



It was hard finding a suitable photograph for the Spring edition, finding one for the Summer edition has been a little easier as at least plants are growing now even if everything is a month or so behind. Ever the optimists, we are sure that everything will catch up soon. So what do we have for you in this edition? A brief update on the Allotment Management/Self Management situation, a report on the activities of the South Acton Community Allotment, a thought-provoking article on the situation regarding bees and the problems associated with neonicotinoid containing insecticides, a site profile of Oldfield allotments and an update about what is going on around the Local Associations including news of two of the major social events of the Ealing Allotment year.

## **Allotment Management/Self Management**

A lot happening but not a lot to report! Different sites and local associations are thinking seriously about what, if anything, they want to do about self management. Some for very good reasons are of the view that the present system works very well for them and that there is no good reason to change. Others are still looking into the possibilities. Three associations recently took up the Blondin Allotment Association offer, made at the EAP-AGM, to run a session in which they explained the basis of the limited form of self management that they have operated for a number of years. All present were impressed by what Blondin had achieved. One thing that came across very clearly was the need for a well motivated group to take this approach forward. Another that the ease, and desirability, of a move from a “site manager centred system” or a “centrally managed system” of the type operating at many Ealing Council allotments to a “collective management system” depends on the pre-existing system. That said, it is clear that many Ealing sites could benefit by adopting the Blondin approach and the people at Blondin have indicated that they are more than happy to set up another information session if requested. Their contact details

can be found under the Local Associations section of the EAP website. The attitude of the Council to moves of this type and the extent to which they would be willing to underwrite such moves in the form of a retention of rent income by participating associations is still unclear.

### **Grow Your Own – in South Acton**

South Acton Community Allotment (SACA) 'Grow Your Own' is a project set up to engage local residents in food growing, both at home and in the ground at the plot provided by Ealing Council on the Jerome allotment site.

Following successful food growing taster sessions on the South Acton estate in 2012, a constituted community group was set up to obtain funding for a full two year project. Funding was sourced from Acton Gardens, Catalyst Gateway and Ealing Council. Although initial grants included funding for an unpaid trainee, the group hope to be in a position to fund a full apprenticeship when the outcome of their National Lottery Awards for All application is announced.

'Grow Your Own' involves basic skills workshops at the local Oaktree Community Centre until the end of summer. These cover how to grow simple crops such as herbs and salad leaves in pots on balconies and windowsills, along with information on the benefits of consuming fresh produce. Regular activity sessions also run at the allotment, where participants learn all aspects of food growing along with composting, mulching and how wormeries work. Best of all they get to take home a share of the produce, which includes year-round salad leaves. Taster sessions at local community events continue to be popular and the group has recently begun delivering weekly activity sessions at the allotment for the Coram funded, young parents group and introductory training at the local after-school club. The group is keen to continue increasing awareness of the initiative to make the project sustainable and hope to announce the apprenticeship over the summer.

Jon Skoyles,  
Chair SACA

### **Bees ... where's the buzz?**

So much in the news recently about Bees being in trouble ... and they are; there is no doubt about it; but the reasons are less than clear!

Honeybees have had an awful winter. After last year's dreadful summer last year soooooo wet ... with very poor honey harvests, the bees needed lots of support during the winter – feeding, with syrup and “fondant” - sugar paste. From nine colonies in the autumn, I – a beekeeper of 20 years - had two colonies survive well, one that was “weak” - probably too weak to survive without help (which has been given), and two where the queen has gone “drone laying” and is laying unfertilized, male eggs - probably because she mated badly last year and has run out of sperm. Since the workers are the girls, and the male drones are only good for one thing, these colonies are doomed. Even now, in spring, the weather continues to be a factor – cold, wet, windy, occasional warm days, we've all suffered, and so have the bees.



