

PLOT-HOLDER

Free Bi-monthly Newsletter - Issue No. 2 (March/April 2006)

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Secretary - Your site!

or www.amas.org.uk

Want a Plot?
Phone 226 3322 to find out
what's available

Going for a Green Flag

Once again, Crumpsall & Cheetham show the way forward. They have been encouraged to enter the prestigious Green Flag Award... And if they get it, they will be the first Allotment site in the UK (There is a smaller 'Green Pennant' Award that one site, down South, has).

Talking to their helpful and industrious Secretary 'Duggie' (D. Allen) while his wife, Jill, prepared me a tasty bacon & egg toastie (recommended by Sue Roberts) he outlined how this was such a daunting task - but that their Committee had decided to "have a go".

We would strongly recommend every allotment site to send a representative to look at this forward looking site with an excellent 'community spirit' with both its members and the neighbourhood. They are bound to find something useful from their visit, how they organise events, work with schools, use computers, sell goods in their shop, etc.

The Green Flag

This is an Award, designed to encourage and improve our Parks and Open Spaces and all will gain from looking at the criteria outlined on their web page www.greenflagaward.org.uk (link from our AMAS site).

Assessment is on eight topics:

1. Being welcoming
2. Being safe and secure
3. Being tidy and well maintained
4. Being environmentally friendly.
5. Encouraging wild-life
6. Involving the local community
7. Marketing and self promotion
- 8 Being well managed

We wish them all the best, on behalf of all of Manchester's Allotments

Parrswood Replacement

At long last, the replacement site for Parrswood allotments is under way and may well be finished by the time you read this.

Acorn Close

Half the size of Parrswood and away from the area where there is most demand, the new site at Acorn Close is welcome, so welcome that all its plots have been let and a waiting list is in force - despite little publicity for plots.

Most of the plots on Acorn Close have gone to local people in the Levenshulme/Burnage area and we are sure they will soon be producing healthy, tasty fresh vegetables while giving those 'lucky' plot-holders plenty of exercise.

AMAS

The Association of Manchester Allotment Societies

What is it - and what does it do?

A voluntary group formed from the various societies that run separate allotment sites in Manchester. The aim is to provide a collective body to promote the use of allotments and to maintain and improve the standards on all the sites in the city. It is also the group that discusses allotment matters with the Council and agrees the capital works programme within the budget set by the Council.

AMAS holds bi-monthly meetings at which representatives from all allotment societies discuss current and ongoing problems.

An AGM is held in March every year at which all plot holders are allowed to attend; non society plot holders are also welcome to the AGM.

In addition to these functions AMAS is also looking to the future and is investigating the formation of a Trust to take over the care and improvement of all allotments in the city.

Involving them 'young'



Its that site, Crumpsall & Cheetham again!

Whilst finding out about the Green Flag application, I was told about the excellent work Emilio Degisi was doing with the young school children from the local area (St. Thomas, Temple and St. Anne's).

Not only does he give them at least an hour's lesson but he sets and marks their homework. They get to plant all sorts of vegetables on his plot and tend the site's community orchard - and as Emilio said - *"they thought spuds come from the Supermarket - someone has to show these kids where their food comes from - and let them experience the joy of gardening"*.

One school has plots in their own school and Emilio helps them and even judges their plots - his friend, Medwyn Williams, certainly approves.

As you might gather, Emilio, and Italian immigrant from Naples, is an accomplished gardener, often taking the prizes at Crumpsall's Annual Show. He has some excellent vines and, of course, makes his own wine.

For 2006, he has ambitions for 4ft carrots and 5ft parsnips and we would like to wish him every success to this committed, enthusiastic and helpful gardener.

Not just Crumpsall & Cheetham:

We hope to include other sites from the 40 on offer in the next edition and publish the excellent work they/you do so maybe May/June Edition will feature your site!

Allotments Competition

Now is the time to start planning the plot for the 2006 Annual Competition throughout the city for allotments.

All plots entered are judged in the middle of July when all plants and vegetables are growing well and plots should look at their best.

Plots which come up to standards are awarded certificates and the plots with the highest marks compete for several cups.

The presentation evening takes place in November when the Lord Mayor presents the cups to the winners and the certificates to the societies.

Do you want to enter? If so see your society secretary for more details, or for non-society sites, Sue Roberts will help.

March/April

This is the busy time for all of us as seedlings are brought on - under the threat of frosts - a useful programme to record is "Countryfile" on BBC1 on Sunday mornings with a slot giving the week's weather predictions.

Welcome to New Plot-holders

It is nice to see the new plot holders on the sites throughout Manchester - all keen and excited about the thrill of tilling the soil and growing their own produce - but a word of caution, don't over-do it. Back-ache, blisters and grazes can soon lead to disenchantment - take your time and tackle a small section at a time, perhaps covering part of your plot with black plastic to tackle later (old carpet is now considered a pollutant by many - who wants their spuds flavoured with "Shake & Vac"?).

Get to know your neighbouring plot holders and find out what they are growing, you will find the vast majority are very helpful and willing to offer you advice.

Compost Bin

Advice to all, but especially to those clearing a new plot is set up a composting area and start making that black gold.