

Elder Stubbs Charity Allotments

2015 Newsletter - January Edition

A Happy New Year to Everyone at Elder Stubbs and wishing you an excellent and productive growing experience for this year!

The New Year is upon us and as with last season we have had a wet start to this year from having had a dry and warm end to 2014. Our ground water levels are being replenished with quite a lot of rain. The pond having again touched a low point is starting to refill. At least we are getting some sharp and cold Winter days which we can hope with our growers sense of priority, that it will reduce some of our unwanted bug population.

Overall 2014 turned out to be quite a good growing season at Elder Stubbs. Crops appeared to be rather slow in getting away in the Spring but we had a good Summer and I think we can look back and feel satisfied that some of the vegetables and fruit which we grew did very well.



It is a good time to think about plans for this coming season with what to grow and how to grow it.

Highlights of last year: Elder Stubbs plots have benefitted from the majority being well tended. A smaller proportion were poorly maintained where some tenants either had other personal priorities or limited time available which reflected on their plots. Many tenants get exasperated when people hold on to plots without the possibility of managing it to a satisfactory standard. **The principle must remain of use your plot or lose it.** If you have temporary issues about your health or other circumstances, it is important to let Phil/The Estate Manager know so arrangements can be made or assistance given where it is possible. We continue to have people on our waiting list who are keen to take on a plot.

Recognition of some superbly crafted plots: We have usually had the benefit of John Purves helping adjudicate the Clerks Cup which is awarded for the best well maintained plot showing excellent growing skills as well as an aesthetic appeal. Unfortunately last year this coincided with John having some health setbacks and Nigel Northcote very kindly agreed to take on the judging role. Nigel presented the award to Gus for his outstanding quality plot. Gus also won another top award with the Oxford Allotment Federation Competition where he was adjudged to have the best kept plot in Oxford in the 60-69 age category. David & Hilary Webster also had a very good season receiving the 2nd prize again in the 60-69 category.

The Elder Stubbs Festival & Vegetable Show: Another very successful event last year which was well attended. The Festival enabling Restore to make its work with people recovering from mental illness more widely known as well as raising some much needed extra funds for their essential work in our community.

Site Maintenance around your plot: We appreciate that it is not feasible for everyone to mow the grass on the paths by the side of your plot. Those of you who do - Thank you, it does help.

Please ensure that when you are weeding, weeds are not left on the path. It will get in the way when we mow the paths, and it damages the grass if left there.

Trimming the edges of your plot is more straightforward and I would encourage all tenants to make this one of your new years resolutions. It is easier to work to a nicely defined path edge as well as looking good! Using long handled edging shears is good exercise and not too demanding.

Paths between plots must be kept wide enough to mow. I will occasionally trim the edges around plots and it is helpful if you do not put canes, row markers, net cages or crop variety labels by the edge of your plot.

Theft and Site Security: Unfortunately theft and antisocial behaviour has again been a problem over this last season. You can greatly assist with site security by being vigilant and ensuring that the gates are properly secured with the padlocks, and letting the Estate Manager know of any problems or incidents that have taken place.



A nicely edged plot on the left hand side.

Sheds: There are many on site and they pose a target for would be thieves and arsonists. A shed has recently been a target of an arson attack and it was completely burnt out. It is very important that there are no inflammable liquids in your shed - petrol, 2 stroke etc. or matches and cigarette lighters.

Trees: These have again been a costly vandalism target, and a number by the Restore polytunnel had been part cut through. They presented a hazard and for safety needed to be cut down.

2015-16 Rental Payments

Your rental payment notice is included with this Newsletter. Payment is due by the end of March and can be made at Elder Stubbs 10 – 11 am on 23rd or 24th March. Payment by cheque can also be made from now (a good idea if you might forget later) and made payable to Elder Stubbs Charity and sent to my address noted at the end of this Newsletter.

Payments made after March will have a £5 surcharge to reflect time needed to chase any that become overdue.

Maintenance Charge: Ideally you will be able to find 3 hours over a season to put into making Elder Stubbs look good and function well. If you can manage more, that would be welcomed. It is preferred that you come up with a positive use of 3 hours of your time rather than paying. The Estate Manager has considerably more work to maintain the site than the hours allocated. It is reasonable to expect that all tenants will take some responsibility to help with this.

If you are moving home or changing your telephone it is necessary to pass on your new details.

It will be really helpful if you have decided not to continue with your plot to let me know as soon as possible. This could enable a new tenant to make a start with preparation for this season.

Waiting list for plots: Allotment tenants with plots can add their name to the waiting list to take on an additional plot. Consideration will be given where their current plot is being well maintained within the Tenancy Agreement guidelines and up to a reasonable combined total plot area.