



Charity No 1108144

'Growing Concerns'

The Newsletter for members of Harrow in Leaf

Winter 2009/10

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Harrow in Leaf will hold its **Annual General Meeting** on Wednesday 19th May at 7 pm at Leaf HQ. Please come along and hear reports on the last year and tell us your views. We will send you the Agenda in April.

HARROW IN LEAF ANNUAL PLANT SALE

Saturday 22nd May at Leaf HQ, from 11 am to 2 pm. As always there will be stalls selling a wide range of ornamental, vegetable and fruit plants at amazingly cheap prices. Why not grow something different this year? It's your chance to fill up your garden or allotment or both with things you haven't tried before and old favourites. Entrance is free and refreshments will be available. If you would like to sell your own plants, tables cost £7.50 on the day or £6.50 if booked and paid for in advance. To book, for further information, or to offer your help on the day phone 8863 7558 or e-mail the address above.

Don't forget our Quiz Evening on Saturday 24th April at 6.30 pm. For tickets or information phone 8863 7558.



HARROW IN LEAF SHOW
SUNDAY 29th AND
MONDAY 30th AUGUST
12 noon–6 pm

Our sixth Horticultural Show will be held on August Bank Holiday weekend at the Headstone Manor site, in association with Harrow Museum and Heritage Centre. Again there will be the popular Beekeepers' Marquee as well as one for the Horticultural classes; the schedule is available on our website or by phoning the Show Manager on 020 8907 0508, from whom further information is available. We have already taken a number of bookings for stalls at the Show, but if you know someone who might be interested in having one, do talk to the Show Manager. Harrow in Leaf will again have their own stalls with information on horticultural matters, allotments, and local associations; we also hope to have some plants for sale. We would encourage members of Harrow in Leaf to get involved in our Show to help us make it even better. Why not enter an exhibit or two? Not only are there are classes for vegetables, fruit, and flowers, but also for preserves and cakes, painting, photography and crafts, as well as classes for children to enter. We would appreciate your help for an hour or two in the marquees, on the gate, on our stall, or with traffic control and parking.



In spite of our grumbles about the weather, last year was good for many crops, especially beans and courgettes. A gardener in Shropshire got 304 fruit on one truss of yellow cherry tomatoes.



Dormancy in lettuce seeds can be induced by high temperatures, for example if you leave a packet in the sun or in the greenhouse. This thermo-dormancy can be broken by a period of cold—put the packet of seeds in the fridge for a week (or store your lettuce seeds there all the time). In midsummer try to choose a cool place to sow them, perhaps starting them off in a seed tray in a cool place rather than in the baking hot (one can but hope) allotment soil. A good way to try to stop all your lettuces coming at once is to sow the second batch only when the first batch has just germinated.

HARROW'S ALLOTMENTS are becoming ever more popular:

sites are filling up and, although there are vacant plots, most sites have waiting lists (more about this on page 2). But, although 10 new plots have been reclaimed from Kenton Recreation Ground, we can't compete with Islington, where there is a 25-year wait for plots—a car park in Holloway has been torn up to make allotments. A councillor said "Allotments and parks are very important for our residents, and we want to make the most of every piece of land we have."



AMAZING CUCUMBERS

According to the New York Times, not only can you use cucumber to cure hangovers, clear your breath, de-mist mirrors, remove cellulite, and shine your shoes, you can also use it as a slug deterrent. It suggests that you put a few slices in an aluminium dish among the plants and the scent given off, undetectable to humans, will drive slugs away. Worth a try? However, the next method definitely does work. Stand precious pots on feet, bits of tile, or cast-off wine corks laid on their sides (what an excellent excuse to provide a few more corks) in a saucer of water to prevent slugs, snails and vine weevils from getting to the plants, provided the foliage isn't touching anything else. Make sure the water level is below the bottom of the pot to prevent waterlogging. It's a bit of a fiddle but for a very precious or vulnerable plant it may be worth it.

Please don't forget to renew your membership by the end of March. See the separate form.

HARROW'S ALLOTMENTS: You may have read Cllr Susan Hall's statement in the local papers in February that there are only 31 vacant plots in the borough, while in early January there were 489 people on the waiting list. As a result, the council now appear to be offering plots on all sites but one or two. However, many sites still have plenty of uncultivated plots, and one site reported more than 30 on just three sites close to his; there are 34 sites in the borough, so it is likely that there are many more plots that could be let. We are trying to get these made available. Sites are currently being re-mapped and plots re-numbered. However, the re-numbering is causing problems on some sites, where, in spite of a waiting list, no plots are being let until the council have had written agreement on the new number from every single existing tenant. You may disagree with Cllr Hall's view that "skint" residents are taking allotments—most say it is because of the fresh tasty produce and the healthy exercise. However, we are all very grateful for the money spent by the Council on improving allotments over the last year.

Do you know about your local **allotment society trading hut**? They welcome new members, even if you don't have a plot or have one on another site. You can find your nearest trading hut from our website.

POTATOES AND OTHER VEGETABLES

One in every four potatoes dug in Britain ends up as chips, but those of us who grow our own know there is more to potatoes than that. There is great interest at the moment in heritage varieties—for example our allotment trading hut is selling Edzell Blue this year. (Blue potatoes look amazing in a salad with white ones, and make an interesting-looking gratin, but I have found that the small ones look just like the dark pebbles on my plot, so get left behind to sprout again next year.) When you grow your own you don't need to limit yourself to the ordinary, you can grow things that are expensive or difficult to find. Asparagus provides a meal every couple of days from mid April to mid June, a time when home-grown vegetables are in short supply. Globe artichokes are very ornamental as well as delicious and, if you fail to pick them, the bees love the huge blue flowers. Celeriac is a vegetable that is not always easy to find in the shops but is quite easy to grow, though yours won't be a big and smooth as bought ones. Look out for interesting things to grow at our Plant Sale.

