

BRIDPORT and DISTRICT ALLOTMENTS SOCIETY

Newsletter

Spring 2017

Our Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Bridport and District Allotments Society (BADAS) will be on Thursday 9th March, 7.00 pm, at the Bridport Town Council offices, Mountfield, Rax Lane.

Our guest speaker will be Jim Binning, who will give an update on the beehives in the Boot Field at Asker Meadow.

All members and guests are welcome to attend.

Membership subscriptions and discounts

Members of BADAS are reminded that the £2 annual subscription was due on 31 December 2016.

On receipt of your subscription, our treasurer Mandy Rathbone will issue a membership card, which provides entitlement to a discount on many items at Groves Nurseries and Garden Centre, West Bay Road, and also at Bride Valley Nurseries, Looke Mead, Cox's Lane, Litton Cheney. Discounts will not be available without an up-to-date membership card.

Cheques should be made out to Bridport and District Allotments Society. Please contact Mandy on [REDACTED] or send her an email at [REDACTED]



Five allotments closed at Gundry Lane

Some members will recall visiting the allotments off Gundry Lane as part of last summer's meeting. The site is owned by Palmers' Brewery, and historical research suggests there have been allotments there since c. 1886. The site falls into two parts separated in places by hedgerow, with five plots to the east of this line and another nineteen to the west, adjacent to Priory Lane.

The 24 plots make a significant contribution to Bridport's allotment provision (most of which is provided by Bridport Town Council). The Gundry Lane site is recognised as forming an attractive and important green space in the centre of town, with unique and distinctive views of the surrounding mill buildings and towards St Mary's Church.

During the course of this winter, tenants of the five eastern plots have been given notice to quit or have been relocated to other parts of the site, and the eastern section has now been fenced off. Plotholders on the remainder of the site have been assured by Palmers that their tenure is secure.

It is understood that Palmers intend to apply for planning permission for housing on the eastern section, which would result in the permanent loss of the five plots and a mature and very productive apple tree.

Next BADAS Meeting - Thursday 9th March 2017

The next meeting of the Bridport and District Allotments Society will be held on Thursday 9th March, 2017, 7.00 pm, at Mountfield (Bridport Town Council offices), Rax Lane. All members welcome..

Bees in the UK

Neil Lovesey, of Picket Lane Nurseries, South Perrott, gave a talk to the Society's Christmas meeting.

There are many more bee species than butterflies in the UK - 76 butterfly species compared to over 250 for bees; 26 species of bumblebees, around 230 species of solitary bee and just a single honeybee species. Bees have a barbed sting and wasps have a straight sting. Some flies look similar to bees; but the fly's eyes are on the top of its head and look upwards; the bee's eyes are on the side of the head.

A honeybee colony consists of a single queen, hundreds of male drones and 20,000 to 80,000 female worker bees. Each honey bee colony also contains developing eggs, larvae and pupae. Workers feed the Queen and grubs, and get rid of the rubbish and dispense water. There are no toilet facilities in the hive and thus bees go on 'cleaning' flights. They stay in the hive for 2 weeks as house bees and then spend 2 weeks guarding the entrance whilst slowly acclimatising to leaving the hive. They learn the local geography of the hive and surrounding area and have a very good navigation system - which they use when collecting food.

Pollen is a protein food and is removed when returning by the house bees. Nectar is carbohydrate and is concentrated by removing water with an air draught to make honey. Honey will keep well and 3,500-year-old honey found in Tutankhamun's tomb was found to be edible. Bees will steal honey from other hives. Bees must have water. They don't like open water so if you have a pond, pieces of sponge make good watering points for bees.

When the hive is overcrowded, the Queen plus half the workers leave to set up a new colony. The remaining workers then make a new Queen (potentially worth £200 per year in honey). Before swarming they eat as much honey as possible to make wax (which has always had many uses in our homes) - but won't sting. The honeycomb is for the Queen to lay eggs in which requires vast amounts of food to produce 50,000 eggs. Spare cells are for storing honey made from nectar. The Queen lives in brood chamber and a Queen excluder keeps the Queen out of the top chamber which is only used for nectar.

Honey bees are probably not the most important pollinator and are not the only species of bee found in this country. Bees may be social like the honeybee, which can sting or solitary - which do not. There are 26 species of bumble bees, 20 of which have different male/female forms.

