

S U M M E R 2 0 0 9

the

# System Allotment Society

newsletter



## Welcome!

This newsletter provides a fresh look at the way we do things in Upper Church Street. We intend to provide you with important dates for your diary such as the forthcoming Social Evening; tips and tricks to making your vegetable garden a great success; giving updates on how the committee has worked hard for you this year; provide details of bargains relevant to our society; where to get those things that everyone asks particularly for those of us just starting out and by sharing best practice. Turn to page 2 for the first lot of tips provided by the winners of the best-kept allotments 2009.

### Riveted to the spot:

System Allotment Society taking in a quick demonstration regarding Comfrey and its use



## Annual outing a great success

Our planned day out to Ryton Organic Gardens this year was blooming marvelous! Roy from Nesbitt's arrived on time and managed to negotiate Upper Church Street which had been cleared by the police courtesy of Terry Bailey, our staunchly supportive Treasurer. Once on board and a head count had taken place on a fairly dreary drizzly Saturday morning, Roy headed off toward the M69, destination Ryton! *Continues p3*

## Dates for your diaries

### Social Evening

**21 September**

Nice night out for all plot holders and prize giving for best-kept allotments

### Committee

**5 October**

Post-social evening and a time to prepare for the longer evenings...

### AGM

**15 March 2010**

Annual voting of committee members with guest speakers.

## Rhubarb Frenzy

Well organised, well attended and well provided, the Spring Sale was a true success this year.

### System demands Rhubarb

As ever, committee member Jane Anderton provided some outstanding hanging baskets this year and we sold well on the tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers and other salad vegetables. However, the rhubarb counter was a popular hit and Sam Eames was forever driving to and from the allotments reloading with fresh rhubarb for an ever-demanding consumer crisis!

### Summer Sale

The great weather helped us break the Spring Sale record by £20. Rhubarb was another big seller as well as the many varieties of beans we had grown. Syston White plums, figs and pears were all sold along with the few donations of carrots.



### Best Kept Allotments

Almost all of us will walk past Brian Piggins' award winner (plot 3, 2<sup>nd</sup> on the right hand side) at one stage of a visit to the allotment. Brian has been on the allotments since 1932 and has had a number of awards during his veggie-growing career. Brian's favourite crop is madeupberries and offers a number of tips on page 6

### And the best half plot...

...goes to 'Gris' on 15b. Gris is overwhelmed by the help, support and friendliness of everyone on the site, let alone the immaculate condition of the plot which is one half of Mick Hall's. Gris inherited a huge amount of fruiting bushes and set to work on making a few minor improvements to the 100 year old shed which was full of clutter when he moved in this Spring. *Continues p7.*

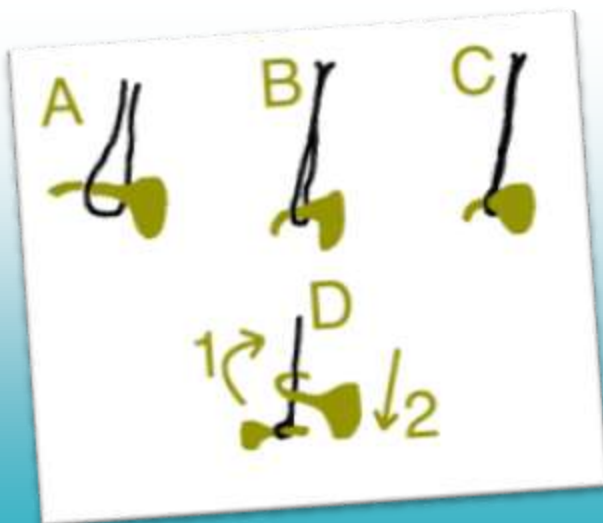




## Ryton Organic Gardens: The Summer Outing

Ryton seems at first just a shop and a large car park; initial entry suggests a café and outbuildings, though behind the shelves of jams, pulses and pastas one can gaze through the full length windows into some gloriously kept and developed gardens. The entrance to the gardens runs through an educational display of vegetable make-up and the history of organic farming with plenty of on-hands experience for the children. This led out to a small courtyard with a fishpond where we met our guide Stephen who showed those of us who wanted to be led through some interesting mini-gardens, some protected by huge hedges and others open to the elements, such as the allotment – a rectangular plot split into

