

Welcome – What a Topsy-Turvy start to 2019's weather. Following last year's 'Beast from the East' we had almost mid-summer weather early this year. Now it seems the drought has set in. Still as I've said many times – We Gardeners can cope with whatever is thrown at us!

Blight Warning!! Very Important – There have been a number of instances on site of Blight on Tomatoes. If you think you have Blight on tomatoes or potatoes you need to take immediate action. You can identify Blight by the black marks on the stems. If you are in any doubt please ask myself, Eddy or Gerry to have a look. Don't confuse Blight with normal potato die-back which is occurring due to the lack of rainfall. With tomatoes you need to remove the whole plant. With potatoes, when Blight attacks the haulm you need to cut away all the above ground foliage immediately. This should save the crop, but obviously the potatoes will not grow any bigger. In both cases, the infected plants **MUST** be bagged up and removed from site. Never compost or leave lying on the ground as the disease is air-borne and will spread like wildfire.

Theft – We have our Site Log Book situated in the toilet where we ask that all 'incidents' on site are recorded. This year we have had a number of thefts reported. The items reported stolen are diverse; growing fruit trees being dug up and removed, metal chairs, watering cans, produce, and numerous other things. I'm sure I don't need to tell you that the Committee take this very seriously and should we have the required proof that someone is responsible we will involve the police and immediately evict the culprit. Please be vigilant, record any instances of theft in the Log Book and ensure the gates are locked shut to keep out intruders.

Greenvale Parking – Greenvale is a very congested road, with residents having to search for parking spaces. It doesn't help them if allotment holders park there rather than coming into the site where there is ample parking. I understand that Greenvale is a public road with no parking restrictions, but in the interests of good neighbourly relations please use our Carparks.

Ruxley in Bloom – We have been successful in this competition in both years it has been in operation. We'd like to continue this success. How many of you have taken the trouble to act on my comments in the last Newsletter and keep the plot surrounds tidy and install floral displays?? Eddy has done sterling work creating displays around the site, but it shouldn't be just his efforts! (If there is a container near your plot please keep it watered – every little helps!) We expect judging to be in late July so there's still time for everyone to put in a bit of effort to tidy the site and do our best to ensure we again are the 'Best Site' in the area.

Water – Our water bill last year was over £2,000. This is the largest expense for the Association so please do anything you can to keep this as low as possible: save as much water as you can by installing gutters and water butts; use the water wisely without waste. See me or a committee member if you need advice on saving water. We do have gutter and fittings available.

Machinery – This year we have invested over £1,400 in new machinery. We've purchased a new cultivator and two new mowers. The machinery is for plotters' use and we encourage you to take advantage of this so that the site is kept tidy. In addition to the new machinery we have strimmers – which are probably the most popular tools. All we ask is that if you use the machinery you treat it with respect, clean it afterwards and make a donation towards the running costs. There is sometimes concern about getting access to the machinery, and as I've said many times you need to be aware that key holders can't be on site 24/7. There is almost always key holders available in the mornings – especially at weekends. If you want to use the machinery at a specific time then please ask in advance so if possible this can be arranged. The Key Holding Committee members are (John Hollands (62/110), Eddy Haydon (23/24), Del Martin (35), Adrian Hawthorne (94/99), Roy Seymour (53) and Ray Mitchell (56). In addition to the general maintenance machinery described above we now have the large shed set up as a workshop that is equipped with a work bench, vices, a generator and an assortment of tools. If you have a maintenance job to do that requires these facilities again a Key holder can give you access.

Website – Our Website is now well established and is a prime source of information regarding our allotments. I'd encourage all plotters to view the site regularly to see what's going on. Recently a Blog has been created showing the progress of Janet and John (New Plotters) on their new plot – Do take a look as it's great to see what they've achieved in a short space of time. The Website is also a source of potential plotters, so if you know of anyone who would like information about the site or are thinking of taking an allotment, please get them to view: www.alersroadallotments.org where they can use the 'Contact' page to send an enquiry.

Bexleyheath and District Horticultural Society – This is our sister society that operates the on-site shop, organises the annual show and the outing each year. This is important as our licence with Bexley Council specifically excludes our Association undertaking these activities. This year's outing is on Sunday 8th September to visit the RHS Garden at Wisley on the weekend of their Flower Show. At the time of writing there is ticket left at £10.

Toilet – We're very lucky that we have a team of volunteers that keep the toilet spick and span – new volunteers always welcome. Once again I have to tell everyone: **please, please, please don't put blue towel or anti-bac wipes in the toilet – they MUST go into the red bin.** There are the three 'Ps' that can go into the toilet – '**Pee, Poo and Toilet Paper**' If you see anything that needs attention please let me know so it can be rectified.

Finally – We hope that everyone enjoys their allotment experience – your Committee work hard to ensure the site operates in a friendly and efficient manner. If there is anything that can be improved – please let us know. Please also remember that any plotter can address the Committee during the 'Open Access' sessions at every Committee Meeting – dates on the notice board.

Very Best Regards - *John*