

Moorside Newsletter

Summer 2010

It has been a dry and chilly start to 2010 which has been due mainly to the winds blowing from the North and NE. This has got the season off to a late start. We do need some rain but one is always anxious that once it starts it will forget to stop! Still, gardeners are resourceful people and we soon learn to adapt to the weather conditions: I am confident that once again we will see a lot of good quality produce at our annual show in August.

If you plan to show items for the first time and are a little bit unsure of what to do here are my three top tips.

1) read the show catalogue carefully so you are clear about exactly what is required. If it says to enter a certain number of vegetables in a class, then ensure you enter only that number. If you enter soft fruit they should be entered with their little stalks still attached.

2) When entering, say five beans, for example, make sure they are all *exactly* the same size, and shape. This is why experienced growers will produce hundreds of beans from which they can select their five perfectly matching ones. The same applies to fruit and potatoes and any other group category.

3) make sure your produce looks as perfect as possible: it should be well washed to remove any residual soil and they should have as few blemishes as possible.

The quickest way to learn is to visit a good show and look carefully at how the experienced people have prepared their entries. There are certain established conventions to follow, particularly with the

showing of forms of Onion and Leek. Then, start early for next season! Plan what you intend to enter and think how it can be grown as perfectly as possible. For example, Potatoes for shows were traditionally grown in pure peat in black plastic bags: this produced very clean skins (but they tasted insipid!).

Plants for wildlife.

1) A good basic principle is to go for the more natural flowers with a single row of petals: the "daisy" look! "Doubles" and the more developed hybrids often have less or more inaccessible nectar. For example, Roses with many layers of petals are lovely to look at but of little value to wildlife.

2) Try to have something in flower every month of the year. A mix of shrubs, bulbs and flowers will accomplish this.

My list of wildlife friendly plants.

1) Bee balm. *Monarda*.

2) Native Foxgloves. *Digitalis purpurea*.

3) Poached egg plant. *Limnanthes douglasii*

4) Asters and other flowers with the "Daisy" look, including "Sunflowers".

5) Buddleja – the butterfly bush. Cut it down each spring to 18 inches from the ground.

6) Vipers bugloss. The very best bee plant. It is a large native wildflower.

7) Herbs: Thyme, Sage, Borage, Lavender, Fennel.

8) Forms of Teasel and thistle.

9) Blossom on fruit trees.

10) Night scented flowers for Moths: "Evening Primrose" and Tobacco plants *Nicotiana sylvestris*.

The Newcastle Allotment Strategy 2010-2015

The Newcastle Allotment Working Group (NAWG) have just completed a strategy document which will shortly be going out for consultation. It is a 65 page document which will probably be too big to post up on the Moorside website. However the full document should soon be available for you to look at on the Newcastle Allotments website:-
www.newcastleallotments.co.uk

The stimulus to the production of this strategy has been a surge in demand for allotments in Newcastle and specifically three petitions to Newcastle City Council, including one from Moorside in October 2009. The strategy begins with section one giving the first ever detailed account of the history of allotments in Newcastle from the nineteenth century to the present. Section two summarises evidence about the universal benefits of allotments. There follows in section three a summary of research on the progress of allotments in Newcastle from 2001 and 2005 to 2008. This notes that there are currently around 2,500 allotments in Newcastle, of which 600 are half plots. From a situation of having 300 vacancies citywide in 2001 there are now no vacancies and a combined waiting list of over 800 for the 62 Newcastle allotment sites. The research also describes the improvements in management and facilities on allotments from 2001 to 2008.

Section four summarises a 2010 community research commissioned by NAWG in which 1,100 Newcastle residents were interviewed. This found that 16% of residents were interested in tenancing an allotment, which would mean that current allotment provision would have to be increased by a factor of ten to meet potential demand. There is also a summary of the Moorside University Survey as available on our Moorside website. Section five consists of a summary of how the allotment strategy has been shaped by key national policies, and how it fits in with local strategies such as the Sustainable Communities Strategy and the Wildlife Strategy.

Finally section six describes the future direction of allotments in Newcastle shaped by three principles and sixteen targets as follows:-

Principle One Newcastle City Council should aspire to meet both current demand for allotments and to plan for even greater future demand for allotments by residents of the City. The targets for this principle are:

- 1) NAWG to set minimum standards for plot cultivation.
- 2) All new plot-holders to be given, initially a half plot with opportunity to move to a full plot having demonstrated the ability to cultivate. A maximum of one plot per household.
- 3) The City Council will undertake to protect Newcastle's existing 62 allotment sites.
- 4) The City Council and NAWG will find land and funds to create more allotment provision.

Principle Two Newcastle's devolved management of allotments should be nurtured in order to improve the structural and communal quality of allotment sites. The targets for this principle are:

- 5) Management will be improved via greater liaison with local councillors and more allocated time for strategic thinking and monitoring.
- 6) NAWG will continue to work towards the provision of basic facilities on all Newcastle allotment sites (water, secure perimeters, on-site toilets, facilities for the old and less able.
- 7) NAWG will continue to promote a sense of a Newcastle allotment community and to facilitate communal tenure of plots.
- 8) NAWG will encourage school involvement in allotment sites and produce a template child-protection policy for allotment sites.
- 9) NAWG will tackle crime and vandalism by holding a central register of crimes and produce co-ordinated plan to reduce crime and vandalism.
- 10) NAWG will collate information upon flooding and identify funds to combat flooding.

