

the saughton ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION SPRING 2017

mains

Spring into Action for 2017...

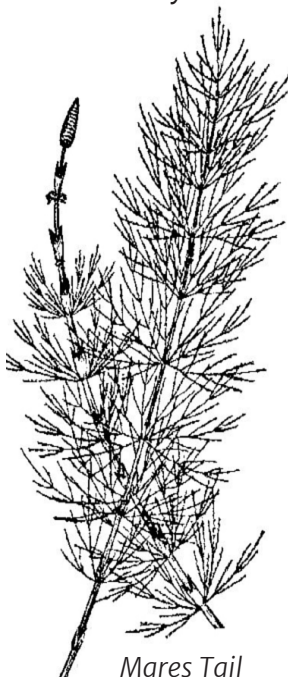
But not so energetically that you put your back out! Easily done in the joy of digging over the weeds of winter! But the tatties should now be in (though its not really too late) and all those leggy seedlings should be off the window sills and hardening off outside. Here's looking forward to a new, sunny successful season, after the the driest April in 75 years! Mary.S. Secretary

Pest of the year Award

The unthinkable happened last year when I considered chucking in the boots, sending my keys back to Ian Woolard and finding something else to do at weekends.

It all came about as a consequence of a Mares Tail infestation which struck me last year, and which has every sign of being just as bad this year. No matter how much I dug it up, it reappeared – very badly when I selfishly went on holiday and neglected things for a few weeks.

Mares Tail is one of the oldest and most successful plants on the planet. Hoe it off and all the little bits sprout anew, dig it out, and it simply re-appears from its network of deep, deep roots. Spray it and the waxy coating on the leaves simply shrugs it off. I've read of a new effective weedkiller, but it sounds pretty lethal for allotment use as it's typically used to spray large fields for ragwort and the mares tail must be 18 inches high before this treatment is effective. Now it has sprung a new surprise – spore producing shoots looking not unlike asparagus which, according to the internet, produces around 100,000 spores! Maybe stamp collecting would be easier on my blood pressure as a relaxing hobby. How do you deal with it? Post your experiences on our Facebook site. Mary.S Secretary



Mares Tail

General Plotolders Meeting

June 25th at 3pm

Are there any things you'd like raised in the general plot holders forum? This meeting is your chance – it is less formal than an AGM – there are no elections or formal procedures, so you won't be pressured into anything. Just come along, air your views and give the committee some support and feedback.

In March the Council published its new allotment strategy 'Cultivating Communities – A Growing Success 2017-2027'. You can find the link on our Facebook page, or try: http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20122/allotments/265/allotments_in_edinburgh Is there anything there that should concern us?

Fall Victims Only

PLEASE NOTE: THE LEAF BINS ARE FOR THE Council's leaf mold only. DO NOT PUT YOUR COMPOSTING WASTE THERE! THESE ARE NOT COMMUNITY WASTE BINS.

They are for the Council's autumn collection of swept up leaves, and by the following year they will have rotted down to give useful leaf mold for us all to use. Alan and Donald are fed up removing dumped piles of weeds. So please desist!

Be prepared for 2017 ! Available Fertilizers from Our Dry Goods Store

On our noticeboards we have an information page on all the materials – organic and otherwise you could purchase through our dry goods selling scheme.

As many of you know, ordering supplies through our site trading scheme brings substantial discounts.

You don't have to bulk buy, of course, you can buy in smaller amounts as the growing season demands it. But now is the time to think of Growmore (general fertiliser, slow release); blood, fish and bones – high in phosphate so good for promoting the growth of roots when you are planting out wee seedlings. Since we have an acid soil, a sprinkling of lime hoed in before planting out brassicas can make a big difference. Get all at big discount prices from our site store.

A Foragers Feast - Tasty and FREE!!

Have you spotted the **Few-Flowered Leeks** around the paths this spring? They are very invasive and are noticeably spreading, but you can help – by eating them !

They don't flower for long (and may be mostly finished by the time this newsletter reaches you).

Easily recognised by its strange flower structure (pale white and creamy coloured – see photo). It is entirely edible with the flowers often used by gourmet restaurants to garnish Masterchef style dishes.

The flower stems are fleshy, triangular in cross-section and are really tasty raw when chopped like chives into salads, or mash potato, or on top of soups and in omelettes. With hints of garlic, leek and chive they are a seasonal free treat – enjoy!

Go onto our Facebook site for more information from Jean Gifford.



In Spring the Few-Flowered Leek has a distinctive (and edible) flower.

If you have any other freebie foraging tips for the things we often miss around the site do share them... For example Chickweed (which we all weed-out) can be used in salads and can be seen in fancy restaurant salad mixes and is considered high in vitamins.

Between a Rock and a Hard Place?

One of the materials which is for sale is Rock Dust, which is made – as you might expect – by crushing rocks. The theory is that over millions of years, inorganic material has been washed out of soils by the weather, and plants benefit from its replacement.

Is it a proven theory? There are many anecdotal claims for its worth, George claims that after a few years you will see benefits, especially in your brassicas. However, this is by no means a controlled trial, George will have been putting all sorts of other good husbandry into his veg beds. And the gardening industry is a bit like the food industry – they will market something to 'cure' anything.

So whether you wish to try the Rock Dust treatment is up to you – but do keep us up to date on your results!

Is your number up?

Some plot holders are old enough to be able to recite their mother's old co-op number off pat. But ask them what their plot number is and they hum and haw. Committee members have a terrible job when trying to find any specific plot. Is your number clearly displayed on your shed or somewhere visible?

The committee are considering offering a numbering service using stencils and a spray. Mail mary.simpson@blueyonder.co.uk or drop a note in the Chalet Mailbox if you would like this service. A list of committee members is on the back page of the newsletter.

