

System Allotment Society Newsletter

Winter 2012/2013

A happy new year to all of you, and an especially warm welcome to those of you taking on a plot after all the years of waiting! As we move into 2013, it is being reported that 2012 was the wettest year on record in England. The drought in early spring is a faint memory, as we have since endured months of rain and soggy conditions, leading to cancellation of the summer produce sale due to the poor growing conditions. We all hope 2013 will prove to be a better growing year.

2012 awards evening

The 2012 awards were presented at Syston Social Club on 27th November. Invitations were sent to everyone placed in the best kept allotment and Syston Town Council trophy competitions, and all other plot holders were welcome to come along and enjoy the evening.

Brigitte Bree accepted the trophy for best kept full plot on behalf of her husband Anthony, Brian Piggin and Norman Hunter took the second and third prizes and Richard Thorpe won the award for best kept half plot.

The Syston Town Council trophy was presented to Alan Hill for the most improved allotment. The recipient of this award is decided by the committee members, and in 2012 it was awarded for the hard work Alan had put in clearing a heavily overgrown plot.

Alan Terry, the previous winner of this trophy, received a plaque as a memento.

The full list of winners is:

Best Kept Allotment – Full Plot:

1st Plot 62 Mr A Bree

2nd Plot 3 Mr B Piggin

3rd Plot 14 Mr N Hunter

Highly Commended Plot 68 Mr S Cioca

Commended Plot 58 Miss C Walker

Syston Town Council Trophy

Plot 64A Mr A Hill



Syston Town Council trophy winner Alan Hill with committee Chairman Richard Thorpe

Best Kept Allotment – Half Plot:

1st Plot 15B Mr R Thorpe

2nd Plot 35B Mr D Ward

3rd Plot 59A Mr N Abell

Highly Commended Plot 39B Mr P Vyce

Commended Plot 9A Mr R Stretton

Children's Competition: Biggest Pumpkin

Plot 57A Callum Lawrence

An avenue of Syston Whites

Syston White plums have been grown in the local area for at least 100 years. Many plots have a mature Syston White plum tree at the rear of the plot, but since the full plots have been split into two, anyone getting the front half has missed out on getting a tree.

Mick Streetly is keen to rectify this, and he has been digging out saplings grown from the original trees and is passing them on to anyone who would like one. He has a vision of an avenue of Syston White plum trees, lining the central track, which would look especially beautiful when the trees are in blossom.



A plum tree avenue to aspire to...

If you would like a tree, and you have space to plant it about four feet back from the front of your plot please contact Mick (plot 11). Availability is subject to Mick finding enough saplings, so if you have any on your plot please let him know.

If you do get a sapling, dig a hole about two feet square and deep enough to easily get the roots in. Mix in compost or blood, fish and bone. Position a stake so it faces into the prevailing wind - the end against the tree should point to the south west, allowing the wind to push the stake against the ground. Attach the stake to your tree with a soft tie.

Mick may have had to prune a few branches or twigs, so if there are any cuts cover them with tree paint or Vaseline. Keep the area under the tree weed free, and if it throws up any suckers ensure these are cut off.

Caring for plum trees

While your plum tree is still a sapling it will need watering during dry spells. Once it is established it will benefit from an application of well rotted manure in spring, but ensure this doesn't touch the trunk. In autumn, a dose of bonemeal will feed the tree and prepare it for growth in the following spring.

It will need a yearly pruning, which should be done in June, July or August, as the spores of silver leaf, a common fungal disease of plums, are much less abundant in the summer. At other times of year silver leaf can enter the tree via the pruning cuts. The fungus gives leaves a silver sheen, and will cause branches to die back. Take out any dead wood and crossing shoots - plums fruit on both old and new wood, so there's usually no need to do much more than this unless the tree starts to overhang the track. If the branches start to look crowded, prune as necessary to maintain a 'goblet' shape.



A Syston White plum tree planted in December 2012

Keep removing suckers as they appear. They can be cut off at soil level, or removed completely by carefully digging down to where the sucker joins the root and pulling it away.

Immature fruits should drop naturally in June, leaving you with a fruit around every five to seven centimetres. If the fruits are closer together than this, pick some off to allow the remaining plums to develop fully.

New notice board

St. Peter and St. Paul church recently replaced their notice board, and the old board was donated to the allotment site. It has been sited next to the entrance, and refurbished with cork tiles to create a much larger space for notices and information.



