

RESERVOIR DIGS

Stuart Road Allotment Society Newsletter



NEWS FROM THE SECRETARY

Welcome to the Summer newsletter. After a wet spring, the last few months have proven to be exceptionally dry. That makes for challenging growing conditions on South London clay. In winter it is dense and claggy. In summer it becomes almost impossible to drive a fork into the soil. Some favourites such as apple trees and roses are happy in these conditions. Others, such as carrots, need a lot more help conditioning the soil to suit their needs.

Wisdom about what to grow and when comes from our own experience but is also available from others ploholders around us. Many of them have grown up in hotter climates. The Committee aims to foster knowledge-sharing among ploholders with some informal talks (plus the obligatory tea and cake!) in the main hut. Big thanks to Luqman who gave the first one in May on preparing the soil. Information on the next talks will appear on the boards by the gates, by email and the new WhatsApp group.

Alessia from Plot 111 has kindly agreed to become our new Social Secretary. She is working with Midge Cameron, the chair, to administer the new WhatsApp group. If you want to join, please send your name and mobile phone number to the usual email address: stuartroadallotmentsociety@gmail.com

At the AGM in April, ploholders agreed that only fruit trees grown on dwarf stock should be planted, and their maximum height be 3m. The time to prune stone fruit trees (plums and cherries) is now, when humidity is as low as possible. As the days lengthen towards the end of July, humidity rises back over 60% and the risk of disease from cut limbs increases. To prune trees, there are loppers for everyone's use available in the small shed down by the main hut. To borrow these tools, please see Richard there weekday mornings after 9am.

Final thanks go to all the volunteers on the stall at the Nunhead Cemetery Open Day in May, but especially Paul Baker and Marie Porcas who work tirelessly to grow the plants. The stall made record sales this year, which all goes into the Social Fund.

Brendan Maton, Secretary



PLOT RENTS ARE DUE IN SEPTEMBER

Ploholders can pay in the main hut from 10am til midday any Sunday in September, starting on the 3rd that month.

For a full plot, rent is £60. For a half plot, rent is £30. If you have lost your rent card, there is an additional fee of £1 for a new book. We can take cash, card or cheque.

Please note that there are fines for any ploholder who fails to pay in September.

So remember: **The Green Man is watching you!!**

HELP US REPAIR THE MAIN HUT

The main hut is more than 100 years old. It has had a chequered history from barn to cricket pavilion to scout hut to present-day allotment headquarters. Many of you will know that there are plans to use the building in more ways now that we have electricity. We have started doing painting and yoga classes. We plan to do more social get-togethers over tea and cake. The shop will also expand to store a wider range of products.

A structural surveyor's report, however, has shown that the hut has foundation damage. It is still safe and very usable but does need some care and repair. Alan Downes has done a sterling job beginning this work but more hands are required. So please contact us if you can spare even a small amount of your time and have any of the following: General building skills - Cement rendering skills - Carpentry skills - Decorating skills - Roofing skills. Using our own abilities as plottolders will save money to keep rents and costs for all down.

Joe Rea



STOP THIEF!

Several plottolders have reported the theft of their fruit in recent weeks. In most cases it is not clear whether the thieves were birds or human. Several of us are quite happy to share produce with the birds. But if you want to keep them away from blueberries, blackcurrants, cherries and the like, then the only sure way is to net your bushes and trees in late spring after flowering (to deter the larvae of fruit-loving moths requires denser protection – use sleeves for tree branches).

We definitely know that some thefts have been by people because the fruit has been systematically stripped from under netting. Alas, in these cases we can only do something if we catch the perpetrators red-handed. As with tools and equipment that get stolen from the allotments, unless anyone sees the deed, there is little that can be done. Unlike tools, however, fruit bushes cannot be taken off-site for protection. It's an unfortunate and often frustrating loss.

SHOP NEWS: GROWING THE RANGE

We have introduced some new stock since the start of the year, extending our organic range of products and taking off insecticides. We haven't gone fully organic - we still sell fertilisers like Growmore as well as blood, fish and bone. But we are currently trialing a new product 'Natura Grow', a plant-based organic, pelleted general-purpose feed that is pretty good value. Now we are into summer, plants should be in and away so why not add some nutrients? We have 40 litre bags of composted horse manure which is excellent for clay soils. It is rich in nutrients, to dig in 50-50 with the soil or used as a mulch around fruit bushes and rhubarb plants.

