

St John's Allotment Association.

Autumn 2020 Newsletter



Break-Ins

The recent break-ins have resulted in distress and loss to many of you. We have had more in the past couple of years than in many decades. We seem to be in the sights of professionals who are wholesalers in stolen goods. They steal stuff, and then return a few months later to steal the replacements. The committee has consulted the Police, National Allotment Society, local allotment associations, a security firm and the Rural Crimes Officer to see what we can do. Our conclusions are:-

- It is not possible to make the site totally secure. Neighbouring sites with security fences have been entered.
- It is your responsibility to secure your stuff. Valuable items should not be kept at the allotments. If you have no alternative, you should keep them out of sight in a locked shed and consider a tracking device, security marking and/or an alarmed padlock. The latter has been cut through with impunity on a previous burglary, and the sound emitted may not be heard by neighbours in the middle of the night.
- We are having a security marking event, organised by the Rural Crimes Officer at the allotments shortly to give advice. If there is demand for it, we will purchase forensic marking gear, and charge for it at cost.
- The thieves have obviously made a least one 'recce' at the site so be aware of strangers and note the numbers of their vehicles.
- Do not leave any tools and the like in the open. A spade is an ideal tool for breaking into a wooden shed.
- We will be checking the boundary for weak spots and plant thorny shrubs to fill them up. Let us know about weak spots, as we may not see them.
- The lack of electricity on the site limits our options. It could be brought on to the site, but it would be big expense with regular charges. We will investigate solar- powered motion-operated lighting, but are in doubt about its usefulness.
- The thieves seem to go to a lot of trouble to avoid the Football Club's CCTV. Its usefulness in securing a conviction is questionable. The images from the latest break-in were very grainy and just showed two bipeds in grey hoodies. The equipment is getting more sophisticated and cheaper all the time, and while no action will be taken now, we will keep it under consideration.
- We have kept the **gate** open to avoid the spread of Covid, but it **will now be kept closed from Monday, 14 September**. If the area becomes designated as one of 'concern', the decision will be reviewed. You should clean your hands and the gate handle before and after use. Keep hand sanitizer and wipes with you. **Please close the gate every time.**

- The gate is clearly the big weakness in our security. Ideally we would like an electrically operated sliding gate, opened with key fobs. Estimates of cost vary between £10K -£25K, beyond our means, though we could take a begging bowl to various grant-making authorities and/nor the National Lottery, or ask for loans or donations from members. Let us know your views.

Manure

Has been delivered. The price is the same as last time - £1 per barrow. Pay at the shed on 1 or 8 November, or by bank transfer. You can also put cash/cheques through the letterbox at 5 Mercia Avenue. Park on the drive when you drop the money off, as parking is often difficult in Mercia Avenue. We have not managed to find a supplier with a small enough tractor and trailer to deliver to the top of the cart roads. We are still looking.

Shed

This is now closed for the season, with the exception of 1 and 8 November for seed orders. You can buy shed supplies at the same time. Many thanks to our volunteers for their help this year

Seed Scheme

Most of the catalogues have been handed out. If you need one, let us know. Completed order forms and payment can be handed in at the shed on 1 and 8 November (last date) or delivered to 23 Berkeley Road. They should be available late November. We will let you know.

Skips

We have spent over £1,000 on rubbish removal this year. Please take as much of your rubbish off site as you can, and only bring onto the site the stuff you have an immediate use for.

Domestic waste, a bicycle and an office fan were put on the skip. Broken glass was put on a skip which could easily have fallen off and caused injury and had to be removed. This is completely unacceptable. You must show care and consideration to your fellow plot holders.

The Drive

The lane and main drive are in a really bad way, and will be even worse when the winter rain comes. We are working with the football club to fill in the holes.

The Football Club

The clubhouse has reopened and is serving food and drinks.

Bonfires

We have already had a complaint from the Football Club about bonfire smoke drifting over to their patio where people are eating and drinking. Please keep bonfires to an absolute minimum, only burning dry material. On no account should smoke drift over to the football pitch. Compost as much as you can, and take stuff which can't be composted home to your green bin.

Last but not least...

Chris Othen has left the committee to concentrate on his bucket list. He is keeping his plot. Chris has done an enormous amount of work over many years, letting plots and managing the site in the most professional manner. Many thanks, Chris, we are missing you already.

So we need more committee members. Please consider doing a bit to help out. The committee meets 4 or 5 times a year, and organise/participate in the work that needs to be done to keep us running smoothly. There is a lot of work to do, and sharing it out rather than being very dependent on a few individuals is the best way.