

Trap Ground Allotment Association Autumn Newsletter 2016

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Access and the Railway Works

Whilst Network Rail (NR) and its sub-contractors have not so far managed to meet any of their project deadlines, it is clear that the Aristotle Lane Works are nearing their completion. Current objectives are to complete the works by mid December and to run the Chiltern Line service from Oxford station to Marylebone within days of completion.

The existing railway bridge is to be removed on 17th September and the new one installed on 8th October. The ramp bridge to the allotments will be put in place soon after this, in the second half of October. Access through our southern boundary has already been made and the footings for the ramp and its westward extension will be built in the next few weeks.

Network Rail's impatience to close the level crossing is, of course, dependent upon all the mitigating measures being complete although political tactics to extract further alterations by the railway to local railway bridges in Oxford are apparently liable to delay matters further.

The construction of the TGAA car park and steps to the eastern bridge path is going ahead and we are consulting with the city council about signage to restrict their use to our members. We plan to plant ivy, virginia creeper, clematis and others to cover the car park wall in a similar way to the plantings over our shop container unit. This should avoid the intrusion of unwanted graffiti.

Trees

The city council tree team pollarded the largest willows on our northern and western boundaries and removed two unwanted trees on neglected plots within the site. Please help yourself to chippings dumped by the compost bins and the machine shed.

Mowing team

Thanks to the mowing team who kept the allotment site looking decent again this summer and made access to plots comfortable and convenient.

Communal compost

The system of depositing compostable material has changed and you should now add it directly to the large compost bays as indicated by the notices on the allotment site.

Bee-friendly garden

With thanks to Clare Hollander for making it happen, the bee-friendly garden (opposite the communal compost) is in full flower and teeming with all sorts of bees. A second bed will be planted up with bee-friendly perennials in the autumn.

Discount seed scheme

Seed catalogues and the special allotment order forms will shortly be arriving from Dobies. You will be able to order direct from Dobies – including online – but to benefit from the discount of 50% on seeds and 15% off everything else, you must quote a special code. All will become clear when you pick up your seed catalogue.

Shared equipment

The shared equipment shed now has a new self-propelled variable-speed mower with 53cm blade, grass bag and

mulching system. It is ideal for mowing the narrow paths between plots which is the responsibility of the plot holders rather than the mowing team – something that several plot holders don't seem to be aware of.

Shop

The allotment shop will be closed from 1st November to 1st March but will open on request. Thanks to everyone who has helped out in the shop this season.

Wells

Thanks to Jonathan Clark and Michael Wheale, the allotment site now has three new wells with smart wooden covers. They are on plots 65e, 75e and 128n.

Good practice guidelines for the use of farmyard manure, compost and other fertilisers

It has recently been brought to our attention that the Trap Ground Allotment site (and much of SE England) lies in what the EU defines as a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) because of high nitrate levels in rivers and groundwater. To minimise nitrate leaching and river pollution, farmers in a NVZ are subject to regulation on when manures and fertiliser may be spread. Allotments are not subject to such regulation, but we have been advised by the Environment Agency that we should aim to follow good-practice guidelines when using manure, compost and other fertilisers on the allotment site such as:

- spreading and digging in farmyard manure – whether delivered in a pile or in bags from the shop - in spring rather than spreading it in the autumn and leaving it un-dug over the winter;
- avoiding manure deliveries between the 1st of August and 31st of December and making sure that any stored manure is under cover during that period to reduce nitrate leaching;
- quickly digging in compost after applying even though the compost is likely to be low in nitrates;
- applying chemical fertilizers such as Growmore in the growing season only and avoiding applications of such fertilisers between the 1st of September and the 15th of January;
- reducing nitrate leaching by sowing green manure seeds in the autumn – which can also control weeds and improve soil structure - and digging in the plant matter in spring. Packets of green manure seeds – including clovers, rye, vetch, mustards, Phacelia and lupins – are widely available from all good seed merchants.

Dates for your diaries

The **TGAA Harvest Supper and Photographic competition** will be held at the St Margaret's Institute on Saturday 12th November 2016.

The **TGAA Annual General Meeting** will be held at the St Margaret's Institute at 8.00 on Tuesday 28th March 2017.

The **TGAA Plant sale** will be on Sunday 14th May 2017. Please keep it in mind when sowing seeds, taking cuttings, splitting plants and/or making jams, chutneys and other preserves.

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