Heard the patter of tiny feet?

If you did it was probably mice digging up your newly planted peas or beans or raiding the seed trays in your shed. Tip: some scrunched up old green netting over the drill until the shoots are through can help deter the little blighters.

Or, maybe, it is **one of our periodic rat invasions**. Apart from the health hazard, they eat up tasty crops you've put a lot of work into – such as sweetcorn. Please let us know if you see any so we can take action.

But more importantly – help to prevent them – do not put any cooked food or scraps into your compost bin, it is giving these vermin a free food bank. No cooked materials in your compost bins please!!

Befriending our predators

Whether you are a cat or a dog person, both animals have a role in controlling rodents around the site. Rabbits, rats, and mice are all attracted to our crops – let's not mention the pigeons! Our proximity to the Water of Leith as a wildlife corridor will always provide a supply of furry fiends who spot a free meal on our side of the fence. So let's give praise to our local predators...

There are a number of local cats which appear onsite. Some of these are quite friendly and if they scent something interesting will quite happily patrol around your shed, even when you are working close by. So please be vigilant if you see a cat in your area and do check inside your shed before locking the door, especially if you are going to be away for several days.

While Urban Foxes are often considered a menace, in a semi-agri environment they do help keep down larger vermin like rats and rabbits that cats won't touch and should be considered welcome guests. If there wasn't a food source they would move on and that food source are our rodent pests ... oh and the occasional glove or boot for the cubs to play with...

Having lost our resident fox last year we are pleased to say at least one new fox has been spotted onsite this year.



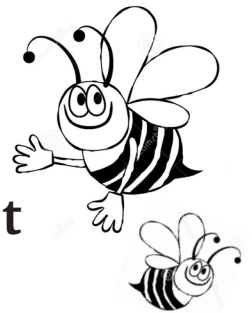
It may be a Water of Leith resident just sneaking under the gate, but if it's creating a den on your plot (likely under a shed) please don't treat it as 'vermin'. Allow it to raise a litter (assuming it has a mate) and in the autumn we can infill and block off the den if you find it a problem.

The vixen will move on and hopefully find somewhere else onsite more accommodating. [We do realise that not everyone might want an earthwork den under their shed].

So if you see a fox or cat please don't scare them away – just ignore them... they're not interested in you – just the things they might eat...

Nick.S

What's the latest buzz about the site?



Many of our crops thrive only if they've been pollinated – and that means Beezzzzzz. You'll have read recently that many native colonies are struggling, probably due to pesticides and alien parasitic or viral infections.

Allotments can provide one of the richest environments for bees, so our site rep Peter Shaw is in negotiation with the Council to get permission for introducing a few hives in a peripheral fenced off area. He is undertaking a course to update his bee keeping skills and will be ensuring all safety procedures are in place, such as installing high fences so that they fly up, up and away over our heads. Entice them back down to your crops by providing flowery treats.

Fond Foodie Memories of Mum's cooking?

Or was your childhood blighted by burnt neeps, lumpy tatties and spam? Maybe you recall the first meal you ever had as a married couple, or what recipes you have been passing on to grandchildren?

If any (or none) of the above form your most vivid memories of food, **Ems Harrington** would like to hear from you. She is part of a lottery funded project recording the cultural heritage and traditions of food and meals that mark significant events or 'rites of passage' in a range of different ethnic communities.

If you'd be happy to share your reminiscences with her, phone her on 0131 467 2994, or mail her at emma-jane@mecopp.org.uk

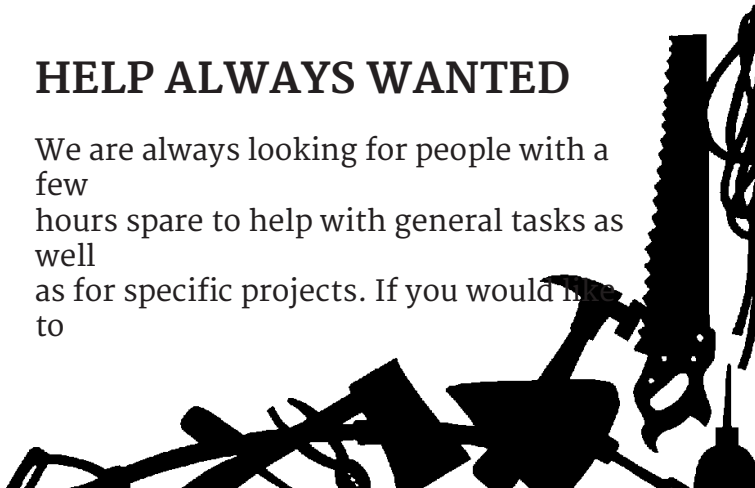
She will be on site for several visits so look out for her!

What is the Remit of the Committee?

- To represent the best interests of the Plotholders of the Saughton Mains Site.
- To communicate within the site with individual plotholders, and beyond the Site to relevant outside bodies such as FEDAGA.
- To represent the Site in communications and negotiations with the Site's landlords, the Council.
- To manage the Trading activities and other income generating activities.
- To mediate between individual Plotholders in the event of disputes and conflict situations.
- To manage communal site assets such as the leaf bins, toilets, paths and others such as the Chalet and communal areas.

HELP ALWAYS WANTED

We are always looking for people with a few hours spare to help with general tasks as well as for specific projects. If you would like to



Reminder...

You should report all theft or vandalism to Police Scotland (dial 101)

Also please inform the Council Site Manager:
Mr Ian Woolard 0131 529 7916
ian.woolard@edinburgh.gov.uk
and our own Site Representative
Peter Shaw : petershaw197@talktalk.net

Your SMAA Committee

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We also now have a Facebook account that we encourage you to use for the latest news and site updates.

www.facebook.com/SMAA2016/