

# Cavendish House Allotments *newsletter*

Issue No. 18 Spring 2014

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## **C a v e n d i s h Allotments Best Plot 2013**

The Cavendish cup was awarded to Nigel and Kim Hare for their well kept, productive and attractive plot.

The Cavendish Cup was originally given to Cavendish House Allotment Site by Nichole Anderson & John Pick who have plots 17 & 17A.

## **On Site News**

### **Seedling Swaps/ Composting Bays open Sundays**

These will be held on the last Sunday of the Month with the next on **Sunday 25 May** at 2:00 pm. Bring along your surplus seedlings to swap. Tea and cakes available.

Contributions for refreshments and for seedlings (if you do not have

anything to swap), will go towards tree surgery and the development of some raised planting beds in the car park area.

### **Communal Compost area**

Open on days as in previous item (on these days you will also be able to take compost from the bays which is free) Please do not add branches or dry woody twigs as these will take too long to break down.

### **Horse Manure**

Due to popular demand, regular deliveries will be organised for Autumn.

### **Paths**

A reminder that paths between plots should be 60cm wide and kept tidy. Buildings, permanent structures and fruit trees must not be positioned next to a path.

### **Food Bank**

Sue at Plot 8 is willing to take surplus produce to a food bank. More details as to what when and how will be posted on the noticeboard.

## **Website**

The AGM minutes and newsletters from the last 2 years are now on our website under archives.

<http://www.cavendish-allotments.org.uk/>

We're hoping to revive the website and will be using it to distribute the newsletters to those online from now on as well as posting items that might be of interest.

We would like to encourage more use of it, so why not contribute and to the forums as well?

If you are receiving this newsletter through your door and you have an email address, we would be grateful if you could let us know by emailing [enquiries@cavendish-allotments.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@cavendish-allotments.org.uk)

## **Allotments as wildlife havens**

Cavendish House Allotment site is fortunate, as far as wildlife is concerned, to have the river Crane with its mature trees along one side and the gardens of Cole Park Road on the other. The bushes and trees beside the river provide shelter for a great variety of birds from the common great & blue tits, robins and blackbirds to the rarely seen whitethroat. This warbler has been heard singing this April, possibly as it migrates to more rural areas to nest. The small perching birds have voracious appetites for pests such as greenfly and caterpillar larvae,

especially when they have young to feed. I'm sure everyone is familiar with the robin who appears the moment your fork hits the soil, to pick up grubs from the newly turned earth.

For the past couple of years we have seen a growing population of mistle thrushes, the largest of Britain's resident thrushes. Last year 2 pairs were frequently seen on the plots nearest to Cavendish House flats, picking up slugs, worms and insects to feed their young. Their harsh churring chatter is often heard across the allotment site.

Many of us have been surprised by a frog or toad sheltering in a damp corner when we lift up some polythene bag or sheet. They are renowned for eating molluscs, but did you know that the ground beetle is a major predator of slugs and snails? They live under leaves, old logs, and stones where it's a bit moist but also love areas of matted grass such as the paths between allotments.

One allotment holder had a big surprise when they found a grass snake on their plot. These reptiles are not venomous, in fact they are entirely harmless. They love warm spots so if you are lucky you may find one basking in the sun or under some polythene.

As gardeners we have to protect our crops from some of the pests, such as pigeons, slugs and snails, but much of the wildlife on Cavendish House Allotment site will help us keep the pests to a minimum if we provide the right conditions to encourage it.

Natural England have produced a leaflet called *Wildlife on Allotments* which gives more information on creating wildlife habitats.

Natural England

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Sheffield, S1 2ET

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www.naturalengland.org.uk



## Slugs

Many of us faced with loss of our tender seedlings to slugs will reach for the traditional and very effective metaldehyde slug pellets. However they are poisonous to hedgehogs, other wildlife and cats and dogs.

If you don't want to run the risk of harming wild life on the allotment what can you do?

There is a slug pellet, 'Advanced Slug Killer', based on ferric phosphate, which is claimed to be harmless to wild life. Slugs eat these pellets and then burrow into the soil and die. These are available in most garden centres.

