

Cripley Meadow Allotment Association Newsletter Sept 2021

The next Working Party (WP) is Sunday 12th September, meet 10am at the green Association Shed on the NW corner of the site.

WPs are usually the second Sunday in the month, except December when the Committee has a holiday. All dates for this membership year (i.e. to March 2022) are on the [Diary Dates page of the website](#).

August's WP did a heroic job clearing and covering a plot that had, due to unfortunate circumstances, become overwhelmed.



Getting some the concrete foundations out of a rusted old polytunnel took an inordinate amount of time and sweat – a practical example of why such foundations are banned by our current rules.



To deter vandalism such as we had a few months ago. It is at the top, but **careful, it is designed to be very sticky!**

The August WP also renewed the anti-climb paint on the gate....



... did more work on water pumping arrangements and started to clear the brick bin which had become overwhelmed with rubbish.

The brick bin is for big things - bricks etc only - intended for weighing down plastic and netting. Not for metal, glass, or small lumps of stuff – they should go in the skip. **The only**

thing that should go in the brick bin are heavy-ish lumps half a brick or bigger. Thank-you.



Waiting list update

I reported in [last month's Newsletter](#) that this new phase of Covid had enabled some plot-holder to move on with their lives, meaning I could allocate plots to a few people on the waiting list. The trend has continued, with more plots due to be available soon – including 79, my second plot, that I have been reclaiming this year. I have made a lot of progress on it, and am harvesting some crops, but now feel it is time to hand it on to someone who will finish its reclamation and make full use of it.

I have had a request from our friends at South Ward Allotments ... they have plots available now. Reclamation will be needed and they are slightly out of town, near Redbridge Park and Ride (just past Go Outdoors and the recycling centre)
<https://www.southwardkenningtonallotments.co.uk/> but there is plenty of parking. If you know someone who would like a plot in that part of Oxford, please point them in South Ward's direction (contact is emmatinker@hotmail.com).

And another request via our local Federation, from someone in Rawlinson Road offering free gardening space for the next two years in exchange for regular commitment to use and maintain the space – mainly 10mx2m in a



restored Victorian greenhouse and perhaps other areas. Let me know if of interest to someone you know and I will pass on the contact details.

October Audit

Next month (date coming soon) will see the second of our regular yearly audits of all plots on the site. This is when five or six Committee members walk the whole site, looking at every plot, to check compliance with our community's rules – i.e. being properly cultivated and not causing a problem for others. For newer members, there is information about the [audit process](#) on the website, including a link to our [Audit Quick Guide](#), written in 2020 but still valid.

Going round the site and checking every plot takes about four hours. **Please, please, please, please, please make sure your plot has a plot number visible from its main access point** so that the audit group can quickly identify. You would not believe how difficult this is in some parts of the site and how much time is wasted trying to figure it out.

Afterwards, all the results are collated and emails written to plot-holders who have things to address. Some matters are straightforward while others warrant discussion at the next Committee meeting (November in this case) – keep your eyes out for an email from CMAA_audit around then.

Sometimes there needs to be quite a lot of discussion and negotiation with the plot-holder to come up with a solution that is satisfactory to all concerned. Only very rarely do we find that this is not possible and membership terminated.

Private fruit...

Last month, I reminded members that fruit on others' plots, including its boundaries, belongs to the plot-holder. It is tempting to pluck a blackberry from someone's headland as you are passing – please resist, this fruit belongs to the plot-holder. I have had report of someone actually going onto another's plot to pick! This is stealing and could cost the culprit their membership. If you are away when your crop is in full flow, please arrange someone to pick so it is not wasted.

... Communal fruit

On a happier note, it will soon be time to pick the communal apples in Castle Mill Orchard. We will send an email round with the date shortly.

The way the harvest day works - participants are invited to take some for their own consumption and there are usually a few barrows of surplus that we leave by the green Association Shed for others to take in the ensuing days.

If you have any comments or questions about the communal fruit trees, please drop Ilias, our Orchard Lead, an email (ikounati@gmail.com).

You may take windfalls from the ground around communal trees, and the odd fruit for immediate consumption while passing. Otherwise please leave fruit for the communal harvest – it is a really joyous occasion.

Member Anna Benn has been pruning the communal espalier pears along our boundary with Castle Mill for the last few years. Her skill is evident in their beauty and fruitfulness.

This photo, taken the last week of August, shows 'before', on the left-hand side and 'after' on the right-.



And here is Anna at work.

Meanwhile Ilias and his 'little helpers' have pruned the other Castle Mill Orchard trees.



Bumble Bees

I reported a couple of months ago that Chloe, a student from Oxford Brooks, would be coming on site to carry out a survey of our bumble bees. I bumped into her and her Field Assistant the other day observing our species and gathering data. The number-crunching comes next.



On the plot

It's been a real harvest festival. I have been ferrying bags and bags of stuff back home in my bike basket. It's a great use for old plastic packaging – we rinse it out and take it back to the site for use again and again.

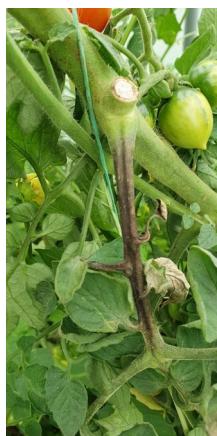


I was particularly pleased with these Marmande tomatoes harvested about two weeks ago.



but alas **tomato blight**, a perennial problem, has been spreading across the site and, from chatting to others, I am not alone in having my plants now succumb to this scourge.

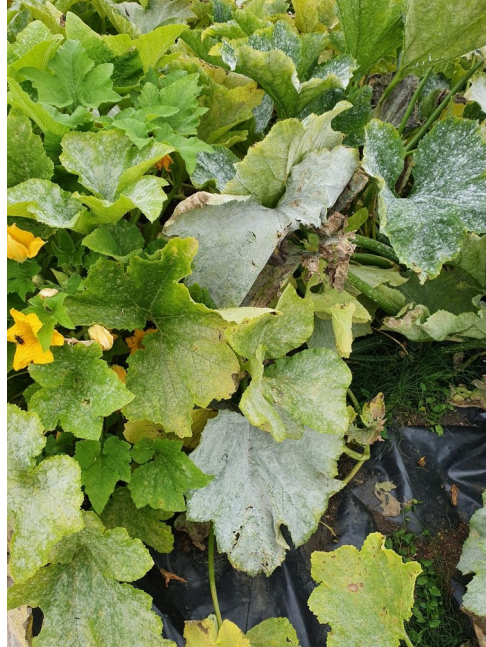
First sections of the stem go brown and black, then you notice that the fruit is looking squishy and discoloured.



Numerous reliable sources confirm that it is fine to compost your blighted tomato plants, fruit etc as they soon rot down and the spores only survive on living tissue. In his latest blog, no-dig guru Charles Dowding suggests blight persists in stray potatoes that get left behind in the soil after harvest.



Mouldy-looking, yellow, brown and collapsed leaves on courgettes and cucumber look similarly disastrous, but happily this



powdery mildew is just the plant getting rid of old, unproductive leaves.

The fruit is still fine and, as long as new, fresh leaves are coming, the plant will carry on producing.

Thinking ahead to next year, there is garlic to plant this month, and sweet peas to sow in pots soon for planting out next Spring.

Good gardening,

Manda, CMAA Secretary and Vice-chair

secretary@cripleymeadow.org.uk

PS Has anyone lost a scythe? One was found by the Gate a few weeks ago. Let me know if it is yours.