**COLCHESTER AVENUE ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION**

***ESSENTIAL INFORMATION FOR PLOT-HOLDERS*** February 2019

*(KEEP FOR FUTURE REFERENCE)*

**Site Secretary – Angharad Jones** **colchesteravenueaa@gmail.com**

**(07779 170662)**

***Welcome to the Colchester Avenue Allotments Association (CAAA). The Committee and Plot-holders hope you will enjoy happy, fulfilling and productive allotment gardening and that you will feel part of our “community” at Colchester Avenue. These notes have been written to help you settle in and enjoy our beautiful site.***

***Please read carefully the Schedule of the Terms of your Tenancy Agreement as well as these helpful notes. (These can be found on our website – caaa.org.uk - and also on Cardiff Council’s website under Allotment Rules - www.cardiff.gov.uk – search for allotment rules).***

**THE ASSOCIATION**

There are twenty eight allotment sites in the Cardiff area, most of which are managed by Cardiff Council. However currently, eight of them are self-managed or what are more correctly termed “locally managed” sites. Colchester Avenue is a locally managed site. It is also the largest site in Cardiff. Each site is run by a Committee elected by current plot-holders at its Annual General Meeting, on behalf of the Landlord - Cardiff Council, to whom your rent is paid. Under the Local Management Agreement our site has with the Council, a portion of the rent we all pay is returned to us and we are responsible for maintenance and improvements on our site and we also pay for our water.

You will have signed a formal Tenancy Agreement when you accepted your plot. Rents are payable annually or by instalments as agreed with the Council, usually by early February, as soon as you receive an invoice. Do not wait for a reminder as the Council’s accounting system will automatically issue a Termination of Tenancy Notice, which you have only 10 days to appeal or lose your plot.

**MAKING A START**

The first term of your Tenancy Agreement and most crucial to you keeping your plot is that Cardiff City/County Council, the Landlord, expects you to **cultivate at least one third of your new plot within the first three months and the whole of your plot within twelve months.** If you find at any time that you have difficulties in complying with this requirement (such as due to illness etc), you **MUST** contact the Site Secretary to avoid receiving a Termination Notice of Tenancy.

**MENTORING**

If you are new to growing vegetables, there are several experienced plot-holders on site who are only too pleased to help with good advice and mentoring. Ask whoever lets your plot to you, at the shop, your neighbours, pretty much anyone! You will be pointed in the right direction.

**HEALTH AND SAFETY** Gardening brings a risk of **TETANUS INFECTION** and we recommend that you ensure that you and your family are properly protected. Free vaccination injections (course of three) can be obtained from your local GP.

**SITE SECURITY**

There are occasions when we get some theft and vandalism. Make sure the site gates are locked after you enter the site and leave the site **NEVER LEAVE THE GATES OPEN.** You will be given a key which fits the locks at all 3 entrances (the vehicle entrance at the end of Hammond Way, and the pedestrian entrances at Hampton Court Road and Dorchester Avenue) as well as the toilet next to the shop. You will be charged a deposit fee of £20. Additional keys are available at £20 per key. The deposit(s) will be repaid upon return of the key(s) if you give up your tenancy. **Roger Williams (029 2049 2934)** can be contacted for extra keys or for returning keys if you decide to give up your plot. It is a plot holder’s responsibility to take out insurance cover for belongings and personal coverage. Our site’s insurance only covers work parties and site property.

**PARKING ON ROADS**

Please do not park your cars on site access roads, causing annoying obstruction to other plot-holders. Park safely on suitable areas for parking and just walk a short distance.

**SITE SHOP**

A site shop, run by **Val Finch (07717 777972),** is available for most of your basic allotment needs, including the sale of surplus plants etc. The shop opens on Sundays from 12.00pm to 2.00pm. Items such as compost, bean canes, fertilizers and slug pellets etc. can be purchased at very reasonable prices. Potatoes, onion sets and garlic are also for sale in season.

**NEWSLETTERS**

CAAA publishes Spring and Autumn Newsletters every year which contain helpful articles and information, plus Committee news. Any member can offer articles or advertisements, photos etc. Julian Goss (Chairman) is responsible for putting the newsletter together. (jbgoss2@gmail.com). The newsletters will be sent to you electronically, unless you do not have access to e-mail, when they will be posted to you. The same arrangement applies for the AGM documents.

