

BRIDPORT and DISTRICT ALLOTMENTS SOCIETY

Newsletter

Winter 2016-17

Christmas Meeting

The Christmas meeting of the Bridport and District Allotments Society will be held on **WEDNESDAY** (not the usual Thursday) 14th December 2016, 7 pm, at the town council office at Mountfield.

All members are warmly welcomed.

Christmas nibbles and drinks will be provided.

There will be a guest speaker – Neil Lovesey, who runs Picket Lane Nursery, South Perrott, will talk about “Bee friendly Gardens”.

Subscriptions

A reminder that membership of the Allotments Society should be renewed by the end of December 2016 – our Treasurer will be pleased to receive your £2 subscriptions, [redacted]

email [redacted]

tel. [redacted]

Discounts at Groves will not be available without an up-to-date membership card, which Mandy will issue on receipt of your subscription. Cheques should be made out to Bridport and District Allotments Society.



Allotments at Pine View



London Inn allotments

Symondsburry Parish Allotments

*This is an extract from an article first published in the parish council's newsletter **Symene Voice**, by Symondsburry Parish Councillor (and former Chairman of the Bridport and District Allotments Society) Bob Driscoll.*

Symondsburry Parish Council has two allotment sites at present, both illustrated here. The first is located off West Road, behind the old London Inn. There are 16 full size plots which have been established for several years. The second is located at Pine View (behind the garages at the south west corner). There are eight medium sized plots and these were created a couple of years ago. The cost of a plot starts from approximately £20 per year.

There are no vacant plots at present, but the parish council does maintain a small waiting list. If you are a resident of the parish and would like to get on the waiting list, please contact the Parish Clerk, Marilyn Stone, [redacted], email symondsburry@dorset-aptc.gov.uk.

Bob Driscoll

Christmas Meeting - NB WEDNESDAY 14 December 2016

The Christmas meeting of the Bridport and District Allotments Society will be held on Wednesday 14 December 2016, 7.00 pm, at Mountfield (Bridport Town Council offices), Rax Lane.

Festive nibbles and drinks provided—All members welcome..

Winter work on the allotment

The **National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners** has some useful tips for work to be done on the allotment in December and January.

Avoid working on the soil if it is frozen, wet or waterlogged, because you will damage the soil structure. Only continue with winter digging when the conditions are dry. If you garden on a light or sandy soil the digging can be left until late winter. On heavy or clay soils leave the soil in large lumps to be broken down by freezing temperatures expanding and cracking the lumps. Loamy soils can be turned over as the winter proceeds.

Keep clearing the soil of spent crops to prevent the risk of pest and diseases overwintering on them.

Check over produce in store, removing any that are rotting or bolting.

If the soil is too wet or cold to work, you can use the time to clean and organise labels, seed trays and flower pots. Throw out any that are cracked or have become brittle. You can use old seed or potting compost to store root crops in, otherwise spread it out over the soil. It can be used around fruit bushes to protect their roots against hard frosts.

Take time to check through old packets of seeds and throw away any that are more than three years old. Always start a new season with fresh seed and compost. Buy in fresh seed and potting compost, storing somewhere frost-free to warm up before using. Check over all tools and equipment to make sure they are ready for use over the coming months. Get rid of any bean poles/bamboos that are dried out or split. They can be cut down to use as short stakes.

In January, if you have access to a heated propagator you can make a start with hardy broad beans and early round seeded peas, lettuce and radish. Once germinated, the seedlings can be grown on a slightly lower temperature than that required for germination.

It's best to delay any planting until at least the middle of February. The soil temperatures are too low and the plant roots won't respond well to the shock.

You can prepare a planting plan of the allotment and check that you have ordered the required seeds. You can also carry out a simple soil test to determine the soil pH and its fertility in order to make a list of the fertilisers needed to grow them.

You can resume winter digging towards the end of January but still keep off the soil if it is wet or frozen. Lay boards over the soil to barrow garden compost or manure near to where it will be required for digging in,

Order or buy seed potatoes and make sure that you have enough trays to chit them.



News from the Community Allotment

After a shaky start the summer turned out to be really good in the end with plenty of late sun to ripen the last of the tomatoes.

We had a second go at growing melons in our polytunnel this year with mixed results. One of the plants shrivelled up and died but the other produced some lovely fruits which were beautifully sweet - probably due to higher temperatures than the previous year. It's just a shame we didn't get more of them!

Most of our other crops have been successful though we need to invest in some new netting to keep the butterflies off the brassicas. There seemed to be more than ever this year and most of them found their way in resulting in huge numbers of hungry caterpillars.

Work is continuing on our new allotment which will be brought into full production next season. The two parts that we used this summer both did very well - lots of good produce from the Memory Café's plot and several sacks of potatoes from the spud bed.

In August we put on our regular "open afternoon" to coincide with National Allotment Week. We had plants and vegetables available to the public as well as our pop up teasshop which had tables groaning with a multitude of goodies made by our volunteers. We had a very good turnout - helped by the lovely weather - from locals and holidaymakers who all gave generous donations which will help greatly towards next season's expenses.

Once again we have welcomed several new members and our weekly meetings on Thursday afternoons have been well attended. This year we have invested in a new double gas burner which is used both at the allotment meetings and at orchard events making the refreshment breaks a lot more efficient.

Jenn Baker, Community Allotment Co-ordinator

Watford campaigners lose fight to save allotments from development

Campaigners in Watford have finally lost their battle to save the Farm Terrace allotments (as reported in previous issues of this newsletter).

