

The Plot

August 2011

A newsletter for members of Kettering Allotments

DOGS – rule reminder

Water Questionnaire

Many thanks to all those members who completed and returned water questionnaires. The secretary has compiled the responses and will be submitting a report to the committee at its August meeting.

Many members made useful suggestions for saving water and coping with drought. Some of these are listed later in this newsletter.

Photography Competition

It is not too late to enter our **photography competition**. The prize is a year's rent for up to 10 poles next year. The winner will have their allotment **rent-free** for 2012!

The deadline for entries is 1st October 2011.

Competition Rules

Rules:-

1. One entry per member.
2. The photo must be taken on an allotment in Kettering.
3. **All entries must be digital** photos (jpg files).
4. Entries to be e-mailed.
5. Entry gives permission for Kettering Allotments to use the photo on its website and other publicity.
6. The judges' decision is final.
7. First prize is one year's free rent (up to maximum of a 10 pole plot for the year 2012).

Please remember our [rule](#) number 6, namely dogs must be kept on a lead and not allowed to roam over other members' plots. The field stewards get regular complaints from members who have been distressed by irresponsible dog nuisance of one kind or another.

Communication

If you are intending to give up your allotment, or wish to reduce the area, please let your field steward know as soon as possible. We can adjust the records, send correct rent reminders and allocate plots to those on the waiting list.

Free Rotavator

One of our members has donated a very old "Merry Tiller" rotavator to the association. It almost goes, but will need some renovating to work properly. It has a manual with it, which will help in repairs and renovation.

This will suit someone who knows her/his engines and mechanics. If you want it, please email us. We have not set a price, but suggest a suitable donation to the association funds.

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Economies of Scale

Northfield Avenue members have negotiated a 10% discount on bulk (20+ bags) of corn etc for chicken feed.

Individuals are unlikely to need such bulk, but they can join with others. Those members with chickens who would like to benefit from this should contact Pete or Sandy Ludwig at the Northfield Avenue field or email

sludwig@kettering.gov.uk

Margaret Rd Gate

A reminder about the noise made at the Margaret Road Gate. Please consider our neighbours. The resident works nights and needs to sleep in the mornings. Please try to open the gate quietly, **switch off car radios** and do your best not to disturb the neighbours.

Free manure

Telephone Dai to arrange collection
01536 483398

Contact us

Email us on the address below

pumpkinking@ntlworld.com

If you wish find out more about our association please visit the website
www.ketteringallotments.co.uk

Safety First!

We all want to enjoy our allotments and remain safe. Trips to A&E are a nuisance, so the committee is working on a **Health and Safety** policy. The draft policy is now available on our website, along with a **hazards checklist**. If you have any suggestions for additions or improvements, please contact the secretary.

In some ways, Health and Safety is what used to be called “common sense”. However, we all know somebody who seems to lack “common sense” and will benefit from a gentle reminder. Some gardening activities are hazardous, so we need to take care (called risk assessment).

Stones (kill 2 birds...)

Many members have been helping to fill the pot-holes on the tracks and ridings to our fields. The drive is now getting smoother. Many thanks.

Some members have also provided hardcore and pieces of broken slabs to fill the potholes. This is welcome, but please check with your field steward, as there have been some instances of fly tipping and some **sharp** stones that may puncture a tyre.

Allotments are **NOT** rubbish tips, and such dumping will be considered a disciplinary matter.

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Low Cost Barrels

We have made contact with a source of sturdy 200 litre barrels. They are made from sturdy plastic, so will not rust or rot. The cost is only £5 each. They can be delivered in batches of 3, so you get 600 litres of water storage for only £15. Alternatively you can buy them one at a time and collect.

Also, 1000Litre IBC tanks for £20.

If you are interested, contact **Harry Craggs** on **01536 520 416**



A request from a member.

Because the clay sub-soil where I live is so awful I enjoy the topsoil on my allotment plot.

Am installing a quality membrane - gravel based Container Garden on the long border at home.

I have enough large pots, but I need more unusual containers to give interest to this garden. If anyone has any to donate to the project I would be very grateful. Enamel saucepan, electric kettle, anything I could drill a drainage hole in, and install a plant. (Sorry, no oil drums.) email Dkn72a@aol.com

Also if **anyone has any small plants to spare**, I would be most grateful. I can collect by arrangement.

I got this idea from www.growsonyou.com which you may enjoy. Lots of ideas for gardening folk.

Diane Bulley

Coping with drought.

The following are some suggestions given by members in their water survey questionnaires.

- Nobody carts water from the troughs for the fun of it! However, some members do water unnecessarily. They splash it on wastefully and water established fruit bushes and other established crops that don't need it.
- A suggestion that the mains water is turned off earlier in the year (mid- July rather than the end of September).
- New plants, eg Brassicas, leeks are "puddled in". Once that is done there is no need to water them again.
- Grow in trenches with organic matter added.
- Use mulches from cardboard, shredded paper, compost etc.
- Use cut-off plastic bottles to funnel water directly to crop roots rather than surface watering, which rarely reaches crop roots.
- Use fibre pots. Germinate seeds in the pots and plant out when big enough. The roots grow through the pots and reach moisture deeper in the soil.
- one small barrel of rain water with a length of pipe, with holes in at the base of a particular plant, coming out of the bottom. The water runs through the pipe on a gravity fed type system. Any crops on a slight slope will get a steady stream of water all the time. Barrels on flat land can be raised and should have a similar effect.

Bridgstock Cup

The Bridgstock Cup is a fine trophy awarded to the best plot in our four fields. The committee has now appointed the judging panel for this year's award and they are making their assessments. This year's winner will be announced after the August committee meeting.

The cup is awarded annually by the committee to the plot holder who, in the opinion of a sub-committee, is deemed to have the best plot from all of the association's sites.

The criteria we look for are: a neat and tidy weed-free plot, a variety of produce, vegetables, soft fruit, flowers, evidence of composting, collection of rain water for irrigation and general good gardening practices.

Crop protection

Many of us have experienced problems with pigeons and rabbits this year. Various ways to protect our crops have been tried. One common way is plastic hoops or Haxnicks tunnels covered with netting. These are effective but expensive. Some members have tried fishing line tied to canes, others use old CDs or other shiny things tied to canes. These flap around in the wind and scare pigeons, but are not much use against rabbits.

One of our members, Diane Bulley wrote to her MP to ask if the government would be able to remove the VAT on crop protection structures like these, but HM Treasury replied that there is no possibility of doing this.