We stock mycorrhizal fungi in large or small packets. These

are used to help speed up the settling in process for any flower or fruit trees or bushes - anything woody being planted.

July is still a good time to sow beans; we have some in the shop.

Thinking ahead to autumn planting, we will be stocking overwintering onion sets and garlic from September onwards as well as the usual flower bulbs. We will put out an email and notices on the entrance gates to say when they are in. We will also be putting in our potato and onion order for delivery in February - so plenty of time to let us know if you have any particular favourites. If there was something we didn't stock this year, we may be able to get it in the next order.

Finally, thank you for coming in and supporting the shop. It is humbling to see so many people come and not just spend money, but some of their time just for a chat. We have tried to anticipate busy periods so there are enough volunteer staff to make it as seamless as possible.

Steve Sheppard



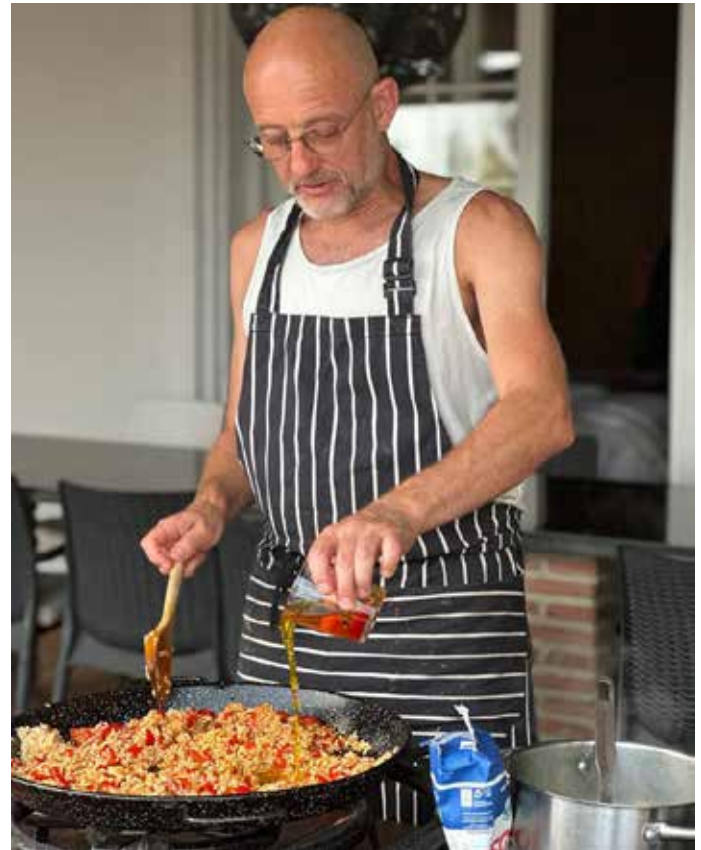
GRILLING YOUR OWN AT THIS YEAR'S BARBECUE

The allotment barbecue takes place on Saturday 12th August, starting at midday. For this year's event we really want to celebrate the amazing produce growing on our plots. My name is Tom Norrington-Davies. I am a plotholder and have been a working chef for over thirty years. My focus when cooking has always been on seasonal fruit and vegetables, and as I'm co-ordinating the allotment barbecue this year, I thought it would be great if we can use more of our own veg and fruit, grown in SE15.

That is where you come in. Any plotholder who has spare courgettes, peppers, onions and tomatoes is welcome to donate them for grilling. I'm also going to be getting creative with salads, herbs, beans and root vegetables.

Successful allotmenting often produces a glut in summer. Finding imaginative ways to use up these extra vegetables is all part of the experience of being a plotholder. If this whets your appetite, please get in touch via the usual email address: stuartroadallotmentsociety@gmail.com or the allotment WhatsApp group. Do mark your message SRA Barbecue 2023.

