

Gardeners' Newsletter

Winter January 2011

STAA Ltd.

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



Welcome to the Winter Newsletter

We hope you find the time to read this newsletter. Look out for our photography competition, and pruning workshops. We've also had the space to promote a few events run by other local groups. If you would like to write an article for the newsletter contact Mo at the office.

Print too small? Contact office for large print version

Are you a keen photographer?

Visitors on our open days are often keen to buy a souvenir of their visit; they've even tried to buy the STAA t-shirts off our back! So this year we have decided to create an allotment calendar, which we can sell at open days and other events we go to. Money will go towards supporting site maintenance.

We'd like the calendar to reflect life on the allotments, and rather than have an outsider coming in, we would welcome photographs taken by tenants and friends of the allotments. We'd like photos of people, plants and gardens at different times of the year. Photos must be digital and a maximum of 300dpi.

We are very fortunate that local Radio Nottingham presenter John Holmes has agreed to judge the photographs. Deadline for submissions is 30th July 2011. *For more information and a copy of the guidelines please contact Mo at the office.*

St Anns Community Orchard

We had a magical time at the Winter Extravaganza where we made Christmas wreathes, sang carols and had candlelit pathways around the orchard. We have more activity days planned over the next few months on:

Sundays, 11am - 4pm

20th February

20th March

17th April

Come and relax and explore this beautiful site; make some popcorn on the fire and let the children play. If you are up at your allotment pop in for a free cup of tea/coffee

EVERYONE WELCOME

Just come along on the day or ring STAA on 0115 911 0207 for more details.

The Community Orchard entrance is on Ransom Road opposite Hill View Community Centre; about 200yds up from the junction with Hungerhill Road, look out for the yellow sign! Or gardeners can come in via the metal gate on 13th Avenue



"I don't go up to the allotment over the winter"

The gardens are very quiet at this time of year, even when there is no snow or rain to keep you at home - but this is a great chance to get down to the plot and get ahead of yourself.

This is the best time of the year for:

- Setting out new beds and planning (brick and cement work is best left for warmer weather). If you have recently taken on an overgrown plot be realistic about what you can bring into cultivation -talk to Marc at the office if you need help with planning
- Weeds clearance by winter digging and preparing the ground, if you leave it until summer, it can be harder to keep clear of weeds
- Clear those sheds and summerhouses out so you have the space to move in them (but please don't dump things on site; take rubbish home, or to the local tip). Watch out for hibernating wildlife
- Tackle the internal hedges
- Prune apple & pear trees (come to our workshop if you need help with this)
- Get the thermals on, bring a flask of tea and just enjoy the peace and tranquillity of your garden
- Dig out your St Anns allotment gardeners' pack for advice on planting and monthly tasks (replacements available from the office if needed)
- For the new or shy ones amongst you, set yourself the challenge of getting to know just one of your neighbours - most of the gardeners are lovely people

Up and coming events

Nottingham Organic Gardeners group have a few interesting events over the next month

- There's a Potato Day on Saturday 29th January 10.30 - 2pm at Sherwood Methodist Church Hall (corner of Mansfield Road/Devon Drive), Nottingham, NG5 2EN. £1 entry
46+ varieties of seed potato for sale, plus shallots and onions, also advice on growing potatoes, and refreshments available
- The Edible Garden - an afternoon with Alys Fowler, BBC gardening presenter on Saturday 26th February 2pm - 5pm at the Friends Meeting House, 25 Clarendon Street, Nottingham, NG1 5JD. Tickets £5 from NOGs, or buy at ROOTS in Sherwood. For more information phone 0115 923 1631
- Stonebridge City Farm are running a seed swap on February 12, between 11 - 3pm. There will be seeds to swap, and some seeds and potatoes for sale. Tel 0115 950 5113

Pruning workshops

This is the time to be pruning the apple and pear trees in your plot. A group of Gorse tenants had a great time at Marc's pruning workshop earlier in January. We learnt how to plan what we're doing with a tree (before hacking it to death; which has been my solution up to now) with plenty of hands on practice. Pruning practice has changed over the years, so even experienced gardeners will learn something new at this workshop.

The next workshop for Hungerhill tenants will be **Saturday 26th February, 9.30 to 1pm**
Meet at Ransom Road gates 9.30

Phone the office to book a place

We will be running a workshop for Stonepit Coppice tenants in March.

A mini adventure

You may have noticed clearance work at the bottom of Gorse, where it meets Sycamore Park. We are working with South Nottingham College to reclaim this area for community use. The gardens had been used during the nineties as an adventure playground but has been disused for over a decade.

Heritage news

In partnership with the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens we are running a discussion session in February to capture the history of the Community Orchard, the vision, progress and the future. If anyone has any early memories of setting up the orchard, photos or papers, we'd love to hear from you.

