

KINGS ROAD ALLOTMENT NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 2 JULY 2016

EDITORS NOTE.....

Welcome to the second issue of The Kings Road Allotment Newsletter. We have had a positive response to our first issue, but I am afraid to say, at the time of writing, I have still not been inundated with literary offerings from plot holders. Please feel free to email me, or speak to me if you have any sudden desire to pen a literary masterpiece that may be of interest!!! However, despite this, we have managed to fill eight pages this time! I managed to twist Chris Cole-Powney's arm and he has written about "his favourite crop, Foremost potatoes. I also threatened to go on strike and leave my husband Duncan, the Association Secretary, to fend for himself in the kitchen and the end result is an article on composting. Our very own Mary Berry, Margaret Bold, has also given us her award winning Rhubarb cake recipe (See my write up on the Queens Celebration Party.). I should imagine this will prove useful, seeing as most plot holders seem to have a glut of rhubarb at present! We also have a note from PC Brand (who is our local Ward Officer. Happy reading!

Amanda

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KINGS ROAD ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE

DUNCAN ANDERSON– Secretary

JOHN BOLD– Chairman

PAUL CHIPPERFIELD– Treasurer

CHRIS COLE-POWNEY - Member

JOHN HAWES– Member

GINA MORRIS– Member

PAUL PIKESLEY– Site secretary

ASSOCIATION NEWS AND EVENTS

ALLOTMENT ETIQUETTE– The Association’s aim is to promote a welcoming and friendly atmosphere, in which people can work their plots and enjoy each others company. Therefore, we would like to emphasise, as mentioned in the LBWF Council Agreements, that all plot holders will have signed, no racist, sexist or abusive language should be used on the site. If you have experienced this, or witnessed such behaviour, please report it to an Association committee member, or the site secretary, so that the appropriate action can be taken.

QUEEN’S CELEBRATION PARTY—On a lighter note, a big thank you to everyone who attended the event that we organised to celebrate the

Queen’s 90th birthday. It was a great success and in total, throughout the afternoon, we had over 30 people attend the event . A veritable feast was provided by members and this included six cakes that were entered into the “**Bake a Cake**” competition, all of which were gratefully devoured by those attending. Many thanks also, to those who took the time to



put their baking skills to the test and to Nigel’s wife, Sue, who judged the competition. Ultimately, the decision came down to two cakes and Brian Davies was brought in to help with the final decision. Eventually, Chris Fox’s chocolate cake was beaten to the post by Margaret Bold’s rhubarb cake and should you wish to release your inner Mary Berry, her recipe is detailed at the end of this letter! I would also like to extend a big thank you to those who helped clear up at the end of the day!

Finally, as this event proved to be so successful, we are currently arranging another party for Sunday August 21st, to start at 1pm. Further details will be posted on boards at the site. So keep your eyes peeled!!!!

SCARECROW COMPETITION– The scarecrow competition has been postponed to give plot holders longer to work on their masterpieces! It will now be judged at the next party on 21st August, together with the

tallest sunflower competition.

MEMBERSHIP- The Association has proved popular with plot holders and we now have over 20 Association members.

Also, I am currently looking into affiliating the Association to the National Allotment Society. However, we cannot make one application for the Association as a whole, but instead, each member of the Association will need to fill out an individual application form, all of which then need to be forwarded to the National Allotments Society. There is also a fee of £2.75 **which we will cover with your annual £10 membership fee.** Please go to www.nsalg.org.uk, click on “**join us**”, then click on “**Membership Application Form**”. Print it off, fill it out and hand it to a Committee member. This needs to be done by the end of August. Remember this will cost you NOTHING and there are numerous benefits to joining. Please see the nsalg website for benefits of joining.

STAY VIGILANT- Sadly, we have to report that there have been a few “incidents” on the allotment. Someone chose to deposit an oil based fluid into one of the water tanks, which Paul Pikesly kindly drained and cleaned. A padlock was also taken from the barrier and found at the bottom of a water tank. As a result the padlocks have now been welded to the chains on the gate/ barrier. Finally, tools have been taken from the bunker and thrown into bushes. We would be grateful if all allotment holders could keep their eyes open for any suspicious activity and report anything untoward to the Committee, so that it can be documented and the appropriate action taken.

