

WAHGA NEWSLETTER



SPRING 2007 EDITION

Editor: David Hickman

Spring has most definitely sprung with wonderful weather over the Easter break and the prospect of another hot summer beckoning. But a return to colder weather is expected towards the end of April so protect those young plants! In this edition we bring you up to date with news, views and details of plenty of exciting events over the coming months.

WHAT'S ON - EVENTS

Car Boot Sale Sunday 10 June at the Gardeners Hall. 7am set up for stalls open 8am-12 noon. Stalls inside hall £7, stalls outside £5, admission 50p. Organiser: Joe Rigg (07917 275255).

ANNUAL SHOW & FETE

Saturday 18 August: the most important date in our calendar is fast approaching so please put it in your diaries and come and support the event on the day! In addition to the splendid displays of flowers and vegetables in the Gardeners Hall, the traditional fete events, train and pony rides and a Punch and Judy show will be laid on.

WE'RE GOING TO THE HOP!

The WAHGA dances are going great guns. We managed to shoehorn 108 people into the Gardeners Hall for a very successful New Year's Eve Dance last year. We bopped away to the sounds of the ever-popular *Golden Oldies Disco* until the early hours of New Year's Day, sustained by a delicious meal cooked and served by David and Carol Huddleston. The supper dance in February was also a great success.

Come and enjoy yourselves at a Supper Dance on:

*2nd June 2007: 7.30 – 11.30 (*Midnight Sounds Disco*) Tickets £8.50

*27th October 2007 7.30 – 11.30 (*Golden Oldies Disco*)

For more information, or to book your table, contact Lesley Spence on 01753 831863 (membership@wahga.org.uk) or Doreen Birch on 01753 861714.

OUTINGS: Sunday 17th June - West Woodhay House Garden Show. These private Gardens near Newbury are not normally open to the public so this is a great opportunity to view the extensive gardens including a Rose Garden, a Walled Garden, five lakes and an Arboretum. There will be 18 show gardens and 100 trade stands, an art show, a jazz band and various other attractions. Cost: £12. A coach will leave the Gardeners Hall at 10.00am and will set off on the return journey at 4.00pm.

Wednesday July 11th - RHS Gardens Wisley. This is a popular trip which has become an annual event. The coach will leave Gardeners Hall at 10.00am and set off on the return journey at 4.00pm. Cost will be £7.50.

** To join either of the above outings contact Karin Lohr on 01753 840651

Kneller Hall Concert: 1 August 2007

John Filmer has tickets left for this special military brass band concert. Tickets are £15 each and can be bought from John at the St Leonards Road Trading Shed during normal trading hours. Kneller Hall is in Twickenham and a coach will leave the Gardeners Hall at 5.30pm sharp.



Ralph Green, who with Carol Gray is Co-Manager of the Gardeners' Hall, explains what's being planned in terms of improvements to the building. As he puts it "Bringing Gardeners' Hall into the first half of the 21st Century"

Our Hall has served us very well for decades and we must thank those responsible for providing this great facility for members and local people. The Hall was built and has been expanded by a very enthusiastic group of members, many of whom have contributed personally to its building and its expansion.

When we took over management of the Hall facilities last November from Jayne Rigg, Carol and I were amazed by the fact that Jayne had managed to cope with Hall management and a full time job. After some 4 months we are more amazed in view of the demand we see for the Hall facilities.

On taking over we were faced with the fact that the Hall needed to be upgraded in a number of areas. The first problem we faced was the fact that the **licensing** of the Hall did not cover many of the uses to which we put it. An application was made by the Committee to upgrade the licence and our new licence was granted by the Council in January. As part of the licence application we were obliged to carry out a risk assessment on the Hall facilities which highlighted a number of deficiencies, many of which have been addressed over the last two months.

You may have noticed that the **Kitchen** is now better protected by new fire doors and the whole **fire alarm system** has been replaced by a state-of-the-art fire system. The doors leading into the Hall have been replaced by swing doors which make access much easier and safer.

The risk assessment highlighted what we might have guessed – the electrical system which had been installed in sections – not always by fully qualified electricians - was in serious need of an overhaul. In order to understand the problems the Committee commissioned a Periodic Electrical Test to be carried out by a qualified electrical installer. This revealed many deficiencies, including a need to totally replace the existing emergency lighting system.

As with the fire system, the Committee has requested bids from a variety of qualified companies and we've now agreed to engage an appropriate contractor so that the system can be totally upgraded to meet the certification standards required by our Licence.

Please support your Committee in spending some £20,000 to provide a Hall which is fit for the future and please be understanding whilst this work is being carried out over the next few months as it is bound to cause some inconvenience to users.



Couch Tomatoes!

Trish Weller on how to combat couch grass:

Eradicating the couch on my allotment by organic methods posed a difficult task until I was pointed in the direction of *The Greatest Gardening Tips in the World* by Steve Brookes. The answer is tomatoes. Tomatoes and couch can't compete and the tomatoes win every time. The tomato roots give out a chemical which is harmful to couch.

This book is full of labour, money and frustration saving ideas, as well as being a very entertaining read, and I would recommend it as an essential in anyone's gardening library. Some of my fellow gardeners are dubious about this theory, however I intend to give it a try and will report back later in the year. I hope it works, has to be easier than digging it out! If anyone else tries this I would be interested to hear you results. Good Luck!

JOHN'S and DON'S PAGE : REPORTS FROM OUR OFFICERS

Our annual seed potato order went well but there are still some left so hurry if you are to get them planted during April. A few people have yet to collect their orders; you know who you are!

This year we have had some difficulty with the supply of onion sets. The problem has arisen with the suppliers and further back along the train with the growers. Owing to unusual weather early in the year the Dutch growers suffered a very bad harvest. Efforts to obtain supplies from France proved abortive and the final supply from UK sources was less than successful. In fact we had to refuse one cultivar which was wet and sprouting when delivered. [Editor's Note: a Cultivar means a group of cultivated plants]. We are now 'sold out' except for the red onion sets which have just arrived.

We hope you will find the standard pricing of seeds satisfactory; it makes the task in the trading sheds easier. You will have noticed several new cultivars available this year. Whilst we try to supply what you all require we need your help to get it right. If you have any comments or requests please let me know.

We are grateful to all of you who help in the trading sheds. If any of you would like to assist please get in touch. It is fun and I am sure you will enjoy the experience. Wishing you all a happy and successful gardening year.

John Filmer, Hon Purchasing Officer

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The growing season is now upon us and it is good to see many allotment holders already hard at work on their plots. For those who have yet to emerge from hibernation, I strongly recommend that you get started. We now have a very strong demand for allotments and have waiting lists on several sites. It is most important therefore, that all allotment holders keep their plots in good order as it is unfair to those waiting if plots are left untended.

The lifting of the hosepipe restrictions will be good news for those on sites with standpipes. The committee agreed that allotment holders who paid for a hose licence for 2005/2006 but were unable to use it would be considered to have paid for 2006/2007. For all other plot holders you may pay for a hose licence in one of the trading sheds at the rate of 80 pence per pole.

I am pleased to report that Tom McCreath has agreed to be a site supervisor on Clewer Park. We're seeing improvements already and I know that Tom and his enthusiastic band of helpers will welcome assistance from anyone else who wants to help. The Council have agreed that sheds of reasonable size may be erected on the site. If any allotment holder wishes to erect a shed, please check with Tom or myself first to ensure that the proposal is acceptable. We'll be judging the best allotment in the week commencing 17th June and I hope many of you will be striving to match Barry Pateman who was the worthy winner last year. Good luck and good gardening.

Don Hartridge, Allotment Secretary