Digging in the archives

Part of our work has been verifying the things we say about the allotments; when they started, who used them, how they were used. Nottinghamshire Archives, Angel Row and various online resources have helped us clarify a number of points. The first mention we've found so far of '*400 highly cultivated gardens each let for £1pa*' was in the History Gazetteer and Directory of Nottinghamshire, 1832, - a bit earlier than previously thought. We've also found a rent ledger and a map of Bridge and Chambers (who managed the land on behalf of the council) from 1848 where it seems that these gardens were not let by the council, but by individual burgesses, who still held large plots of land. Another area of research has been via the new newspapers on line initiative launched by the British Library. They have now digitalised the Nottingham Guardian from the 1840s - this can be accessed via the Angel Row library web site

St Anns Rose Show

Dawn, one of our volunteers, has been researching the history of the Rose Show. She's been going through old newspapers to establish the movement of the Rose Show, news coverage, and what gardeners were growing at the time. We hope to put together a display about our findings in the summer, and research into plants will help us plan our display garden

Water update

The water is off for the winter. The landlord (Hungerhill Developments Ltd) and the City Council have identified a solution to last year's problem. This is being reviewed by professionals to confirm that it is workable and negotiations are in hand with suppliers with a view to getting the equipment installed as soon as possible.

The garden I lived in

Further research via the census has produced quite a bit of information on people who lived on their plots in the past. Morris Weisblum lived at B44 & B48 between at least 1891 and 1903. Mr Weisblum was a Russian Pole, a tailor and shared a house with his sister in law. His plot measured 1,607 sq yards with rent at £8-5-6. On the 1882 OS map there is a small house on this plot, but numerous greenhouses and land. Samuel Bradbury lived at 'The Cottage' on Fords Avenue from 1891-1903. William Shelton lived at B265 from 1891-1903. The 1903 Bridge Estate ledger lists a house & garden measuring 724sq yd, at a yearly rent of £5-7-6. William was a cooper, and lived with his wife (a lace worker), 2 daughters, 2 sons and a grandson.



“Now, what's my plot number?”

In the last newsletter we asked tenants to paint their plot number on their gates. We've had a good response to this, with some tenants making lovely boards, mosaics or painting their gates - individuality is the way to go!! Many thanks to those who have done this. If you haven't got around to it yet, why not take a bit of paint (or even a felt marker pen) down to site next time you are there and mark up your garden number.

Spring open day

Tenants will know that we only have two major open days a year - in spring and autumn. The date for the next open day is Sunday 15th May. This is an opportunity for members of the public to see our site – it is part of the payback for the funding we've had over the last few years. It would be great if more tenants got involved in this.

Here are a few ways you can be involved in the day:

- Opening your garden, whether as part of a formal tour, or for visitors to pop in and see what you're doing
- Help out on the day - we need people to greet visitors, show them around and direct the lost ones
- We are hoping to run a plant swap table - could you help us run this? Will you have any plants you'd like to swap?
- For Gorse tenants this is an opportunity to come down and see the Hungerhill/Stone Pit Coppice site.
- For all tenants - why don't you pop down to the Community Orchard to meet staff, see displays and have a cup of tea?

There will be more information in the next newsletter, but contact Mo at the office if you'd like to be involved.

Consultations on rent and cultivation policies

Thanks to all the tenants who took the time to respond to our consultation on rent levels and cultivation standards. We have had a good response - but you can still complete the questionnaire and return to us if you didn't get it in last year. We have just heard that the Council have put out a consultation paper on 'proposals for changes to the tenancy agreements and plot allocation'. This is downloadable on:

<http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=23873&p=0>.

Bye bye cabins

At the time of going to print, the old metal cabins at the Ransom Road entrance are being demolished and removed from site. Hopefully work on the allotment centre, to be built in this area, will commence soon.

Hungerhill Heritage Fruit Tree

Did you know that we are growing 2,000 apple & pear trees to distribute to the community? We planted the rootstocks last spring, and budded the stocks with local and heritage varieties in August. Well, they have survived the snows and frost of winter, and we are getting more and more interest in the project. So if you would like a fruit tree for your plot, or your local community group get your name down now! Trees will be available this autumn and in 2012.

Tree preservation

Talking about fruit trees, we know that our site has a great variety of fruit trees; many of the old pear trees are unusual 19th century Belgian and French varieties, and very often they represent the only specimen on site. We are currently in discussion with the City Council to protect some of the trees, so they are not lost for future generations. This will be via 'tree preservation orders', whereby STAA tenants could not take down listed fruit trees. If this goes through, any gardeners affected will be notified. In the meantime, please check with the office if you want to take down a tree in your plot - there is a balance of biodiversity to be maintained on site - so we need to work together on this. If you have fruit trees but never get around to using the fruit we can ensure it doesn't go to waste.

Theft of greenhouse frame

There's a lot less theft and dumping on site nowadays, but one of our tenants had an unwelcome shock for the New Year. His aluminium framed greenhouse has carefully been dismantled, the glass stacked neatly and the aluminium taken away. The plot was on Stone Pit Coppice, near the park - did anyone see anyone climbing over fences, or carrying frames? If so let us or the police know. Last summer our local Police Officer stopped a scrap metal man climbing over the gates - so we are still being targeted.

So if you see anything suspicious, let us know. If you don't feel able to challenge anyone, make a note of the incident, get registration numbers of fly tippers, or if you have a mobile phone take a picture.