



SUMMER 2009

NEWCASTLE



Hi everyone. What a summer weatherwise and what has it done to our plants? I try to ensure a succession of any one vegetable but cauliflowers sown a month after the first batch headed up first and peas sown a month apart have podded to picking size at the same time. As a famous Scot once said "the best laid plans o' mice an' men gang aft aghley". That doesn't help much but the freezer is filling fast as are grandchildren.

Incidentally I have been told that weeds are only plants that refuse to grow in rows. I know that they also fill any space that has nothing else in it and this year proves both these points. Keep the hoe going because it is said that one year's weeds are seven years' seeds. Incidentally advice is that when hoeing at this time of the year you keep the hoe quite level so that you don't dig too deep into the soil and expose to the drying air the layer of damp soil.

### **Tribute**

Paul Roberts from Beaumont Tce AA has asked me to mention Stan Ciach who has retired, from over 50 years on the site, at the age of 87. I leave the rest of the tribute to Paul.

"Stan's plot was always known as the cleanest and best plot on the site and everyone envied and respected his ability to grow fantastic vegetables and keep his plot clean. We were all sad to see Stan leave, with his warm words and generous advice, but in the end it had to be his decision based on what he felt was his inability to maintain the plot to the high standard that had always been his trademark. Stan came to us from Poland at the end of the war and he is a great example of how a refugee from another country can bring so much to his new home."

A photo entitled 'Stan on plot' was taken about eight years ago, in his latter heyday for a project about the site as part of 'Tomorrow's History' and will be on view at the 2009 Show.

### **Allotment Officer**

A lot of you will already know that Michael Cranston has resigned as allotment officer and leaves the post on 21 August. Michael is to join his wife in expanding their business, Riders North of Shiremoor (Saddlery, Country Clothing, Pet Supplies & Animal Feeds). I am sure we all wish him the very best in his new endeavour.

## **The Humble Bumblebee**

Quite a lot has been written recently about bees and the effects on food production if they continue to decline at the present rate. As responsible gardeners I am sure you do all you can to look after one of our greatest allies. However, it is worth a reminder that you should avoid using plant sprays when bees are busy and that it is useful to provide somewhere for the solitary varieties to hang out in the winter and during bad weather. Suitable homes can be purchased ready-made or you can provide a pile of hollow sticks in a sheltered spot. Lack of any disturbance is important and I am sure that most of us can find a suitable spot. You will find more information on this and suitable plants to encourage and support them at [www.bumblebeeconservationtrust.co.uk](http://www.bumblebeeconservationtrust.co.uk).

## **Garden Allies**

Three of our greatest allies (except for bumblebees) are birds, frogs and hedgehogs. All can be poisoned by the indiscriminate use of metaldehyde slug pellets. The World Health Organisation describes them as moderately hazardous meaning that they are a risk to anything that eats them. By the very nature of things the number of wild animals and birds poisoned by the incorrect use of pellets is undetermined, but I am sure that none of us want to be responsible for killing any of the creatures I have mentioned. Please, therefore, take great care when using and storing slug pellets and remember that they can poison children.

## **2009 Allotment and Garden Show**

Now about the show. The brochures have been distributed and are available from your secretary or additional supplies can be obtained from Parks and Countryside Services.

There are some changes to the schedule which we hope will encourage more entries as well as removing any descriptive inadequacies.

There will be the usual stalls, including an activity stall for the youngsters, so all are welcome and remember your money as we will have preserves, fresh vegetables and flowers for sale.

That reminds me we are always looking for contributions to the stall, so if you have surplus produce, which we could sell, please bring it along or contact your AWG rep who will collect. All money raised will go to the AWG funds which are used to support allotment sites throughout Newcastle.

BBC Radio Newcastle will transmit their garden programme from the show so if you have gardening problems you can have them answered by their gardening experts.

There will also be a tombola with some super prizes. See you there.

## **Recycling Boxes**

Hope you saw the article in the local press about the Heaton resident who is growing a huge range of veg on his garage roof in old recycling boxes. I know that there are numerous people who are after allotments to grow their own fresh veg and that there are not enough plots to go round. The boxes are not an alternative but as a standby until more plots are available they are a good idea. The boxes are available from the council's Condercum Rd depot if the idea appeals to you.

## **Wildlife Pictures**

Kara Jackson works with Northumberland Wildlife Trust and is anxious to photograph our wildlife, particularly foxes, badgers, hedgehogs and rabbits. If you know of an area where any of the above can be seen regularly please let Kara know at [kara.jackson@northwt.org.uk](mailto:kara.jackson@northwt.org.uk).

## **Area Representatives**

In the last "Dig This" I mentioned the election due to be held for new area reps. The election went well and the following were elected to their respective areas.

Area 2:- Donald Robinson, Area 3:- Stu Gilhespy, Area 4:- Honor Cooper, Area 5:- Hugh Smith, Area 6:- Peter Whewell, Area 7:- Steven Coates, Area 8:- John Tucker or JJ Brown.

Unfortunately we do not have a rep for area 1, which covers the following sites, Branxton A & B, Leighton St Pigeons, St Anthonys, St Michaels, Stephen St and Walker Rd. The AWG would happily consider co-opting a volunteer who would be willing to undertake the job.

It is worthwhile also mentioning that all members are volunteers who do the job without any reward except a great deal of satisfaction.

In mentioning the AWG members I think it is also appropriate to mention George Ross. George was a member from 1999 when the AWG was first set up and served as the representative for area 3 for 10 years. Thank you George!

## **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 2116217**

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.

**SEE YOU AT THE SHOW ON 13 SEPTEMBER  
AND REMEMBER TO WIN A PRIZE  
YOU HAVE TO ENTER**