

# Hw&DAA Newsletter

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## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM will be held at the Store, Alderman Moores Site, on Thursday **21st January 2010** commencing at 7.30 pm sharp.

### AGENDA

1. To approve the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 15th January 2009 [proposers and seconders from those attending that meeting]
2. Matters Arising
3. Chairman's Report
4. Treasurer's Report and Accounts for the year ending 30th September 2009
5. To vote on the Audit of the September 2009 accounts
6. To approve the September 2009 accounts
7. Notice of Plot Rents with effect from 1st October 2010, as notified in Sept 2009 Newsletter
8. Election of Officers
  - [a] President
  - [b] Committee
9. Any Other Business

## Chairman's Comments

### Plot Queries

#### 1.Can I take over someone else's plot?

Answer: Put simply, this is **not** permitted, and anyone who takes over a plot without going through the Plots Secretary will lose it immediately and without discussion! This applies equally to family members, as well as friends or acquaintances who may have been helping on the plot. **Everyone** with their eye on a particular plot must apply in writing to be added to the waiting list maintained by the Plots Secretary [Peter Tucker, 11 Hampstead Road, Brislington, Bristol BS4 3HL]. If you want, explain

your connection with the plot, which will be given appropriate consideration. On bereavement, family do not automatically inherit a plot; although they might be given priority if it were shown they had been actively and substantially involved over time.

#### 2.Can I take over a bit more ground?

Answer: A current tenant who wishes to take on additional allotment space must write to the plots secretary, Peter Tucker, who will refer it to the committee for consideration, if **all** the following conditions are met:

1. The applicant must have held the existing plot for a minimum of one year.
2. The existing plot has been **100%** cultivated. (Land under plastic does not count as cultivated).
3. The Committee must be satisfied that the applicant has the capacity to engage with the additional area both in terms of time and physical ability (discuss this with your site rep).
4. The tenant's total holding, together with the additional area, would not exceed that of a large plot.

### Rubbish

Some tenants are leaving rubbish on the front of their plots. There are no rubbish collections by the Allotment Association (except occasionally in the case of new tenants clearing a plot) so please take all rubbish away from the site yourself. As you would expect, it is absolutely forbidden to dump rubbish anywhere on any site!

Also, do not bring domestic items on to the site unless they have direct relevance to cultivation, in particular carpeting, which is totally banned from allotments. See Tenancy Agreement, Second Schedule, para 7.

Disposal of weeds, prunings and wood are the tenant's responsibility. Even Mareetail and bindweed can be dried and then burned or composted.

### **Fires**

Once again may I remind you that fires should not be used for the disposal of weeds, cuttings, leaves or other combustible items if they produce other than the most limited amount of smoke. Compost them!

In any case, ensure that any smoke does not go across other plot holders or adjacent roads or housing. Otherwise you could face a heavy fine, lose your plot and cause a ban on all fires on the site. This applies whether it is an open fire or an incinerator. The message is: don't be a nuisance, and don't lose the value of organic matter as a soil-enriching compost.

### **Children**

We welcome children on the sites and think it is highly desirable that they are encouraged to learn the value of fresh food and the satisfaction that comes from growing it.

However, allotments can be dangerous places and youngsters can be accidentally injured by falling into ponds, harming themselves with tools, playing with dangerous chemicals or fires and possibly putting noxious weeds or unsuitable crops into their mouths. Moreover, there is always the danger of accidents involving motor vehicles on hauling ways.

Therefore this is a reminder that children should remain on their parent's plot throughout the time they are on the site. Like anyone else, they are forbidden to go onto any other plot, unless specifically invited on by the other plot holder. And please do not allow children to play with water tanks (in the interest of keeping the water pure), or on hauling ways - riding cycles or otherwise. A plot is essentially not a place for play. Therefore swings or slides, etc are specifically banned. A small sandpit would be acceptable for toddlers, but that is about the limit.

Your attention is drawn to the Tenancy Agreement, paras 13 and 15, Second Schedule; the persistent flouting of

which can lead to the termination of the tenancy.

### **Site Inspections**

These will recommence in early spring. Take advantage of the winter period to bring your plot up to scratch - prepare and nourish the soil with compost, manure and other organic matter - plan rotation, seeding and planting. By the spring inspections, you want it to be ready to go! At Alderman Moore's stores, we have numerous books and magazines for you to consult, great for ideas and planning for next season - over a cuppa as well.

### **Site Gate Locks**

Please do not put WD40 onto the gate locks to make them move more freely - it actually has the opposite effect, by drawing in dirt and dust

Have a good Christmas and New Year.  
See you at the AGM

**Bob Franks**

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### **From Your Editor**

#### **Cycle track alongside White City**

Clearance started mid November- works started 2<sup>nd</sup> week Dec - possible completion date late Feb. See website for updating information.

