

Cripley Meadow Allotments November Newsletter 2020

There is no committee meeting planned for December as the Committee (try to) have a 'holiday'. Any requests not already in for November will be dealt with in [January](#).

Covid 19 - Oxford's period in Tier 2 was short-lived. The Committee has once again reviewed our Covid management arrangements now England is in "Lockdown 2". As before, the Committee is guided by national and local official guidance, and our aim to enable all members to access their plots safely. Many members are in the vulnerable category, and we want them to feel OK about coming to their plots.

We are therefore having to roll back some of the relaxation of recent weeks and return to the arrangements we put in place for the first lockdown. That means

- Go directly to and from your plot.
- The Green and other communal spaces are once again closed.
- Max 4 people on your plot (either 4 from same household, or 3 from same household plus 1 guest). Some plots are too small for this so use common sense.

As before

- Sanitise your hands or wear gloves at common touch points, particularly the Gate.
- Don't come on site with symptoms or if quarantining.
- Keep your distance from others.

New Plots

We returned 4 plots (66, 67, 84 and 109) to cultivation in 2019 and this year have extended 6465a and created 6465g. All have new members. We are exploring a cultivated space on

119 provided this does not limit the Shop. In November and December, weather permitting, we'll be looking to create three new 5 pole plots (152a 153a 153b).

Despite this, we'll still have people waiting. **Can you free up some of your plot?** If you cannot use all your allotted space please let us know as it might be possible to divide and offer space to someone waiting.

Audit There has never been a more important time to have our plots well prepared for next year's Spring food cultivation.

As we flagged in the last newsletter, the audit team this Autumn (Emma Delap, Manda Joyce, Christine Melia and Wendy Skinner Smith) went round the site on Sunday 11th October and all plots were visited. As usual we were looking primarily at levels of cultivation, weed control, trees and boundaries.

Emails will be sent out over the coming weeks to the lead member for all those plots where the Audit team identified a need for some level of remedial action.

Under the current very trying Covid 19 circumstances, and given the time of year, we do understand that not everybody will be able to take action immediately. Where this is the case, we will be asking you for a plan to do so. If you are struggling, please let us know as we may be able to arrange some help.

If your lead member does not receive an Audit email by the end of November you can assume that the team found no issues on your plot, so thank you and well done!

Trading Shop

The site's Shop will continue to open by appointment. [See website for details](#).



Congratulations again to Sandra (126A) and Alejandro (126B) for winning this year's [Harry's cup](#). Here is Sandra receiving the award on behalf of them both.

The skip

Wire fencing still attached to its wood was just piled into the skip without



any work to condense the space it took up! Another member spotted it and kindly detached the wood, took it away and crushed the fencing so that it did not take up half a skip. Please think!

The Communal Bonfire

The fire ban on plots is still in place but if the wind is in the right direction, it is dry and OCC rules does not prohibit, a couple of us (one household) may manage to use Nov 5th to clear more of the bonfire area. Many thanks to all the members who put their saved wood waste under the tarp as requested... so the material is as dry and smoke-free on burning as possible. Please continue to do this in the coming weeks.

Positive things to do...

- Clean and oil tools you will not be using.
- If you are storing produce like potatoes, onions and apples, store in a frost-free place. Do check your stores regularly.

- Collect fallen leaves to make leaf mould. If they are on grass, a mow means they can be collected and composted with grass cuttings.
- If you have a shed and it does not have gutters and water butts do organise it to **harvest water** and protect yourself against those increasingly hot and dry summers!
- Protect fruit trees against winter moth damage with grease bands. Do not use them on other trees as caterpillars are a vital food-source for wildlife.
- Sow annual sweet peas in pots now. Overwinter the seedlings of these popular climbers in a greenhouse or cold frame.
- Blackcurrants, redcurrants, white currants, and gooseberries can be pruned any time between November and March, while they are dormant. Prune out any dead, dying or diseased wood and aim for an open, goblet shape.
- Autumn-fruiting raspberries bear fruit on new wood, so cut down all of the old canes to the ground between November and March.
- If you have not done it already, protect your brassica crops from hungry pigeons. Use mesh and keep it clear of the brassicas, otherwise birds will peck through.
- If you have not done so already, stake your Brussels sprouts, as they can get top-heavy and topple in heavy winds. I have also mulched mine.

Toads...

You can harvest a surprising amount of crops in November including maincrop carrots, cabbages, Brussels sprouts, celeriac, celery and cauliflower. My root crops are fantastic this year and we are greatly enjoying a veggie version of Toad in the

Hole.

<https://www.theguardian.com/food/2020/oct/10/yotam-ottolenghi-recipes-for-autumn-traybakes>.

Celeriac, carrot, and golden beetroot are my “toads”!

...And Bats



TV presenter and naturalist Chris Packham, the RHS and RSPB are all urging gardeners to do more to help bats this autumn.

Often wrongly thought of as a pest, **bats are highly efficient natural pest controllers**, eating hundreds of tiny insects every night, including biting insects and many of the pests that can be damaging to crops. **The UK's 17 species of bats are coming under increasing pressure** as the wooded areas, ponds and open green spaces they use to feed and roost are shrinking. Our site is amazingly well endowed with green spaces but here are some tips that are within our rules for cultivated land and can help.

- Plant [insect-friendly flowers](#). Aim to keep these flowers as part of your regular sowing and planting. We are generally too rich for wildflower meadow mixes but the diversity of vegetables, complementary planting and, above all, herbs, are absolute favourites with insects and therefore bats. (Avoid perennial planting if you have any of our pernicious weeds, i.e. bindweed, ground elder or horsetail. Growing perennials in areas with

these problems will make it worse for you and your plot neighbours).

- Coppiced woody plants such as elder and willow support leaf-eating insects that help feed our bats. We will be coppicing some communal elder and willow on as soon as we have leaf drop, and hazel poles will be available for sale in the shop.
- If you do not have one !! Start a compost heap – lots of bat prey will live in it.
- Build a bat box and put it up at home - or if you want it on Cripsey Meadow, let us know and we will find it a home either in our willows or on Cripsey Island. (Bat boxes must be at least 10ft up so plot fruit trees... pruned to below 10ft to grow up to 10ft ...will not be tall enough). <https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/give-nature-a-home-in-your-garden/garden-activities/buildabatbox/>.



This is my bat box ... still not attached to a tree!

- Our surrounding water supports the midges and aquatic larvae that are the favourites of the pipistrelle bat and our adjacent uncultivated land - Badger land, Fiddlers Bow, Fiddlers Island, Willow Walk and Port Meadow - have lots of bramble and nettle to support bat food i.e. insects.

Do check the web site for more of [what to do over the next few months](#), weather permitting!

Good Gardening,
Wendy