At a hearing in the High Court on 21 October, Mrs Justice Lang ruled that Watford Borough Council and the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, who backed the local authority's plans, were entitled to develop the site for housing, a car park for the town's football club and a possible future hospital development. (*Guardian*, 2 November 2016)

The claimants, who had fought off two previous attempts by the council to develop the site, said in a statement: "We feel that at every stage where we have won the rules have been changed to make it increasingly difficult for us. This judgment is, in our view, a developer's charter for development on any allotment site and in particular threatens urban allotments that have become targets for redevelopment, which makes us extremely worried about the ramifications of this case for all allotments."

Watford's elected mayor, Dorothy Thornhill, who had previously described the allotments as "a really hideous, derelict site", welcomed the High Court decision, and tweeted, "Great news for our hospital and our town."

The campaigners stated that, after consultation with their legal team, they had decided not to appeal against the judgment. The High Court had previously overturned a decision by the then Communities Secretary Eric Pickles to allow the 128 allotments to be dug up. But Watford council launched a new bid to develop the site, and after a compensation offer to tenants, only 24 of the 128 plots were still occupied.

Legislation

Under the 1925 Allotments Act, councils can build on allotment sites only if stringent rules are followed, but government guidance updated in 2014 granted the Secretary of State power to allow development of allotments in "exceptional circumstances".*

At the High Court hearing, the gardeners argued that those two words indicated a "strong presumption against the grant of consent" but that interpretation was rejected by Mrs Justice Lang. The council had argued that the allotments needed to be removed in order to address the town's "acute" housing crisis and the Communities Secretary highlighted the benefits of the regeneration scheme.

In her written judgment, Lang ruled that "the interference with the ... rights of the allotment holders was justified and proportionate because of the wider public benefits to be gained".



The Farm Terrace gardeners said after the judgment that "there is no clear benchmark for what is actually exceptional. We feel the term can and will be applied to close other allotment sites throughout the country and we are being made aware almost every week that a new allotment site is under threat of closure for development."

A freedom of information request found that between 2007 and 2014, 194 of 198 applications to close allotments were granted by the Secretary of State.

* [Allotment disposal guidance: Safeguards and alternatives](#), DCLG 2014.



Produce from the Bridport community allotment—see story opposite.

Waiting Lists

There are 70 people on Bridport Town Council's waiting lists for allotments: local parish councils and Palmers' Brewery also maintain small waiting lists.

This is a reminder to allotment holders who may be considering giving up because they no longer have the time, interest or energy to maintain their plots in reasonable and productive condition. Some of those on waiting lists may have been waiting for several years, and will welcome the opportunity to take on a plot.

This is a good time of year for those who are thinking of giving up to stop and to notify the council, so the plot can be reallocated in time for the new plotholder to make a start for the new growing season.

Borough Gardens

The Bridport Borough Gardens Community Group was set up in 2012 to restore the Borough Gardens to be a tranquil space in the middle of the town to be enjoyed by residents, visitors and wildlife alike.

The "Friends of the Borough Gardens" get together on Wednesday mornings to plant, weed and do the many jobs like dead-heading, pruning and generally coaxing the plants that we want to grow. We are now coming to the end of our fourth year of action. Much has been done, but there is a long way to go with this amazing project.

From **March to October** we get together **every Wednesday from 10-12 noon**. During the **winter months** we meet every **first and third Wednesday of each month**.

Please drop in if you have a little while to spare - you don't need to come for the whole time - just fifteen minutes makes a difference. You don't need to be an expert - just an enthusiast. We have lots of people who will be delighted to share their knowledge and experience. Bring tools if you have them, though we will have some spare. Or just call in for a chat - we appreciate your ideas for restoring this "secret garden" off South Street, between Gundry Lane and the Tanyard.

Coordinator Maggie Ray says "Contact me if you would like to join the "Friends of the Borough Gardens" to be kept informed about future events and to receive the online newsletter email me at [redacted]"

Suggestions for talks or subjects members would like to see at future BADAS meetings will be welcome—contact the Chairman, Colin Sparkes (01308-456479, colinesparkes@btinternet.com), or Secretary, Lynne Atkinson (01308-424587, lynne@follymill.plus.com).



Bridport Seed Swap

Saturday 11th February 2017, 10 am-12 noon
Ropemakers Inn, West St.

Join this informal and jolly gathering of local gardeners and swap your surplus seeds for some other seedy gems and surprises. There are always plenty, so feel free to simply come and take some for a donation to charity if you don't have any surplus.

For more info call Eileen : [redacted]

Water supplies over the winter

A reminder for town council allotment holders, particularly those who have polytunnels or greenhouses, the council will turn off the water supply if the weather gets close to freezing, so make sure to have some water stored.

Bridport and District Allotments Society

Membership of the Bridport & District Allotments Society costs £2 per annum, and gives entitlement to discounts e.g. on some items at Groves'. Our Membership Secretary/Treasurer Mandy Rathbone will be pleased to receive your subscriptions. Please contact Mandy on [redacted] or send her an email at [redacted]

Receiving the newsletter: We now send out the newsletter, meeting agenda and minutes by email — if any member is unable to receive these by email, please contact the Secretary, Lynne Atkinson, on [redacted] to receive a copy by post or hand delivery.

Newsletter contributions welcome: if you have any items you would like to see included in future issues of our Newsletter (which comes out quarterly) or if there are subjects you would like us to cover, please contact the Editor, Charles Wild, [redacted] or email entries to [redacted]

Contributions to the next edition (articles, news items and/or photographs) are welcome at any time, but by **20 February 2017** please. Many thanks for contributions this time - please keep them coming.

Website: visit our website at:
www.bridportallotmentsociety.co.uk