#### **Advice sought - reply to newsletter editor**

##### **1. Badger rampage**

Mr Brock has been active on Kennel Lodge sites- write in with your proposals / solutions. But to show that there is a silver lining, we have a report that the badger(s) sat on some lettuces and, far from keeling over and dying, they recovered and became very delicious and hearty. Also, badgers eat slugs (as well as worms and sweetcorn) which is a bonus.

##### **2. Potato storage**

Do you wash your potatoes before storing them (in dark, dry, cool conditions)? If so, do you just give them a swirl in a bowl of water, or do you scrub them clean?

##### **3. Leeks**

Do leeks continue growing fatter over the winter - ie if you have some thin weedy

leeks in the ground in December, is it worth leaving them in to grow over the next few months?

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**Book Review** Organic Gardening, the Natural No Dig Way by Charles Dowding (£10.95 available Riverside Garden Centre)

There are many ways to grow plants. This book tells how a Somerset market gardener gets good crops through the 'no dig' method – which requires mulching with lots of any kind of well-rotted organic matter you can get your hands on, reducing slug damage through tidiness and night time slug patrols, and avoiding holidays in peak harvesting time! His rationale was that, if you garden on clay soils (as we do), the soil contains enough nutrients for the plants – they just need to be able to access it – which they can if you add lots of organic matter (2 – 3 cm mulch every year at least), because it gets broken down by worms and micro-organisms to create the conditions for roots to get at it, and some extra nutrients. And if you don't dig, you don't disturb the balance of soil organisms living at various different depths in the soil. He gave an inspirational talk in Bristol recently and I saw impressive slides of the plants growing on his 2 acres - it certainly works for him. A particularly useful tip is that rocket, oriental vegetables and chicories, despite what the packets say, should be sown in the first 2 wks of July (as the days start shortening but when there is the longest period left for growth) to keep them leafy and avoid putting up a flower stalk.

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### **Courses**

#### **Setting up an allotment – an introduction for beginners**

4 weekly evening meetings with Tim Foster, Tuesday evenings in March 7 – 9 pm  
University Botanic Gardens ffi 331 4906

#### **An introduction to bee keeping**

6 week course with David Maslin, Sunday mornings in April + May 10 – 12.30  
University Botanic Gardens ffi 331 4906

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### **Vegetables for a permanent bed**

advantage- some are harvested earlier in the year than annual crops, so fill the 'hungry gap'

disadvantage- they take up more space for the amount of harvest

- Globe Artichokes
- Chinese Artichokes or Crosnes
- Asparagus
- Seakale
- Lundy cabbage
- Perpetual cauliflower
- Sorrel
- Welsh onions
- Rocamboles
- Egyptian / Tree Onion
- Good King Henry
- Winter Purslane - Pink Purslane

Can you think of any more???

### **Stores News**

The Alderman Moore's store remains open throughout the winter--Saturday, Sunday and Wednesdays between 1030 and 1200. The Bower Ashton store is in winter mode and opens Wednesdays only 13.00 – 14.30

If you need to obtain items for sheds, and ground cover, why not buy the items now and put them into your shed? (sod's law says the store will be closed on the one occasion that you have the time and the weather opportunity to use them!) It could be time to replace tools - get new secateurs – put in a new compost bin - add soil conditioners. Check out the seeds, some of which can be brought on under glass/plastic to get an earlier crop before the direct sowings. You will be hard-pressed to better our prices, the items are on the spot, and are specially selected as being appropriate to our sites

**Amazing value** 3 x 75 litre bags multi-purpose compost for £10 (1 bag £3.75)

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**POTATOES** coming to the stores next spring [dry matter content on scale of 1 –9 in brackets].

#### **\*\*First Early\*\***

(harvest from 10 weeks after planting)

**Rocket:** [4] very quick maturing variety (so if you put it in early it's the first to be

ready) – prone to tuber blight so unwise to leave in the ground, but otherwise good all-round disease resistance including golden eelworm – almost round, white-skinned and fleshed tubers. Use: new potato / boil.

**Foremost:** [5] slightly waxy firm white flesh of good flavour, which does not disintegrate or decolour on cooking. Use: new potato /boil.

**Duke of York:** [3 – 6] esteemed for its pale yellow tubers and dry floury texture with strong flavour. A first early which, if left, also develops into a quality general purpose potato Use: new potato / general purpose.

