



Hillingdon Allotment News No. 11: Summer 2006

The Chairman's bit - It has been a year of watering cans and we are all growing longer arms with our crops. This edition has more tips, a review of allotment history and an important note on the Joint Allotment Strategy so I must keep this short. – happy allotmenting

Marianne Slater

HAHF / LBH Joint Allotment Strategy Update

The aims of our combined Strategy are:

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|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 - Providing enough allotments | 2 - Promoting allotment use |
| 3 - Improve the standard of provision | |
| 4 - Environmental sustainability | 5 - Providing enough resources |

Looking at progress so far:

- The current allotment provision is 6.96 plots per thousand of the population against a target of 7. Any new house-building projects, or proposed rationalisation of allotments, will need extra sites.
- A minimum of £1 million needs to be invested over life of the strategy (2003-2008) to improve allotments. So far £150,000 has been spent renewing dilapidated fencing and gates for safety and security. Water supplies have been improved and the latest project is to provide toilet facilities to three sites. The total allotment budget for this financial year will be around £142,500.
- The Green Spaces Health Promotion Officer provided useful links with HAHF but unfortunately the funds for this post were discontinued. We are looking at ways to fund a dedicated allotment officer.
- The Green Spaces Team, Healthy Hillingdon and Adult Education have been working together to provide a range of courses to promote allotments and gardening in general. These courses have been well attended and we plan to continue running them next year after a glitch this year. We continue to encourage sites to establish areas for wildlife, ponds etc and bee keeping is becoming a popular addition to some sites.
- Two sites were declared surplus. Acacia Avenue has now been sold with an income to the council of £925,000. As agreed by the council's cabinet the allotment strategy will receive 10% of this. The reduction in size of the Belmore site has received approval from the Secretary of State and will now be progressed.

If you have any queries about the strategy or any other allotment issues please contact the Countryside and Conservation Team on 01895 250635

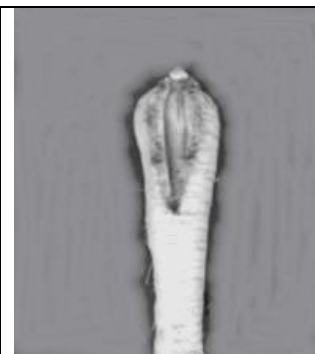
Question : When pulling up parsnips I found that some of them were split down the side. (see photo). What caused this and what can I do about it?

Answer. This occurs when there is an inconsistent water supply and is usually caused either by uneven watering, or dry periods when the plants have not been watered followed by sudden downpours. This causes rapid expansion inside the plant, putting pressure on the outside which then splits.

This problem also occurs in carrots and can spoil a whole row.

Some varieties are far more susceptible than others..

To prevent this happening it is necessary to ensure that any watering that is carried out gives the plants a good soak and that the soil is kept moist at all times



Allotment Competition 2006

The weather has made it has been a hard year for us all. Final judging will have taken place when you read this, Prizes, Top 50 plots, best sites will all be awarded at the AGM on 8th November.

TIP OF THE ICEBERG

One of things many of you asked for was more tips.

The difficulty is that every site has different conditions, everyone grows different crops and one person's tip is simply 'blindingly obvious' to someone else.

We will include some tips every issue. Do let us know if they are at the right level ? If you have any tips yourself do send them in for the benefit of other people.

How to grow: GARLIC

Garlic, a member of the onion family, has been known to be cultivated for at least 5000 years and originally a native to Siberia and central Asia, and until recent years was regarded as being 'continental' and not at all British. These days there are more than 300 varieties in cultivation although you will not normally see more than two or three varieties in any vegetable catalogue.

While garlic can be planted in the spring, to obtain larger bulbs they should be planted in the autumn on ground that was manured for a previous crop. They prefer a light sandy soil, and if like mine yours is on the heavy side, then incorporate some sharp sand or grit to make the soil lighter and I find that a bag of sharp sand from the builder's merchants worked into the required area does the trick. Please buy your garlic from a reputable supplier and not from the supermarket as these could carry virus. Break up the bulbs into individual cloves and plant 6" apart in rows 12" apart covered by its own depth in soil. Little care is required until the spring apart from keeping the area weed free and then a dressing of a nitrogenous fertilizer such as sulphate of ammonia, or a general fertilizer which will boost growth. In a dry spring keep well watered as the plants are shallow rooted and hoe the soil when necessary. Autumn planted garlic is usually ready in July when the tops die down, but can be used 'in the green' before then should you wish to do so. Garlic should be dried and stored as one would onions and will last well into the following year and as a last resort, can be peeled and frozen for use in stews.