BROWN BINS- Please ensure that only compostable allotment waste is put in the brown bins. Over the past year there have been a number of occasions when the council have refused to take some of the bins, because of excessive weight caused by soil being placed in the bins. Whilst the bins are provided for **green waste only**, we would also like to encourage you, where possible, to compost your own waste and to this end, we have included in the issue, a brief guide to composting.

FENCE REPAIRS- A big thank you to Paul Pikesly who has mended the hole in the allotment fence adjacent to the alley. The fence had been damaged for quite a while and although it is the councils responsibility, as nothing had been done about it, he recently repaired it.

NEW PADLOCK AND KEYS- For a while now, some allotment holders have had trouble with the padlock at the Cambridge Road entrance. This has

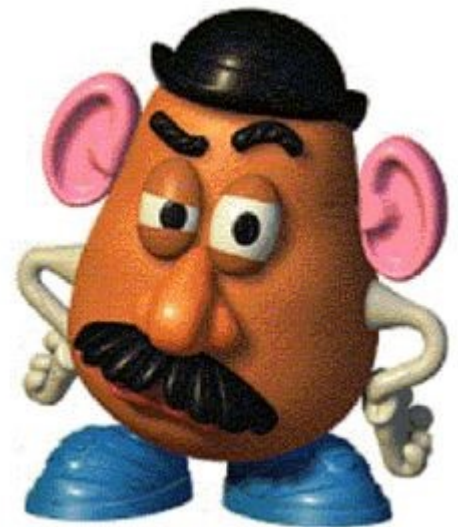
now kindly been replaced and new keys issued by John Bold. Most site members have received keys, but if you are one of the few who have not, please see one of the Committee members.

SITE SECURITY- I have been in contact with PC Brand, who is our "Ward designated officer", regarding site security. Many of you may already know of PC Brand through his regular emails on crime updates and prevention within our Ward. (Personally, I think he should be pounding the boards of a London Comedy club, not the streets of Chingford!!) He has kindly agreed to write a regular brief report for our newsletters, which start in this issue.

MY FAVOURITE CROP.....

Thank you to Chris Cole-Powney for the following article on "his favourite crop".

My favourite crop has to be the first early potato, Sutton's Foremost. To my mind, it is unrivalled for its creamy texture and superb flavour. Other varieties might crop slightly earlier (Swift or accent), but I do not think they are in the same league in terms of taste. Better to wait an extra two weeks and get the real deal!



I like to buy my seed potatoes loose, rather than pre packed, so that I can select the number and size that I require. I can also inspect the tubers for any visible sign of disease. I purchase them as soon as they are available, usually towards the end of January and set them out in trays to sprout (chit).

If conditions allow, I plant out in well prepared ground during the first week of April. I line the drills with compost and wood ash and a little blood, fish and bone. If all goes well, I start cropping about the third week of June.

I leave the tubers in the ground and dig them as required. With regard to potential pests and disease, the tubers mature before potato blight becomes a problem, they are not disfigured by scab and fortunately, slug damage is minimal, if at all.

Regarding cooking, I have baked, roasted and mashed them, but they are probably best steamed or microwaved till soft and then served on their own with butter, salt and pepper. Sheer luxury!

EDITORS NOTE: *Having a plot adjacent to Chris, he converted us to Foremost years ago and since then we grow it every year. I definitely recommend you try this variety next year!*

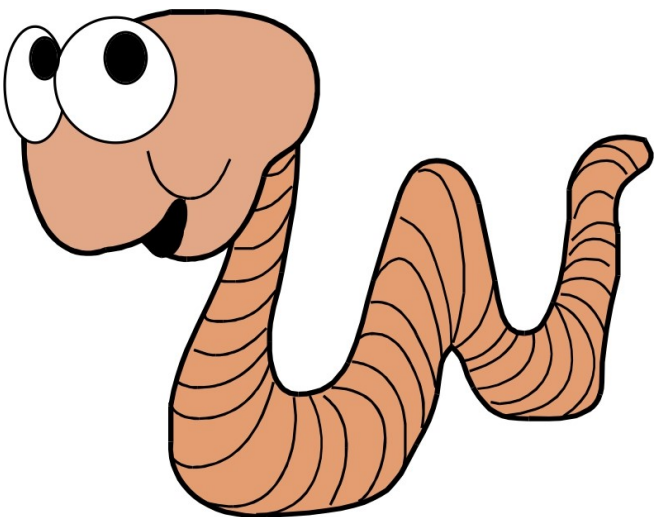
COMPOSTING

Composting is a great way to turn your kitchen, garden and allotment waste into nutrient-rich material for your plot. It is both environmentally friendly and means that we do not exceed the available capacity of the brown bins. Below, we provide a brief guide on composting, but, should you wish to investigate this further, additional, in depth details, can be found by visiting www.rhs.org and entering "composting?" as your key word or visit www.getcomposting.com

