

MAIDSTONE ALLOTMENTS NEWSLETTER

COVID - 19

With this virus which has affected life for so many, we have been very fortunate to be able to work on our allotments, with safety measures in place.

For many it meant more time to spend on their plots, fresh air and exercise, fresh produce, so good.

But you must maintain the safety measures - **please adhere to distances & sanitise your hands (especially when touching the gates, padlock & keys).**

We have also had a huge increase in requests for plots and there are waiting lists for each site.

We had to cancel our AGM, as advised on our website and as yet cannot advise a new date.

Our secretary was able to work out of office and has done a great job.

www.maidstoneallotments.co.uk

Contact Details

admin@maidstoneallotments.co.uk

01622 664528

Office hours - Mon-Tues, Thurs-Friday

9.30am - 1.30pm



WELCOME

Well a challenging time on the allotments particularly with Covid, and weather too this year - so no competitions this year. We will resume these next year.

Thanks to those who assist on sites, our reps and managers and some ploholders who help with cutting back, mowing and more. This is always appreciated and helps to maintain the sites; if you could help please speak to your site rep or manager to see what is needed.

We have some splendid pictures of our bees, and ideas for encouraging, butterflies and other wildlife but there is not enough room in this Newsletter. They will be on our website soon. Hints and tips too.

Judith

Chair



Composting

A compost bin can be simply built, pallets are often free or a small cost. All annual weeds and unwanted vegetables can be put in there. Remove as much soil as possible, leave it where it should be, on the plot. Waste vegetables and weeds **must** not be dumped on the plot, it encourages vermin as well as being a waste of your growing area and is unsightly. This produces excellent compost and at no cost!

Your plot is for growing. Sheds and greenhouses are allowed, with permission, but do not bring items that you think 'might just be useful'. It is unlikely they will be, and are, unsightly and a waste of space [oh, and not allowed!]



2020/21 Invoice

Your invoice for the next allotment year is enclosed. Payment methods are clearly shown with due date. Late payments will have to incur the surcharge.

If for any reason you are unable to continue with your plot please let us know as soon as possible.

Plot Rental

The Allotments Management Committee [MAMC], manage voluntarily the 10 sites with some 770 plots on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council who make no financial contribution.

The Committee must therefore ensure that income from plot rentals provides sufficient money to cover costs incurred on the management and upkeep of the sites. This includes site maintenance – perimeter fences in various forms, padlocks and repair of, tarmac/concrete paths where relevant - Health and Safety Issues, trees and more. Water provision also includes maintenance of pipes and taps.

Costs rise each year in providing these, including our administration costs. But the most significant cost pressure we currently face relates to the cost of water used. Hotter and drier summers are now a fact of life leading to a huge increase in water consumption with the major impact on our costs. Water costs so far in 2020 are much higher than expected – and place significant pressure on our finances.

We did not increase plot rentals last year (October 2019) but must do this year (2020/2021) to cover all costs.

Plot rental will therefore be increased:

- * from £6 to £7 50 per rod from 01 October 2020;
- * a 5 rod plot will increase in cost from £30 to £37 50 a year;
- * a 10 rod plot will increase from £60 a year to £75.

We remain amongst the least costly allotment providers in the South East with all that is provided.

Contact

Please advise us of email, mobile changes and any change of address.

Please ensure our emails do not go to your spam/junk filter – please add - admin@maidstoneallotments.co.uk to your address book.

To contact you by email is speedy and at no cost to us.

Keep in touch

If you have a concern or problem working on your plot, please let us know so that we are aware, we might be able to help. If we don't know it can cause a problem

Tenancy Agreements & Amendments

PLEASE READ AND ADHERE TO - it is an essential agreement for renting you the plot. All sections are important and necessary. It gives us no pleasure to have to advise you that the rules are being ignored and you risk losing your Tenancy. Some problems this year have been people going on to other plots to take produce. Children roaming on to other plots and the site – this is not allowed and is not safe for them. Over use of water.

We want all to enjoy their plots Please help, if unsure if something is allowed please ask your site rep or manager or email the office.

