

# NEWSLETTER

Welcome to your last newsletter for 2023 and a warm welcome to our new plotholders.

## **Special thanks**

Several of these!

A special thanks go to plotholders Gail and Brian Black for clearing our water drain in the bottom corner of our site. This job has now been diarised to be done every 3 months and will be on our working party schedule for the year. This way it won't be such a big job ongoing.

We have all enjoyed the manure deliveries this year which were made possible by plotholder Agnieszka Kalita-Rybka. A massive thank you Agnieszka from all of us as most allotment sites in Bromley have to pay for deliveries and then charge plotholders for it.

Finally, a special thank you to whomever fixed our back gate. We don't know who fixed it, but it is much appreciated!

## **Losing enthusiasm?**

Don't worry, we all go through phases where we find our allotment is enjoyable, peaceful and good for our wellbeing. For me, it's in the spring when the growing season is kicking off and it's all about soil preparation and planting. Funnily enough, the winter months don't quite cut it and being an allotmentee can be a pain in the backside. If you're feeling a little bit despondent, it's perfectly natural. On the other hand, if you've genuinely had enough, please give the Committee the heads-up before your plot becomes an overgrown jungle and is unlettable to another tenant. We will be hammering your email inboxes with requests for plot fees in January, so now is the time to have a think about what you are planning for next year.

## **Beat the weeds (and the weed letter)**

You might not think it, but winter is one of the most important periods on an allotment. What you do (or don't do) now will have a massive impact on your growing season next year. Believe it or not, things are still growing on your plot, including perennial weeds such as couch grass which will be sending long, winding, white roots deep into the soil as you read this. As soon as the soil warms up next year, the weeds will have a head start on you. A bit of hard graft now, clearing the weeds and putting down a mulch of chippings, compost or manure will set you up perfectly for February/March when your plans for world (well, vegetable) domination are put into action. Nothing beats the smug feeling you get when you're on your plot in spring and all you have to do is rake the lovely crumbly soil while your neighbours toil away clearing brambles, mare's tail and couch grass!

On that note, we still have plenty of bags of soil improver and well-rotted manure in the lock-up on site, and this is the perfect time to be adding it. If you send us an email we can arrange for you to pick up.

## **Working Parties**

A big thank you to all that joined in and helped at our working party to cut back hedges and overhanging trees around our perimeter fences. It is amazing at what can be achieved when we all come together to help.

We will be putting together a yearly plan for 2024 to give more advance notice of what they are and the dates and times they will take place in the hope many more of you can come along and help out. Apart from making a big difference to our site's general maintenance, it's also a great way to meet other plotholders and enjoy free teas, coffees, biscuits and sometimes cake!

## **End of season natter with international food**

It was lovely to see all those who joined us for this event and to those who brought dishes that represented their part of the world or culture. This will now become an annual event and we encourage you all to come along and enjoy great company and amazing food!

### **Water usage**

As promised at the beginning of the year, we have kept you up to date on how much water we have all used during the year. The monthly figures are held on our website and have been posted on our noticeboard throughout this year. The final figure for 2023 is 110,880 gallons which is 86,460 gallons less than 2022! Now this sounds impressive, but we have to take into account 2022 was much hotter and dryer than this year, and we had a few leaks we have to take into account. However, it is still impressive as water is the most expensive cost to us all on the site.

### **Main gate padlock update**

This year has been particularly bad on the padlock front. However, we have added a telephone number on the gate for you to call if it does get stuck and we have been in contact with the company that makes them - Squires. Whilst they can't provide any insight as to why these usually reliable padlocks have been failing, they sent replacements as they are covered by a 10 year guarantee and will keep replacing any that fail. We've spoken with other allotment sites across the borough, and they use the same make, although some use padlocks with keys and some use combinations like ours. If you do think the padlock is sticking or being difficult, please let us know immediately so we can try and fix it before it gets totally jammed and people get locked in or out.

### **Sharing Shed update**

The foundations have been done. We are currently sourcing wood and repair materials so that the donated shed can be fixed and put up.

### **Biodiversity Corner**

A big thank you to those who hosted the biodiversity survey tiles on their plots and to everyone who reported sightings of reptiles and other wildlife throughout this year. Joan has now submitted our sightings to idverde for inclusion in their survey. The tiles will be removed from plots shortly.

The resounding winner being the slow worm with 29 sightings. The runner up the viviparous lizard with 3 sightings. We also had several stag beetle sightings!

The focus of the survey for 2024 is urban red-listed bird species, many of which can be observed from most allotments in Bromley. More details to follow.

We have started work on the designated wildlife area behind the community shed, and the sharing shed should be put up in the coming weeks.

We thought having a seed swap might be useful and Joan has collected seed from some of her vegetables this year to share when the new season starts.

Kindly contact Joan Vine if you have any ideas/thoughts about improving the biodiversity on our allotments.

Finally, that just leaves us to say we hope you have a lovely Christmas and New Year and here's to a bumper 2024 season.

**Bill, Sam, John, Graham, Rob, Denis, Lesley and Bob**