

North Hainault Allotment Holders Association & Protection Society Ltd

Spring Newsletter

May 2013 - <http://www.nnr-allotments.org.uk/>

Registered office: 31b Tomswood Hill, Barkingside, Essex IG6 2HL FSA ref 9792 Estd: Sept 1923

Welcome to our Spring(ish) newsletter.

Well it has certainly been an eventful winter. You cannot have failed to have heard about the arson attack on the Tomswood Hill site in November which destroyed the Trading Hut, goods store and tool store, following the theft of the equipment held within. Our Trading Hut at New North Road has been raided several times, but each time the building was repairable, this is not. A full report is inside.

I would like to thank the New North Road team for making all our plotholders so welcome at their Trading Hut and also for providing the venue for our committee meetings.

The weather has not been good, with several parts of the site under water for weeks at a stretch, making work difficult. Hopefully we have now seen the end of that and the new season can begin in earnest so it is time for a few reminders.

The Editor

News from the AGM

At our AGM in November we had a lively discussion with the 38 members and guests that attended. Thank you for all those that came along to support us and to Norman and Eileen who again provided the refreshments.

The bulk of the committee remain the same, with the addition of Anne Sachs from Tomswood and Michael Fresco from New North Road. Regrettably, Wendy Rowe has since decided to step down from the committee and we wish her well for the future.

Web Site

If you spotted a website address at the top of the page your eyes are not deceiving you! Sam Swanborough at New North Road and her contacts have kindly put this site together for us and are looking for more information to put on it. Please get in touch if you have any info for her.

Inside this issue

- AGM Report
- Website
- Tomswood Fire – new premises arrive soon!
- Compost
- On Your Patch
- Bees, pipes and carpet
- Latest contact list
- Happy Birthday

**Trading Hut
Open**

Sundays

10am – 12 noon

ALL WELCOME

New this

Fire at Tomswood Hill

In the early hours of November 9th, thieves broke into the stores at Tomswood Hill, stole the machinery and set the premises on fire, causing the destruction of our buildings and severe damage to the vehicle repair premises next door. This was widely reported in the local press at the time.

Initially, David and Norman were kept busy working with Vision and Redbridge Council to organise the removal of the waste which included asbestos roofing materials and necessitated the use of a specialist contractor. They liaised with the neighbours, electricity company, fire brigade and police in confirming that it was a case of arson and not an accident or fault. Norman has since been busy dealing with the Council, Loss Adjusters and builders in getting the claim settled and David has been coordinating the efforts to remove the debris on site using a mixture of contractors and volunteers. Between them they have worked hard to get a good settlement on the claim and a good price on the replacement items.

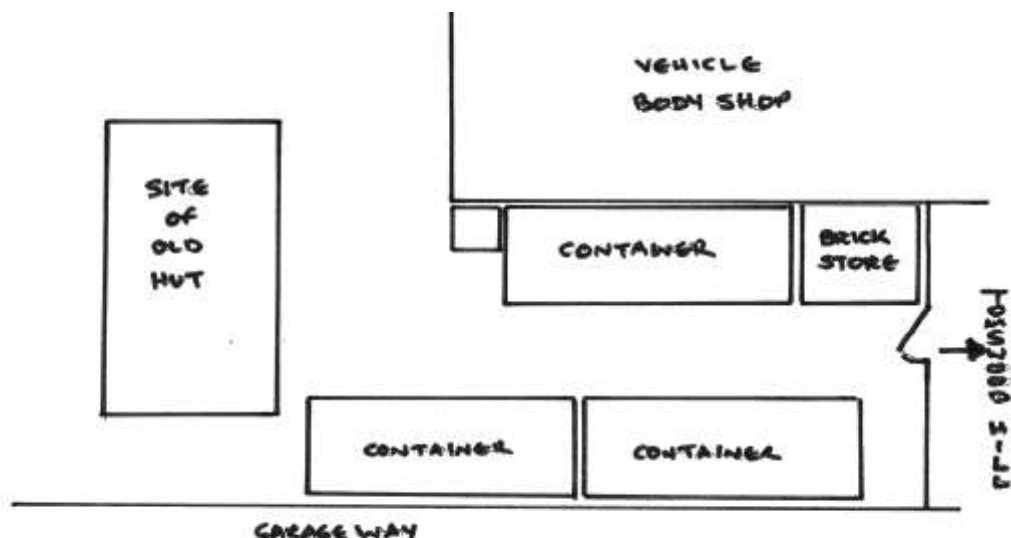
The good news is that the claim has finally been settled and our new premises will be arriving very shortly.