quadrants designed at developing a four-field crop rotation. The two sections that seemed to enchant us at first, was the pest and disease testing beds. They had experimented with six different ways of controlling slugs: Collars to prevent reaching succulent new leaves, Tile and bran that entrap those trying to hide under the plant and dry them out, advanced organic pellets safe for wildlife that only kill slugs and snails, a thick layer of bran which the slugs eat and dehydrate, 'slug pub' full of beer or yoghurt placed high enough to prevent beetles from entering, and Slug Stoppa Granules made of tiny rocks to prevent slugs from getting to the plant. Our second level of interest was the versatility of Comfrey as a manure and liqui-feed.



## Tying Onions

**A little tip from Paul Windridge on how to store your onions and manage string**

*Paul's got this neat way of tying onions and I will never go back to any other method. Take a length of string and fold in half, placing the onion neck in the hoop and tie around. Each extra onion needs to be tied around the string as demonstrated in this picture and keep going until you run out of onions or string. Best to keep to a maximum of 15 onions.*

## Spring Clean

### The entrance is our advertising

As with business and our homes, it's nice to come into a grand entrance and the allotments are no different! In late May the committee trimmed the front hedges, tidied up the hard ground by the shop and cleared the pond of weed and litter. It was nice to find the frogs have been busy in their own little ecosystem.



### Shop still open for business

Every committee member holds a key to the allotment so please approach one of them if you want to obtain any competitively priced compost, chicken pellets, string and some liquid feed. Terry Bailey tends to be the most popular shopkeeper but if he's not around try one of the committee listed on page 5, prices (at time of printing) are on page 7.

### Booked your ticket yet?

The social evening and annual prize giving will be on the 21 September at the Conservative Club. Tickets are £4 and available from our ever popular Terry Bailey. You can find Terry on plot 65 or try another committee member who will arrange to have a ticket handed to you.



### Criminal sentenced

The spate of thefts from sheds and plots over Christmas finally came to an end in February when a 22 year-old man was caught red handed in a sting operation by the police and plot-holders and sentenced to 18 months in February. Many of the items were retrieved – the rest were re-sold at the summer sale, supporting LOROS.

## Introducing the Allotment Committee

Let's start off by explaining that we are all paid-up plot holders like yourselves, we come under the same rules that the council adheres to and we do not make any claims against the society's funds. We do however, at our regular monthly meetings, arrange activities like the prize giving ceremony and social evening (this year set for 21 September and tickets available for £4), the Annual General Meeting and most notably this year, the trip to Ryton Organic Centre. Terry Bailey - our Secretary and Treasurer - works hard at arranging the Spring and Summer sales, and the rest of us, under the guidance of our larger-than-life Chairman Terry Farmer put forward ideas and agree the way forward for our society. Most importantly of all, we represent **you**. Should you wish to put forward a change to the rule to the council, wish to have something erected on your plot or just need general advice, we are here to help. We are not a policing service and will be willing to take anything you wish to ask for on board. This includes the request for a toilet block (refused every year by the council for at least 4 years).

**Matt Davis** →, plot 66B. Matt's a recent arrival and is covering Terry as secretary to give him a rest.



← **Sam Eames**, plot 5. Sam's often around to give advice if he's not walking the dog...



← **Terry Farmer**, Chairman, plot 67A. Terry took over from the last chair after the AGM this year.



→ **Jane Anderton** and her husband  
← **Dave**, plot 43B. Jane and Dave have been on the committee for ages.



← **Terry Bailey** (plot 65) has had some role in the committee for over 10 years. Terry works hard for the committee and is a common sight in the shop.

↓ **Paul Windridge**, plot 54. Paul's knowledge of organic farming is impressive.



↗ **Mick Streetley**, Plot 11. Both Mick and Paul are sages of knowledge but Mick has the trailer!



... and **John Evans** who was unavailable for a photograph before printing

## Brian's tips

Following his well earned success as best kept full plot this year, Brian shares a moment of his time...

### Brian's history

Brian's been on the allotments now for more than 40 years and was originally plot 2 because the road was widened and a plot lost and the turning head at the other end lost another plot. Not much has changed – the single pump is still there, the centre path was just a dirt track but some sleepers were put in around the same time as the taps, and the gate has been renewed. You've never been able to get out at the other end

### Water management

I don't do much watering – runner beans originate from swamps, so naturally I give them some water but watering plants leaves surface roots instead of letting the plants search for water by burrowing down into the soil. Before the taps appeared, the pump was used only for initial planting.

### Investing the time

As its Leisure time for me, I don't look at it as having to manage the allotment for allotted time – after the summer sale I didn't go down there for almost a week. Hoeing is the key when the weather is dry by killing the weeds while they're small – Fat Hen and a number of other dodgy weeds won't compost or they'll seed the compost if it doesn't reach a high enough temperature.

### Soil treatment

I used to muck one half every year and the other half the following year but due to rising prices I started to lay off and then the scares (concerning pesticides being passed through animals) started to appear. I used to work on a farm so cow muck was my preferred soil treatment but since the population has exploded, the muck now contains some questionable stuff – each to their own I say, but I prefer not to use manure any more.





## Mick Hall's legacy finds a dedicated grower

When Mick Hall decided to hang up his wellies and call it a day, there was a panic that the best kept, weed free allotment would be handed to a novice compared to Mick. 'Gris', as 'R Thorpe' is better known to his friends ("it goes back to my CB radio days"), has shown through his dedication that the fears were unfounded.

"Initially", said Gris, "I was disappointed that I would only get a half-plot", but evidence has proved that Gris is pleased with the outcome. I live in a Jelson house, so the garden is very small and I am restricted in what I can do. Gris has already spruced the Victorian shed and laid some pathways recycled from materials left by Mick. "I consider myself as the custodial keeper of the shed given its history and

the work put into the plot". When Mick first picked up the allotment in 1946, the gate stated "Knoll Allotments". Some previous newsletters have referred to the site as "Church Street Allotments". "There is a lot of history here but most of all", added Gris, "it's the people. There has been no end of well-wishers and advisers and everyone has been so friendly, especially Norman Hunter next to me (plot 14)". Gris, like the rest of us can't believe there is no toilet facility, "especially for the children and the women" he said. Gris' favourite vegetable is Brussel Sprouts and looks forward to planting some next year, meanwhile he has been very impressed with Spinach beet, "it is fully hardy and the leaves keep growing back".



## Community shop prices

**We have a range of items, competitively priced, direct from the wholesaler**

<i>80 litres compost</i>	<i>£3.99</i>
<i>Chicken pellets 20l</i>	<i>£8.50</i>
<i>Seaweed concentrate</i>	<i>£5.95</i>
<i>1l</i>	<i>35p each</i>
<i>8ft bamboo canes</i>	<i>£1.30</i>
<i>string</i>	<i>£14.00</i>
<i>Growmore 20kg</i>	<i>£1</i>

# Help us with news

Care to give us some tips on how to grow or how to store? Do you know anything that needs sharing with other plot holders? Is there anything you may have heard from 'experts' that you would like to share with us?



We would love to hear from you

## Want to read some more?

System Allotment Society online (under construction)

[www.matthewdavis.co.uk/sas/Welcome.html](http://www.matthewdavis.co.uk/sas/Welcome.html)

Matt Davis, plot 66B

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