Competition time

Each year Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council holds an allotment competition which is open to all tenants of allotments in the borough.

The competition is in two classes: Class 1 for allotments five rods and under and Class 2 for allotments over five rods. The competition is judged by officials from the Hampshire Federation of Horticultural Societies (HFHS) and this year the judging will take place between Monday 24 June and Friday 12 July.

Demand for allotments remains high and now that all allotments within the town are tenanted, it is clear that a great many gardeners are working

Continued on page 2
Pitcairn Close Allotments: Pallets

We were offered a large supply of pallets which we gladly accepted as we knew we could use them for compost bins and dismantle some to use the wood for raised beds and the edging around the beds.

We decided to make a shed with the remaining pallets using one for the base, three for the back and sides and filled the gaps with the spare planks from the dismantled pallets. We secured the three sides together and the base, before adding another pallet with the gaps filled in to make a roof (you can put it on flat or put a small wedge to make a slight slope to help the water run off). You can cover the roof with roofing felt or any material of your choice.

The door was made with more spare planks. Firstly we made a frame and attached more planks as a whole pallet would be too heavy – before securing the door with two hinges and a bolt, and adding a lick of fencing paint. You can line the inside if you prefer.

We use our shed to store compost but it can also be used for garden tools. All this shed cost us was about £2.50 for the hinges and bolt as we already had the screws, felt and paint. It was great fun and we made a second one for one of the other tenants on the site.

Karen Wood

Continued from page 1

them with skill and imagination. It is time to put your talents to the test by entering this year’s competition. All are welcome to enter whether you have been working an allotment for a long time, or whether you are new to growing your own fruit and vegetables.

There is no entry fee for the competition and any costs incurred for judging, awards, etc are borne by the council.

In addition to entry into the borough competition, members of Basingstoke Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Association (BALGA) will also be entered in the county HFHS competition in which further prizes can be won.

Completed entry forms (included within this edition of Corner Plot) must be received by Mark Littlefield (the council’s Specialist Services Officer) no later than Saturday 1 June 2019.

The main competition is open to a maximum of 30 allotment plots. Should we be fortunate enough to exceed this number then area representatives will inspect entries in early June to select the 30 plots which will be officially judged.

Some allotment sites enter plots into the competition each year. If your site is one of those which has not recently entered, don’t be shy, have a go.

Please complete the application form, cut out and return to Mark Littlefield no later than Saturday 1 June 2019. Entry forms received after this date will not be entered into the competition.

I wish to enter the Basingstoke Annual Allotment Competition 2019 (please print in capital letters).

Title: Mr/Mrs/Miss Initials ______________________
Surname:____________________________________
Address:____________________________________
Tel:________________________________________
Email:_______________________________________
Name of allotment site:________________________
Plot number:____ Size of plot in rods:___________
Signature:________________ Date:______________

There is no fee payable. Basingstoke Allotment and Leisure Gardeners’ Association (BALGA) members will be entered in the county Hampshire Federation of Horticultural Societies competition for which further prizes can be won.
Grumps from the Chair

I must first remind tenants that from this year those who do not clearly display their allotment number on their plot will get a warning letter followed by a termination letter if they do not rectify the situation. Following the September issue of Corner Plot, the autumn inspections revealed an all-round improvement. However, some have not taken the message on board (or on plot if you prefer).

My grump in this issue concerns paths between allotment plots, and here the rules are not particularly helpful. Rule 3.11, third bullet point, simply states: “To ensure the paths are kept clean by cutting the grass between the plots and keeping them free from weeds and the accumulation of waste”. Unfortunately, as a result of the many allotment sites and plots of different shapes and sizes, there can be no hard and fast rule about (A) doing the right hand side and (B) the left. This is possible on some sites and is put into practice well. However, on other sites it causes moans and problems and ill-feeling, more particularly where plot holders do not attend on a regular basis and the work falls on adjacent plot holders. In very bad cases it is difficult to even find the path between allotments as I found during my autumn inspections. Clearly, in that instance, no one has taken any responsibility for any work on the paths.

Surely this is a matter of common sense mixed with a little courtesy. Fellow plot holders should be able to discuss who does what in a civil manner and both take responsibility for the paths. If you always find paths nicely cut and you never do it, there is no magic fairy out there cutting the grass at night. There might be, however, a fellow allotment holder who is getting peeved at always doing it! Go on, have a word and share the burden.

If you are not on speaking terms with your nearby plot holder, which is a pity but it does happen, then remember Rule 3.21 which states that “in the case of a dispute between tenants of any allotment on the site, adjoining landowners or the occupiers of nearby houses, the matter will be referred to the council, whose decision shall be final”. In the first instance please contact Mark Littlefield.

Again, please write and let the editor have your views. Have a great growing season.

Ron le Maréchal

Site representatives needed

The following allotment sites currently have no site representative:
- Abbey Road
- Beggarwood
- Cedar Way
- Chopin Road
- Trinidad Close
- West Ham Close
- Marnel Park
- Worting Road

The role is voluntary and involves being the eyes and ears of the site liaising with the council’s Specialist Services Officer and acting on behalf of tenants.