The committee would like to express our sincere thanks to Norman and David for their extensive work on this matter, and also to those who have helped in clearing the debris - in particular, Roger Kennedy, Misha Patel and Steve Lavender.

We have decided to go for a radical approach to the new build – instead of a replacement timber store, we are purchasing three 20ft long refurbished steel container units to replace the store, shop and meeting room. These will be fire resistant, rat proof and strong enough to put off all but the most determined and well equipped thief.



These will be tucked into the space previously occupied by the stores and cage and the neighbours adjoining this part of the site have indicated that they are very happy with this approach. A plan below shows the proposed layout.



Composting



Pardon me if you already know this, but we have many members new to gardening on a larger scale and it doesn't hurt to look again at our own practices, so we thought it would be a good idea to have some hints and tips about composting. There are a great variety of these for sale but it is a really good way of recycling the green waste produced on the allotment and there are lots of ideas about the best way to go about making it.

Here is a general guide as to what makes a good compost mix taken from a variety of sources.

What do I make compost in?

A bottomless box or a plastic barrel/bin are best, sitting directly on the soil to let out any excess moisture. You can use a sturdy bag but that's harder to handle. The main thing is that it is enclosed so it gets warm and stays a little moist. Pallets are great for building a large bin with but line the sides to stop it drying out.



What can I put in it?

Just about anything! The main rule is to keep a balance between the softer material and more robust woodier material so it doesn't turn into a soggy smelly mess. There is a full list opposite -keep it on your fridge or shed door for reference if you like.

What about weeds?

Small domestic composters do not always get warm enough to kill off all seeds, so do not put any seed heads in and the real nasties are best put in the Council green waste bags and sent for composting with the Council – NOT IN OUR SKIPS PLEASE!



So what about leafmould?

Is it really mouldy? No. Fallen tree leaves can be a good source of nutrients. Simply bag them up, put a few holes in the bag and leave them at the back of the garden for a year and you will have leafmould. Watch out with conifers and other evergreen leaves – they can take two years or more.

So I put it in the box and forget about it?

Not quite – it's worth turning it over and remixing it from time to time. If you can fill it all in one go it gets started quicker and will get hot quickly. If it gets too dry, add water and if it gets too wet, add more brown waste. The more effort you put in, the quicker you will see results but it can take anything from a few weeks to a year, so be patient.

There is lots of information on composting on the internet, in magazines and in books if you want to look further into this. Good ones include the BBC, recyclenow.com and RHS.

Compost ingredients

Anything that was once living will compost, but some items are best avoided. Meat, dairy and cooked food can attract vermin and should not be home-composted.

- **For best results, use a mixture of types of ingredient.** The right balance is something learnt by experience, but a rough guide is to use equal amounts by volume of greens and browns (see below).
- **Some things, like grass mowings and soft young weeds, rot quickly.** They work as 'activators', getting the composting started, but on their own will decay to a smelly mess.
- **Older and tougher plant material is slower to rot but gives body to the finished compost** - and usually makes up the bulk of a compost heap. Woody items decay very slowly; they are best chopped or shredded first, where appropriate.

'Greens' or nitrogen rich ingredients – quick to rot

- Grass cuttings
- Raw vegetable peelings
- Tea bags and leaves, coffee grounds
- Young green weed growth - but avoid weeds with seeds
- Soft green prunings
- Animal manure from herbivores eg cows and horses
- Poultry manure and bedding

'Browns' or carbon rich ingredients - slow to rot

- Cardboard eg. cereal packets and egg boxes
- Waste paper and junk mail, including shredded confidential waste
- Cardboard tubes
- Glossy magazines – can be included but why not pass them on to friend, your local doctors or dentists' surgery or send them for recycling
- Newspaper – in small doses, better to send your newspapers for recycling
- Bedding from vegetarian pets eg rabbits, guinea pigs :hay, straw, shredded paper, wood shavings
- Tough hedge clippings
- Woody prunings
- Old bedding plants
- Sawdust and wood shavings
- Crushed egg shells

What's on my patch?