The only problem that seems to reoccur is 'rust' but this seems to have little effect on the plants and I do not normally do anything about it.

Like Peas in a Pod.

While the cold and wet spring set the growing season back and made life very difficult it did have one advantage and that was that I was able this summer to compare two varieties of peas that I would not normally grow. All of a rush in the spring to get plants in and growing, I started my usual variety of peas off in trays in my little plastic 'greenhouse' sitting on our patio, this as it turned out was not a good idea as due to the cold and wet very few germinated and those that did were not worth keeping. Having lost several weeks this meant a hasty trip to the local garden centre to restock, but as it so happened they had a sale of seeds that had reached their sell by date, and not one to pass up a bargain, I came away with packets of Rondo and Lincoln peas, two varieties that I had never grown before. As both of these were listed as main crop they were sown on the same day as each other and having reached the required height were planted in the allotment.

In comparing these varieties the first thing that was apparent was that Rondo was the faster growing and ended up the tallest of the two by about 6 to 9 inches but both sorts were healthy apart from a few aphids on Lincoln which were only apparent at picking time. The pods on Rondo were much larger than Lincoln but there were fewer per plant and contained about eight peas as an average. Lincoln on the other hand had the same number of peas but with at least twice as many smaller pods.

At the final weigh in both varieties came in at about the same weight but Rondo was harder to shell than Lincoln, which probably doesn't matter if you are just doing a few for your Sunday dinner but makes a difference if a lot are to be done at the same time. Which one would I choose? Probably Lincoln, but I shall try it against another variety next year and let you know the results

Show Dates it is **Saturday 9th September 2006 for :**

Eastcote Horticultural Society & Harefield Horticultural Society
Ickenham & Swakeleys Horticultural Society & Ruislip Central Horticultural Society

And **Sunday 10th September** for the Middlesex County Autumn Horticultural Show
at the Perivale Community Centre, Horsenden Lane South, Perivale open 3 – 5pm (staging 10am- 1pm)

A very brief history of the legal background to the creation of Allotments.

- From the 1740s the Enclosure Acts deprived landless poor of their rights on common land.
- In 1782 an Act was passed enabling the enclosure of up to 10 acres for a poor house
- After various attempts to provide land for the poor the Great Somerfold (Wiltshire) Inclosure Act of 1806 was the first to set aside land as an allotment for the labouring poor.
- By 1833 42% of all parishes in England & Wales had allotment schemes, and by 1883 7 counties had allotments in nearly every parish.
- The 1887 act compelling local authorities to provide allotments where a demand was known to exist and where they could not be obtained at reasonable rent.
- The various acts of parliament were consolidated in 1908, and by 1913 there were 600,000 allotment plots recorded in England and Wales.
- By the end of the Great War in 1918 there were 1.5 million plots available (ranging from 600 square yards to an acre). There were 7000 applications a week from returning servicemen.
- By 1922 there was pressure from landowners for the return of requisitioned land, but the 1925 Allotments Act still included the need for allotments in town planning, and ministerial consent to the disposal of allotment land.
- The mid war years saw pressure to return land, by 1939 the provision was down to 570,000 plots.
- ‘Dig for Victory’ in World War II was encouraged by local authorities and the National Allotment Society saw the war end with 1.4 million sites in use, having produced over 1.3 million tons of produce a year – 10% of all food production in the country - a total of over 3 million tons from newcomers to the allotment movement.
- In 1949 the recommendation was 4 acres of allotments per 1000 of population – and in 1950 the law removed the restrictions on keeping rabbits and hens (but do not try it in Hillingdon nowadays)
- Successive governments largely ignored allotments, including their own enquiry reports. In 1998 the government put a duty on local authorities to demonstrate that steps were being taken to promote allotments before they were to be allowed to dispose of any more – and by 2001 the Planning Policy Guidelines for Sport and Recreation were revised to include allotment provision.
- Sites which are registered as Statutory Sites cannot be sold without the agreement of the Government. They refer all such proposals to the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners, who ensure that even if there is general value to the community, adequate compensation is made .
- The current upsurge in the use of allotments is driven by reactions to global warming, the organic movement and people wanting to know what they are eating. Whatever the reason, while allotments are not in front line politics, politicians are aware that there are a lot of people out there – with votes.