### **\*\*Second Early\*\***

(harvest from 13 wks after planting)

**Kestrel:** [4] pretty blue eyes, versatile for all cooking purposes with good flavour, shows good slug resistance as well as golden eelworm and partial white eelworm resistance. Use: general purpose.

**Charlotte:** [3] reliable high-yielding variety -yellow skinned waxy tubers with creamy yellow flesh excellent either hot or cold, pale purple flowers - superb tasting – a standard reference in taste trials. Use: salad potato/boil.

**Wilja:** [4] high yields, good appearance, good boiling qualities and easily managed foliage. Use: bake/boil/general purpose.

### **\*\*Early Main crop\*\***

(harvest from 15 weeks after planting)

**King Edward:** [6] attractive red-blotched skin Creamy white flesh. Consistent demand over the last century is a testament to its eating and cooking qualities Use: roast (classic Sunday roast potato)/ general purpose.

**Desiree:** [5] red potato with pale yellow, firm, waxy flesh with strong flavour. Good drought resistance. Use: bake/boil/general purpose.

**Sante:** [6] robust and with good general pest and disease resistance. lots of uniform tubers like flattened pebbles with quite dry pale yellow flesh. Use: bake/boil/general purpose.

**Picasso:** [2] Creamy skin with striking bright red eyes. Waxy flesh. Good cropper. Good all round disease and drought resistance, but prone to slug damage Use: bake/general purpose. Tubers store well.

### **Main Crop**

(harvest from 20 weeks after planting)

**Pink Fir Apple:** [5] knobbly pink-skinned tubers with butter yellow, waxy flesh Use: salad potato + fry + chip (need to be cooked with skins as too knobbly to peel).

### **What's the difference between Floury and Waxy Potatoes? (the science of cookery!)**

Dry matter content - ie what is left (mainly starch) when potatoes are dehydrated – is a useful indicator. High dry matter varieties tend to be floury in texture, high in food value, high in "old fashioned" flavour and are often more difficult to boil. The latter is because starch swells as it cooks and tends to burst cell structure. (But this also varies with protein content to some extent because cells with lots of protein structure resist break-up). High dry matter types are usually more suitable for mashing, baking, microwaving and frying. They crisp up more and absorb less fat.

Medium dry matter potatoes are general purpose.

Low dry matter types are better for boiling and salad use. Specialist salad varieties (eg Charlotte, Pink Fir Apple) can boil particularly well, staying firm and not discolouring and are pleasant to eat hot or cold. They will slice or dice cleanly. They are often scab-resistant to give clean skins so that tubers can be boiled whole and unpeeled.

Strong "earthy", "floury" flavours are often associated with high dry matter potatoes. Low dry matter flavours are often described as "mild", "fresh" or "clean". Some classic low dry matter salad potatoes, however, manage somehow to have very strong flavours.

### **Other potato varieties to consider**

**Sarpo Mira** [8] is a late main crop potato I would recommend for its blight resistance, flavour and vigour. It is available only through Thompson + Morgan. I have grown it for the last 3 years – it hasn't got blight and the tubers this year (when I planted late and only harvested in November) were huge – one whopper was over a kilo, and fine for eating apart from

one small hole (wireworm I think).

**'Mayan' Potatoes** – Mayan Queen, Mayan Twilight, Mayan Gold – again annoyingly only available from Thompson + Morgan - see seasonal recipe at end for description.

**Oca** – not a potato, but the plant *Oxalis tuberosa*, so not affected by potato blight. It's considered one of the lost crops of the Incas - thin skinned, delicate lemony flavour, with a texture similar to a baby potato and it cooks very fast. Useful dense weed-suppressing foliage, tubers make growth in autumn but stop when foliage killed by frost. (tubers available from Real Seeds on internet late Dec, early Jan).

### **Carnivorous Potatoes (and tomatoes) (Vegetarians - don't read this section)**

Researchers at Kew have found that some species of potatoes and tomatoes have sticky hairs which trap aphids and other small invertebrates - a vicious side that makes them deadly killers on a par with Venus fly traps and pitcher plants. However, rather than devour the prey directly they use passive means - the dead bodies decay slowly and the nutrients fall to the ground where they are taken up by the roots. Professor Mark Chase, of Kew and Queen Mary, University of London, said: "The cultivated tomatoes and potatoes still have the hairs. Tomatoes in particular are covered with these sticky hairs. They do trap small insects on a regular basis. They do kill insects. We suspect in the domesticated varieties they are getting plenty of food through the roots from us, so don't get much benefit from trapping insects. In the wild they could be functioning in a way that could properly be considered carnivorous."