*When all is going well – bees at  
Brentham*

The same is true for bumble bees – the big, fluffy cousins of honey bees who don't have beekeepers to give them TLC! Their lifestyles are different – in the autumn they produce a number of fertile queens, who mate, and hibernate. If they are in good condition, well fattened, healthy, strong, then they'll survive the winter and make a new nest in the spring. It is hard work for the queen – after emerging from hibernation she has to find a new nest site, make a nest, make some wax cells, lay some eggs, and feed the larvae that result – all by herself for the first several weeks. If the weather is good, then she will be warm, there will be pollen (important for protein) and nectar (rich in carbohydrate, full of energy) from the plentiful spring flowers that we all enjoy so much. But this year, the flowers have been late. Very, very late! Finding enough forage is more difficult, the work harder, the chance of success less. So all pollinating insects – bumble bees, honey bees, those little solitary bees, all will have been finding it tougher than usual this year.

For honeybees, there are added problems – one is the parasite, Varroa Destructor; an import that came to the UK about 20 years ago. It lives on the bees and their larvae, and sucks their haemolymph (blood). By itself it is very damaging, but rather like the mosquito vectors malaria in humans, by sucking blood, the varroa mite vectors (transmits) a variety of viruses around amongst the honey bees and their larvae. These viruses typically shorten the life of the bee by about a third, so the colony is smaller than it ought to be, and critically, the winter bees, who ought to live for several months, from hatching in October till they've nursed the first generation of spring bees in about February, die early – so there are no nurse bees and the colony can die out.

Then there is the question of the effects of garden chemicals. I am not a great gardener but am amazed at the range of materials available to gardeners and allotment holders for the sole purpose of killing things – herbicides, fungicides, insecticides, rodenticides. It is a massive industry. We've been using insecticides for years, of course, first with little understanding (do read Rachel Carsons “Silent Spring” if you disagree with that statement!) and more recently with better, and increasing knowledge and control. The latest generation of garden insecticides - currently very much in the news - are the neonicotinoids or neonics. Very efficient, very “clean”, very precise. They are often used as a seed dressing, to protect the seed in the ground. They are also the active ingredients of some of the most widely used garden insecticides. A major problem lies in the fact that as systemic insecticides they are absorbed into plants where they “protect” the whole plant. It seems likely that this includes the nectar, and pollen, those important food sources for our pollinators.

The effect of the neonicotinoids on pollinators is not fully understood but there is increasing evidence (see links below) to suggest that one of their side effects is that they can

affect bees' brains leading to changes in their behaviour, among other things their ability to navigate and for a bee, interference with its navigation, preventing it from finding its way home, is likely to be a life ending-experience. Bees are totally reliant on what they forage – the pollen and nectar from plants; everything that is in a bee hive – the wax, the bees, the eggs, the larvae, the queen – was once plant tissue harvested by a honey bee. If neonicotinoids are contaminating the nectar and pollen, then the contaminant is imported into the hive and present in everything inside. So the queen, who lays all the eggs, is contaminated; the eggs could be contaminated, the wax, that the developing larvae lie in intimate contact with for 2 weeks during their larval stages, is contaminated; the brood food, fed to the larvae by the nurse bees, is contaminated. Death by a thousand tiny doses. Hence the fuss in the media!

What can you as an allotment holder do?

1. Be friendly to bees and other pollinators. Brighten your allotments with flowers that provide pollen and nectar for bees, butterflies and other insects. Choose a range of wild flowers or garden plants to offer food from spring to autumn.
2. Make a bee hotel. A block of (untreated wood) – (an old floor or roof joist off a skip is ideal!) drill some holes in it (anything from about 5 to 8 mm diameter, 100 mm or so deep) and mount it in full sun; it will become home to – with luck – some solitary bees, *Osmia Rufa*, the Red mason bee ... fantastically hard working pollinators, will do you proud. For details see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mason.block.jpg>
3. Probably most important of all, avoid the use of chemical insecticides where possible. In many cases soapy water, a little washing-up liquid in water, will be just as effective at controlling pests like aphids and cabbage whitefly. If you feel you do have to use insecticides check the active ingredients and avoid using those containing the neonicotinoids (imidacloprid, clothianidin and thiamexoxam are the common ones).

