

# fairfield allotments

newsletter 30 Winter 2014 / 2015

## HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL MEMBERS

Summer 2014 was another good year for growing and it was a great experience to wander through the site after a hard day's gardening and see wonderful flowers, fruit and vegetables. The year 2014 brought us a lot of new members and most were able to cultivate their plots in time to get some useful harvests, even though one family heard to remark that fried courgettes, steamed courgettes, courgette casserole, courgette pudding and courgette cakes could become a little tedious! 2014 was also the first year in which we have been fortunate enough to receive several regular deliveries of horse manure, and this has undoubtedly added to the fertility of our plots. It is always eagerly and quickly gathered, and special thanks are due to the members who have the patience to scrape up the last bits, thus restoring the paths to their usual tidy state thanks to the mowing carried out so conscientiously by Martin Luke.

## SEED SCHEME

Many of you will have noticed we are a little late with the seed scheme this year. Please accept John's apologies for this it was a complete oversight! If you are on our email list you will have received an email about the scheme by now. Like last year we will only deliver catalogues to those that want one. If you, do please email John ([secretary@fairfield-allotments.co.uk](mailto:secretary@fairfield-allotments.co.uk)) or phone 01524 849371. The catalogues should hopefully be with us soon unless they have got caught in the seasonal parcel delays or worse (stuck in a City Link warehouse!).

## GATE - SIBSEY STREET END

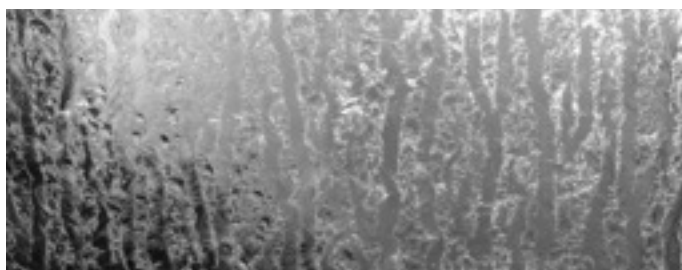
A concrete pad has been laid to allow the manure skip easier access. The work has been carried out by Lancaster City Council and the Probation Service Community PayBack Team and we would like to put our thanks on record. We will pay only for materials. Obviously this pad will help all vehicles approach navigate the steep entrance but please continue to bring vehicles in only when the ground is dry. Manure deliveries will still be alternated between the two gates but there will not be a concrete pad at the Sunnyside gate because the approach is much more level.

## NEW PADLOCKS

After some initial teething problems resulting from bad advice about lubrication, George Burnett has now taken on responsibility for regular maintenance. We are now using two locks alternately for each gate so that the spare can be thoroughly dried and lubricated. If you have any problems contact George on 07989 823973 or [georgeburnett52@gmail.com](mailto:georgeburnett52@gmail.com). **Please don't oil the locks because, believe it or not, this can actually make them worse in the long term.**

## A PAT ON THE BACK

It is always good to read that allotment holders throughout the country are contributing to the wellbeing of the land. In April an article in the Telegraph reported the findings of a research project which analysed the health and fertility of allotment and other urban soils in Leicester compared with arable soils in the surrounding countryside. Healthy soils were defined as those containing plenty of organic matter which enables the soil to hold nutrients, resist erosion and maintain its structure. The findings showed that allotment soils were higher in organic matter and more fertile than farmed arable soils leading to 'yields of fruit and vegetable 4 – 11 times greater than conventional agricultural crops.' The difference was attributed to the fact that allotment holders routinely compost allotment waste and household green waste and use manure and commercial compost.



## SURPLUS PRODUCE SALE, AUGUST 2014

Thanks to so many members contributing their time and produce we had our best ever Surplus Produce Sale raising a total of £758.00. Special additional thanks go to Ruth Mackenzie and Gillian Allen who once again worked extremely hard and were responsible for the overall organisation from the planning to the actual day. We were fortunate to have dry weather and the whole event looked smart and attractive with our three new event shelters bought with the proceeds of the previous year's event. The successful 2013 Surplus Produce Sale also contributed to the purchase of six matching folding tables and two benches which serve well as low tables.

The event was a great opportunity for allotment holders to get together, and everybody seemed to have a thoroughly enjoyable time as well providing invaluable help. We can always use extra help next year even if you can only contribute an hour or two.

## COMMITTEE AND CONTACTS

Your allotment committee is:

**Chair:** Manjeet Lamba

**Secretary:** John Lambert, 6 Carr House Lane, Lancaster LA1 1SW. Tel: 01524 849371.

Email: [secretary@fairfield-allotments.co.uk](mailto:secretary@fairfield-allotments.co.uk)

**Treasurer:** George Burnett, 8 South Road, Lancaster LA1 4XD. Tel: 01524 840715

Email: [georgeburnett52@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:georgeburnett52@yahoo.co.uk)

Members: Gillian Allen, Philip Atkinson, Val Burnett, Ian Fraser, Ruth Mackenzie, John Weedy

New members or observers are always wanted. If any member does feel like helping out on the Committee, or just coming to meetings, you will be most welcome.

Proposed dates for the AGM: 12.02.15.

## SLUGS

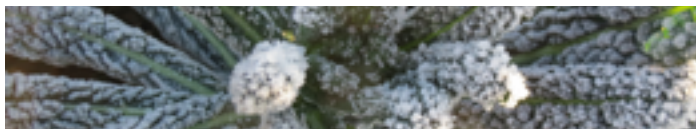
In our Summer 2014 Newsletter there was a brief article about the use of nematodes and organic ferric phosphate slug pellets and their impact on wildlife. We received the following response from Helen Bennett:

*Ferric phosphate pellets: I love 'em, used them for years. They kill slugs and are relatively non-toxic to vertebrates. I try to just use small amounts round fresh transplants and particularly vulnerable things. Poisoned slugs go and die underground which is less dramatic than with metaldehyde but also less gross.*

If any more members have further information or views we would be pleased to hear from you.

## WATER TANKS

Around twenty tanks have now been purchased by members allowing us to store at least an extra 20,000 litres of water (much more if you try an account for usage and re-fills), and the accumulated rainwater should considerably reduce our bills for metered supplies, especially during the summer months. We do not yet know whether more can be obtained but John Lambert will open a waiting list. So please email John if you would like one. We are uncertain whether the 2014 price can be matched but you will be contacted with a price before committing to buy.



## SITE INSPECTION

The next site inspection will be on Saturday, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2015. Our Treasurer, George Burnett, has requested that all 2015 rents are paid before this date - The exact figure has yet to be finalised but you will receive this information very shortly.

## AND FINALLY.....

Winter seems to have arrived very suddenly this year thanks to prolonged autumnal weather. It has been really good to see how many plots have been cleared for the winter, and we are already beginning to think about seeds and crops for 2015. So enjoy the planning and meanwhile best wishes to everybody for 2015.