If any tenant at any of these sites wishes to be a site representative for their site, please contact Mark Littlefield, Specialist Services Officer, on 01256 845435 or email allotments@basingstoke.gov.uk.

Tenants at the new Beggarwood Allotments met with the council’s Cabinet Member of Planning and Infrastructure Cllr Mark Ruffell, representatives from the borough council and Basingstoke Allotment and Leisure Gardeners’ Association (BALGA) for the opening.

An additional 20 new plots have been added near to the existing 15 allotments funded by the council. Extensive work to prepare the land included scrub clearance, hedge planting, fencing, pathways, compost bins and a new access route.
Towards the end of last year, a group of our area reps were talking about weeds and how to eradicate them. I suggested eating them and was challenged by the other reps to find some recipes. After some research I found an array of suggestions and decided to focus on the most common pernicious weed in our area, the dandelion.

Everything, from the flower all the way down to the roots, is edible. The taste of dandelion resembles a slightly bitter green. You can eat them fresh in salads, or cook them on the stove. Young dandelions provide excellent salad leaves (though larger, older leaves become bitter). They grow wild all over Europe, the US and Asia. If you pick your own, do so in the spring when the leaves are small and sweet and before the flower has formed. Take care though, as they may have been chemically sprayed and, if so, should be avoided. Also avoid picking dandelions by the roadside as they will have absorbed petrol fumes.

I have not yet tried any of these recipes myself, though I plan to try them in the spring.

In the next issue of Corner Plot I will endeavour to find some recipes for using chickweed. If you have any favourite recipes using weeds or produce from your plot do feel free to send them in to Mark Littlefield for inclusion in Corner Plot.

---

**Warm potato salad with shallot dressing**

Recipe from www.bbc.com/food/recipes

**Ingredients**
- 6 new potatoes, preferably Charlotte
- 30ml/1¼fl oz olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
- 1 shallot, very finely chopped
- 25ml/1fl oz wine vinegar
- 2 thyme sprigs, leaves only
- 1 portion of summer leaves (e.g. rocket, sorrel, dandelion leaf, red chard)

**Method**
Place the potatoes into a pan of salted boiling water and cook for 15 minutes or until tender when pierced with the tip of a knife. Drain and leave to cool for two to three minutes.

Heat 10ml of the olive oil in a pan and fry the shallot for a few minutes until soft and transparent. Add the vinegar. Cook until it has reduced by half. Remove the pan from the heat and add the remaining olive oil and the thyme leaves.

To serve, chop the potatoes and scatter on a large plate. Dress the salad leaves with a little of the shallot dressing and drizzle the remainder over the potatoes. Place the salad leaves on top of the potatoes.

**Dandelion greens**

Recipe from www.allrecipes.com

**Ingredients**
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 1lb of dandelion greens torn into 4” pieces
- 2 tablespoons of olive oil
- 1 tablespoon of butter
- ½ onion, thinly sliced
- ¼ teaspoon of red pepper flakes
- 2 cloves of garlic
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 tablespoon of Parmesan cheese

**Method**
Soak the dandelion greens in a large bowl of cold water with one teaspoon of salt for 10 minutes before draining.

Bring a large pot of water to a boil with one teaspoon of salt. Cook the greens until tender (three to four minutes). Drain and rinse with cold water until chilled.

Heat the olive oil and butter in a large skillet over medium heat; cook and stir onion and red pepper flakes until onion is tender, about five minutes. Stir in the garlic until it is fragrant, about 30 seconds more. Increase the heat to medium-high and add the dandelion greens.

Continue to cook and stir until the liquid is evaporated (three to four minutes), season to taste.

Sprinkle the greens with Parmesan cheese to serve.

---

**Gardener’s soup**

Ideal for using up gluts of tomatoes or cucumbers

**Ingredients**
- ¾ lb cucumber, chopped
- ¾ tomatoes, peeled and chopped
- 1 medium potato
- 1 small onion
- Lettuce leaves, shredded
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1 teaspoon basil
- 2 tsp fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 tsp lemon juice
- 1 pint hot water mixed with 1 tsp tomato puree
- Butter, oil, salt and pepper

**Method**
Soften onions in 1 tablespoon (tbsp) of butter and 1 tbsp oil.

Add the rest of the vegetables, salt, pepper, lemon juice and sweat for a good 15 minutes.

Heat the olive oil and butter in a large skillet over medium heat; cook and stir onion and red pepper flakes until onion is tender, about five minutes. Stir in the garlic until it is fragrant, about 30 seconds more. Increase the heat to medium-high and add the dandelion greens.

Sprinkle the greens with Parmesan cheese to serve.
Tidy plots

A frequent request is made for the council to provide skips and/or trailers to help tenants tidy their sites and remove rubbish. While the council does offer some assistance with these requests, with 42 sites and over 1,100 plots spread across the borough, scant resources and finances can be stretched to the limit.