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### **SEASONAL RECIPE**

I grew some 'Mayan potatoes' this year (bred by Greenvale AP and the Scottish Crop Research Institute from species found growing wild in the foothills of the Andes in Peru – a different species to the usual potato). They cook in half the time of normal potatoes, don't need peeling although classed as main crop, and taste

delicious with a lovely creamy texture. They are no good for boiling as they turn to mush but are wonderful for chips and roasting and this recipe...

### **Patatas Bravas**

1 kilo potatoes cut into wedges  
olive oil (about 3 tablespoons)  
1 tablespoon paprika  
1 teaspoon cayenne pepper.

Heat oven to gas mark 7 and put roasting dish towards the top, with olive oil covering base. When hot, add spices and potato, stir them to coat and leave to cook. (my mayan potatoes take about 20 - 30 mins – normal potatoes take 45 – 60 mins)

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### **POWDER FERTILISERS sold loose**

In both Alderman Moore's and Bower Ashton Stores, we sell powder fertilizers, the use of which, I think, has been lost with the passage of time. It's **much cheaper** than buying packaged fertilisers and does the same job – check the nutrients listed on packets to see what they contain.

Powder fertilizers contain concentrated sources of the nutrients that plants need to produce strong root systems, healthy leaf growth and abundant flowers and fruit. They're generally used from March to early September. In my experience, well-fed vegetables will produce bigger crops with more flavour, and fruit trees and bushes will retain more fruit for harvest. If you apply the right fertilizer at the right time of year at the right rate, you will encourage optimum growth. Too little will give poor results. Too much will scorch plants and interfere with the take up of other nutrients.

However nothing will produce quality crops without attention to (a) soil condition / structure (making sure the soil particles are the appropriate size for the roots to penetrate– eg a fine tilth for seeds – and that it contains plenty of organic matter) and (b) removing weeds and thinning plants to reduce competition for nutrients.

There are other methods of managing the delivery of nutrients to plants, (eg adding lots of manure to defined no dig beds) but the difference is that you do not know the

precise nutrient content in the same way, and they tend to be long-term additives so you can't give a quick boost when the crops need it. Because we are using the soil intensively on allotments and removing produce and plants, we need to put back what is taken out, one way or another, in order to maintain the fertility of the soil.

### **About Fertilizers.**

The three main nutrients contained in fertilizers are Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P) and Potassium (K). The nutrient content is expressed in numbers (eg 7-7-7 for Growmore) which indicates the percentage weight of each component in the fertilizer - in the order NPK. The balance is made up of a carrier material to help spread the fertiliser.

**Nitrogen (N)** is used by plants in large quantities and fuels the growth of leaves and shoots. It is absorbed through the soil water and is easily leached out of the soil eg during winter rains. N deficiency is recognized by the yellowing of older leaves, and slowing or stopping of growth and flowering. Leaves may drop sooner than expected. Excess N is recognized by extremely fast lush growth, resulting in long, spindly, weak shoots with dark green leaves

**Phosphorus (P)** is important in the growth of roots, the ripening of fruit and cell division. It is used most heavily during blooming and seed set, and by quick growing plants harvested young. Phosphorus is unavailable to plants when the pH is slightly unbalanced (best absorption is when the soil pH is between 6 and 7 - slightly acidic to neutral). It is released in soil through decomposing organic matter and deficiencies are rare. Phosphorus deficiency is recognized by dull blue/green leaves and purplish stems, and short and thin shoots. Plant maturity, flowers and fruit are delayed and small.

**Potassium (K)** (potash) is essential for good flower and fruit formation and it increases the general hardiness of the plant and its resistance to disease, pests and frost.

Potassium deficiency is hard to recognize, but plants are generally sickly, with poor quality fruit and seeds, stunted weak growth and a scorched look to the edges of

older leaves gradually progressing inwards. Too much K leads to magnesium deficiency!

**Magnesium (Mg)** is another nutrient needed by plants for photosynthesis, chlorophyll and movement of other nutrients around the plant. Deficiency is fairly rare, especially where lots of farmyard manure is applied, but can occur when there is too much potash in the soil (on site of wood bonfires?) as this interferes with the roots' take up of Mg. The symptoms are yellowing between leaf veins, leaf tips curl upwards and early leaf fall.

### **Application**

You can add the fertiliser to the soil either as a base dressing (dug into the soil before planting), a top dressing (applied to the surface of the soil), a liquid (dissolved in water and applied to the soil surface - which gives a faster reaction than a top dressing), or foliar feed (dissolved in water and sprayed on the leaves). An average handful of the fertilizers listed below is about 40-50 gms

### **Organic Fertilizers**

(i.e. derived from living matter)

**Hoof & Horn. (13.5-0-0)** This organic fertilizer is a slow release supply of nitrogen for plants that produce large amounts of leaf. Examples include brassicas such as cabbage and kale, as well as lettuce, courgettes, rhubarb and corn. Use as base or top dressing at 150gms per square metre at start of season and 25gms per square metre when transplanting.