The garden bumblebee (*Bombus hortorum*) lives about 10 weeks depending on its activity as does the tree bumblebee (*Bombus hypnorum*). Bumblebees may live in old mouse burrows. Air gaps under stones



Neil Lovesey giving a talk to the Society's December meeting

make good nest sites. Tawny mining bees (*Andrena fulva*) are a commonly found solitary bee species. The females of this are bright red and create nests in short turf, often in people's lawns and leave behind volcano like spoil heaps. Sharp tailed bees (*Coelioxys*) - feed their caterpillars with grubs etc.

Solitary bees may have very different life histories: Carder bees use leaves to line their nests with. Cuckoo bees have a very different life style: the female bee will creep into bumblebee nest and lay her eggs, and when hatched her grubs will then eat the bumblebee grubs.

Threats to our native bee population

The bee mite (*Varroa destructor*) is in itself a serious threat to our native bees and also spreads other bee diseases. It was first encountered as a parasite of the Asian honey bee, (*Apis cerana*). Asian bees were brought to Europe because they are more productive than our native honey bees (*Apis mellifera*), but Asian bees have greater resistance to the mite than native UK species

Monoculture i.e. 500 acres with one crop such as oil seed rape, causes problems; varied diet is required by bees and is now lacking in our countryside. Insect populations in general have declined, this is indicated by the smaller amounts of insects collected by our car windscreens - when was the last time that you needed to clean the insects from your windscreen?

The two main enemies of ground living bees such as bumble bees, are fire and badgers, - which eat most ground living wildlife.

New insect species are turning up all the time - including giant Asian hornets. These may have a 3-inch wingspan with 2.5 inches long body. Once they have located a colony or hive of bees they can swiftly destroy the bees and then take the honey.

Introduction of non-native bees can lead to cross breeding. Polish bees have been used in polytunnels but can escape and now half of white-tail bumblebees in Dorset are of Polish origin.

March tasks on the allotment

The following advice is reproduced from the website of the National Allotments Society

www.nsalg.org.uk

The days are beginning to lengthen and although it may not feel like it at times the temperatures are slowly increasing day by day. More importantly the longer days are the real trigger to new growth and you will find that with the help of a little protection you can really go for those early sowings. They might not all make it but it is still worth a try and you will still have plenty of time to re-sow any misses. Your best friend this month is the weatherman - try to keep up to date with the local forecasts, better still ask the advice of the gardeners around you who have years of experience to draw on.

Sowing and Planting

Plant out early cultivars of potatoes as soon as possible and follow on planting out at regular intervals with the second earlies and first maincrops until the end of the month. A little bit of forward planning, don't be tempted to plant out more potatoes than you can protect from any frosty weather further down the line.

Transplant any early peas, broad beans, cabbages or lettuce you may have started off earlier.

Sow the seed of Brussels sprouts, summer cabbage, broccoli, onions and leeks in short rows on a "nursery seed bed". These will be grown on to be transplanted in April.

Sow in rows in the open ground seeds of round seeded spinach, Swiss chard, early types of beetroot, carrots, parsnips, lettuce, Spring onions, peas, broad beans and turnips. Try sowing the seed of the white form of kohlrabi towards the end of the month.

Plant out onion sets, shallots and garlic before they start to produce shoots. If you are buying any from the site shed or garden centres reject any that are shooting they will only bolt during the summer. Transplant any onions that were grown from seed sown last summer into rows. It is best to treat these as a sacrificial crop to be harvested and used from August onwards.

If you can offer the protection of a greenhouse sow the seed of celery, celeriac, French beans (they are hardy enough to be planted out before the runners), cauliflowers to transplant on the open soil next month.

General

Complete any unfinished digging and winter pruning. Clear the old leaves off strawberry plants and clean up the ground in between the plants before giving them a top dressing of a general fertiliser. Keep some fleece handy to protect the developing strawberry flowers from frost. Any frost damaged flowers are easily identified as they display a tell-tale "black eye"

at the centre of the dead flower.

When the weather conditions allow it, complete the preparations of seed beds for direct seed sowing. Spread the job out over several days to allow the surface of the soil to dry out.

