



Cwmcarn Allotment Association Cymdeithas Rhandiroedd Cwmcarn

Newsletter Issue 3 - Winter 2013

Welcome to the Cwmcarn Allotment Association newsletter. This quarterly publication will give you all the news and views from your allotment site.

If you have any pictures or articles, you would like to see in the next newsletter please contact *Voirrey* or *Phil*.

Unexpected Extra Funds

Some good news to kick off this newsletter! The Islwyn Federation has given ours and other allotment associations within their jurisdiction, a much welcomed grant of £400 to go towards our general running expenses. This addition to our bank balance has been gratefully received.

Spud Day

At the time of press, we are knee deep in organising our first Potato Day. It's a chance for each of you to purchase your spring essentials; compost, fertilisers, lime, onion, shallots and of course, potatoes. As well as having a cuppa and a chat.

New Starter Induction Pack

A new leaflet has been produced, to help welcome our new plot holders to the site. The New Starter Induction leaflet will give debutant tenants a little history of the site, how the association works with the Islwyn Federation and the Caerphilly Council, the main do's and don'ts, and hints and tips for getting the best out of their plot and enjoying time spent on the plot.

We'd be delighted to receive any feedback you have and if you're interested in viewing the leaflet, even if you've had an allotment for years, we'd be more than happy to provide you with a copy and hear your thoughts on it.

New Starters

We have a team of guinea pigs ready to road test the New Starter Pack and fortunately enough, they're all new starters! We're delighted to welcome Alex, Katie, Anne, Melanie, Teresa, John Beecham and John Bellas to our association and wish them all a bumper harvest. I know you'll all make them feel very welcome, so do say hello if you see them on their plots.

Seasonal Jobs

The days are stretching and a few might even be dry and sunny ones too, if we're lucky. That means it's time to dust off the wellies, get stuck back into the allotment and ready the plot for the 2013 season. Here are a few things which need to be done during February and March.

1. Prepare vegetable seed beds, and sow some vegetables under cover
2. Chit potato tubers
3. Net fruit and vegetable crops.
4. Plant shallots, onion sets and early potatoes
5. Protect new spring shoots from slugs
6. Plant summer-flowering bulbs
7. Lift and divide overgrown clumps of perennials
8. Top dress containers with fresh compost
9. Deal with weeds which have come back in to growth, before they get out of hand
10. Open the greenhouse doors on warm days

Chairman's Column

Hopefully everyone has had an excellent winter break from their allotments, although I notice several of you are already preparing for the new season. Let's hope it's not as wet as last year's.

I know several of you, myself included, suffered from flooding last year and the committee is trying to get to the bottom of this with both the council and water board without much luck but we will keep trying.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome new plot holders to our association and wish you luck with your growing. Take time also to introduce yourselves to your neighbours and fellow allotmenters, who are all a friendly and helpful bunch. It's amazing the tips you can pick up by talking to the people around you. I know I did when I first started, so if you're not sure about something, just ask someone and if they don't know the answer, I'm sure they will know someone who does.

Can I also remind you all that keeping plots tidy and free from weeds is not only a requirement of your tenancy, it's also neighbourly. The committee had to deal with a very high number of complaints last year regarding this and it's not something we want to repeat again this year.

Many will also notice that the new shed is now up and in the next few weeks we should see the final stages of the paths around it being completed. In the meantime, the committee have been fitting out the inside, so a big thank you to Mike, Ryan and Kev who have worked hard to get it ready for the new season.

The committee will be taking over the running of the shed and a schedule of opening times will be available soon. We are already stocking up on the essentials like compost, seed potatoes, peas, onions and shallots for the new season.

So happy digging everyone, let's hope it's a good one!

Recipe: 'Fasoolia'

A staple dish of the Mediterranean countries and Middle East is 'fasoolia', a simple bean stew which is commonly served with rice or warm bread. Dried haricot, cannellini or butter beans are used for this dish throughout the year, with the beans being soaked overnight before they are used. Fresh green beans, (usually French beans), are used when in season but I have used chopped runner beans.

Ingredients:

1 large onion, diced
2 cloves of garlic, crushed (optional)
0.5 Kg (1lb) beef or lamb, cut into cubes
0.5Kg (1lb) fresh beans washed and cut into short lengths
2 dessert spoons of tomato puree
1 can of diced tomatoes or a carton of passata
Vegetable oil
Salt, black pepper and cinnamon.

