

Issue Number 7

The Newsletter of the Felixstowe Allotment Association
www.felixstoweallotments.co.uk
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DOWN
TO
EARTH

The year is running away from me, many crops are already planted and growing like topsy along with the weeds. All around me, I'm seeing plenty of activity and keen growers arranging their allotment plots to get the best crops possible for this forthcoming season.

In many respects the very wet Spring may have given us a good start and perhaps with careful thought and planning we might hold in some of that water to reduce our reliance on the taps. I'm expecting Monty to help suggest some ways at reducing our water usage as this commodity becomes more and more precious in a world that is getting hotter and hotter.

Plot 39 has seen not only a Christmas get together but now we are holding a hot drink and cake Saturday morning once a month having started in April. The photographs give testament to the event and I must thank those who ran the kitchen and to the members who baked the goodies.

The idea is to hold these monthly events throughout the summer, adding to the BBQ days already set for the 2nd July and the 10th September, providing we have support for both.

We also now have a presence on Facebook, all new to me but

we have Sarah and Claire working hard to settle in the FB site for all our members and to use it as a positive vehicle to promote good allotmenting and sharing tips and advice to further our collective interest in growing.

NEW'S NEWS



The oneway system at Cowpasture for the vast majority has proved to be worth while, especially as tenant numbers increase. It's expected that the system will be adopted by the Town Council Assets & Service committee and incorporated into future tenancy agreements.

Maintaining the road and tracks will always be a consideration given

the vehicle wear, but may I yet again request that motorists keep to the 5mph speed limit even if your car or SUV can travel faster.

The conversion of 65 rods at plots 112 at Cowpasture has now seen the renting of smaller plots known as "alittlements"...not "allotments". Nearly 20 such plots are in use by those who are new to growing or just don't wish for a 5 or 10 rod plot.

The Association has suggested that a water trough be fitted within the plots to enable watering by cans and to that end the Council have purchased a self filling trough soon to be fitted, probably with our help.

The last winter meeting in April was a success with members

hearing from growers at the Capel St Mary allotment site, which is completely self managed by a large committee. It has communal facilities including polytunnels and greenhouses. It's a very active site with a large vegetable/flower show each year. A visit to this site is likely to be offered in June.

To close, might I invite some of you to participate in Felixstowe in Flower competition, your plots are a credit



Felixstowe
ALLOTMENT
ASSOCIATION

to you and also don't forget the opportunity to enter your produce in the Garden Club show to be held at OFCA in Ferry Road on Saturday 15th July.

Keep hoeing.

Neville Farthing, Chair

DO NOT FORGET
THAT THE SHOP IS OPEN
EVERY SATURDAY
FROM 9AM to 12.30pm.
SEE PAGE 3
FOR ITEMS & PRICES



Above left: Ray Martin and Neville Farthing celebrating their birthdays at the Hut - Plot 39. Below left: A typical "allittlement" at Cowpasture. Above: Typical fayre at the monthly coffee and cake mornings. Below: Members relax and enjoy themselves at such an amicable monthly occasion.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Hot drinks and cake at the Hut - Plot 39 at Cowpasture. On the 4th Saturday of each month until October.

Saturday 17th June - Visit to Capel St Mary Allotment Site, at 10.00 am. Maximum 20 members only. First come first served.

Sunday 2nd July - Barbecue on Plot 29 at Cowpasture. Possible scarecrow competition - details will be on Felixstowe Allotment Association Facebook page.

Saturday 15th July - Felixstowe Garden Club Show at OFCA, Ferry Road. Plants etc required and help on our stall. You can also enter your plot in the Felixstowe In Flower competition. Entry forms available from Felixstowe Town Council or the Felixstowe Allotment Association.

Sunday 10th September - Barbecue at Plot 39 again at Cowpasture. Don't miss it - the last one of the season.

New Members

Cowpasture

Lucy Turnell
Teresa Hunt
John and Amanda Roberts
Helen Bird and Wesley Yardley
Val Wallace
Chris Piddington
Mike Dean
Oliver Dale
Kevin and Ruth Lewis
Rachael Osbourne
Dave Flaherty
Georgina and Roy Baxter

Ferry Road

Railway Hill
Katharina Froede

Taunton Road

New water trough now fitted at Cowpasture

As mentioned earlier a water trough was suggested within the new Allittlements at the Cowpasture site. The photographs show the busy association members digging an 80M trench alongside the Council ground staff with the work being finished within the day.