At the end of the day it is down to us, as plot holders, to make every effort to keep our plots and sites tidy. Much of the following can be found in Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council’s Rules for Allotment Plot Tenants but in essence:

- It is the responsibility of tenants to keep their plot clean, cultivated and fertile and to maintain it in a good tidy condition.
- Tenants must not bring on-site or store any items other than for horticultural use. This includes a prohibition on carpet, underlay and tyres for any use.
- Composting is only allowed on plots and must be properly maintained to the satisfaction of the council. Only plant waste may be composted. All other waste material must be removed from the site and disposed of in an appropriate manner.
- Tenants must not bring food waste, cuttings and other garden waste onto allotment sites.
- No vehicular tyres to be kept on the allotment plot or allotment site – tyres are hazardous waste containing toxins and require special treatment for disposal. They cannot be placed in skips and trailers nor can they be taken to the Household Waste Recycling Centre in Wade Road.
- When you give up your plot you should ensure that it is left in a clean and tidy state. It is not fair on the next tenant to leave your plot in a mess. The plot should be clear of any buildings, fruit cages, debris and rubbish at the termination of the tenancy. Failure to do so may result in the council arranging for the plot to be cleared and the cost of doing so could become a debt due by the outgoing tenant.
- Ultimately a site that is well presented and looks used and cared for is a pleasure for everyone to work on and can help to reduce antisocial behaviour such as fly-tipping which is fast becoming a real problem on Basingstoke sites.

Martin Eastwood

Polite reminder to tenants

Please note that the following are not permitted on allotments:

- **Vehicle tyres** (these contain toxins and are hazardous waste)
- ** Carpets, underlay or astroturf** (these contain chemical additives)
- **Cockerels** (in order to prevent early morning noise complaints from nearby residents)
- **Baths** Do not bring household baths on to an allotment site.
- **Paths** Do not obstruct or reduce the width of any path between the allotment plots.
- **Water Troughs** Do not interfere in any way with, or connect a hosepipe to, the water or wastewater supply on any allotment site.
- **Waste** Do not fly-tip on any land within an allotment site including tenants’ plots.
Abbey Road, Beggarwood, Chopin Road, Trinidad Close, West Ham Close and Worting Road.

The role is voluntary and involves being the eyes and ears of the site and while liaising with the council's Specialist Services Officer and acting on behalf of tenants.

If any tenant at any of the sites mentioned would like to be a site representative for their site please contact Mark Littlefield on 01256 845435 or email mark.littlefield@basingstoke.gov.uk.

8. Corner Plot (allotment newsletter) - Mark Littlefield

Same as the previous year - a request was made to tenants to submit allotment related articles which can then be considered for publication in Corner Plot. Without sufficient articles, the allotment newsletter can be on the thin side which means it may become difficult to justify its publication in the future. All submissions to be with Mark Littlefield as soon as possible. Corner Plot will be sent out with the annual invoices in early March.

9. Specialist Services Officer – Ron le Marechal

Ron le Maréchal informed tenants that the council's Specialist Services Officer, Mark Littlefield, has other responsibilities other than allotments. This means Mark is not always available to respond immediately to allotment matters and allotment holders should both appreciate and understand this. Mark's responsibilities also includes Hart District Council Street Cleansing Service, street name plates, bus shelters, ring road fencing and specialist lighting.

10. Any other business (to include only previously advised written questions).

Mark Littlefield responded to several questions that were previously raised in writing.

11. Basingstoke Allotment and Leisure Gardeners’ Association (BALGA)

Please note the following information:

• The membership is very inexpensive costing £5.00 per annum
• There is a shopping facility at Eastrop Allotments
• Kings seeds are heavily discounted
• £5m Public Liability Insurance where most household insurance do not cover allotments is included in membership
• If you are interested, please contact Iain Crawford (BALGA) on 01256 364378.

12. Presentation of Annual Allotment competition trophies and certificates were presented by The Worshipful Madam Deputy Mayor of Basingstoke and Deane Cllr Diane Taylor.

Meeting closed followed by buffet.
Annual tenants meeting

The annual tenants meeting will be held this year on Thursday 5 December 2019 at 7pm at the Civic Offices. The Mayoress will attend and she will present trophies and certificates to the winners of the annual allotment competition. The meeting will finish with a buffet. All tenants are invited to the meeting.

Sign up
for email updates on council services, news and events.
www.basingstoke.gov.uk/signup

Your allotment invoice for 2019/20 is enclosed – please ensure payment by 1 April 2019.

Committee
Specialist Services Officer  Chairman  Minute Secretary
Mark Littlefield  Ron Le Maréchal  Derek West

Committee (area representatives)

Martin Eastwood  Ron Le Maréchal  Bill Fergie  Derek West
(Burgess Road)  (Eastrop)  (Hackwood Road)

Susan Beard  Ian Crawford  Brenda Morrison  Tony Gritt
(Carpenters Down)  (Eastrop)  (Haydn Road)  (Whiteditch)

Tim Briston  Mick Phelps  John Champion
(Churchill Way)  (Elizabeth Road)  (Stag Hill)

Site representative meeting

The site representatives meetings in 2019 will be held on Thursday 11 April and Thursday 12 September at 7pm at the Civic Offices, Committee Room 1.