LOCATION- Choose a reasonably sunny spot in your garden or on your plot where conditions are fairly stable - not too hot or cold, or too wet or dry. The micro-organisms which break everything down need these conditions to work best.

SIZE- Old pallets can be used to build compost areas and are very cheap, or, if you are lucky, may even be free! Size wise, you should be aiming for at least 1 cubic meter and, if possible, build two side by side, so that the compost can be regularly turned. *(On this note, if you require pallets, please speak to Duncan first, as he sometimes has spare pallets available for free, through his work.)*

COMPOST "RECIPE"- Ideally, your "ingredients" should consist of a mixture of soft green and woody brown material. Aim for about 25-50% green materials and make up the rest with the brown bits. If possible, mix the green and brown material together, as you add them, to help keep the mixture airy and aid decomposition.



If available, place a piece of carpet over the heap. This, in turn, will keep the pile warm, thus speeding up decomposition.

So, you may say.... What is the difference between brown and green material? **Soft green material** includes raw fruit and vegetable peelings, tea bags, grass cuttings and annual weeds. **Brown material** includes the following: dead leaves, shredded paper (don't add shiny paper), chopped pruning's, dead plants, plant stems, hedge trimmings,

cotton and wool, woodchip and straw. In addition you should avoid adding large woody stems, as these will take too long to breakdown. Also avoid adding weed seed heads, perennial weed roots, diseased plants, cooked food scraps, meat or bones, cat or dog mess or manure from other animals which eat meat.

Material can be added to your compost heap at any time or year, although obviously, certain months will generate more material than others.

The time it takes for materials to decompose can vary, taking anything from six months to two years. This is dependant on a variety of factors, such as mix of ingredients, size of heap and weather conditions. Adding air to the mixture by “turning the heap” occasionally, can assist the process and covering the heap will prevent it from getting too wet, Your finished compost should be dark brown with a crumbly-soil like texture and smell like damp woodland.

TROUBLESHOOTING - If the heap is slimy and compacted you have not included enough air. Add more brown material to help add air and make sure you turn it.

Dry and fibrous- This is an indicator that there is too much brown material in the heap. Add more green material to the heap, to increase moisture content. When turning it, you can also add some fresh manure, if available add water to dampen the mixture.

Nothing's happening – This means that the compost heap is not warm enough for the bacteria to act upon and decompose the material. Cover the heap with carpet remnants to insulate it against the cold.

And finally, we have two round plastic, green composting bins to give away. Please let us know if you would like one! Names will then be put in a hat and first two drawn will be given a bin each.

TRIED AND TESTED RECIPIES.....RHUBARB CAKE

225g Muscovado sugar

2tsp Baking powder

300g SR Flour

500g Rhubarb

225g Butter

Juice and zest of 1 orange

4 Large Eggs

1 tbsp. milk

Special equipment: Tray bake tin, 30 x 23cm (12 x 9in) and 4cm (1½ in) deep

341 calories per serving

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C (fan 160°C/350°F/Gas 4). Grease the tray bake tin with butter and line with baking parchment. Peel and slice the rhubarb into 1" lengths. If the rhubarb is thick, either half or quarter the lengths and place in a dish.

2. Put the butter, muscovado sugar, flour, baking powder, eggs, and orange juice and zest into a large bowl. Beat thoroughly using an electric hand whisk for about 2 minutes (or use a wooden spoon for about 3 minutes) until smooth and light.

3. Spoon half the mixture into the prepared tin and spread it out evenly. Lay half the rhubarb on top and spoon the remaining cake mixture on top, carefully levelling the surface. Scatter the rest of the rhubarb over the cake mixture and press them lightly into the surface.