New Awards of Garden Merit

Every year the Royal Horticultural Society makes awards to plants that they consider are the best of their type. The granting of an award is made based on a number of criteria depending whether it is a vegetable, flower or fruit, but includes such items as cropping ability, freedom from pests and diseases and amount of crop or flower production.

Recent awards for vegetables include Carrot varieties: Bangor, Carson, Eskimo Indiana, and Maestro.

Spring headed cauliflower: Aasmeer, Christingle, Evita, Jerome, Martian, Patriot and Prestige.

Peas include: Balmoral, Dorian, Greensage, Greenshaft, Jaguar, Serge and Starlight.

Current trials that are running include runner beans and courgettes and I shall keep you posted on these.

Lists of all AGM fruit and vegetables with descriptions can be obtained free of charge.

Send a self addressed A4 envelope with two first class stamps to:

AGM Fruit and Vegetables Lists, Botany Department, RHS Gardens Wisley, Woking Surrey GU23 6QB.
or see online at: www.rhs.org.uk/plants/award_plants.asp

Assistance.

The federation is pursuing a number of avenues in their efforts to promote gardening in general and allotments in particular. We are looking for anyone who has a special aptitude to growing, or a skill in a particular subject, who is willing to pass this on to small groups of people. **If you consider that you can spare some of your time next year in helping out on courses please get in touch with the editor**

Meetings Bloody Meetings

Federation evening meetings are open to anyone that would like to attend, the only restriction is that only one vote per site is allowed. If your Site Secretary can not or does not attend the meetings, or is unable to keep your plot holders up to date on what is happening, (or if there isn't a site secretary) then you might like to come along yourself and contribute.

The meetings for the rest of 2006 are : 13th September AGM 8th November

ALL are at 8pm in the CIVIC CENTRE – parking is available – ask at reception to find which room.

Jobs for the Month

September. This month that marks the end of summer, shorter days and cooler evenings, most summer vegetable crops are coming to an end now and this is the month not only for harvesting but also for preparing for the cooler and wetter months ahead. All potato crops should be lifted, any soil removed and dried for storage. I prefer to store mine in paper sacks, but hessian sacks, when you can get them, do equally as well, as do cardboard boxes for smaller amounts. Put aside any that are a bit suspect or too small, you can use these first or recycle them to the compost heap as long as they are not diseased. Store them anywhere that is frost free and easily accessible. Plant cabbage for spring use in vacant ground and keep on top of weeds. Prepare for winter digging by ensuring sufficient manure or compost is available. Make sure you attend your local show, or better still enter something.

October. Take off the lower leaves of sprouts as they die off. Not only does it make picking easier later on but also helps to keep slugs and snails away. Return all leaves to the compost heap and stake the plants if necessary.

Start winter digging, especially on those plots that have heavy soil or which have only recently been started, you can get some nutrients into the soil and break up the clay at the same time. This is probably one of the hardest jobs to be done but is well worth the effort and time involved. Turn over the soil in largish lumps and try to incorporate organic material as you go. On very heavy soil spread lime on the surface, but do not add it where you have manured as it reacts with any nutrients and they wash out of the soil more easily. If you are also able to incorporate sharp sand or any gritty material this will help with drainage by opening up the soil which in turn makes it easier to work. It is this preparation that will stand you in good stead in the spring time when you come to work the soil for seeding and pays dividends in the summer as it will give you the chance of better crops with moisture retention in dry weather.

Jobs for winter, & responses to the summer edition questionnaire will be in the Autumn newsletter.

HAF – Who's Who



Name: **Stuart Hunt**

Role : **Countryside and Conservation Manager London Borough of Hillingdon**

I have a wide range of responsibilities within the Green Spaces Team, including the upkeep of the borough's Allotments Country Parks, Woodlands (including Ruislip Woods National Nature Reserve), areas of informal recreation, Bridleways, promoted walks and the borough's Nature Conservation Sites.

I have worked for Hillingdon Council for 24 years, starting out as a horticultural apprentice. My professional qualifications are horticultural and arboricultural and I am a member of the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management. (IEEM)

The Website address is
www.hahf.org.uk

It contains all sorts of details, news and events, photographs, links to useful web site, back copies of newsletters, etc

Views expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual members of the Federation. They do not necessarily reflect those of The Federation or The London Borough of Hillingdon. This Newsletter is produced by the Hillingdon Allotment and Horticultural Federation.

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Asst Editor, David Slater, 41 Rowleys Place, West Drayton, UB7 9NQ or

All comments, contributions, and articles to the
davidk.slater@tesco.net