The trough, although small, should relieve some of the pressure which we are seeing on the water taps, with water usage becoming a more significant issue as the climate seems to be heating up.



- Compost**
60 litres **£6.50**
- Chicken Pellets**
4kg **£4**
- Bonemeal**
3kg **£3.50**
- Fish/Blood/Bone**
3kg **£3**
- Growmore**
3kg **£5.00**
- Potato Enricher**
3kg **£5.50**
- Fine or Large Mesh**
£1.50 or £2 per metre

- 8ft Bamboo Canes**
£10 for 12
- Fleece**
35g **£1** per metre
- Garden Lime**
3kg **£2** or **£10** per bag
- Paper Potato Bags**
£1.50 for 2
- Weed Suppressant**
4m wide **£2.00** per metre
- Weed Suppressant**
2m wide **£1.00** per metre

Prices subject to fluctuation

Well, two weeks ago I thought Spring had finally Sprung ... and then Winter returned with a vengeance, although the weeds seem to care not one iota about the temperature. I went up to weed the plot yesterday - before Mrs Monty and I departed for a week in supposedly sunnier, warmer climes (in Dorset... don't ask... Yes, it was just as wet and just as cold even in the South West!) there was hardly a weed in sight, yet seven days later the plot looked like the Amazon Forest in full growth. I only wish the veg were as robust and vigorous as the speedwell and groundsel!

Unseasonal temperatures notwithstanding, I'm starting to worry that this Summer is going to follow the pattern of recent years.

If 2023 is anywhere near as hot and dry as 2022 was, watering will be the major challenge for allotmenters and we're all going to have to think long and hard about how we keep our plots heathy and productive. Lugging the equivalent of Lake Windermere daily from the site taps in endless two gallon cans may save a small fortune in gym memberships and lycra (definitely, Don't Ask!!) but on an unrelenting basis it's no fun at all. And heavy water usage will inevitably bring ominous warnings from the Town Hall about excessive charges; the Council have, after all, already declared a Climate Emergency so allotment water consumption is bound to be on their radar.

I've been giving this subject a lot of thought in the long, lonely hours spent weeding. I don't for one moment claim to have the right answers, but here's a few things I will/won't be doing this year...

The best way to avoid having to spend excess time watering is to firstly invest in the soil itself. A healthy soil, enriched with humus, needs less added water as it retains moisture like a sponge. Soil scientists have found that putting down two bucketfuls of well-rotted compost or manure per square metre will increase the moisture content by the equivalent of a crop's water requirements for two weeks.

The second step is to apply a liberal mulch (at least three inches deep) of similar organic material, to lock

moisture in and reduce loss through evaporation. Also avoid heavy digging after mid Spring, so winter rainfall isn't brought to the surface, to be stolen away by sun and wind. In a drought, No Dig is King!

Secondly, grow crops that don't have an excessive thirst or which are susceptible to high temperatures. Leeks, once puddled in, send down deep roots and are generally resilient. Likewise roots such as carrots, beetroots and parsnips can survive dry periods once established. French beans

have surprisingly frugal requirements for water - and unlike their running cousins, don't throw their unset flowers to

the ground in a hissy fit once the

temperature starts to rise. Outdoor tomatoes only really need watering once the trusses have set - sweetcorn is the same. Cabbages and calabrese are far better choices than cauliflowers and Brussels sprouts, which have a tendency to run to seed. The best, and by far easiest to grow leafy veg is spinach beet, which positively revels in the dry heat.

Certain varieties of potato, including the blight-resistant Sarpo range and Desiree are more successful when rainfall is low. I've put in a few rows of Sarpo this year to see just how they perform, (no doubt a sure guarantee that 2023 will be the wettest, coldest year on record!) Unfortunately, traditional Northern Hemisphere favourites such as summer and autumn peas may be off the menu, not because of the dryness but the heat, which (like Monty and Mrs Monty) they just can't tolerate.

Planting crops further apart may also be beneficial, since the increased spacing allows them to spread their roots out to find moisture. Against this, planting more closely creates shade, which reduces evaporation and allows plants to make greater use of the same quantity of added water. Horticultural experts can't seem to agree on this point, so maybe it's a case of paying your money and taking your choice.

Keep splashing on the Factor 50 sunblock and always wear a wide-brimmed hat!

Happy gardening!

MONTY SAYS

This year's watering options

If you have an allotment plot and are not a member of the Felixstowe Allotment Association, you could be missing out! There are several advantages, like free insurance, discounted garden seeds etc and monthly meetings where most of the business is focused on horticulture.