2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity. The Natural History Museum lists projects such as *What on Earth?* to encourage people to get out and try to identify wildlife in their gardens and parks, and a survey of swifts, once common in Harrow, but declining in number so that they are now a conservation concern. There is also information about policing your pond plants.

Blueberries really are good for you. It has been suspected for some time that the high levels of antioxidants and vitamins in blueberries are good for health, but new research from Lund University in Sweden has shown that blueberry fibre has a protective effect against bowel disease, especially when eaten with the types of probiotic bacteria found in yoghurt. Although the soil in Harrow is not ideal for blueberries, they are easy to grow in large pots kept well watered. They are most productive when more than one variety is grown.

Prince Charles may have been right after all! A month-long trial at RHS Wisley found that tomato plants put on more growth when extracts from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Day of the Triffids* and *The Origin of Species* were read to them by ten different people. Female voices had a greater effect, and the most growth was seen in the plant read to by a great-great granddaughter of Charles Darwin. So if you see someone down on their plot with a book it may not just be for relaxation.

Do you want to change from brown to green fingers?

There are many people who enjoy growing flowers or veggies in their gardens but they don't always flourish as we would like. You can get help! There is an organization called WEA (Workers Educational Association) and amongst their activities in Harrow is a horticultural class. It has run in Pinner and Harrow Arts Centre, and there is also a class in Ickenham. Because I have enjoyed it so much I want to tell others about it.

The Course: We've learnt about seed sowing, taking different types of cuttings, compost making, mulching, garden and border design, pests and diseases, allotments and growing veggies, growing organically and more. In fact we've learnt enough to make our gardens and allotments flourish. There were trips to different gardens such as Capel Manor, Regents Park and Golders Hill. Some of the sights (e.g. a golden Ginkgo biloba tree on a misty autumn day) were quite inspirational. Other activities have been telling the class about particular interests, practical work and plant identification. Our current tutor is fascinated by the science of plants so we've also looked at how roots are formed and photosynthesis.

The social side: The group has always been friendly and sociable. When the class is not running we often meet up for coffee at a local garden centre and of course we have an end of term celebration.

The practicalities: It is a 20 week course of 2 hours per week in the Autumn and Spring terms. Sometimes there is a short Summer course but most gardeners want to be in their gardens or allotments in the summer. More details can be found at <http://www.london.wea.org.uk/pinner> or on 8428 7194.

Conclusion: My plants don't die and my allotment fed the family.

Carol Hewitt

EVENTS

Harrow in Leaf Quiz evening 24th April, from 6.30 pm at Leaf HQ; Tickets £9. **Barbecue** 31st July from 6 pm; details for both events from Harrow in Leaf. Harrow in Leaf, the Beekeepers (**HBKA**) and Harrow Fuchsia Society will be having stands at the Mediaeval May Day at the Harrow Museum and Heritage Centre on 3rd May (noon–5pm); HBKA will also be at the St Luke's Hospice 1940s afternoon at Bentley Priory on 22nd May and at Grimsdyke Open Day on 31st May.

Dates for your diary from Member Societies
Belmont Horticultural Society Shows July 3rd and Sept 4th, 3 pm, St Anselm's Church Hall, Uppingham Avenue

Harrow Fuchsia Society Meetings every 4th Thursday (except Dec), 8 pm. Shows 7th August, 2.30 pm, and 26th August, 8 pm, all St Andrews Church Hall, Malvern Ave, S. Harrow.

Harrow Recreation Ground Users' Association
Kite Day, 18th April; Band Concert, 6 June; Jazz Band, 4th July; Arts Festival, 18th July; Jazz Band, 1st August; Fun Day and Band Concert, 5th September (all 2.30 pm); Tree Dressing, 5th December, 2.15 pm. All events free, at Harrow Recreation Ground
Newton Park Horticultural Society Show, 4th September, 2.00 pm, Tithe Farm Sports Club, Rayners Lane

Membership renewal is due at the end of March. You can renew by sending the slip below or a piece of paper with the same information, together with a postal order or cheque for £2 made out to Harrow in Leaf and a stamped self-addressed envelope, to the Membership Secretary, Harrow in Leaf, 90 Pinner View, Harrow HA1 4RH. Alternatively, you may be able to renew via your Allotment Site rep: Bishop Ken—Diane Tigg; Cuckoo Hill—Roger Kirkham; Greenhill—Helen Shorter; Headstone—Diana Dolman; Kingsley Road North—John Smith; Woodlands—Mike Love; Lincoln Road—Dave Willis; Marshalls—Bernard Harris; Melbourne Avenue—Judy Long; Newton Park East—John Hillier; Newton Park West—Ron Dickens; Rayners Mead—Francesca Sherwood; Streamside—Mike Beech; West Harrow Large—Hedley Dunmore; West Harrow Small—Kevin Mooney; Yeading Avenue—Carol Tilbury.

I wish to renew my membership of Harrow in Leaf . I enclose the annual subscription of £2 and a stamped self-addressed envelope.

Name:E-mail address:

Address:

.....Date: