

Roehampton Garden Society

AGM November 2021

Site 2 Secretary's Report

Everything about gardening is for me personal, creative and therapeutic. Being a simple grower, however, my cultivation prowess extends only to low maintenance and everyday plants that I like to eat. I am fortunate, therefore, to be able to continue to derive great pleasure from observing the beauty and variety of plants in our vegetable gardens while they miraculously defy our unpredictable weather to reward the patience and considerable efforts of our creative allotmenters.

Tomato blight

For the second year in a row, tomato blight has wafted in on the wind to Site 2 causing widespread destruction of our tomatoes. Blight is a disease caused by a fungus like organism that spreads rapidly in warm, wet weather. Those dark brown patches on the foliage, stems and fruit can be a disheartening sight. But take heart. These problems are sent to test our gardening mettle. Taking a positive view, we learn from these setbacks and should not be defeated. As someone once said, if gardening was too easy, it wouldn't be so much fun!

Bindweed

That perennial pest, bindweed, has been a bit of a problem again this year. However, in your indomitable way, you have tackled the problem magnificently and have, at least, banished it from sight. I would like to think you have taken some guidance from the article on the subject that appeared in the June bulletin. Whatever the reason, well done to you all for your concerted efforts in keeping this persistent plague and other weeds under control.

Social area

Our social area is certainly serving its purpose by becoming a popular social and meetings venue. Many of our plot holders have already savoured the pleasure of eating their lunches al fresco in the sunshine on the patio. While refreshments are not provided, a kettle is supplied in the social hut and water

is available on tap (outside the loo) for those who fancy a brew or a coffee. In line with Covid risk avoidance, you must bring your own mug. My thanks to the gallant team of volunteers who worked tirelessly to turn a barren piece of land into an oasis of peace and tranquillity for us all to enjoy.

Lettings

The effect of the pandemic has meant a reverse migration for some of our plot holders. Accordingly, we have had to bid 'bon voyage' to some who have returned home to be with the families they left behind and to re-connect with their roots. For others, the pandemic, a shifting economy and changing work patterns has persuaded them to leave the metropolis in order to seek cleaner air in the country. Accordingly, this year has seen the departure of twelve plot holders. However, with a fast growing applications list, there is no shortage of eager applicants waiting to fill each vacant plot.

Lavatory cleaning

This may come as a surprise to some but, I promise you it is a fact. Lavatories do not self-clean! Nor do we employ a professional team of cleaners to attend on site to maintain our lavatory to the high standard of cleanliness to which we have all become accustomed. The fact is that this maintenance program is carried out by our own dedicated volunteer task force of plot holders who don the Marigolds and the masks, spray the cleaning agents and get scrubbing. My thanks to everyone on the lavatory rota who make our lives a lot more pleasant than might otherwise be the case.

Covid-19

So far, we have had only one case of Covid-19 on Site 2 with no other re-infections. This I see as testament to the considerable efforts of our Chair, Helen Finch, to provide us with safeguarding guidelines in order to reduce the risk of contracting the virus. In addition, of course, there is the manner in which we have all united to follow those guidelines without demur. Together, we would seem to have proved that good hygiene really does work.

Appreciation

I take this opportunity to thank all those plot holders who have martialled their strength and kindness to assist those shielding or self-isolating against Covid-

19. While this virus has presented us with an unprecedented threat, at the same time, it is also an unprecedented opportunity to come together as one against a common enemy. It has been an uplifting experience to know that, amid so much isolation, we can offer a helping hand. In the spirit of solidarity, we have offered help with shopping, posting mail, collecting medical supplies and maintaining unattended plots, particularly by keeping weeds under control. But the pandemic has also offered us the opportunity to rethink our values and intentions. It has forced us to imagine new ways of being with one another. Perhaps, even after this pandemic has blown over, that same spirit of solidarity and generosity should continue towards our fellow plot holders who, from time to time, may be in genuine need of our gardening assistance.

My thanks to you all for your kindnesses, friendship and admirable work ethic.

Catherine Maunsell-Bower

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