

## February 2014: A foxy number.



Alistair Armitage writes: During 2011 and 2012 we had a family of foxes in residence at Redhall allotments. One of them became quite tame, and I managed to take this photo when the fox had got bored of begging dog biscuits from me. We haven't seen the foxes for some time, and the damage caused by rabbits this year makes (at least some of) us miss them.

The Newsletter Editor writes: Do you remember we asked for photos for a "competition" last year? This is all that came in. There isn't a deadline - yet - so can you do better? In the meantime, thanks to Alastair for a lovely image.

## Allotment Competition: Going for Gold



*A top plot at Stenhouse.*

We are delighted to announce that the Edinburgh in Bloom allotment competition is running again this year.

The competition is focussing on Allotment Plots and is open to all plot-holders in Edinburgh.

This year's 'Britain in Bloom' theme is 'Growing for Gold' which ties in nicely with this and will form an important element of Edinburgh's 'Entente Florale' bid later in the year.

Prizes are:

1st prize -

One year's free plot rental (up to the value of £100)

2nd prize -

50% reduction on plot rental (up to the value of £50)

3rd prize -

£25 donated by FEDAGA

Further information on how to enter and criteria for judging can be found [here](#).

## **Rat...atouille it's not!**



It can be pleasant to have a visitor to your plot, showing off your fine crops and swapping ideas and tips can be an enjoyable way to pass an hour or so. Increasingly though, there are visitors to Edinburgh allotments that are most unwelcome – RATS! They seem to be on the increase and some sites have been plagued with these vermin. Helping themselves to your crops is the very least of it as rats are carriers of a number of nasty diseases, although The Black Death is probably not a realistic possibility!

It's fair to say that allotment sites are places that are attractive to rats but still there are a number of measures that plotholders can take to discourage them. It's all about managing the site environment and in many ways it is common sense. Regularly check sheds and any other structures to make sure that there is no ready access either into or under the buildings. Compost heaps are des res for rats providing shelter and food, especial disused heaps. Dig the old heap out and get the benefit of that lovely compost. Be very careful what you add to your compost heap. Household scraps are not the best to add as rats will eat anything, far better to put the scraps into the appropriate Council waste bin.

Allotments are a fantastic place to have BBQs and picnics but you should always clear up any leftovers and if they can't be placed in rat proof bins, just take them home. Birds are welcome and delightful visitors to our plots but have a care as to how rat proof your bird feeder is and store all bird feed in a metal container.

Making Mr Rat less welcome to your plot may help avoid a nasty ailment and save your lovely crops. Another benefit which may not readily spring to mind is that as the annual allotment budget currently allocates £5000 for pest control (25% of their total budget). Less money spent on this may get you that water supply improved or that bit of path made up.

Any tips in dealing with or stories about rats feel free to share them via [this Newsletter](#).

# Follow Plotholder's Progress: The Alloted Month



*Midwinter at Midmar.*

We are now well into January and this is probably the coldest month of the year. The wet conditions we've experienced recently also mean that digging the soil is hard going and it is probably better to wait until the soil has dried out a bit before you decide to dig your plot over. [Read more...](#)

# Council spending plans



The approaching Financial Year will see a similar spend on Repair and Maintenance to that in recent years. It could be argued that this is A Good Thing in view of further spending cuts elsewhere. On the other hand, it is nowhere near adequate for the jobs requiring attention around the city sites. Between them, the site associations and the Allotment Officer have identified works that are estimated to cost around £75,000. The budget after standing charges for items such as water, electricity and waste uplifts will be lucky to top £20,000. The Allotment Officer's priority this year is to improve the noticeboards on sites and attend to water supplies. The tap posts will be upgraded to concrete and lagging will be improved. Other large items of expenditure include tree work and improvements to site security by maintaining fences. Where required, rabbit fences are to be improved also. Wall pointing is now becoming more urgent on various sites and it is hoped that this item can be moved outwith the allotment budget. FEDAGA has co-ordinated all sites' wish lists this year and have arranged them in order of priority to ensure fairness to all. Larger items will be subject to a job specification to be agreed between site representatives and the Allotment Officer to ensure that both sides share a realistic expectation and disappointment is minimised.

## Spud News



The FEDAGA Seed Potato and Onion Set order is expected to be delivered to Inverleith around 10.30am on Saturday, 15th February. All sites with orders are expected to arrange for a representative to attend to help sort the delivery and take away their goods. Last year this didn't happen with half a dozen sites which caused extra work for our volunteers.

Bridgend Growing Communities is holding their annual Potato Day on Sunday 23rd February. More details [here](#).

Finally, if you're STILL bereft of seed potatoes and onion sets, visit the FEDAGA Shop at the West Gate, Inverleith allotments between 2 and 3.30pm on any Sunday in March and April where the "bag ends" are being sold off.

## **Please help with research into the human health impact of contaminated land**



Eric Dede writes:

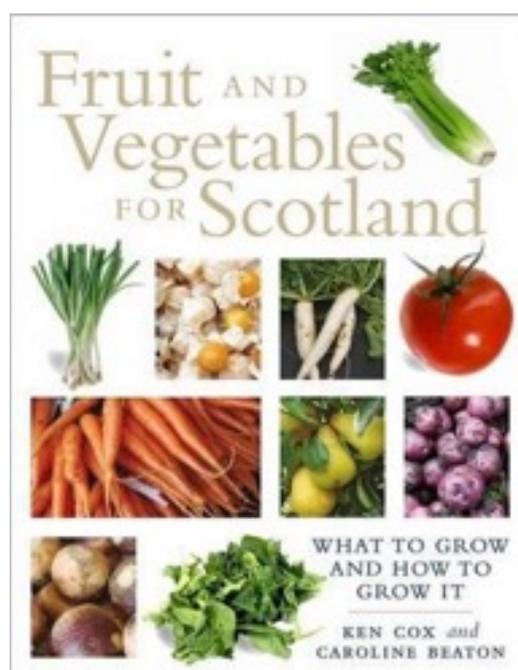
I am carrying out a study on the effect of low level soil-bound contaminants on human health resulting from working on allotments sites and consumption of allotment produce. Therefore, I would like to recruit local allotment owners/users to participate in the study. Find out more [here](#).

# Still looking for unbeatable prices for top quality seeds?



Why not try the FEDAGA Seed Scheme? It's been going a year now and is proving to be successful. Not only is it available to members ALL YEAR ROUND, but it delivers a whopping 45% discount to you and a further 10% dividend to your allotment association. A few members have been in touch with problems registering and we've been able to help them. As a result we've improved the advice on registering which can be seen [here](#).

## Fruit and Veg advice tailored for Scotland



FEDAGA doesn't have a resident book reviewer yet (any offers?) but we'd like to draw your attention to this useful addition to the gardening library, in case you haven't seen it. For once, it's actually going to be of particular use to the Edinburgh gardener as it's not written from a southern England perspective.

[Here's what Alastair Crozier has to say about it.](#)

[And here's where to order it.](#)

## Corrections and Clarifications



It has been drawn to our attention that last month's piece on Craighouse was incorrect insofar as the location of the War Poets' rehabilitation quarters. In fact, it was nearby Craiglockhart Hospital, now the Craiglockhart Campus of Edinburgh Napier University.

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