

Gardeners' Newsletter

Winter January 2010

STAA Ltd.

Promoting and enhancing the historic allotment gardens in St Ann's, Nottingham



Happy New Year

Welcome to our Winter Newsletter. We hope you (and your gardens) have survived the cold weather and that you are busy planning for 2010. Our newsletter is full of information about what's happening on the allotments, so we hope you take the time to read it. Note our tenants' consultation event on 16th February – remember if you can't make it you can still pass on comments to the office. Also check out our Fruit Tree workshop on 14th February – everything you wanted to know about fruit trees, but were afraid to ask!

STAA is now a registered charity!

After six months of hard work we have now been successful in obtaining Registered Charity status.

To make our work purpose clearer, we intend to adopt the operating name "St Anns Heritage Gardens". Legally we will still be 'STAA Limited' but we will increasingly use the "St Anns Heritage Gardens" name as an operating name.

This will not change the day to day management of the site in any way; but hopefully will open doors to sources of funding that have previously proved elusive as some organisations will only support Registered Charities. It will also enable us to "gift aid" some donations and reclaim some tax.

All this will add to the funds we can dedicate to improving and maintaining the site and supporting gardeners.

New STAA Staff

In December 2009 our new Site Maintenance Officer started work with us. Chris Jamson has previously worked in the landscaping industry and brings a wealth of practical skills and experience to STAA.

Shortly after Chris started we were able to employ a further 3 people who are funded for one year posts through both Nottingham City Council and the Government Future Jobs Fund. Colette brings much needed administration support into the office and John and Ashley are working on the site with Chris, Rob (Partnership Officer) and Marc (Garden Support Officer). We hope gardeners will appreciate the hard work that is currently going in to clear derelict gardens and also to support gardeners with difficult practical tasks such as reducing internal hedges to manageable levels and clearing out the huge amounts of dumped household waste from gardens. We hope you will welcome our new staff and show your appreciation to them. Also any offers of help that any gardeners can give are much appreciated. We do have several gardeners who are contributing to the running of the site and helping to bring back old allotments into use, but with the size and complexity of this site, we would welcome more help.

And sadly our Heritage Officer, Helen Keating, will be leaving us to take up a post nearer to home. We wish her well, and thank her for her hard work and dedication in getting the Heritage Project of the ground.

Gardener Consultation Event Tuesday 16th February 2010, 4pm-7pm

***Hedge Cutting...Cultivation Standards...Fly-Tipping...We need your opinions!
Come and have your say...Just call in sometime between 4 and 7 o'clock and make
your comments, no need to stay.***

*Willow Room, John Folman Business Centre, Hungerhill Road, St Anns NG3 4NB
If you can't come to the event, please do write in or email us with your comments on the
above topics. Email to: info@staa-allotments.org.uk*

Community Orchard

What a way to celebrate 100 Activity Days – and thereby 100 months – on the Orchard!

There was hot soup, mince pies, cake, tea and a big fire to keep us all warm, and we lit 100 candles to give the place a goodly glow as dusk fell. But the main thing that fell was the snow!

Snowballs were thrown, snowmen (and women) were made and we even had some intrepid sledgers slaloming between the trees.

And to mark our anniversary off up into the snow we launched some white Chinese lanterns to float mysteriously across St Ann's.

Many thanks to all who came, on that day or the other 99 – here's to the next century!

Remember the orchard holds activities days 11 – 4pm on the third Sunday of the month. Future dates are

- 21st February
- 21st March
- 18th April

Rachel is also running short monthly walks around the site – if you know any one who may be interested contact the office.

Rodents

Many of you will be aware that the onset of winter brought many sightings and evidence of rats. We have taken advice from the Council's Environmental Health Department on this problem and would like to inform you of their advice:

- Rats like food and will gather where there are food sources. Food is anything edible from apples on the ground, vegetables or bird food.
- Rats will breed very rapidly with large litters of offspring!
- It is essential not to leave any potential food around on your allotment as this will continue to attract the rodents in. Pigeon and chicken keepers in particular need to be aware that grain spillages will bring the rodents in. They will even burrow into storage sheds, so ideally any stored food should be in metal containers.
- In the autumn, any windfall fruit should be collected, not allowed to lie on the ground.
- Whilst it is a good thing to have bird feeders, where possible they should have collection trays underneath as hanging feeders tend to result in a lot of the bird food dropping to the ground.
- Finally don't leave any food wrappers and packaging lying around as the smells of food will attract the rats. We have noticed that many of the avenues and paths have food and drink packaging dropped in them. Not only is this an antisocial habit, it means that your allotment rent is going towards cleaning it up! There are many better ways we can use the rent money and feel that you as tenants would prefer to walk into a clean, tidy, litter and rat free site!! So please hold onto your own litter and dispose of it in your dustbin at home!

Hungerhill Fruit Tree Project

We are pleased to announce that STAA have been successful in securing a grant from Awards for All for a fruit tree project. Building on the work done by the Heritage team in identifying many interesting varieties on site, the **Hungerhill Fruit Tree Project** will aim to propagate 2,000 apple and pear trees from scion wood collected from our old trees as well as some from new varieties recommended for organic growing. Once grown, the trees will be given away freely to gardeners, schools, community groups, as well as parks and other open spaces.

