

MAIDSTONE ALLOTMENTS NEWSLETTER

Competitions

The first competitions have been judged – Most Attractive Plot, Best Produce, Best Newcomer, Best Overall, Most Consistently Cared For, and Most Attractive Site. There is still time to enter the photo competition - theme - “A Hard Days Work on the Allotment”. I think we all know how this feels! Entries to be in by the end of September. So please get a photo to us. Then there is – “Create a Birdhouse” - end of August for that one. Let us know so that we can come and judge. We have already seen some very tall sunflowers, send us the height and a photo by the end of August. Pumpkins – well they are coming on – end of September for that one.

Awards Evening

Tuesday 1st December,
7.30pm at Maidstone Hockey Club as usual. Please join us for a splendid visual presentation of plot entries and winners in the competitions. It is great to see what plots are like on all our sites. Awards will be presented. Mulled wine, soft drinks and nibbles for all. No cost to plot holders. Oh, and a simple gardening quiz with prizes. It is a great evening; good to support the winners and runners up and chat to fellow plot holders.



WELCOME

to our latest newsletter. I hope you enjoy the contents.

For most people newsletters from now on will be sent electronically to save postage costs, which with over 700 plot holders is huge. We know that not everyone has access to a computer – approximately 70% of our plot holders have email contact. Copies will be printed and put on notice boards so a copy is available to all. When we need to contact all plot holders, as at invoice time, we will enclose a newsletter with no extra postage cost.

BUT, importantly - please advise if you change your email address.

Judith

AGM

A good attendance as always. The Minutes of last year's meeting were agreed and signed off. The Chair reported on what has been happening on the allotments over the year and the Treasurer presented accounts [printed copies] and talked through expenditure and income.

These accounts were agreed.

(over)



LOOSE BUSY BEES

We all love to see honey bees pollinating our plants, and then going off to create honey.

However, earlier this summer, what seemed like a swarm, flew through the site to the top gate. They were intent upon creating a new home. An ideal spot had already been identified - the allotment water meter just outside the gate!

Queen installed, the bees all got busy with their various jobs.

Before long, it felt a little unsafe to walk by their 'hive'. Call in the Bee Man! He arrived with suitable gear, and sure enough, a new comb had been beautifully constructed within the meter area. He informed us that it was not a full swarm, but a cast. He carefully moved the comb with queen attached, into a box just inside the site. That evening at dusk, he returned, and by then just about all the bees had transferred to the box.

They were then driven off to become part of another hive.

We thought that was all, but a couple of weeks later, the same thing happened again (a different cast I assume). The Bee Man returned, and after the same procedure, the bees were moved on. This time we blocked up the holes in the metal covering of the meter, and so far, peace reigns. I was able to read the meter!

Lisa Moore - Loose site

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Questions were mainly about some overgrown plots on one site. A really wet time earlier this year encouraged weeds to grow – some plots can be cleared by volunteers but some need our contractor. We ended with a light hearted quiz which Cheryl from Glebe won. After the meeting we were approached by some plot holders wanting to help on the site. Good to see.

RENT INCREASE

As all are aware, the Maidstone Borough Council grant of over £10,000 has now been withdrawn totally. It was phased out over four years. We are among the very lowest priced allotments in the South East and provide great value for the opportunity to grow your own fruit and veg. We manage the sites voluntarily on behalf of MBC, which keeps costs down hugely. The Committee, working voluntarily, plan and budget for the maintenance and upkeep of the sites. There are the basic costs too – admin is a large and vital one. We also have to allow for emergency issues. Water tanks and pipes will need replacing on some sites. The accounts presented at the AGM show all these costs.

It is now obvious that to allow for the total loss of the grant, we must further increase plot rental. The cost for a plot for 2017/8 must increase by 90p per rod to £5 50 per rod, making the cost for a 10 rod plot £55 a year for 2017/18. We hope that you continue to enjoy your plot and the produce, and understand the need for this increase.

