

BRIDPORT and DISTRICT ALLOTMENTS SOCIETY

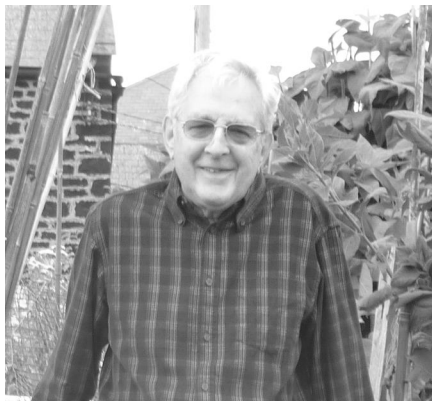
Newsletter

Winter 2010-2011



David Rapson (*below*) sent in this photo of pumpkins by the side of a road in Germany. This year he grew a monster on his plot on the Palmers' allotments, but while he was away on his travels, it was stolen from a porch in West Allington.

David says, "I bought several packets of seeds from the CoOp in Trieste including some grey/green pumpkins that will be easy to trace next year."



On the subject of surpluses like that in the photo above, we've an article in this issue (page 2) about a scheme called **Foodshare**, which enables allotment holders to donate their surplus produce to local charities.

Laura Dron has written a piece on why we need to get on with bees and wasps (page 3).

Town surveyor **Daryl Chambers** gives an update on progress with the two new allotment sites at the Medical Centre and Priory Gardens, Bob Driscoll reports on an offer for manure delivery, and two Bridport allotmenters describe their successes and failures this year.

Many thanks to all our contributors and please keep the contributions coming in.

**Date of the next Allotments Society Meeting: Thursday 2 December 2010,
7.00 pm, at Mountfield (town council offices at Rax Lane).**

Foodshare

There has recently been national publicity (NSALG and Radio 4's Gardeners' Question Time) about Foodshare, a new scheme which encourages allotment gardeners to donate surpluses and grow produce for local charities.

Foodshare originally started on an allotment where growers realised they had surpluses of the same crops as their neighbours (*do courgettes, runner beans and apples spring to mind after this summer, by any chance?*). Too often some of these crops may end up on the compost heap. At the same time rising food prices can put a strain on the finances of charities which rely on fresh food.

A pilot scheme at the village allotment in Milton, Cambridgeshire, which began in 2009, saw allotment holders donating surplus crops to a Children's Hospice a few hundred metres down the road.

A green collection bin (called the "Donation Station") was set up at the entrance of the allotment, and a small team of volunteers would check and deliver food to the Hospice throughout the week. In three months over £1,000 worth of fresh produce was donated by allotment holders, substantially reducing the Hospice's spiralling food bill. What's more, the children were now eating the freshest food they could have - local, seasonal, and from harvest to plate in less than twenty-four hours.

This year some of the allotment holders were planning to increase their donations by creating a Foodshare Bed, where all the produce will go to the Hospice. Some are growing specific crops, others dedicate a bed to plant any left-over seeds and see what grows.

A website has now been set up (www.foodshare.co.uk), which has a Foodshare Allotment Guide on how to set up a project. The idea has also spread to school allotments with the RHS endorsing the project to the 10,000 schools within their School Gardening campaign.

Co-founder of the scheme, Mark Desvaux, says that "If every allotment in the country set up a Foodshare scheme we could jointly donate over £26m of food annually to charities!"

Scope for an initiative like this in Bridport???



Editor's view: winter at the Gundry Lane allotments

News from Bridport Town Council

*Town surveyor **Daryl Chambers** reports the following items:*

There has been some delay on the original timetable while legal formalities relating to the **Medical Centre** site have been dealt with. These have now been resolved, and it is now planned that the 37 new plots will be marked out, fenced and offered to tenants by March 2011 in time for the new season.

It is also hoped that the 16 plots at **Priory Gardens** will be handed over to the town council once the new housing development is complete in the spring. A new water supply has already been installed.

At **Flaxhayes** a new noticeboard is due to be fitted.

At **Skilling** this winter a new communal composter will be installed at the northern end and the former hazel copse at the southern end will be dug up and let as an allotment.

At both Flaxhayes and Skilling a skip will be dropped off at the end of February to enable tenants to clear rubbish from their plots.

The **waiting list** for town council allotments currently includes 49 residents of Bridport parish and 47 residents of other parishes.

Bees and Wasps

Please Bee-friendly them

Laura Dron describes her experiences of co-existing with bees and wasps on her allotment in 2010, and urges us all to encourage them.

I have one of the newer allotments, by the Community Orchard. In keeping with our guidelines, I work organically.

I had put a compost bin in a central position which turned out to be constantly in the way when I later organised walkways. Just before I moved it, however, I realised that bumble bees had set up home in a gap between it and the ground. They were very active, probably about 8-10 of them going in and out.

They were completely placid and in my opinion, adorable, so I was delighted. I removed and relocated the compost bin, and all but the nest (bottom layer) part of the contents. Note that they worked harmlessly alongside me and my comings and goings, even when I accidentally trod on the edge of their nest several times (I did apologise). Note also that they did seem to persistently hang around and annoy anyone who was a bit scared (i.e. my husband). So remember to talk nicely to them and not flap about and curse.

