on 8th September. Entry forms will be available at the Plant Sale and in the Trading Hut from 19th May.



Barnet Federation of Allotments and Horticultural Societies

Malcolm Brewer, Chairman of BFAHS for over 20 years, stood down at the AGM on 18 February. The new Chairman is Hushang Balyuzi and new Vice Chairman is Hilary Burden, both from Childs Hill Allotments.

Members

A big welcome to a new members:
Maureen Gaythwaite, Chrissy Cole, Penny Igoe, Millie Martinez-Fernandez, David Ralli, Lucy Seifert, Young M Oh and Priscilla Van de Velde.

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.

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

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Next Newsletter: Summer Issue - June 2013

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

RHS Great London Plant Fair

RHS Horticultural Halls, 26th - 27th March
Nurseries, horticultural products and expert advice. More information: www.rhs.org.uk

Federation of Middlesex Horticultural & Allotment Societies - Spring Show -

Sunday 7th April

Amongst many classes for gardeners is a new category for photographs of a horticultural nature: flowers, plants and horticultural scenes. For all details about the Show contact The Show Secretary, Colin Lathwell, 18 Robin Wood Way, Greenford, UK6 7QN. Tel: 020 8902 8756.

- Avenue House -

East End Road, Finchley, London N3 3QE.

Bothy Gardens Open Day: Sunday 7th April, 3-5pm
A chance to visit this delightful 'secret garden' in the grounds of Avenue House.

Farmer's Market: Starting on 14th April

Now back on as a regular event on the second Sunday of each month.

- Long Lane Pasture Pond Day -

Off Long Lane, Finchley, N3 2RN

Saturday 20th April, 10 am - 12 noon

The ponds here will be alive with tadpoles and other water creatures. This is a great event for children (and adults) to discover underwater life. Nets and trays provided. Further details from: www.longlanepasture.org

- RHS National Gardening Week -

15th - 21st April

Find out how to take part to encourage everyone to get gardening: www.nationalgardeningweek.org.uk

- Save Our Butterflies Week -

18th - 26th May

Take part in a national recording scheme which year on year helps to build a picture of changes in our butterfly populations. Further details from: www.butterflyconservation.org/events



**Butterfly
Conservation**

Saving butterflies, moths and their habitats