4. Bake for 40 minutes or until well risen and golden brown on top and a knife comes out clean. (If the cake is cooking too quickly on top but still "raw" inside, cover with silver foil.) Once cooked, the cake will feel spongy but firm, and will be starting to come away slightly from the edges of the tin, The rhubarb should also be soft. Leave the cake to cool in the tin for 10 minutes, then loosen the sides with a small palette knife and turn out onto a baking tray. Peel off the baking paper and sprinkle the top of the cake with a light dusting of icing sugar when it has cooled.

A NOTE FROM PC BRAND.....

Dear Allotmenters,

Recently Amanda approached me and asked me to write a regular Crime Prevention contribution for your newsletter which I am more than happy to do.

As the local Police Officer for the Chingford Green Safer Neighbourhood Team based at Chingford Police Station, I believe that Crime Prevention is key to keeping crime figures down and that goes for absolutely all types of crime.

Most reported crime relates to theft and one of the most vulnerable places in recent months in North Chingford and across the Borough for that matter is the garden shed.

Shed burglaries peaked around about 9 months ago and I am pleased to say that they have steadily been coming down in numbers through targeting, identifying and arresting offenders as well as Crime Prevention education.

You may have seen the "Sheduction" leaflets that the Police have been sending out with all the tips on how to secure your sheds and gardens. (EDITOR'S NOTE: If not, I am sure Darren can oblige, although there are plans to touch on this in future issues.)

Allotments have also been hit recently with multiple sheds burglaries reported at many allotments locally.

Allotment sheds are very difficult to secure due to their isolation and vulnerability, so, my advice is not to leave anything of any value in them at all.

Although a keen gardener myself, I have never had an allotment. My only experience with allotments dates back to the early 70s when my Granddad would put me in his home made wheelbarrow and wheel me all the way to his allotment in Barking, where I would spend the day with him trampling all over his radishes and generally being a nuisance!

I shall have to do a bit of reading up on the art of "allotmenting", in order to give you the relevant information that you require!

Over the next couple of weeks I will also be speaking to Amanda in order to get a better idea of your allotments and the specific problems that they may encounter, as all allotments are situated differently and I am aware that some have more secure perimeters than others.

I look forward to working with you all and helping to improve existing

security and to assist in any way I can with tips and advice on all aspects of security.

If you would like to drop me a line, for any reason, then please do at darren.brand@met.police.uk

Regards,

Darren

PC 746 JC Brand

TOP TIPS

For the first year ever, thanks to the inclement weather, we have managed to grow a decent crop of salad leaves, which has presented me with the problem of storage. We sowed Little Gem lettuces and “Salad bowl, red and green leaves” and did not bother thinning out (We love to go against the grain!) and have an abundant crop! I have found that if I pick a few plants (leave the roots on) and place in a large Tupperware dish on a layer of damp kitchen roll, cover with more damp kitchen roll and then the lid, they will store in the fridge for about 5 days. When ready to use, refresh and clean under cold water. Et voila!

Speaking to Chris Cole-Powney today, he has a different preferred method, for larger lettuces..... Pick the whole lettuce, place in a bowl with the root end in a small amount of water. Individual leaves can then be harvested, as and when needed

A NOTE ON BLIGHT

With all the damp and humid weather we have had recently, blight has reared its ugly head again! For the uninitiated, blight is a fungal condition that devastates both potato and tomato crops. It spreads through fungal spores, easily “jumping” from one plot to another. According to the RHS symptoms include “*a watery rot of leaves which soon collapse, shrivel and turn brown. A fine white fungal growth may be seen around the edge of the lesions on the underside of the leaves and brown lesions may develop on the stems.*” There is no cure.! Immediately picking off affected leaves will slow the disease but, once 25% of the plant has been affected it needs to be removed. For potatoes, remove all foliage above ground, cut the main stem to within 3-4 inches, the potatoes should then be harvested within two weeks. For tomatoes, the whole plant will need to be removed and disposed of. This is brutal, but essential, otherwise the disease will spread to other plot holders. All blight materials should then be removed (Even fallen leaves, as blight can “over winter in the soil) and placed in the brown bins. **DO NOT COMPOST!!!**

PLEASE BE A RESPONSIBLE PLOT HOLDER and act accordingly. If you are unsure if you have blight, speak to one of the established plot holders who will be able to advise you