**Bone Meal. (4-20-0)** This slow release product promotes strong root growth and is useful when planting fruit bushes and trees and as a base dressing for vegetables, especially Beans and Peas. **Do not use on acid loving plants i.e. Blueberries.** Use 100gms per square metre every one or two years.

**Fish Blood & Bone (5.5-8-6)** This is widely used as a base or top dressing on flowers and vegetables and is excellent when a long term feed for leaf and root growth is required. Use 125gms per square metre dug in early season and 50gms per

square metre as a top dressing, shake off any lying on foliage

## **Non Organic Fertilizers**

**Sulphate of Ammonia. (21-0-0)** This soluble fertilizer (adding N) is used from March to August at 4 to 6 week intervals. Use about 35gms to one square metre as base dressing, top dressing or liquid feed. Effects are noticeable in about 10 days. Can also be used as a compost activator

**Superphosphate (0-18-0)** This is probably one of the oldest inorganic fertilizers. It is best dug in to the root area so the P can be easily found by the developing roots but can also be applied as a top dressing. Use in early winter for root crops 100gms per square metre.

**Sulphate of Potash. (0-0-50)** A very fast acting and soluble fertilizer (adding K). Use at 45gms per square metre as a base dressing before sowing. During the growing season use at 15-30gms per square metre as a base dressing or liquid feed. For fruit trees apply at double the rate. Do not apply in heap at base of stem, and shake off any lying on foliage.

**Magnesium Sulphate** Better known as **Epsoms Salts**, this product corrects Mg deficiencies (which are rare). Soluble in water and mainly used in foliar and liquid feeds at 20g per litre of water. It's used in a wide range of crops, especially glasshouse crops like tomatoes.

**Growmore (7-7-7)** Probably the most well known all-purpose fertilizer, it's a mineral based regular sized fertilizer for easy spread and can be used for all types of flowers and vegetables during spring and summer. Use 125gms per square metre dug in early season and 50gms per square metre as a top dressing.

**Garden Lime.** Plants perform best in a soil pH of about 6.5 (very slightly acidic). Soil tends to get more acidic over time, so lime is used to reduce the acidity and return it to 6.5 pH level. Old gardeners say it "sweetens the soil". Check your pH before liming. Don't lime and manure the same bit of ground in the same year, as the effects counteract each other.

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I found a sheet of information from a College of Agriculture and Horticulture from the 1970's containing recipes of fertiliser mixes for specific crops. I remember an old boy who used to run the stores, making up these mixes for plottolders. Here are some of them are in case you feel like experimenting. Please report to me or the newsletter editor on how they perform

Dave Brice HWDAA President

### **Fertilizer Mixtures -**

**Use at 4oz per sq. yard (125gms per sq metre). Mixtures suitable for top and base dressing the crops indicated**

#### **Mixture 1. High Nitrogen**

**13.1N: 5.2P: 6.2K**

Helps develop leaves and shoots, so suitable for crops where you want fast leaf growth, eg summer and autumn cabbage, sprouts, summer cauliflower, lettuce, spinach. Not suitable for leaf crops that stand over winter, eg purple sprouting broccoli, overwintering cauliflower, because you don't want their leaves to be too lush and therefore susceptible to frosts.

Sulphate of Ammonia	2½ oz (80gms)
Superphosphate	1 oz (30gms)
Sulphate of Potash	½ oz (15 gms)

#### **Mixture 2. High Phosphate and Potash**

**5.2N: 10.5P: 12.5K**

Helps develop root system and promotes flowering, so suitable for peas, beans and all root crops other than potatoes

Sulphate of Ammonia	1 oz (30 gms)
Superphosphate	2 oz (60gms)
Sulphate of potash	1 oz (30gms)

#### **Mixture 3. Some Phosphate and high potash**

**2.6N: 10.5P: 18.7K**

**Suitable for green crops standing over winter, and root crops**

Sulphate of ammonia	½oz (15gms)
Superphosphate	2 oz (60gms)
Sulphate of potash	1½ oz (45 gms)

**Mixture 4. Potato fertilizer**

**9.1N: 9.1P: 6.2K**

Apply before planting and again when earthing up

Sulphate of ammonia 1¾ oz (55 gms)  
Superphosphate 1¾ oz (55 gms)  
Sulphate of potash ½ oz (15 gms)