



Winter 2008/9



## NEWS from the SITES

Our fellow gardeners at Burnopfield, Castleside and Tantobie AA, St Gabriels AA and Thropton Tce AA sites have all recently elected new committees. The AWG wish them good fortune in their endeavours.

Management of allotment sites can, at times, be a trying and thankless exercise and, unfortunately, is not always handled well. In an endeavour to ensure that problems which inevitably arise are handled as effectively as possible, with the best result for all concerned, the AWG and Allotment Officer are on hand to offer advice and assistance. We also will be issuing a guide for management committees based on the experiences of AWG members. Hopefully this will assist committees to better perform their responsibilities and overcome some of the problems that have been brought to AWG's and Allotment Officer's attention. It will also point out to members their responsibilities and show them what to expect of their committee.

## What a WINTER

I am quite old (alright very old) and can think only of very few winters as cold as this and then from several years ago. I do, of course, wait to be corrected, but I am sure that the effects on our garden pests will be to our advantage. I moved some covers from a manure heap a few days ago and found an extended family of snails. I assume that the weather encouraged the gathering and I would add that the local bird population fed well that day. I have pursued this exercise since and cleared a few more of these pests, again to the benefit of the bird population. Global warming and recent mild winters could account for the apparent explosion of these pests and it is nice to see that nature has done her bit to redress the balance. Makes them at least easy to find.

By the way I notice that there are some gardeners who are using slug pellets by spreading them over the soil making them and whatever they kill easily available to birds, hedgehogs, pets and young children. The blue pellets are a dangerous poison and should be used carefully in a manner so that they are only available to the slugs and snails you intend to kill. Please remember the slogan; **PLEASE USE GARDEN CHEMICALS SAFELY.**

Talking about nature and such, our friend Steve Emsley wrote an article recently about the Christmas presents he received to support local wildlife. Many of our garden friends will be suffering in this weather and it is to our advantage to help where we can. I know that some would frown at an apparent untidy pile of logs, branches or what have you, but they make an ideal home for hibernating frogs, centipedes etc. and the pile of hollow sticks will provide homes for ladybirds and solitary bees. Bird boxes are easily made and sizes and styles to cater for different species can be obtained from the internet, try

[www.lincstrust.org.uk/factsheets/nestbox.php](http://www.lincstrust.org.uk/factsheets/nestbox.php) .

Hedgehogs are a major garden friend and a search of the British Hedgehog Preservation Society site at [www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk](http://www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk) will give you lots of information as well as a guide to making a hedgehog home for next year. As gardeners we can do a lot to redress the balance of nature that a less than careful and thoughtful human race has upset and we, I am sure, will benefit.

### **EYE Project**

Whilst I am on about wildlife have a look at [www.eyeproject.org.uk](http://www.eyeproject.org.uk) They allow you to record wildlife sightings on line and the information is used to give a picture of the distribution and variety of wildlife in the Northeast. Just your thing if wildlife interests you or you can make a valuable contribution to what is becoming an important measure of the affects of global warming.

### **TOWN MOOR CRUSADER**

I see that our old (well he is quite old) friend, and retired AWG colleague, Gordon Chester has raised his cudgel about the Town Moor. He feels, and I have no doubt he will have many supporters, that better use could be made of the huge area of land at our city's heart. His ideas, promulgated in The Journal on 24 January, include a botanic garden and more allotment sites on the Moor to ease the large list of those awaiting a plot. I have no doubt that he would appreciate your support in whatever way you feel appropriate.

### **POTATOES, SHALLOTS and ONION SETS**

I suspect that most of you buy your potatoes etc pre-packed and end up with more than you need or even some that are too poor quality to use. Why not visit Chandlers Garden Centre on the west end of Gosforth Park. All their potatoes, shallots and sets are available from bulk and you can pick as many as, and which ones you wish from large trays. There is a wide range of varieties to meet even the most fastidious and the prices are very reasonable. If you follow this up please mention that you got the idea from Dig This.

### **Roll out the Barrel**

In these days of conservation and ever increasing costs, in this case water rates, it pays to use as much of the free stuff from the sky as possible. To this end you might like to take up the following: Our secretary Peter Horrocks passed on information that a gentleman has clean blue barrels for sale at, it is believed, £3 and free delivery. Please contact the gentleman on 0191 4605340 or 07930682654. I have no other contact information so the rest is up to you. Good luck.

## **A Pot of Gold ?**

Looking for funding for a project to improve your site or to fund activities involving the community then look no further than the Grass Roots Fund. They have already funded a number of allotment projects, like a composting toilet, new fencing and an art project involving children and older people in the community.

The forms are easy to fill in and the staff at the Fund are very helpful. They will fund projects up to £5000.

Contact them at [www.communityfoundation.org.uk](http://www.communityfoundation.org.uk) or telephone 0191 222 0945

## **MANURE**

Talking about pots of gold, Arnie Waugh has a huge pile of stable manure that he is anxious to shift. The manure is very fresh and will need to stand but it is free. There is, however, a delivery charge which you can negotiate. Contact him on 07833522455.

## **ALLOTMENT and GARDEN SHOW 2009**

An important date for your diary, the show will be held on Sunday 13 September in its usual venue the Civic Centre Banqueting Hall. There are several changes to the show schedule, the most notable of which is the amalgamation of the best site and best individual displays. The prize money for the winner has been increased and if you don't enter your site you cannot win. (Or in it to win it!).

## **CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOME**

**Contributions to this newsletter are welcome, whether they are news items about site activities or personalities, ideas, opinions or criticisms.**

**Contact me on 0191 2665910 email [michaelarmstrong07@btinternet.com](mailto:michaelarmstrong07@btinternet.com)**

**Or Michael Cranston on 0191 2773565**

The Allotments Working Group is made up of elected and co-opted representatives from across Newcastle and operates under the auspices of the City Council.