The project has secured the help of a top U.K. nursery and as such provides a great opportunity for volunteers to learn nursery skills such as budding, planting, and pruning. Work has already started on preparing the site, on plot B442. Once clear the rootstocks will be planted in late February before being budded in August. For details of regular work party events please visit our new website – to go live in a few weeks or call the office on 0115 9110207

Fruit Tree Workshop Day

We are holding a 'Learning about Fruit Trees' event on **Saturday 13th February**. This event is open to both tenants and members of the public and will include a workshop on looking after your apple and pear trees, as well as how they are propagated from rootstock. The day also features a site tour, highlighting some of the very old and interesting varieties of fruit trees growing on the site, as well as our new Fruit Tree Nursery, where we will be propagating fruit trees.



Participants will be eligible for a tree fruit tree when the propagated trees are ready to be planted out.

The event will start on the Community Orchard at 10am and plans to finish by 4pm at latest. We do have some funding to offer free refreshments including fresh, hot vegetable soup, however, we must ask you to register with us before hand as places will be limited.

If you do wish to join us please call STAA office or email to

info@staa-allotments.org.uk

asking for your name to be

included. This event is being funded by Greater Nottingham Partnerships using *The Learning Revolution Transformation Fund*.



Water Use on Hungerhill and Stonepit Coppice Gardens

As we move into Spring, hopefully we will have a fully functioning water system. During the excessively cold winter weeks there were a few problems with some new taps and valves, but hopefully these will be rectified by the time you read this newsletter.

In the drier spring and summer months when you will need to use water, please try to use it wisely and not wastefully. It is important to be aware that the borehole pump has a limited capacity and excessive use will result in water not reaching some areas of the site. Also the borehole water is still metered with a limit set on the total amount that can be extracted each year.

Please remember that water coming through the taps on the main site should not be used as drinking water. This comes straight out of the ground and is not purified in any way.

(This does not apply to gardeners on the Gorse site, where the water is still straight from the metered Severn Trent Water System)

Finally, as mentioned in our previous newsletter, do try to save water in water butts and containers wherever possible, as this can be used for watering instead of going to a tap. Finally do remember that a tap is not exclusive to any one tenant! They all need to be shared so any permanent hosepipe connections are likely to result in a reminder from STAA!

BONFIRES

Can we please remind tenants to be aware that their Tenancy Agreement does state that bonfires should not cause a nuisance to other tenants or residents.

We have recently been contacted by Environmental Health Officers and asked to remind tenants that hazardous and toxic materials should not be burnt as bonfires. Any such materials should be disposed of in a dustbin or at a waste recycling depot. This will include plastics, rubber and household furnishings which will have been treated with chemicals to make them fireproof. When burnt, these materials will release toxic chemicals which are damaging to the lungs as well as the wider environment!

Allotment bonfires should only be waste garden materials such as wood and dead leaves. Even with these, care should be taken so that excessive smoke does not cause offence to neighbours or local tenants.

Safety on site

Whilst the new gates have improved security immensely it is still possible to get on the Hungerhill site if you are determined. **SO** please continue to lock your avenue gates and your own plot gates if you are working by yourself. Continue to be vigilant if approached by some one you don't know, and don't allow strangers onto your plot.

Capital Works Finishing

The contract awarded to Crestra for the Capital Works on the site is almost finished. It is anticipated that they will be leaving the site in February. After being around for 2 years, their presence will be missed, but we appreciate the changes to the site that has been made.

At the time of writing, there are still some projects to complete, which fall outside of the Crestra contract – in particular the building of the allotment centre. Hopefully we can give you an update on this in the next newsletter!

Partnership and renovation works

Thanks to all our partners, volunteers and tenants who have tirelessly supported us in 2009. There has been a dramatic change in the overall site condition as a result of organisations and individuals' commitment to volunteers. Around 30 gardens have since been cleared, hedges planted, a historic well restored and wildlife habitats created. We greatly appreciate the support given to us and would like to encourage our existing partners to continue working with us as well as inviting new partners to join us during 2010.

This table below shows of the partners involved during 2009 in the restoration project

Organisation	Project
BTCV	Wildlife and habitat management
Urban Nature	Wildlife and habitat management
Nottingham Probation service	Plot renovations
University of Nottingham	Plot renovations
Romax Tech	Well restoration
Barclays	Donations plus plot renovations
Capital One	Plot renovations
EON	Donations

Tree O'Clock

On 5 December in collaboration with Urban Nature, STAA took part in a world record tree planting day to deliver top class hedge planting session which attracted 35 volunteers, who planted 432 whips in just one hour. The event had the full support from BBC through live broadcasting before and during planting session. It was encouraging to notice tenants getting involved in this project. Not only did the event help restore an important historical element of the site, it also created additional wildlife habitats, and raised awareness of the importance of the site for the City of Nottingham.