Method:

Heat some oil in a large saucepan and add the onion and garlic and gently cook until soft. Add the meat and brown before adding in the tomato puree. Stir well and add just under half a level teaspoon of powdered cinnamon, then salt and black pepper before adding passata or chopped tomatoes. Stir, bring to the boil then reduce heat and simmer for around 10 minutes before adding the beans. Add sufficient water to cover the beans, bring back to the boil, then reduce heat and simmer until the meat is tender. Check seasoning before serving with boiled rice or warm naan. This recipe can be altered to individual taste. I use cinnamon which gives a little warmth to the flavour, or cumin could be added instead and more tomato paste increases the thickness of the sauce. Two tins of butter, cannellini or haricot beans can be used instead of fresh beans.

Climbing Bean Tips

I have grown both dwarf and climbing French beans and I will continue to use the climbing varieties for ease in picking. Trials of French beans carried out by 'Which' revealed that the dwarf varieties, Stanley and Green Arrow produced mild flavoured beans that cropped through August into September from a May sowing and were like 'supermarket beans' in appearance and flavour. However, the highest cropping dwarf beans in the trials was the variety Amethyst whose knobbly pods turned green on cooking and had a strong bean flavour. I find the disadvantage of dwarf beans is the bending over one must do in order to pick the produce but as the 'Which' trials reported, Amethyst tend to be very vigorous in its growth and in need of some support so I am considering giving it a go this year. One can but try!

The above Recipe and tips are from Dr. Dianne Elam, with our thanks

Dŵr Cymru Complaint

In response to your concerns raised during the course of last year's very wet season, the issue of poor drainage has been followed up with the CCBC, Islwyn federation and Dŵr Cymru. An inspection of the site has taken place by Dŵr Cymru and they have referred the case to CCBC to repair/replace any breaks in the drainage pipes, which run under the site to the brook. The issue has also been referred to the Chair of the Islwyn Federation and he will address the issue with his committee. We'll keep you updated on the progress of this matter, after we follow up on the progress with the CCBC and Federation in the next few weeks.

Plot Health and Safety Advice

A recent inspection by the Caerphilly County Borough Council (CCBC) has resulted in a few Health and Safety guidance notes being communicated to us.

Glass

The gales over the winter has left a lot of broken greenhouse panes. Please make sure that you remove any smashed glass on your plot. Dispose of it with care.

Tin Sheeting

As mentioned in the AGM, tin sheeting should not be used on the allotment for raised beds, or where it could cause an injury. If you have any on your plot and you're not sure if it needs to be removed or is within the 'tolerance', please let the committee know and we'll come and have a look. Scrap Metal vans are often up and down the road, and will be glad to take it off your hands.

Asbestos

A small number of Asbestos sheets are on the allotments. Please let the committee know if you have any. They will then liaise with CCBC to arrange its safe removal and disposal.

Please bear in mind that the following are purely notes for your guidance and are not mandatory requirements.

Metal poles

Care should be taken if metal poles are used on your plot (e.g. for bean poles) and are below head height. These can present a risk of injury, especially if they have jagged edges. They can be covered if you're concerned or replaced with wooden poles.

Water butts

Open water butts can be covered with mesh to prevent a small child (for example) falling into them.

Waiting List

In light of the new starters, we're really excited to have a number of additions to our waiting list. There are 7 people on the waiting list at the moment and 4 waiting for a plot on the Abercarn site. If you know of anyone who would like to be added to the list, please ask them to contact me.

Website

'Construction' (without high-vis vests and hard hats!) is under way on the association's new website. It'll be a central reference point for up to date news, documents, such as the rules and tenancy agreements, meeting minutes, pictures, tips and much more. Watch this space for the launch date. We'd welcome any additions, so if there is something which you would especially like to see or a contribution you'd like to make, please drop me a line. There will also be the opportunity for sponsorship of the site, so if you know of a local business which could use some inexpensive, web-banner style advertising, let us know.

Allotment Events

We're planning our first 'Potato Day', which we hope will be the first in a series of association events throughout 2013.

Contact Us:

If you would like to contribute something to the next issue of the newsletter, be it a news article, gardening advice, recipes or just something you'd like to share, please email or speak to Voirrey.

Think green! If you would rather receive future newsletters via email, please email Voirrey with your request.



Cwmcarn Allotment Association

All being well, a Seed Swap and brook clean up will take place in March and April. Keep an eye on our notice board (in the shed and on Nantcarn Road), our Facebook page and these newsletters for more information of events. We'd be interested in hearing any of your ideas for future events and if you'd be interested in helping with the organisation of them.

Reminders

Please remember to read, sign and return the rules and conditions and tenancy agreements to me at your earliest opportunity. A copy should be kept for your own reference. If you've lost your copy and require a replacement, one can be provided upon request. Copies of the Tenancy Agreements have only been issued to new starters this year, as no changes have been made following the AGM. Again, should you require a copy for your reference, just ask.

Also, the fees for the allotment (£10 for a full plot and £5 for a half plot) were due by the end of January. If you haven't already done so, please make payment to a committee member as soon as possible.