Andy Pedley

Hon. Sec. of Ealing and District Bee Keeper's Association, and the Selborne Society Ltd.

Neonicotinoid links:

<http://bees.pan-uk.org/neonicotinoids>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neonicotinoid>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/nature/victory-for-bees-as-european-union-bans-neonicotinoid-pesticides-blamed-for-destroying-bee-population-8595408.html>

### Upcoming Events for Bee Keepers and Bee Lovers

Two events: A presentation by “Bees for Development” at Ealing Abbey on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> June and a Mikron Theatre Company production of “Beyond The Veil” at the Perivale Wood Nature Reserve on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> July. For more details go to the “Latest News” section of the EAP website at [www.ealingallotmentpartnership.co.uk](http://www.ealingallotmentpartnership.co.uk) and click on the relevant links.

## *Site Profile*

Oldfield Allotments were created when Ealing Borough purchased a piece of land between the Grand Union Canal (Paddington Branch) and Carr Road, shortly after the First World War. It was situated to the west side of the Joe Lyons Company Building and had approx. two hundred plots. Over the years, land on its west side has been lost to housing development and land to the east gained from J. Lyons.

The land alongside the canal is prone to flooding and under water most of the time and several attempts were made to create ponds in order to collect the water. Around 1970, it was noticed that Norfolk reeds (used for thatching) had started to grow in the flooded area and an area of Scientific Interest (S.I) and a Nature Reserve were created. Some parts of Oldfield Allotments are still under water in the wet season of the year; probably due to various underground springs that run from the top of Wireless Hill (Radio Station) in Northolt down to the canal. These are now separated from the Allotments by a wicker fence. Some allotment areas close to the fence still cannot be cultivated due to the high water table. A lot of work has, however, been carried out by Stephen Cole and the Park Rangers in the last two years in order to reduce the risk of flooding.



*A testimony to the hard work put in by all on site maintenance – editor!*

Oldfield currently has over a hundred plots of varying sizes each with its plot identification number on display. The Oldfield Allotments and Gardens Association has developed over the years. Plot-holders pay an annual membership fee of £2. Membership is also open to local residents. The Association has a Committee of fifteen members at present and meets five times a year. It holds its AGM early each November when Committee members are elected and reports received on work done.

The Site Manager, Michel Le Guilcher, is responsible for the routine maintenance of the site, collecting rents for the Council, letting plots to new tenants and carrying out regular site inspections. He also organises six Volunteer Days per year when plot-holders and their families work together, clearing ditches, collecting rubbish, removing weeds, trimming hedges etc. followed by a small BBQ. Our present challenge is to repair and expand our BBQ area.

We have a well organised Allotment Shop, open twice a week in the summer and once a week for the rest of the year, that has a good stock of compost bags, seeds, fertilisers, vegetables, bamboo canes etc. Each year, we organise a Produce Show with prizes for plot-holders best fruit, vegetables, flowers and herbs. Winners are decided by a panel of judges and the show is followed by a BBQ where we celebrate the success of our harvest. We also have beehives on our site and a small chicken pen – which is a big attraction for children.

Oldfield enters the Ealing in Bloom competition and we are very proud of the fact that twice in recent years we have won the First Prize for the best allotment site in the Borough.

Our plot-holders are of different ages and a range of nationalities –reflected in the wide variety of fruit and vegetables grown on our plots. Allotment first-timers thus have the benefit of guidance from long-standing members who are generous with their help and advice. At the present time Oldfield Allotments Association members are carefully considering various options open to them or the future development/improvement of the site.



*Barbeques are another Oldfield speciality – editor!*

For more information about us, visit our website [www.oldfieldallotments.wordpress.com](http://www.oldfieldallotments.wordpress.com)

Paula and Stuart Lawrence,  
Oldfield Allotments and Gardens Association

### Around the Associations

#### *Brentham Plant Swop/Plant Sale Day*



*Spoilt for choice!*

To everybody's amazement the weather on Sunday May 19<sup>th</sup>, the day of our annual Plant Swop/Plant Sale, was ideal. Warm and sunny - despite a week of rain and cold. Amazing! The plot holders turned up trumps and produced vast numbers of young plants – tomato plants, beans, cauliflower, cabbage, sprouting broccoli, lettuces, cape gooseberries, aubergines to name but a few. Cultivate London also supplied a large rack of plants sale so there were bargains galore.

