

# Cripley Meadow Newsletter May 2020

[www.cripley Meadow.org.uk](http://www.cripley Meadow.org.uk)

Firstly, thanks to all who have amended their allotment behaviour to enable us all to use and enjoy the site in these extraordinary times. It has been great to see so many members working productively.



Jane Mollison has been painting the water butt by her plot. You can see the finished thing [here](#), but please don't go to look in person. **Continue to adhere to our COVID-19 regulations - keep mostly to your plot and limit movement around the site as much as possible.** We aim to avoid inundating you with emails so please keep an eye on the [website](#) and noticeboards for changes.

On April 18<sup>th</sup> Oxford City Council banned all bonfires on allotments. This includes any fire that generates smoke - incinerators, fire pits and lit BBQs (gas ones are OK). The Communal bonfire is now closed.



Please **store anything for burning on your plot until further notice.**

Our last bonfire was so big it attracted the attention of the neighbours, the police and fire services. The services judged it to be a controlled fire. However, when and if bonfires are allowed again we will alert in advance. We are

monitoring the bonfire/rubble pile area (no dumping!) with CCTV.

Our new lease is likely to restrict bonfires.

**It's Compost Awareness Week** so a good time to remind you of the composting [advice on our website](#).

## 'Working party' plan

Fortunately, our finances can cope with emergencies. Jeremy Hyde, Plot 91, is doing working party plot and site work. He has already put another new bridge to Cripley Island. All our communal spaces, including the Island, are closed to members for Covid reasons; note also that the Island's weeping willow is dropping large branches, another reason to stay away! Arthur Bruce, plot sf19, is also doing plot clearance for the Association. He has already cleared plots 102 and 103 and is



starting on 107. Apart from committee members (all their [photos are on the web site](#))

Jeremy and Arthur are the only people you should see on another plot or plot path ...other than the member.

## Reports of stealing

Unfortunately, members have reported missing tools - a spade, secateurs, loppers and a wheelbarrow - and we had a very distressing report from a member about to crop her first asparagus. It was harvested by another! Members cannot make judgements about whether plots are worked or not, and no member should be ever be on a plot or plot path that is not their

own. **Our constitution is rightly harsh about stealing.** We have to be able to trust one another.

**The Skip** - There has clearly been some dumping. We cannot accommodate members' household and garden waste. We need the skip for plot clearance so we will have to keep it for now but monitor with CCTV, and open bags to check contents. Please check the list on the nearby noticeboard about what can go in the skip.



Copies of the latest **National Allotment Society magazine** are available for members on the noticeboard by the main gate. Please leave one for reference.

## Parking

We have generally had a tremendously positive response to limiting car use and conserving our parking areas for those who need extra consideration. We have been picking up on our AGM commitment to enforce rules on not parking on tracks or green areas or anywhere on The Green. To be fair we had got rather lax about this and a handful of members had developed some bad habits, parking on plots, the orchard, tracks, indeed any green space next to a plots whether it was theirs or not. There can be no parking on plots as our constitution and allotment law precludes any use other than for the cultivation of flowers, fruit and vegetables (your plot space goes up to where the track is mowed). Parking on tracks by your plots is

only allowed to briefly, and rarely, to load or unload heavy material.

It is great that the present emergency seems to have made us all more aware of pollution and consideration for our neighbours. Long may it last. Members of the committee have spoken or written to 17 people or so over the last few weeks and **almost** without exception members have been extremely supportive and cooperative. Please let us know if you have a particular health issue requiring consideration.

**Spring Audit** - Given current circumstances, we won't be having a full audit. But we will be checking on plots that limit their neighbours' productive use of the plot. Audit lead Tia and other Committee members will be going round the site individually over the next two weeks or so. We will only contact you if we have concerns.

Do your best to improve your **rainwater harvesting**. If you are reliant on Castle Mill tanks, a reminder that they will only be rain-filled this year (whereas they used to be topped up by the University with mains water). Everyone should be making the most of harvesting rainwater as this is the most eco-friendly and reliable water source.

**The Shop** We have had a new delivery of manure and Sarah's safe system of paying online and booking a slot at the shop is working really well and enabling the shop to stay open. Many thanks to Sarah.

**Vacant plots and Waiting list** - We had a delivery of black plastic to cover vacant plots. Members who cannot get to their plots presently as locked down elsewhere have

generally let us know and most have made arrangements to manage it whilst they cannot. We are getting regular enquiries from new members and we already have 22 on our waiting list which is more than the number of available plots, although sizes vary, and we may subdivide more plots. We are emailing potential members to assure them that we will start tours as soon as lockdown is over. We will not accept applications from present members for more space until we have accommodated our waiting list.

**Fiddlers Stream Water Butts** Training for members in how to fill the water tanks has been carried out. Amanda, Peter, and Tia are looking after the middle one, by plot 31, Christine has a team with Barrie, Doke, Robin, Richard and Jean to do the 3 at the North end, Rob and Louise are covering the South end.

### Mowing



The mowers are back. Due to COVID-19 they will not always be experienced workers on site so do **make sure your plot is numbered** as they work by map and the site is not easy to navigate. They accidentally mowed the new wild strip on The Green, but we have marked it out again. We have re-found the path between plot 6 and 7 which

had become too narrow due to with a vigorous *Rosa rugosa*.

### Cripley Meadow Bees

You may have noticed that our two beehive sites have been moved to new locations (plots 10b and SF12/13, still at each end of the site to maximise pollination but now in more natural settings closer to open country). The [website](#) and noticeboard have information on bees. May and June marks the natural bee swarming season and the information includes contact numbers if you spot a swarm on site. Meanwhile, beekeepers Christine Melia and David Edwards are always happy to answer questions or queries.

### On my plot

We are eating the very last of the potatoes, carrots and celeriac in April and still have a few good onions! The asparagus is cropping well and there is plenty of lettuce and still some white sprouting. My 2020 potatoes are through and covered. There will inevitably be some **frost** before May is out and up to the first week of June, but they usually recover. I continue to dig up dandelions galore and bag them to rot down as I have lots of bee-friendly flowers that will not seed into my perennial planting!

### Committee meeting

The committee had its second video-conferenced meeting recently and we now aim to stick to the usual [timetable of meetings](#). The date of the next one is Weds 10<sup>th</sup> June.

Do continue to let us have requests and let us know if you are beset with unexpected COVID-related problems.

**Meanwhile stay safe and enjoy growing** - Wendy