I hope to be collecting produce in the days ahead of the 12th in order to prepare some dishes. Recipe-sharing and help on the day are always welcome. Meat-eaters, please be reassured that there will be plenty on the grill for you. And we are very keen for all types of cuisine to be on offer from plotholders,



Tom will be on hand to turn your produce into a tasty dish

so please do bring your own prepared dishes on the day too. The costs of the barbecue are paid out of the Social Fund, so it is free to plotholders. Provided the sun shines, we should have a great day. See you there.

Tom Norrington-Davies

ALLOTMENT PRESSES ARE AVAILABLE FOR JUICING FRUIT

There are always a lot of apples and plums lying on the ground in autumn. Some have been ruined by caterpillars but many are simply left to waste by plotholders. This year we are offering a juicing service to use up all spare fruit. There are four presses available in the small shed next to the main hut. Plotholders are welcome to use the presses to juice their own fruit or donate any excess. Ask for Richard in the small shed - he's there most mornings from 9am. Feel free to walk in and ask him how to use the presses.



MANY TANKS FOR CARING

At the AGM this April there was a lively discussion about the contamination of our water tanks. Some on-site have blanket weed and duck weed growing in them. Both weeds are difficult to remove; the tanks would have to be drained to do so.

Weeds get into the tanks when plotholders inadvertently enrich the water with nutrients. This happens a couple of ways. One is washing dirty hands and utensils in the tank. The other is from watering cans containing residue of fertiliser, e.g Tomorite. To break the cycle and keep the water pure, plotholders should not wash anything in the tanks. Please use separate cans for the tank and any soluble fertilizer. If only clean cans go into the tanks, then the water stays pure. We encourage plotholders to put covers over their nearest tank during the warmer months to deter mosquitoes from breeding.

HEALTHY IN MIND AND BODY



The main hut is now available as a space for any creative exercise or pastimes related to allotmenting. The Committee is open to suggestions about how to use it now that we have electricity.

This summer we have already trialled painting and yoga. Local artist, Andrew Carter* led two watercolour workshops in July. Plotholders brought flowers, foliage and fruit from their plots to draw and paint.

Tiffany George, a qualified yoga instructor and plotholder, has run three exercise classes to ease away the strains of gardening with careful stretches. These summer classes are now over but there will be more yoga on demand in early autumn. Luisa Pazienti went to the first drawing class and said it was great to meet some fellow plotholders. "The hut is a fantastic

space and the light was magical on the evening I went. Andrew is a great teacher. I really enjoyed the experience and the friendly vibe."

* Andrew Carter will be our first artist in residence at the Stuart Road allotments this autumn. His plan is to create a wall of prints that reflects the diversity of people, their plots and their plants. He will be working in the main hut from mid September. Each week the studio will be open for one day to plotholders to come and create a drawing, watercolour or linocut print with Andrew's help. The only charge will be for materials. This will be an opportunity to see what he is creating, to discuss his work and to learn the process of creating a linocut print of your own. There will an exhibition of his works from Thursday 14th December. Everyone is welcome.

DATES FOR THE DIARY

TRIP TO WISLEY

Saturday 22nd July

The trip to RHS Wisley is back on this year and imminent. We will be travelling down by car, not coach. You must arrive at Wisley not later than 10am on the day. Highlights of the day include a tour of the gardens plus a cream tea!

SUMMER BARBECUE

Saturday 12th August

The allotment barbecue takes place slightly earlier this year. Do bring your own dishes to share if you wish. If not, there will be plenty of food and drinks provided free. The grill will begin at 2 pm Help to get shopping, prepare the food and set up the tables is always welcome.

RENT PAYMENT

Sundays in September

Plot rents are due in September. Please pay in the main hut any Sunday morning that month. We take cards, cash or cheques. The annual rent for a full plot is £60; for a half plot the rent is £30.

NUNHEAD ART TRAIL

Saturday 23rd and Sunday 24th September

Plotholders' art will be showcased in the main hut (see below).

NUNHEAD ART TRAIL

Creative plotholders are welcome to submit their work for the Nunhead Art Trail. This takes place all over the area but plotholders can show their painting, sculpture and making in the main hut on the weekend of 23rd and 24th of September. If you are interested in this opportunity, there is still time to take part. Contact us at the usual email address, stuartroadallotmentsociety@gmail.com or drop a note through the letterbox in the main hut. Please address correspondence to Joe Rea, Events Co-ordinator.