Hunting and trapping are two inexpensive ways of ridding your allotment of slugs. Slugs hide under mulches, under or in thick areas of weeds. Looking for them in the day in their hiding places or looking for them when they are out on wet evenings, is very effective. Providing them with very few areas to hide obviously also helps. Keeping your plot well cultivated and clear of big areas of weeds will make the slug problem much less severe. Providing the slugs with a hiding place is also a good tactic. If you leave almost anything lying on the surface for a few days you will eventually find slugs there. Uprturned Grapefruit skins is a traditional trap.

Slugs can't resist alcohol. A jam jar with a little beer or cider in the bottom, placed near a plant that is being attacked by slugs will soon fill up with slugs. It is best to have the top of the jar slightly above

ground level so that it doesn't trap beneficial ground beetles. You also need to empty the jar fairly frequently before the mass of slugs start to decay, the smell then can be very unpleasant. With an allotment sized area this method can prove expensive in beer or cider. You can try making alcohol with a bit of yeast and some sugar and water and putting it in the jars after it has fermented a bit.

There are many barrier methods, many based on surfaces the slugs find difficult to cross. One type 'Slug Stoppa' is made up of granules that suck the slime from the slugs. These, it is claimed, remain effective even after rain. Another is made of wool pellets that also are uncomfortable for slugs to cross. Used coffee grains are also claimed to provide an effective barrier. But you will need a lot of barrier material to protect plants spread over an allotment. The Organic Gardening Catalogue ([www.OrganicCatalogue.com](http://www.OrganicCatalogue.com)) lists several other products and methods.

If you have found an effective method, on your plot which is harmless to wildlife, do let us know and we can put it on our website or in a future newsletter.

## Bumblebees

Dave Goulson in his book *A Sting in the Tale*, highlights the plight of bumblebees and reminds us to value and look after them. We benefit enormously from their effective pollination of fruit and vegetables so return the favour in growing some bee-friendly plants, avoid using pesticides and perhaps request the council to stop mowing grass frequently.

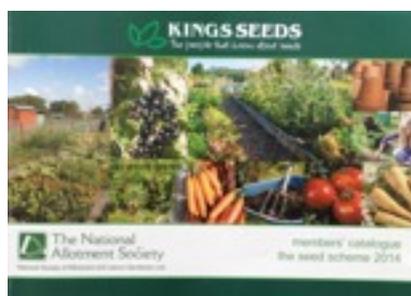
## A big thank you to Toni Francis

We think she may have now been organising the seed scheme for us from 20 years.

Anyone can join the schemes at the AGM when Toni gives out the

Kings Seeds catalogues.

The seeds are very reasonably priced and there is a good range available. Toni takes the orders by the end of January and somehow organises all of the requests and payments, and delivers the seeds by the end of February or early March for which we are most grateful.



## Jam Yesterday Jam Tomorrow

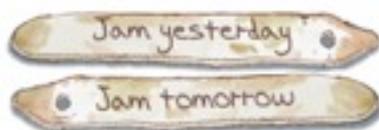
is a 3 year Heritage Lottery Fund project uncovering the history of market gardens and nurseries in Middlesex.

Various events are planned but close by in Marble Hill Park a corner is being developed into a Model Market Garden for heritage varieties of fruit and vegetables.

Also, 15 people with historical connections to market gardens have been interviewed at length to gain insight and information that would otherwise be forgotten.

Information on events, talks, workshops, newsletters and soundbites at:

[jamyesterdayjamtomorrow.com](http://jamyesterdayjamtomorrow.com)



## Recipes:



Asparagus and Gruyere Tart by Martha Stewart Flour, for work surface

1 sheet puff pastry  
2 cups Gruyere cheese, shredded  
1 1/2 pounds medium or thick asparagus

1 tablespoon olive oil

Salt and pepper

COOK'S NOTE

Emmental or Fontina cheese can be substituted for the Gruyere.

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. On a floured surface, roll the puff pastry into a 16-by-10-inch rectangle. Trim uneven edges. Place pastry on a baking sheet. With a sharp knife, lightly score pastry dough 1 inch in from the edges to mark a rectangle. Using a fork, pierce dough inside the markings at 1/2-inch intervals. Bake until golden, about 15 minutes.

Remove pastry shell from oven, and sprinkle with Gruyere. Trim the bottoms of the asparagus spears to fit crosswise inside the tart shell; arrange in a single layer over Gruyere, alternating ends and tips. Brush with oil, and season with salt and pepper. Bake until spears are tender, 20 to 25 minutes.

## Contact us

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