



Charity No 1108144

'Growing Concerns'

The Newsletter for members of Harrow in LEAF

July 2011

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HARROW IN LEAF SHOW

SUNDAY 28th AND
MONDAY 29th AUGUST
12 noon–6 pm

Harrow in LEAF's seventh Horticultural Show will be held on August Bank Holiday weekend at the Headstone Manor site, in association with Harrow Museum and Heritage Centre. The show will be opened on Sunday by Harrow's 'Queen' and the Mayor will visit us on Monday and hand out the prizes. The Horticultural and Beekeepers' marquees will have plenty of exhibits for you to admire, and there will be information on allotments and other horticultural matters at the Harrow in LEAF stall. There will be many craft stalls and entertainments, and for the first time we have a petting zoo. Refreshments will be available. Come along, bring your family and friends, and enjoy the Show.



Have you considered entering an exhibit in the show? There are horticultural, domestic, and arts and crafts sections. Schedules and entry forms are available on our website or from the Show Manager. If you haven't entered a show before, why not do so this year? There is

a simple guide to showing to help you and give you some tips. You can find it and on our website or obtain it from the Show Manager (020 8907 0508).

WE NEED VOLUNTEERS to help in the marquees, on the gate, on our own stall, or with traffic control and parking. We depend entirely on volunteers. Could you help for a couple of hours? You will, of course, get a chance to go round the show as well as helping the show run smoothly. If you can help, please e-mail dichurch@btinternet.com or phone Roger on 020 8866 6066.

We run a fund-raising tombola and raffle at the show and welcome contributions from members. If you have any new goods that you would be willing to donate, or know somewhere that you could display a show poster, please contact us.

Allotment news: Earlier this year you may have read of the government's proposals to review the statutory duties of local councils, including the obligation to provide a 'sufficient number' of allotments (Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908). The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners urged people to respond to the consultation. Over half of the responses to the review were in relation to allotments, although allotments were only one of almost 1300 duties to be reviewed. The outrage among allotment holders forced the Prime Minister to assure MPs in Prime Minister's Questions on 4th May that this obligation was safe. He also said that he thought it extremely important that allotments are made available, that he was aware that queues for plots were often long, and that the allotment movement had his full support. The Department for Communities and Local Government has also stated that "we will not remove statutory protections for allotments".



Increase in rents: LEAF's Allotment Protection subcommittee are looking into the increase in allotment rents for 2011-2012 shown in the invoices that we received in April. Although we escaped a rise for 2010-2011, next year rates per pole, when the 67% increase in water rates is included, will go up by 29% for those who pay the full rate and 51% for concessions. This is way above inflation and the increase in RPI and cannot be justified.

At our Annual General Meeting in May there was concern that Harrow in LEAF might have to be dissolved, since our Chairman Georgia Weston, Secretary Judy Long, and Treasurer Mike Love, resigned and no nominations were received to replace them. It was agreed that a Special General Meeting would be held on 29th June and we would call for nominations for the committee officers. If none had been forthcoming, it would have been necessary to dissolve Harrow in LEAF. Fortunately there was a wonderful response, and at a crowded meeting we were able to vote on some excellent candidates. We were very happy to see so much support for LEAF. Our new Chairman is Gordon Cox, a founding member of LEAF; the Vice-Chairman is Terence Frisch and the new Secretary is Frances Goldingay, both enthusiastic newcomers, and the 'new' Treasurer is Judy Walker, who has previously carried out this role. We would like to thank Georgia, Judy and Mike, for the enormous amount of hard work they put in and the progress made in not just retaining but increasing the number of plots and active sites.

Under our new constitution, agreed by a majority vote at the AGM, we have a management committee, comprising Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, chairmen of any subcommittees (eg show, allotment protection, maintenance) and co-opted members of LEAF. The general committee is made up of the management committee plus a representative of each allotment site and of each affiliated society. If your society or site does not send a rep to LEAF committee meetings, please consider doing so. It enables societies to keep their members up to date with what is going on. As a result of meetings organised by the council in 2008 and 2009, most allotment sites have a rep; however, these meetings no longer happen, and Harrow in LEAF provides a useful forum to discuss what is going on in allotments throughout the borough, and allows us to work together for better allotments. Copies of the new constitution are available from the Secretary (info@harrowinleaf.org.uk or 0750 2300 956)

Britain is said to be the slug capital of the world, with around 30 species and 200 slugs per m³ of soil, each eating about twice its bodyweight each day. Although slugs were less of a problem in this year's dry spring, they are now making up for this. To use slug pellets or not? Do your neighbouring plot holders use them like a mulch? There are many ways you can reduce damage without using pellets, such as looking for eggs in early spring and late summer, hunting for adults on warm damp evenings, and looking for snails hiding, often in clusters, in winter (deal with them as your conscience allows). Traps can be made from upturned grapefruit skins or containers part-filled with beer, but these must be checked and emptied frequently as predatory ground beetles can fall in. Encourage predators such as songbirds, hedgehogs, ground beetles, frogs and toads, or use the parasitic nematode (in Nemaslug) for small slugs. You can put copper tape round pots, or barriers of crushed eggshell, commercial granules or repellent gel around precious plants. Plant out larger plantlets as these are less vulnerable than small seedlings. But you may still wish to use pellets.