The car park was packed – nobody had seen it so full before. The refreshments were plentiful and excellent and our “chef be barbeque” Malcolm Ireland and his assistants kept the hot dogs and burgers coming. Ann Salaun as usual ran an excellent raffle with prizes donated by local firms, In short an excellent day enjoyed by all that made a handsome profit for BAGS our local association which will go towards some financing the hard-core standing for our manure storage area.

*Ealing and Hanwell Allotment Association*



Ealing & Hanwell Allotment Association



# Annual Show

Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2013  
at the Polygon St Mary's Church

**open to all**

allotment holders and local residents  
in Ealing, Hanwell and Acton

bring your friends and family to look around  
enjoy high tea and a raffle from 4pm

Pick up a show schedule for the rules at the  
Ascott or Searchlight trading huts or for an online version  
go to: [www.ealingallotmentpartnerships.co.uk](http://www.ealingallotmentpartnerships.co.uk)  
or [allotmentshow@gmail.com](mailto:allotmentshow@gmail.com) and we'll email a copy to you.

Any questions?  
contact Elaine Hagan and Lynne Casey at [allotmentshow@gmail.com](mailto:allotmentshow@gmail.com)

\*The show is affiliated to the RHS, the National Dahlia and Chrysanthemum Societies

A big thank you to everyone that entered last year's show. After a year's break it was back and everyone seemed to enjoy entering again. This year we will be inviting Acton to join the show and local residents. The show has always been open to all and we really want to remind everyone about that and also the fact that the show is affiliated with the RHS and the National Dahlia and Chrysanthemum Society, so there is some pride as well as the fun

of winning. If you grow flowers in your garden, or have a neighbour who does, please consider entering the Dahlia and Chrysanthemum categories. These have been undersubscribed and it's a chance to show off those blooms. They flowers are really back in fashion (Monty Don grows them in his jewel garden, as does Sarah Raven in her cutting garden).

Last year, we had a fantastic tea and cake stall and this year it will be there again with the amazing cakes homemade by John Regan's clever daughters - who will also be running the stall. There will be cakes to eat at the show or take home with you. We will also have our usual raffle (please donate anything useful and in good condition if you can).

Remember don't eat all of your onions and potatoes - save some for the show and it's time to start thinking about making preserves as well.

Look forward to seeing you in September.

Elaine Hagan and Lynne Casey (show secretaries)

For a full copy of the categories and rules for show exhibits go to the "Latest News" section of the EAP website [www.ealingallotmentpartnership.co.uk](http://www.ealingallotmentpartnership.co.uk) and follow the link provided

### *Acton Gardening Association*

Our latest news is that we have just had the BBC-TV series New Tricks filming for four days on one of our sites at The Vale. On your screen soon!

We are now planning for our Open Day at our Bromyard Site on Sunday September 8.

Chef Barney Haughton who started the Bordeaux Quay restaurant in Bristol will be giving a cooking display using food from ploholders. For entertainment we will have a classical quartet led by our allotmenteer and violinist Laura Samuel, who appears regularly at the Promenade Concerts. We all worry how she manages to do all that weeding and digging with her valuable hands! Royal Beekeeper John Chapple will also be bringing his glass observation hive and will give talks on bee keeping.

The Brentford youth training group Cultivate London will have a stall of their home grown plants. And the finalists of our Painting competition based on Grow Your Own, organised with the W3 Gallery, Acton will be displaying their work.

*Don't forget! Sunday September 8<sup>th</sup>, noon till four with home-cooked food. Bromyard Allotments, Bromyard Avenue W3 - opposite the King Fahad Academy. Everybody Welcome!!*