

WAHGA NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2009

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IMPORTANT NOTICE: AGM NOTIFICATION ENCLOSED

Welcome to the Autumn edition! After a busy season, curl up and have a read of our news, advice and “useful stuff” for WAHGA members.

BIG DATES FOR 2010

Annual General Meeting

This will be on Friday **15 January 2010** at the Gardeners Hall. Please make every effort to attend: it’s your chance to hear what’s going on and meet the Committee.

WAHGA Show & Fete

This is our big flagship event each year. The Horticultural produce show inside the Hall (see below for some advice from our Chairman on showing your produce) and the Fete outside with music, children’s activities and entertainment for all. This will be on **Saturday 21 August 2010**.

Put it in next year’s diary and let’s hope we have another sunny day!



Neighbourhood Watch

Thames Valley Police are setting up a Neighbourhood Allotment Watch Scheme. Jeff Pick, the Watch Administrator has given a presentation to us and we intend to participate. PCSO Olly Woodriffe will be the beat officer and will regularly patrol sites. We will receive regular bulletins on local crime and we have two numbers to contact if we have problems. If you witness a crime in progress, even anti-social behaviour, call 999. For all other calls, telephone 08458 505505. Further information will be made available in future newsletters when we are up and running.

Supper Dances at the Hall

On New Year’s Eve there will be a supper dance featuring a Buffet supper and the Golden Oldies Disco. It starts at 7.30 and will run through right into next year, finishing at 12.30. Tickets are £17.50. Or why not get amorous for **Valentine’s Day** - come to our dance the night before (**13 February 2010**).

Contact Lesley on 01753 831863 or membership@wahga.org.uk

How to show vegetables: highlights of a Talk by Mr Ted Bailey, President of WAHGA, given in August 2009

For many, the showing of vegetables in a horticultural show is something of a mystery. The rules and requirements can seem a little forbidding. Ted's talk was therefore perfectly timed for members looking to show their produce at this year's Show. So here are some highlights of Ted's pearls of wisdom.

Potatoes are the only vegetables which should be displayed with a base of parsley. Smooth skinned spuds are best. Size-wise don't pick the biggest but find a matching set - ie a group of spuds which are the same size. Ted advises that you harvest the potatoes at least ten days before the show so that you can wash and grade them and decide upon the matching set you wish to enter into the Show. This also allows time for the skins to harden.

Onions and Shallots should be tied around the tops. Ted suggests you get a small paintbrush and apply water to the tops before tying to stop them splitting. Onions are best staged on sand.

Tomatoes should always be displayed with the calyx (top) attached. Toms look good on a base of sand/vermiculite.

Beetroot looks best if it has a blood red colour. A tip on how to get your beetroot to look redder is to soak them in a gallon (5 litres) of water in which you dissolve a dessert spoon of sea salt. And remember to tie the tops with raffia for the best appearance.

Carrots: Ted's favourite variety is "Chantenay Red Cored".

Runner Beans need to be straight to do well in the show! To straighten them up wrap them in kitchen towel with rubber bands to hold it in place then soak them in cold water for 24 hours with weights on top. That should do the trick. Leave the ends on for display purposes. Between 9 and 12 inches is an ideal length for a runner bean.

Cabbages leave a stem of at least 3 inches. Don't remove any outer leaves. Weight-wise 7-8 pounds (4 kilos) is ideal. "Celtic" is a good variety.

Cucumbers should be about 12 inches long. A matched pair is ideal.

Courgettes not too big - around 6 inches is best. "President" is the best variety!

For other advice from Ted please see his "Grow for Show Guidelines" on our website: www.wahga.org.uk

On the same evening we had an excellent talk and demonstration on Flower Arranging by Alison Mount. Space doesn't allow us to include a write up but we'll put this on our website.