Which? carried out a test of different types of slug pellets, containing 3% or 1.5% metaldehyde or 1% ferric phosphate. Small plots, as free from slugs as possible, were surrounded copper-topped barriers and planted with young lettuces, then slugs or snails were introduced. After 2 weeks, the lettuces in all the plots treated with pellets had very little damage, whereas the untreated plots lost a half to a third of their lettuces. Although new formulations of metaldehyde pellets are less toxic than old ones, they still account for many animal deaths, and the recommendation is to use ferric sulphate pellets, which pose little threat to people,



pets or wildlife and are approved for organic gardening. They are more expensive, but most of us apply pellets too thickly, which increases the risk of poisoning; the manufacturers recommend spacing pellets 15 cm apart. Use them early in the spring, just as slugs and snails are emerging, and on warm damp evenings in summer.

Harrow in Leaf HQ hut, at the far end of the track on West Harrow large allotment site, was donated by a local community group in 1999, and it needs maintenance from time to time. Our maintenance group meet on Tuesday afternoons at about 2.30 to do any repairs, use the ride-on mower, do a bit of gardening and have a cup of tea. If you could spare a bit of time to join them, phone John Hillier on 020 8933 1810, or just turn up.

Top gardening tip from Timothy Walker, Director of Oxford Botanic Gardens: the only part of your garden that should be watered is the compost heap!

How much do you love your lawn? If, like me, you can live with a lawn that is a mixture of grass, moss, clover, buttercups and daisies, you won't need to feed your lawn or mow it very often. However, if you want a beautiful green sward, tests have shown that lawns that are fed four times a year look healthier and have fewer weeds, but feeding more often doesn't make enough difference to justify the effort. Using a mulching mower instead of feeding can produce a lawn that looks good, though with a few more weeds. And to echo the tip above, lawns don't need watering to survive, even if they are going brown, as they will recover when it rains.

But if you like to use lawn weedkiller, there is bad news. Aminopyralid, the weedkiller that was banned after manure from animals fed on pasture treated with it caused problems, is back. There are now tighter regulations for its use, so it ought not to get into manure now. However, the closely related clopyralid is a constituent of many domestic lawn weedkillers, which presents a problem of what to do with clippings. The Health and Safety Executive requires all amateur products containing clopyralid to carry the following warning by February 2014: "After treatment, leave the clippings from the first mowing on the lawn. The next three mowings should be composted well, for at least 9 months, before being used as a mulch. Do not dispose of the grass clippings via a council composting scheme." Commercial compost producers are required to test their compost for residues, but if your compost heap, like mine, isn't all it ought to be, and you use lawn weedkiller, you need to take care.

Dates for your diary

Harrow in LEAF SHOW: 28th and 29th August, noon–6 pm, Headstone Manor, HA2 6PX. Admission £2; accompanied children under 12 free. Free parking.

Belmont Horticultural Society Show: 3rd September in St Anselm's Church, Uppingham Avenue, Stanmore; 3 pm.

Federation of Middlesex Horticultural Societies Show: Sunday 11th September, 2.30 pm, Perivale Community Centre, Horsenden Lane South, Greenford.

Hatch End Horticultural Society Autumn Show: 17th September, 2 pm, Hatch End Guide & Scout HQ, off Grimsdyke Road, Hatch End.

Harrow Fuchsia Society Shows: Saturday 6th August, 2.30 pm, and Thursday 25th August, 8 pm; St Andrew's Church Hall, Malvern Avenue, South Harrow.

Harrow Recreation Ground Users' Association: Music in the Park 7th August; Fun Day 4th September; both 2.30 pm; Tree Dressing 4th December, 2.15 pm; all free, Harrow Recreation Ground; refreshments available.

Newton Park Horticultural Society Show: Saturday 3rd September, 2.30 pm, Tithe Farm Social Centre, Rayners Lane. Outing to Capel Manor, 6th August, £15; contact Chris Salter 020 8868 3254

Donations to local horticultural groups

The aim of Harrow in LEAF is the promotion of horticulture for the benefit of the public, in particular those who live in or near Harrow. One of the ways we have carried this out this year is by making donations to affiliated societies and local horticultural organisations, including schools and charities, to help them carry out horticultural projects.

Learn to love a wasp: at this time of year, wasps are starting to annoy us by wanting to share our al fresco meals and our fruit crops. The first female workers to hatch in spring use wood from our fences and sheds to make their amazing papier-mâché nests, but the larvae in the expanding colony are fed on meat, including caterpillars and aphids, so they should be regarded as beneficial. It is only at the end of the season that the adults become a nuisance by feeding on fruit.

And talking of fruit, **hoi polloi** is a community-based orchard project recently launched in Harrow that plans, among other things, a number of events such as an apple day in the autumn (<http://www.hoipolloi.btck.co.uk/>).