

**Cripley Meadow Allotment Association
Newsletter
May 2021**



The Association noticeboard by the gate has been updated post-AGM with new Committee info and the latest issue of Allotment magazine is there to share (please leave at least one copy for reference). The website is also updated, including [dates for this membership year](#).

This coming **Sunday (9th May)** is a busy one - the **Spring Audit** will be taking place as well as the first **Working Party** of our new membership year. This one is pre-booked for Covid-safety, but from June onwards, we aim to revert to our previous arrangement of 'just turn up at the Green Association Shed on the Second Sunday of the month', observing prevailing Covid rules of course.

June's Working Party (13th June) will be combined with our traditional contribution to **OxClean** when we'll tackle the litter around our gate and the Walton Well Road car park. More in next month's newsletter.

Speaking of Cripley Meadow traditions, the Green has seen many-a wonderful social event over the years when members gathered to celebrate our allotments, their produce and the fellowship of gardening. I am delighted to announce the imminent renewal of that tradition...



CMAA BIG SUMMER PARTY

Sunday 18th July

For all members to meet (Covid willing), celebrate our allotment community and thank Wendy in person for her years of service as Chair.

Bring and share / BBQ on the Green from lunchtime onwards.



These photos are from our Cripley Meadow party two years ago.



More details in the next newsletter. I am so looking forward to us being able to do that very basic human thing of chatting and eating together. I know many members, but perhaps particularly those who have joined us in Covid times, will feel the same.

Meanwhile, back down-to-earth – may I use this little corner space to remind everyone... – **never drive or park on grass, plot edges, verges... Vehicles should be on the main track or designated parking areas only**. If in doubt, refer to [site map](#).

Members on the South Field part of the site may have noticed the splendid **makeover of the pumping shed**. Many thanks to members **Louise and Rob Bruce** who spent their Easter Sunday doing this maintenance. They tell me that a neighbour was going to throw the roofing felt away, the creosote was found during plot clearance and the gutter was an odd bit looking for a good home. Great example of Reduce, Reuse, Recycle! When I first drafted this, I wrote "all we need now is a bit of rain to fill the newly-set up water butt". Be careful what you wish for!



Ilias adds that hybrid fruit trees are the result of pollinating the flowers of one type of tree with pollen from another. The seeds from the resulting cross-pollinated fruit produce a different type of tree that has some characteristics of each. "Don't confuse hybrid with genetically engineered," he adds. "Genetically engineered plants are modified by artificially introducing genetic material from another organism. Hybridization is considered a natural process as it can happen in nature when the wind, birds and bees spread pollen between trees with overlapping blooming periods. Humans can intervene by using a small paintbrush to carry pollen between blooms."



The powerful winds of the last few days caused moderate havoc on my plot. A very beautiful honeysuckle that was using the downpipe on my shed as support managed to yank the whole lot off. Oh dear!



Our Orchard Manager, Ilias, has also been busy. He has embarked on replacing the few dead fruit trees in Castle Mill communal orchard. The first one – Miracot – is a new hybrid grafted onto semi-dwarf rootstock. It's "a fabulous cross between a mirabelle plum and an apricot, producing delicious, firm, sweet medium-sized high aromatic fruits, that are yellow with red speckles. Pick from the middle of August, with a good harvest period, shelf fertile and with a stone that separates from the flesh easily (freestone). A real beauty."

One of my new, empty, 'dalek' compost bins went for a wander too. It was weighed down, but obviously not enough. Some of my seed trays had been blown onto the ground and a few pea seedlings lost. I hope your plot fared no worse.

At this time of the year, I find it's all systems go on sowing and pricking out/potting on, while trying to keep on top of weed seedlings and ensure the ground is ready for planting out.

My original plot, 72, is in pretty good shape now after 4+ years of work. Earlier frosts have done for any hope of quince fruit this year, and the tops of raspberries and rosemary have gone brown, but they should recover.

But 79, which I am reclaiming, is another story. It was mainly grass when I took it on last year. In the Autumn, I covered the areas destined to be beds with about 5cm of manure and rectangles of black plastic.

Over winter, the grass has mostly died but there is still a lot of viable couch grass, bindweed, buttercup and dandelion root, not to mention the dreaded horsetail. I am loosening the soil with a big fork and then hand forking through every inch to try to minimise onward problems.



Potatoes have gone into the first two beds. The next one will see spinach station-sown direct and covered with fleece or netting for a while to give it a bit of protection, plus whatever seedlings are ready come out of my polytunnel.



I have just started sorting out the composting facilities on 79 too. Essential as the weeds I dig out will rot down eventually and contribute valuable organic matter back into the soil. And raise the soil level on what is a very flood-prone plot. I will not compost anything from 79 on 72 to avoid transporting horsetail (picture shows it next to my fork, still very viable after months under plastic).

I recently got four additional 'dalek' type bins are from EvenGreener.com as plot clearance generates a lot of organic waste and I could no longer stuff any more into my existing bins.

In the last week or so I have sown cosmos, torchflower, various types of basil, chard and pain-de-sucre chicory in the polytunnel. I have also cut the first asparagus of the season, from crowns planted in 2016 and first harvested last year.



Early-mid May I'll be succession sowing spring onions, coriander and beetroot and starting climbing French beans and borlotti, autumn cabbage (Piacenza, Vertus) and red cabbage (Lodero), all in the polytunnel. Late in the month it'll be squash and sweetcorn, started in pots but outside as I have found they tend to rot if too hot.

And I'll start to acclimatise my tomato seedlings and dahlia cuttings that have been growing inside at home. It is always nerve-racking watching the temperature forecast after you have made the call to transport your precious tender plants to Site.

Plot 79 had an 'out of rule' glass house that my friend helped me to convert to polycarbonate last summer. But some of the panes have bowed and blown out, so I have repairs to do. My plot neighbours and I are also tasked with sorting the boundary and restoring the plot path between us. I have managed to remove some of the hawthorn (vicious stuff) and a ridiculously-large rose that had been planted in the boundary, but there is more to do. Onwards!

More advice for this month on the website ([Your plot→The gardening year](#)).

Good gardening,

Manda, CMAA Secretary and Vice-chair

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PS I recently received a letter from Network Rail telling the Association that the works on Oxford Railway station ('Oxford Corridor Phase 2' in official speak) will entail, among other things, the **re-routing of Roger Dudman Way** to remove the current junction where it joins Botley Road and create new access on Criphey Road, and that while this is going on **access will be temporarily restricted along the southern section of Roger Dudman Way with a diversion 'proposed to come off Walton Well Road and then onto Roger Dudman Way from the north**. As the allotment's association has rights of access over part of this route we wanted to inform and reassure you of our proposals. Access to the allotments will be maintained throughout the works.' I've just had a reply to my follow-up email asking about timescales, and have been told that we are still in the planning phase and it is likely to be next year at the earliest before anything starts to happen. But 'As the scheme progresses and we get a clearer picture of timescales, I will be sure to keep you updated so you can pass details to your members'.