NB: *The National Allotment Society is a not-for-profit organisation, which exists to support the needs of all allotment holders across the UK. Through our membership programme we raise funds to ensure the future of allotment gardening is protected.*

We campaign against government legislation which threatens allotments, engage with local authorities to ensure they meet their statutory obligations and offer free legal advice to allotment holders as and when they need it. On a day to day basis we are there to help educate plot holders with growing advice, support schools into allotment growing and be the voice of allotmenters up and down the country.

We cannot do this without your support, so please become a member today, make us a donation or remember us in your will.

Individual membership is £23 per year, or £500 for life membership.

Topsoil for Raised Beds

In response to enquiries from members thinking of growing crops in raised beds, BADAS Secretary Lynne Atkinson has written to Groves asking whether there would be any deals on topsoil. Charlie Groves has replied as follows:

"Our one tonne bulk bags are £79.99 which for that price we can deliver to the allotment for you but they have to be tipped at the final position. I am afraid that because we only have the capacity to deliver one dumpy bag at a time we can't offer any bulk discounts.

"If it is any help we do also have cubic meter bags of mushroom compost at the same price. When I created my raised beds on my allotment I found a 50/50 mix of topsoil and mushroom compost made a good mix.

"We have both in stock so we could deliver immediately if required."

Can you help?

The Bridport and District Allotments Society has had an invaluable role since its formation, in promoting allotments in the Bridport area and in maintaining essential links and good relations with the town council –perhaps you can help it to continue this good work.

There are still two vacancies on our committee. Responsibilities are not at all onerous – we have two or three committee meetings a year in addition to four general member meetings. But we would welcome some new committee members to bring some fresh ideas and help take the Society forward and continue its good work. In particular, we would also like to find a minutes secretary to take minutes of meetings.

If you would be willing to become a committee member or would like to find out more, please contact Lynne Atkinson on [REDACTED]



News from Burton Bradstock

The Society's summer meeting is traditionally held in mid-June—we take advantage of the theoretically fine weather to visit one of the allotment sites in the Bridport area. In 2016 we visited the town council's Priory Gardens site and the privately-owned Palmers' allotments off Gundry Lane, both in Bridport's "South West Quadrant".

This year, after a gap of four years, we will visit the allotments in Burton Bradstock.

Geoff Adderley has sent us some information about the Burton Bradstock allotments, whose members have their own Society.

The parish council has 55 allotments of varying sizes - some of the allotments are on National Trust land.

Plotolders are required to enter into an agreement with Burton Bradstock Parish Council, and a deposit system has been introduced for new plotholders. When an allotment is taken on, not only is the rent collected but a deposit of £25 is taken. If the plot is kept in good condition for two years the deposit is returned. Should this not be the case and the plot is given up leaving a mess behind, the £25 is used towards making it acceptable for rent to a new applicant.

The Parish Council will over a period of time be re-establishing those paths that have been eroded. It is felt the paths need to be approximately 2ft 6ins wide to enable a mower or strimmer to be used. This will make the paths more user-friendly and much safer.

The Society's summer meeting and visit to the Burton Bradstock allotments will be on Thursday 15th June 2017.

Suggestions for talks or subjects members would like to see at future BADAS meetings will be welcome—contact the Chairman, Colin Sparkes

or Secretary, Lynne Atkinson

Twelve new Bridport allotments announced by Town Council

Bridport Town Council reports that it will soon be creating twelve new allotments.

Town surveyor Daryl Chambers writes:

"The Town Council has completed the transfer of the piece of land between Victoria Grove and Dibdin View (the land is actually in Bradpole parish).

"We will be creating a minimum of twelve new allotments and a green open space to the river.

"The brambles have been cut back leaving the cycle path clear; other works include fencing and ditch works.

"We have six people from Dibdin View on the waiting list as they have no gardens."

The Town Council currently has 37 Bridport residents on its waiting list, and another 36 from neighbouring parishes.

Safety on allotments

The Allotment and Leisure Gardener (Issue 1, 2017) recommends that allotment holders have access to a First Aid box, and have a mobile phone with them in case of accidents, illness or other emergencies.

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 May 2017** please. Many thanks for contributions this time - please keep them coming.

Website: visit our website at:

www.bridportallotmentsociety.co.uk