The new notice board before refurbishment

Stock up from the shed

Remember you can buy supplies from the shop in the shed. The shop will be open for a few hours most spring and summer weekends. If it's closed, most committee members have a key and are happy to open up for you if you ask.

Price list

Multi-purpose compost 60 litre bag	£4.75
Chicken pellets 20 kilo bag	£8.75
Seaweed concentrate 1 litre bottle	£5.95
Slug pellets	£1.40
Pest spray for greenfly & whitefly	£3.99
Blood, fish & bone per kilo	£1.00
Growmore 3 kilos	£2.50
Weed killer for paths	£1.50
String	£1.30
Lime 20 kilo bag	£4.50
Labels one dozen	£0.25
Canes 8 feet	£0.42

Make friends with nettles

Most allotment holders would probably consider nettles to be a tiresome weed, but the new shoots that will start to appear soon are the cook's friend, and the more mature stems make an excellent liquid fertiliser, especially suitable for leafy plants such as brassicas. Nettles grow in abundance along the lanes and footpaths around Syston, and can be harvested in early spring for culinary use, and throughout spring and summer to make fertiliser.

To make a nettle fertiliser, pick enough nettles to fill a bucket, crush them a bit in gloved hands and put in the bucket. Cover with water, and weigh them down with something like a broken slab or wire mesh and a brick. After three to four weeks the liquid feed is ready to use, diluted about ten to one with water. The bucket can be topped up with more nettles and water as needed. Any sludge remaining in the bucket at the end of the season can be put on the compost heap. The liquid can get a bit smelly, so choose a suitable location for the bucket while the fertiliser is maturing.



For use in the kitchen, pick just the tip of each stem – four or six leaves – and stop picking once the nettles start to get coarse in late April. The nettles can be used as a vegetable like spinach, in soups, in ravioli or in gnocchi. They have a 'dark green' taste, a bit like broccoli, spinach and kale mixed together. The sting disappears once the nettles are cooked.

Nettle Soup Recipe

A carrier bag two thirds full of nettle tops
Onion, chopped
Garlic clove, crushed
2-3 potatoes, chopped into small chunks
1 litre vegetable or chicken stock
Double cream to taste
Wearing gloves, pull the nettle leaves off the stems and wash well. Fry the onion, potato and

garlic until softened. Stir in the nettle leaves and add the stock. Cook for about 12 minutes, until the potatoes are soft. Allow to cool a little, then liquidise the soup. Reheat, then add seasoning and cream to taste.



Bonfires – a clarification

After problems with smoke from bonfires entering our neighbours' houses last summer, Syston Town Council amended the rules to only allow bonfires outside of British Summer Time. The rules sent out with the rent reminders unfortunately had not been amended to reflect this, but when you paid your rent you should have received a set of amended rules that reflect this change.

So please have any bonfires before the clocks change on 31st March, or wait until after 27th October.



The rules also say that bonfires are only allowed during the two hours before dusk. If you plan to have a bonfire please don't light it any earlier than this. As a guide, here are some sunset times for February and March:

February 1st 4.50 pm February 14th 5.14 pm
March 1st 5.41 pm March 15th 6.05 pm

Dates for your diary

Committee meetings are on the first Tuesday of the month at the Syston and District Social Club, starting at 7.45. Any non-committee members are welcome to attend.

The Annual General Meeting is on Tuesday 19th March 2013 at the Syston and District Social Club, starting at 8pm. All plot holders, their families and friends are welcome to attend, but please note that only plot holders will be able to vote. If you would like to suggest someone to give a talk at the meeting, please let any committee member know.

The spring plant sale will take place on Saturday 18th May 2013. We welcome contributions of vegetable or flower plants, and any produce you can spare from your plot.



The summer produce sale will be on Saturday 17th August 2013.

The best kept allotment competition will take place in early July. Please keep an eye on the notice boards for the exact date.

Your committee members

The current committee is:
Richard Thorpe (Chairman) plot 15B
Terry Bailey (Treasurer) plot 65A
Jackie Stanley (Secretary) plot 2A
Paul Windridge plot 54
Anthony Bree plot 62
Mick Streetly plot 11
Alan Terry plot 65B

We always welcome new committee members, so if you think you would like to join us please come and let us know.