

The Grower



COFFEE MORNINGS 2013

Coffee mornings are in full swing again and being well supported every week by hungry and thirsty allotment holders. Come and join us at the Focal Point, every Saturday through the Summer between 10.00 and 12.00. Please note that on 24th August, we will be at Asheridge Road.

Volunteers to make cakes and/or join the duty rota always welcome. Please contact Chris Challis

Allotments Open Day 2013

This year's Open Day is on Saturday 10th August at our Cameron Road Site. Notices and further information will be posted on the Allotment gates. Please support this very popular event.

BEST KEPT ALLOTMENT

Chesham Horticultural Society will be carrying out their first allotment inspection on the 19th June 2013 and the points awarded will be accrued to the final judging on the 7th August 2013. The winners of the Best Kept Allotment for the Cameron Road and Asheridge Road sites will be announced at the Chesham Allotments Group AGM to be held on Thursday 12th September 2013.

BONFIRES



Following concerns from local residents about bonfires, please could all allotment tenants read the notice on the gates and be as considerate as possible before lighting a fire.

Thank you

ALLOTMENT SECURITY

There have been a few break-ins at the Allotments recently. Many thanks to the Police who have been collecting forensic evidence to try to catch the culprits. Meanwhile, here is some advice from the NSALG to help keep our allotments safe and secure.

Fencing

The Boundary fence surrounding the allotment is the first line of defence against thieves and vandals. Check for:

- ◆ Holes in the fence.
- ◆ Top of the mesh bent over.
- ◆ Climbing aids placed against the fence.

Site Security

Be alert and report suspicious behaviour to the police as soon as possible

- ◆ If a vehicle is involved, try and take down the make,

colour and registration number.

- ◆ Get to know all the allotment holders, not just the ones who border your plot, that way you will know who should have lawful access to the area.
- ◆ Always challenge strangers found within the site, a simple request of "can I help you?" will often deter the dishonest.

Shed security

- ◆ Remove tools and valuables, such as power tools which are not regularly used, from the site.
- ◆ Remove items such as matches, petrol or other flammable material.
- ◆ Visibly mark your tools and valuables with your post-code and house number.

BRITAIN IN BLOOM



The Royal Horticultural Society judges from the Britain in Bloom will be judging areas of Chesham on 9th July 2013. The Cameron Road Site will again be part of the judging route, and the allotment holders are politely requested to ensure that the produce and flowers

growing on their plots are identified and labelled, and the plots are as neat as possible, with adjoining communal paths cleared and tidy. The allotments have won acclaim from the judges over the last few years and we would, therefore, appreciate it if we could maintain and improve our worthy standard.

Allen Tilbury

CHEESE AND WINE EVENING

Our ever popular Cheese and Wine Evening will be held this year on Saturday 13th July. A perfect chance to meet other allotment holders. Everyone is invited, so bring your family and friends along. All we ask is for attendees to bring along a food contribution to share: quiches, cheese, biscuits, crisps, bread, wine, beer, a pudding or cake for afters. All ages are welcome. **Rain or shine, this event always goes ahead.** So join us at the Focal Point, Plot 38A, Cameron Road. Start time 6.30pm to give families with young children the opportunity to attend.

Fish and Chip Supper with Quiz Night



Chesham Allotments group would like to thank everyone involved in yet another highly successful Fish and Chip Supper with Quiz Night. Particular thanks must of course go to our excellent quiz master Phil Folly. Congratulations to the winning team pictured above!



LOCAL COMMUNITY EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

ALLOTMENTS GROUP

Sat 13th July Cheese and Wine Evening at the Focal Point, Cameron Road. From 6.30 onwards

Sat 10th August Allotments Open Day—Cameron Road

Sat 24th August Coffee morning at our Asheridge Road

Thurs !2th Sept. Allotment Holders AGM—Chesham Town Hall

CESHAM HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Sat 6th July Early Summer Show at the Trinity Baptist Church

Sat 20th July Coach outing to Wrest Park

Sat 7th Sept Late Summer Show at the

Sat 21st Sept Coach outing to Capel Manor

YOUR ALLOTMENT GROUP REPRESENTATIVES

ALLEN TILBURY (CHAIRMAN) Plot 104 CR	MARSHALL HALL (VICE CHAIR) Plot 47A/47B	JOHN SHARP (TREASURER) Plots 33 and 37A CR	YVONNE WEBSTER (SECRETARY - MINUTES) Plot 63A CR
ANDREW SINCLAIR (SECRETARY - CORRESPONDENCE) Plot 45B CR	JIM ABBOTT Plot 31/32 CR	CHRIS CHALLIS Plots 65A/66A/67A CR	VINCE CROMPTON Plot 36 CR
BEVERLY MACKAY Plot 3B AR	CLAIRE MALAN Plot 235A CR	SARA SAUNDERS Plot 84B CR	COLETTE LITTLE (COUNCIL)
PATRICIA CHERRILL (COUNCIL)		CR = CAMERON RD	AR = ASHERIDGE ROAD

Late Blight in Potatoes

About blight

Late blight (*Phytophthora infestans*) is a fungal pathogen which is usually epidemic in July and August. It may surprise you to learn that it is more closely related to brown seaweed (!) than a other fungi. The conditions that suit it are known as Smith periods. These are defined as at least two consecutive days when the minimum temperature is 10C or above and when each day has at least 11 hours of relative humidity over 90%. Go to www.blightwatch.co.uk to sign up for alerts.