I looked them up and they seem to be buff-tailed ones. They like a nice terracotta pot slightly raised up as a shelter with perhaps a broken crock placed loosely over the drainage hole. They want air, but warm and dry. I didn't have a spare pot, and now had a mass of half-composted material the circumference of a compost bin to deal with. I didn't dare break it up to find exactly where their small nest was. In the end I put pond liner over, raised up for air, as an approximation of the compost bin. It remained there and I had to pick round it for the rest of the season. I have seen no activity in the cold, so have carefully removed the layer and put it in the bottom of another new compost bin.

I will construct a more planned shelter for such bees next year, in a convenient place. You can encourage them to choose this as their nest if you can find an old mouse nest and put it inside - they like the smell apparently!



photo from bumblebee conservation website (see below)

Otherwise, a bit of old hay or similar to nest in (they had homed to the old corn stalks in the bottom of my bin). I will also plant even more bee-friendly flowers and would encourage people to do the same, and especially also for hoverflies. I did not see many of these on the allotment this year and we badly need them to keep down pests as we are organic. I also had wasps in autumn, feeding on sap from a broken stem of Jerusalem artichoke or taking cellulose for pulp for their nest, I couldn't tell. Now none of us really wants a wasp nest on their allotment, but as to the individuals, please can I remind everyone they murder just about every pest you can think of including caterpillars and flea beetles.

Two useful websites:

<http://www.ecofriendlyhouseandgarden.com/bees-and-wasps-are-free-eco-friendly-garden-workers/> - I would encourage everyone to look up and understand the bees (and wasps) and not to be frightened of them - we need them.

http://www.bumblebeeconservation.org.uk/bumblebees_id.htm—you can identify your bees here and also log rarer ones for "Beewatch" which is collecting the information.

Many thanks to Laura for this article, and a reminder that at the next meeting of the Allotments Society, at Mountfield on Thursday 2 December, 7 pm, Ken Bishop will be giving a talk on bees and other pollenating insects.

News from members

Skilling allotments—one year on

Last year I wrote to say that I had experienced Leek Moth which now seems prevalent in in the South of the country.

After taking advice from various quarters I have this year managed to repel the worst of these hungry invaders by covering the leeks with fleece through the period of May to October when I understand they are at their most pesky and hungry. The leeks seem to be doing well using this form of protection.

After talking to a fellow allotment holder I decided to grow carrots in containers this year and this also seems to be an excellent way to get a good crop which also are of a reasonable size and free from carrot fly. I believe the fly does not go above approximately 12-15 inches above ground level, so as long as the containers are high enough, *et voila* — good carrots. I didn't even thin them and I just pick them as needed.

Not so lucky with the onions and garlic but I understand that a lot of people struggled with these this year due either to the hard overwintering or the dry summer, or both.

Potatoes were free from blight this time round — not sure if this was because I chose different varieties or better growing conditions. I would be interested to hear from others on their experience.

As I'm sure others have experienced I have had success with some produce, ok results with others and downright disasters as well but that's what it's all about, a cycle of learning together with the pleasure and fun of enjoying your own produce.

One other thing that I have learnt is that Cabbage Whites are very clever. I would not have believed it if not seeing myself but I witnessed the little blighters fly up to and land on the netting protecting the brassicas, fold their wings closed and manoeuvre through the net. Who'd have believed it?

Finally, I'd also like to take the opportunity to thank Daryl Chambers for his continued support of allotments in Bridport. He makes it feel as if it's important to have allotments.

Maybe others can let us know what successes and failures they've had to form a pooled knowledge.

Terry Porter

Success with peppers and chillies

We have had a good summer in the allotment this year, with a good crop of tomatoes, cucumbers, courgettes, aubergines, peppers, chillies and squashes.

Our success, I feel, is partly due to the generosity of Joy and Michael Michaud of Sea Spring Seeds who donated some of their surplus seed stock to Society members. We thought the cherry tomato 'Apero', the Early Jalapeno and Caldero chilli peppers, very good, cropping heavily, with a good flavour. We are now looking forward to next season.

Lynne Atkinson

Manure delivery

With many of our traditional sources for bulk supplies of manure no longer available, we are pleased to advise that one of our members, Tony Cooke, has kindly agreed to arrange delivery of trailer loads of manure from a local farmer.

A trailer load currently costs £50. Tony can only accept an order for a full trailer load, so anyone wishing a part load will need to find a colleague or colleagues to share a load, and it will be on a "cash on delivery" basis. For further details and to place an order please contact Tony on 01308 456707 or 07967 375759.

Bob Driscoll

Membership of the Bridport & District Allotments Society costs £2 per annum. Our Membership Secretary/Treasurer Mandy Rathbone will be pleased to receive your subscriptions. Please contact Mandy on 01308-458005 or email manwell52@hotmail.co.uk.

Receiving the newsletter by email: If any member who currently receives the newsletter/minutes of meetings through the letterbox could receive them by email (and save us delivery cost/time), please contact Bob Driscoll—drisc.juggs@talk21.com.

Newsletter contributions welcome: if you have any items you would like to see included in future issues of our Newsletter (which comes out quarterly) or if there are subjects you would like us to cover, please contact the Editor, Charles Wild, Flat 3, 91 Crock Lane, Bridport DT6 4DH; or email entries to charleswild@btinternet.com. Contributions to the spring edition (articles, news items and/or photographs) by **7 February 2011** please.