Additions/amendments to the agreement will be advised to all ploholders, as they arise.

Watering

Please water only for the time allowed as in your Tenancy Agreement - 15 minutes for a 5 rod plot, 30 minutes for a 10 rod plot. Anything more is not allowed or necessary. It is also unfair to fellow ploholders to use more as they will be waiting to use the water too.

Lisa who manages Loose site advises what we know is best – rain water. With guttering on your shed or greenhouse, place a large plastic container under the drain pipe to collect the water, a tap at the bottom is good to fill a watering can or dip it in if it is not a raised container. Buckets on your plot - you can gather precious rainwater that way too. Using a watering can directs water straight to the plant rather than wasting it on foliage.

Water provision is primarily via the tanks, the use of hose pipes is a privilege and may be withdrawn at any time. The water is turned off from November until March. A good time to sort a system to collect your own rainwater which will work all year – when we have our precious rain.



Facebook

Our page is locked down to approved membership only. To gain access to our facebook site existing ploholders must email the details to our Secretary. It will then be checked and you will be given a password. To control what is posted, people that wish to post anything on it, must email the details to our Secretary. It will then be checked and posted by the MAMC admin team. CHECK WEBSITE FOR MORE DETAILS.

Companion Planting

I always thought Companion Planting was when the neighbouring plot holders were friendly enough to share their seed potatoes but I was wrong. The concept is to grow companion plants alongside the crop plants and thus create a mutually beneficial environment and, in doing so, reduce the need for undesirable chemical application. 2020 will be remembered for many things (Blackfly?) but the weather patterns saw common garden pests explode in profusion not witnessed before and our crops were victim to these little horrors. Some plot holders reached for the spray gun whilst others manually removed the pests from their crops and washing-up liquid was used in copious quantities to combat the plague. It was whilst doing my rounds as site rep that I noticed French Marigolds growing in close company with beans. Similarly, carrots rubbed shoulders with yet more marigolds and both crops looked exceptionally good given the year. This was a fine example of Companion Planting where both White fly and Carrot fly were under control as both find marigolds impossible to live with. This situation is repeated for many other plants and it is well worth a visit to the Internet to see just what can be achieved. Space will not allow me to expand here but do tap "Companion Planting" in your browser and you will be treated to some good, sound advice as to who likes who in your greenhouse and plot. A good, solid organic way forward.

See photograph on page 2.

PETER - Sandling Lane

Wildlife

We are fortunate to have these wonderful large open spaces for our allotments, rare in these times of so much building going on. We share them with our precious wildlife as their lives have changed too. They are beautiful to see but we know can cause problems sometimes. Foxes like to dig and the cubs to play and sometimes crops get damaged. It is wonderful to see them but some don't like them because of the damage they can do, but they must not be harmed. Trapping or poisoning is an offence and will result in prosecution. Humane deterrents can be used, Scoot from Foxolutions.co.uk for example. Nothing stronger. One site has seen a beautiful badger helping himself to the plum drops, perfect. Another has a hedgehog wandering in from the wildlife area below the site. Squirrels – well they have eaten a lot of my sweetcorn but I should have picked them sooner. Pigeons are a problem but secure netting usually stops them.

We have dedicated wildlife areas on four sites, managed by volunteers not just left to be overgrown and there we can encourage our smaller wild friends. One has a small pond, made to be frog friendly with newts and a toad already. It is a quiet and precious area in a safe corner of a site.

Bees are so important and planting flowers to encourage them is really good. Please look online for good advice, lavender is a sure winner – bees are so vital to pollination.



FACEBOOK – Correction to information in the Newsletter

Our page is locked down to approved membership only.

To gain access, existing plotholders will need to find our page on Facebook, and submit a Join Request

An email notification will be automatically sent through to the MAMC admin team. The request will then be checked and approved.

People that wish to post anything on it, must email the details to our Secretary. It will then be checked and posted by the MAMC admin team.

CHECK WEBSITE FOR MORE DETAILS.