

# Moorside Allotments association: Summer newsletter

Welcome to our June edition of the newsletter.

## News items.

The **Moorside Show** takes place on Saturday the 5th September and it should be a good afternoon. Neils (plot 88) is the Show Secretary. This year we have, in addition to our extensive flower and vegetable prizes, a fun section and also a children's section with a mini-garden, a painting of a flower and a small scarecrow. Also there will be face painting and quoits for the kids. The brochure will be printed shortly and available via notice-boards and the Trading Hut.

Help is needed at three levels:

1. Any member who wants to get involved in the planning of the Show can be co-opted onto the Show Committee; just see Neils.
2. We need volunteers on the Friday to help erect stalls and volunteers to help with events on the Saturday such as the face painting and quoits for the kids; again see Neils.
3. We need help accumulating raffle prizes; if you have any item you wish to donate we would be very grateful, please leave at the trading hut. We are going to have a stall for books and CDs, so if you have any unwanted books or CDs please also leave them in the Trading Hut too and we will store them in the Community Hut.

## Moorbank garden

Moorbank Garden is looking really good and is well worth a visit. It is open on two occasions as follows:

July 15th, this is an evening event 5 - 8pm:  
October 25th 2 - 5pm.

## Rotovator and Strimmer.

The association has a petrol-driven Rotovator and Strimmer available for the use of members on their plots. Before being able to use it however you must undertake a short training session. Please pass your name to a committee member if you would like to take advantage of this scheme.

## Need some help with your plot?

Over the last few months the 82<sup>nd</sup> Newcastle Scout Group (plot 81) have been fortunate enough to have had additional help with the heavy digging on our plot from some young people organised through the youth offending team (YOT). The young people have come along on occasional Saturday mornings and spend a couple of hours digging, weeding etc. These young people have been involved in low level offences and as part of their reparation to society need to undertake some community service hours.

Our experience of this has been very positive, they have worked hard, been polite and compliant and respectful of our allotment. They are always supervised by at least one worker from the YOT, in addition to one of our group leaders.

The supervisor is keen that opportunities to help others are available and would be prepared for the young people to help other allotment holders and would be interested in the future to have their own allotment.

*Carol Preston*

The committee have been approached with a view to allowing the young people mentioned in this article to help out more widely on the site. Any member who needs some extra help could ask for the YOT to assist them with a working group. Before a final decision is made the committee would like to hear the views of other allotment members. Are you happy or unhappy with this idea? Please let any of the committee members know your views. Thank you.



4 eggs: 25<sup>th</sup> April.



8 days after hatching.



Two weeks later.



10 days after hatching.



5 days after hatching.



One of the four fledglings to make it.

Tony Whittle has sent in this remarkable series of photos of a Blackbird which nested two feet above ground in logs in his backyard. In just over a month four fledglings were successfully reared.

**We all grow various types of *Brassica* on our allotments. Here are a few facts about this family to interest you.**

**Brussels Sprout.**

This well known crop was not grown in Britain until the early years of the nineteenth century. The plant may have originated near Brussels and is generally thought to be a sport that occurred around 1750.

**Cauliflower.**

This was once known as the "Cole Flowery". It was known to the Romans but doesn't appear to have been widely used in this country until the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century it had become highly regarded as a plant and Dr. Johnson considered it to be his most favoured vegetable. Purple and red types of Cauliflower were once grown in this country. Now we prize white and cream coloured heads.

**Broccoli.**

This comes from the Italian word for "shoot". It has been grown in southern Europe since ancient times. It may have originated on the island of Cyprus. It probably came to Britain in the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century. We now grow a rather limited range of Broccoli. In the Victorian kitchen garden you could have found brown, red and cream heading varieties, and green, purple and white sprouting ones.

**Swede.**

The yellow one! And yes, it is a brassica... It was introduced into Britain from Sweden in 1770, hence its name. It is thought to have originated in central European medieval gardens, possibly as a hybrid between Kale and Turnips, (another brassica!).

**Cabbage.**

Cabbages are probably native to this country and have been known about for a very long time. The Romans had heading Cabbages similar to the ones we grow today. They thought raw cabbage to be a useful cure for drunkenness and this idea persisted in Europe until the 16<sup>th</sup> century. They were once known as "Coleworts". It was once not uncommon for cabbages to be boiled for two hours before cooking!