Community Gardens in Australia

One of our members, Sarah Roddy, has a friend in Australia called Debbie who's helping to set up an allotment site, or community garden, as they're known down under. Here's Debbie's report on her experience in taking this on:

I have some exciting news to share with you. When I left the UK I was inspired by your plot of land and the community interaction that occurred while you were gardening. When I returned to Bunbury I thought it would be a great initiative to introduce to the community here, but was not completely committed to getting it up and running. Well I had a change of heart recently and have been successful in obtaining a strong support from key community members. I have had a NGO provide the land for

the garden, I have funding pending by form of grants and have the support of the Health Dept, Water Corp, Ag Dept, Schools, TAFE (*the Aus FE/technical colleges set up*), Dept of Commerce, Local Council, Environmental groups and community members. We are at the marketing stage and then it will be the physical development stages – having the land assessed professionally for its suitability. Oh and my work is also supporting me do this as I am representing the Dept in a positive light within the community and working towards a positive public relations project by volunteering one the Dept's houses to build a water wise garden This will be in line with our sustainability and environmentally friendly focus along with our positive community relations. Community gardens in Australia are becoming more popular as higher density living increases and people become more aware of the benefits of growing their own produce.

John Filmer, our Purchasing Officer, reports from the Trading Sheds

Have you ordered your spuds yet? The demand is high and some cultivars are running short. Should we need more then I should like early notice. So far we have over 200 separate orders.

The potatoes should be delivered sometime about the middle of January. Should you be able to help with the bagging up please let me know.

Thanks to the noble work of our president and others the seed shelves are loaded and hopefully you will find the seeds you require. If any of your requirements are not on the shelves please let me know and I will do what I can to fill the gaps.

You will have seen the extension to the Fairground shed which gives us much useful space.

We hope to see you in the trading sheds shortly. As always, we offer good prices.

John

Don Hartridge, Allotment Secretary has the following...

The allotments have been bustling with activity this year and it is pleasing to report that the surge in interest shows no sign of abating. Unused and overgrown areas of land have been recovered and let but the lists of waiting applicants continue to grow. On some sites the waiting time is estimated to be five years or more. This situation places greater responsibility on all of us. Your committee is obliged to monitor performance more actively and take action where necessary. Allotment holders are asked to consider whether they can manage their plots satisfactorily. If you feel that you are unable to manage, and wish to give up part of your plot, discuss your problem with the site supervisor or me.

Security has been a problem on some sites. Damage and theft has occurred and it is imperative that gates are closed and locked. This has been evident particularly on Municipal where the gate is regularly left open during the day although no allotment holder is on site. If allotment holders see anyone they do not recognize, acting in a suspicious manner, they should challenge them and subsequently notify a committee member.

Bonfires and rubbish dumping continue to be the biggest problems on site. If our regular warnings are not heeded, I anticipate the Council may impose a complete ban on bonfires at some time in the future. To recap, burn only dry materials for short periods when wind conditions will not cause a nuisance to neighbouring residents or other

allotment holders. No plastic, rubber or other toxic materials should be burned. No weeds or other rubbish may be dumped around the allotment site except in designated areas. Your authority extends only to your own plot.

Finally I would like to congratulate the winners of this year's Best Allotment Competition. The results were:-

Best Allotment 1 st .	Colin Coombs	Clewer Park
2 nd	Barry Carrod	The Glebe
3 rd =	Joe Rigg	Fairground
3 rd =	Denis Saunderson	Fairground
Best Small Plot	Sue Tormey	Maidenhead Road
Best Newcomer	Samantha Cross	Clewer Park

Don

******* Gardeners' Christmas Quiz *******

Question 1: The egg plant is a native of where?

- (a) Southern India and Sri Lanka
- (b) Northern Europe
- (c) North Africa or
- (d) Brazil

Question 2: Which pumpkin is named after one of the States of Australia?

Question 3: What did Queen Victoria have for Christmas lunch before 1851 when she ate her first turkey?

- (a) Carp
- (b) Partridge or
- (c) Swan

Question 4: Which wood is traditionally used for making white chess pieces?

- (a) Mistletoe
- (b) Holly or
- (c) Ivy

Win a prize! Send a correct set of answers to reach the Editor by not later than 8th January 2010 and you could receive a voucher to spend in one of our Trading Sheds. Send your answers by email to: davidhickman@waitrose.com or by post to 14 Grove Road, Windsor, SL4 1JQ. We'll have a draw to decide the winner.

NEED MORE INFORMATION ABOUT WAHGA?

Please visit our Website: www.wahga.org.uk