New North Road

Sam and the team have done a brilliant job tidying up and sorting out the Trading Hut. It is open every Sunday from 10-12 noon and they are always open to suggestions for stock. Keep an eye out for our plant sales – we have cabbages now, with tomatoes, beans, corn and squash to follow soon. Thank you Brian!

We have asked the Council to assess the asbestos roof on the Trading Hut. Although sound, with the fire at Tomswood, we are mindful that if that should ever happen here, it would be a major hazard to the local area. We await their verdict but are planning how we can fund any replacement ourselves should we need to.

Tomswood Hill

A couple of timely reminders to all please: all plots should display their plot number at the front of the plot (Rule No 6) and all paths should be kept in a safe state (Rule No 5). Regrettably many are not, which makes getting around the site difficult. Although David and his helpers do a stirring job on the main paths, it is your responsibility to maintain the left hand path beside your plot and also the path between your plot and the one behind, if you have one.

We have found a lot of leaks in the pipework, so regrettably the water had to be turned off while these were being repaired. Thank you for your patience while Terry and Norman carried out this essential work.

Carpet

Our lease with Redbridge Council forbids the use of carpet on site. We are encouraging gradual removal where it already exists, **but no more carpet should be brought on site.**

Garden Plots

I'm off to a late start this year, just like everyone else, but generally it looks quite healthy considering some was completely under water for a while. The apple and quince trees are doing well, although one is overshadowed by my rather large compost heap that is refusing to rot down, so I'm going to have to follow my own advice and sort it out.

I am very pleased to say one of my yuccas has a flower spike this year – it must have heard me plotting to remove it as it is quite dangerous to get close to. Be warned the tips of the leaves are very sharp!

If you would like to help me here, you will be more than welcome, do please get in touch.

I hear that a garden is being prepared at New North Road Site too, so please keep an eye out for this. It's right by the entrance so you cannot miss it.

Diane



Redbridge in Bloom

Congratulations to our entries at last year's Redbridge in Bloom competition, Mr Sinclair and Mr Miah, who both did very well. There is not an individual allotment category this year but if you are interested details are online at redbridge.gov.uk and forms should be in your local library. Closing date for entries is June 28th.

To Bee or Not to Bee?

A local beekeeper is looking for a new site and we were approached as a possibility as Forest Farm already has a hive and cannot accommodate another. We asked around and discussed this at our last Committee meeting on April 23rd, and decided that unfortunately we would not be able to accommodate this as we had concerns about interference with the hives and risks to plot holders with allergies.

Generators

We have had a couple of enquiries about having a generator available for hire so that plot holders can use their domestic electric garden tools on site. We are looking into the safety of this and would like to know how many of you would be interested if we were to go ahead. The suggested fee would be £5 per half hour as it is quite an expensive item to run. Please speak to your Stewards to let them know if you are interested.

Water Pipes

We are fortunate to have lots of water tanks around the sites, but with tanks come pipework. Most pipes are laid across the front edge of the plots so please be aware of this when digging. May we remind you that we will ask for payment to deal with pipes found to be damaged by plot holders.

Distribution

This newsletter will also be put on our website, so if you would prefer to access it from there, please let your David or John know so that we do not print unnecessary copies.



Our next issue is not due until September, but if you have anything for this or the website please get in touch through the Hut or at diane.meakin@btinternet.com

Happy Birthday!

It's our 90th birthday in September 2013, so thinking caps on please for ideas to celebrate!

Contacts

Management committee

Chair	David Sevant
Vice Chair	Alan Wagstaff
Secretary	Anne Sevant
Treasurer	Norman Hagger

New North Road

Plot Lettings	John Burt
Plot Stewards	Alan Wagstaff
	Brian Watkins
	Jim Smith
	Peter Elliott
	Sam Swanborough
General Member	Michael Fresco

Tomswood Hill

Plot Lettings	Anne Sevant
Plot Stewards	Terry Byrne
	Norman Hagger
Garden Plot & newsletter	Diane Meakin
General member	Anne Sachs