Principle three Allotments make important contributions to Newcastle's environmental and ecological well-being which need to be recognised and fully integrated with existing local strategies

The targets for this principle are:-

11) NAWG will research pesticide and herbicide use on allotments with a view to an educational programme advocating organic gardening.

12) NAWG will conduct research into the carbon savings of allotments.

13) NAWG will initiate a pilot project to produce green energy on allotments.

14) NAWG will liaise with wildlife organisations to promote the conservation of wildlife on allotments.

15) NAWG will encourage beekeeping on allotment sites and encourage the improvements of bee forage on plots.

16) NAWG to investigate more hedge planting on allotment sites.

If you have any comments on the strategy they would be gratefully received by the Moorside Chairman on peter@moorsideallotments.co.uk who is a joint author of the strategy.

The Moorside Show Committee has set the date for this year's

Moorside Show to be held on **Saturday the 21st of August.**

We hope that this year's Moorside show will be an event to be enjoyed by all who look after allotments at Moorside. Every plot is eligible to enter any of the categories. We have planned a wide range of categories to appeal to all allotment holders, whether experienced or a complete beginner. Have a go and enter... its great fun.

Show classes. The categories are mainly the same as last year with slight changes. However we have greatly expanded the children's categories, doubling the **children's prizes** by creating separate categories for the under sevens and for the seven to fourteens. We hope Moorside kids will be fully involved: start planning now kids!

Trophies. There will be trophies for Moorside Champion Gardener; Best Allotment; Best Newcomer; Best Bee Friendly Plot; Best Wildlife plot as well as the Trevor Storey Unsung Hero of Moorside. Judging will take place in the last week of June or the first week in July. The criteria for judging plots will be same as those used for the City Show and can be seen on the website or copies obtained at the Trading Hut.

Selling Stalls. We will be having a book sale (any spare books or CDs please drop in to the Trading Hut from now onwards); a plant sale (any spare plants to the Trading Hut any time), art stalls and a jam stall.

Information Stalls We will have stalls giving information from Northumberland Wildlife Trust; Transition Fenham; the Comfrey Project and more (further info shortly). Anyone interested in taking up a stall for a fee of £5 should express an interest to any member of the show committee.

Demonstrations. We hope to have a demonstration on bee-keeping with a glass fronted hive (don't worry, the bees can't get out!).

Children's events. We hope to have a treasure hunt (supervised with no entry into individual plots) and face painting. Any other suggestions are very welcome.

Food and Drink. We will be having a barbeque and probably outside caterers... watch this space.

The final Show Programme has been agreed, this and the entry form will be available on the website and Trading Hut and will be sent out to all those without e-mail.

Show Committee: Peter Whewell; Pat Francis; Sue Johnson; Frank Lightfoot; Neils Souter Tony Whittle.

Allotment Growing Recipes.

I have discovered a really useful website for those interested in using their allotment produce in new recipes. Go to www.allotment.org.uk/recipe where you will find hundreds of recipes sent in by allotment holders, I have included an example of one for a vegetarian lasagne, which received excellent reviews.

Ingredients:

- 8 sheets Lasagne Verdi
- 1 medium onion peeled and chopped
- 8oz (225g) aubergine
- 8oz (225g) courgettes
- 4oz (112g) olive oil
- 1lb (450g) ripe tomatoes with a little water, or 1lb tin
- Salt and pepper
- 1 tsp each of fresh parsley, basil and oregano chopped, or ½ tsp of each dried
- 2 oz (56g) butter or margarine
- 2 oz flour
- ¾ pint(400ml) full or semi-skimmed milk
- 3oz (84g) parmesan cheese, grated

Method: Serves 4

Slice the aubergine and courgettes lengthways and lightly sauté in hot oil along with the chopped onion. Drain and put aside.

Peel and chop the tomatoes and mix with seasoning and herbs. Put into a saucepan and bring to boil. Boil rapidly until sauce has thickened.

In a separate saucepan melt the butter or margarine, stir in the flour and gradually add milk. Cook stirring constantly until sauce thickens. Simmer for 5 minutes and then stir in the grated parmesan.

Pour a layer of the tomato sauce over the bottom of a greased shallow ovenproof dish. Arrange a layer of lasagne on top, then a

layer of veg and cheese sauce. Repeat until everything is used, ending with a layer of cheese sauce. Sprinkle the top with a little more grated parmesan.

Cook in a pre-heated oven at Gas Mark 4 (350 degrees F/ 180 C) for about 40minutes until golden brown and the lasagne tender.

Liz Whewell

When removing sideshoots from tomato plants, instead of discarding them, keep some to use as cuttings if you need a few extra plants. They root quickly into small pots of multipurpose compost on a windowsill indoors and they will start flowering and fruiting far sooner than seed - raised plants so they will catch up with your existing plants.

Andrew Moat

Tip for picking your Tomatoes:

Water them in the morning but delay picking them until the evening. Over watered Tomatoes taste insipid. Giving them a day in the sun helps them to dry a little and improves the flavour.

As allotment holders we grow a lot of our own vegetables. Unless you are self-sufficient however you will still need to buy some from the shops. From the 1st July all organic produce grown in the EU which meets the required standards will have to display this symbol.