**Kohl Rabi.**

This member of the family has never been very popular in Britain, compared to the continent of Europe, which may help explain why it does not have an English name, although it was once referred to as, "Turnip rooted cabbage". It was widely grown in German speaking countries. The Romans grew a plant that sounds similar to this one. They are best grown quickly and harvested while still small.

**Kale.**

The Kales are the most closely related members of the family to the original wild types of Brassica. They have been used since ancient times but have a reputation for being suitable only as a poor man's food or animal fodder. The colourful ornamental types were grown to decorate the Victorian dinner table, not the garden. Today we are seeing a resurgence of interest in these "ornamental cabbages" for our flower gardens.

**Mizuna.**

Tired of all the usual caterpillar-eaten brassicas? Then why not try something new this year? This is an oriental brassica which is becoming popular as a "cut and come again," addition to salad bowls. It matures in only ten weeks, grows over a very long season, and can be cut at any time.

**Point of view...**

There is a tendency amongst some gardeners to look back to an earlier "golden age" in horticulture: ways of doing things were simpler and the food tasted better etc. I confess I have a tendency to this nostalgia myself. So I most interested to set up a trial to test out this philosophy. I obtained some heritage Pea seeds, "Lane's Prince Albert", which I had first heard mentioned in the 1980's BBC programme, "The Victorian Kitchen garden". I planted then along with a standard modern Pea cultivar. I would then be able to compare the two types.

The first thing I noticed was how much taller the old variety was compared to our modern selection. "The proof of the pudding is in the eating" though so I was looking forward to sampling them. I found that the LPA pods were much smaller with fewer Peas in them than the modern Pea and they had a very

bland taste compared to the sweetness that we are used to from a Pea today. The actual Peas were also a lot smaller. So I have to say that I was a bit disappointed. It made the point to me though that we do take a lot of the improvements in seed breeding for granted these days. Modern seeds usually have improved disease resistance, better taste (?) and improved cropping rates compared to older varieties. So let us not automatically assume that "old is best", and start to value all of the advances in modern horticulture as well.

I will be very interested to print anyone else's experiences and thoughts on this topic. Please pass your letter's to me. Thank you.  
RG – editor.

PS I think I have some of the old Pea seeds left if you would like to try a similar trial.

### **Horticultural Fleece and Mesh.**

The invention of these products in the last few years has revolutionised the practise of organic gardening. Fleece is more widely known: it is used in the Spring and Autumn to cover early and late crops: it protects them from some pest damage but is primarily used to raise the temperature around the plants and to provide some shelter. Rain and light pass through the fleece. It should not be used to cover summer crops as they can overheat underneath it. It is also used to protect crops from late or early frosts.

Horticultural mesh is a very finely spun white plastic mesh. Again, it is laid over the crops. It is excellent in protecting them from insect and bird damage. It allows the rain and light to pass through. Fleece has a life of two or three years, whilst mesh can last ten years if looked after. You can see an example of mesh on my allotment (103) covering a frame which I have placed over some lettuce plants near my gate.

If you are an organic gardener and do not like spraying your veg' against pest attack then cover them with mesh instead...problem solved. I wish they'd invented this stuff years ago!

### **"A Man and his shed"**

By Martin Newell

This is where he'd hide away  
Each rainy summer Saturday  
The dusty radio, burbling sport  
A heaven of a manly sort  
Recalling how he'd put it up,  
The sawdust in his coffee cup  
Its atmosphere, the way it smelt  
Of creosote and roofing felt  
The making of it waterproof,  
Before the final for the roof.  
A final tap of panel pin  
And ceremonial moving-in  
Of workbench and Swarfega tin,  
A valor stove and paraffin  
And in the corner by the door  
His hoarded bits of two-be-four  
Magazines of trains and cars,  
Screws in labelled chutney jars,  
Crosscut, countersunk and 'Miss',  
A paint-stained, carborundum disc,  
His sacred singles - mainly punk,  
Abandoned bits of boyhood junk,  
Unopened kits of homebrew beer.  
For this was all his kingdom, here.  
And if the reaper came to call,  
They'd put a plaque upon the wall.  
And English Heritage declare  
A site of national interest there  
The time arrived and on you went  
And this would be his monument  
For life is transient, so they'd said,  
But much of it goes in the shed.

Submitted by Pat Macdonald and published  
on [www.pensionerslink.org.uk](http://www.pensionerslink.org.uk)