Blight spores are spread in the wind and land on the foliage of the potato plant. However, if the mother tuber is already infected lesions may be seen first on the lower stem of the potato plant. Symptoms are blackish spots on stems and leaves which grow larger and may have a halo of lighter green around them. A frosting of white spores may appear on the underside of leaves in humid conditions. It spreads rapidly in wet warm weather and can kill foliage within 10 days. In dry weather lesions will dry up and remain dormant until it rains again. Tubers are infected by heavy rain washing spores into the soil. Infected tubers show patches of firm chestnut brown rot on surface. Soft rot bacteria may then move in. Go to www.sarvari-trust.org/late-blight.html or www.gardenorganic.org.uk/factsheets/dc17.php for good illustrations of what to look for.

Normally blight spreads by means of spores. The bad news is that there are now two types, A1 and A2. If present together they can combine to produce new hybrid strains. The resulting oospores remain in the soil and can germinate in subsequent years to infect a new crop.

Like flu, different strains of blight can appear in different years. A new aggressive strain called Blue 13 emerged a few years ago which is resistant to the systemic fungicide metalaxyl (only available to commercial growers). These changes mean that almost all varieties with formerly high or moderate resistance to blight now only show moderate or low resistance. For example former resistant varieties

Stirling and Lady Balfour are not resistant to Blue 13. The Sarpo varieties remain the exception.

It is not just potatoes - other solanum varieties can be affected. These include tomatoes (*Solanum lycopersicum*) of course, but also aubergine (*Solanum melongena*) and even petunias.

Is there anything we can do about it?

Good plot hygiene and rotation can help. Try to avoid leaving infected tubers in the soil and remove any volunteers that pop up in the spring. Ensure you buy blight free seed potatoes – don't use 'ware' potatoes sold for eating. Early potatoes can be harvested before blight arrives, otherwise try to plant early to get the best possible crop from late varieties. An open site with good airflow helps. Mulch to conserve moisture in the soil and if you need to water, target the base of the plant as blight spores only infect wet foliage. You could try an open ended polythene tent over the potato plot to keep off rain.

If (when) blight arrives, cut back any suspect foliage immediately, but if over 10% of the plant is infected cut the haulms to the ground and leave the tubers for 2-3 weeks for the skin to set before harvesting. If storing the tubers do not wash them. Haulms (but not tubers) may be composted in a good hot heap (how many of us have one of them??) or buried in a trench.

Chemical solutions for home/allotment use are limited, although commercial growers have more options (commercial potatoes are typically sprayed every 4-6 days). Bordeaux mixture has been withdrawn from sale as from end February 2013, as it is copper based and a potent environmental hazard.

In the next issue of *The Grower*, we shall look at the development of blight resistant Sarpo (pronounced Sharpo) potatoes by the Sarvari Research Trust.

Chris Challis

A TIME FOR REFLECTION

When I took over the Chairmanship of the allotments Group there was approximately 24% of allotments overgrown and under-worked. With a small number of people (6) on the group I was determined to turn things around.

The idea of an Open Day was discussed and with the help of the Bucks Examiner (Advertising) the first Open Day was held in 2006. Visitor attendance was not high, but there was interest and enthusiasm expressed as to what working on an allotment was about. After this initial event a small number of people applied to the Town Council for a vacant plot. This was encouraging and we decided to hold further Open Days. Following subsequent Open Days, the take-up of plots was good and this event is now held annually.

We decided it would be a good idea for allotment tenants to interact socially and in 2007 we held the first Fish and Chip and Quiz Evening. The popularity of this event has since grown.

In the early days we did not experience much vandalism. However, it was considered that the fencing needed replacing on both sites. A request was made to the Council and there was an improvement to the height of the gates and the original fencing was replaced on the Cameron Road site. Additionally, additional standpipes were installed to enable Senior Citizens who suffered ailments, to water their plots more easily.

As the uptake of allotments increased, it was considered desirable to seek a plot to be used as a focal point. When plot 38 became vacant, a request was made to the Town Council for it to be used for this purpose. Here I must pay tribute to allotment holders who gave a lot of their time to clear the site. The hut was built in 2008 and opened by the Town Mayor, Alison Pirouet. Thanks must go to allotment holders for their monetary contributions and to Focus who donated a large amount of building materials. We will all agree that the focal point is well utilised for events such as the coffee mornings, cheese and wine evenings and open days. Over the years Waitrose has contributed generously towards our cheese and wine evenings, which is much appreciated and we pay a sincere thank you.

When Bill Richards, Town Clerk, in his address at our AGM in 2012 stated that I was associated with the Allotments Group for 10 years, I was very surprised, as I never thought I had served that long. My main aim was first and foremost to ensure that the allotments are kept for future generations and protect the interests of the allotment holders to the best of my ability. It was never my intention to seek any publicity.

I would like to thank Bill Richards, Town Clerk, and his staff, in particular Bob Ayres, Parks and Premises Manager, without whose loyal support I would not have been able to achieve as much as I did as Chairman. Thank you also to the dedicated members of the Allotments Group, past and present, and to all allotment holders for their friendship. I shall continue to support the Allotments Group as long as they wish me to do so and I am confident that the Officers and Members of the Group will continue to work in the best interests of the allotment holders. I wish them well.

I have taken on other roles in the community – Chairman of Chesham in Bloom, Trustee of the McMinn Centre. I hope that I can continue to count on your support.

Although there were times when things were difficult, I have enjoyed being of service and thank you for giving me the opportunity to do so.

Once again, thank you for your support

Vince Crompton