**FAMILIES AND CHILDREN**

Families and children are very welcome on site, but parents must be mindful of the potential dangers that are present on allotments such as sharp tools, broken glass etc. Access roads are well used by plot-holders, so if you drive a car on the site, **be aware that there is a 5mph speed limit.**

**PATHS**

The paths adjacent to your plot do not comprise part of your plot but have to be kept tidy and closely mown. Each plot-holder is responsible for maintaining the paths.

**USE OF MACHINERY**

The use of motorised machinery such as mowers, strimmers, cultivators and the like is permitted on site, but please be mindful of the nuisance and intrusion of loud machinery being used for long periods. We have equipment that all plot holders can use. There will be a charge for the use of this machinery and a deposit for its return in a clean and undamaged condition.Contact **Craig Smith for details (07944 417528)** Craig is also responsible for the sale of weed suppressant fabric – contact him if you need some.

**PESTICIDES AND WEEDKILLERS**

As many plot holders grow organically, please be aware and careful if you decide to use any weed killers or pesticides.

**RUBBISH**

You must remove any items of rubbish from site. Any glass, metal or plastic materials brought onto the site by plot-holders **MUST** therefore be removed by them. The cost to CAAA, and therefore to you, of having such rubbish removed from site is enormous. Take it home to put in your black bins or to Council waste and re-cycling depots such Lamby Way.

TYRES are now a controlled disposal material, so must NOT be brought on site. The cost of removing tyres from a plot, which has been vacated will be deducted from the key deposit.

**BONFIRES AND BURNING OF GARDEN WASTE ON SITE** **IS NOT ALLOWED.**

**WATERING**

Self-filling water troughs are provided within a reasonable distance of your plot. However, the use of hoses is **PROHIBITED**. Please keep the water clean for watering plants. **Do not contaminate the water by washing tools, produce or anything in the troughs.**

Try to save as much rainwater as you can on site from shed, greenhouse and poly-tunnel structure roofs. You can do this by using old plastic bins and the like, or why not purchase water butts from the Council at Lamby Way, which are very reasonably priced. The cost of providing water on site comes out of the money we get from the Council, so save as much rainwater as possible and make sure you report any leaks or continuous filling and overflowing troughs to the Committee.

**COMPOSTING**

You are strongly encouraged to make compost from the annual weeds (if not seeding) and other suitable waste material from your plot or elsewhere. Almost all vegetable matter can be composted. A compost heap must be large enough to raise the temperature sufficiently high to break down the vegetable material. It is unwise to put pernicious weeds in your compost heap such as dandelion, mare or horse tail, couch grass, bindweed, creeping buttercup, ground elder, dock, and of course, diseased material such as blighted haulms from potatoes and tomatoes. Also brassica roots should never be composted. On the other hand, lettuce, cabbage tops, bean and pea haulms, leaves of vegetables and grass mowings can be safely composted. Keep some brown cardboard from packaging handy to add to your composter (in the proportion of approximately 40%) to avoid it getting too wet and slimy.

Eventually, you should have lovely dark, crumbly and sweet smelling material that will enrich and improve the texture and fertility of the soil on your plot. Again, there are great deals for plastic composters, from as little as £7, from the Council at Lamby Way.

**MANURE AND TOPSOIL**

Manure can be delivered to the site, but you must be in attendance to open the gates to take delivery of your load. Names and numbers of suppliers are shown on the notice board in the shop or are available from the Plot Secretary for you to order manure. If you have a small plot, try to share a load with some of your plot neighbours on site. If you import topsoil to your plot, it must be certified to BS 3882:2007.

**WOODCHIP**

Woodchip is often delivered to the site by the Council’s tree services contractors. It is useful for paths but ensure that you lay it over an underlay of black plastic or weed/ground control fabric so that it does not leech into the soil and destroy the nitrogen content. Craig Smith can sell you permeable ground cover fabric (07944 417528). Woodchip should NOT be used for mulching plants or fruit bushes because it is fresh and not composted. Carpets should not be brought on site or used to cover paths. It is difficult to remove them, especially when weeds grow through them.

**SHEDS, GREENHOUSES AND POLYTUNNELS**

You may wish to erect your own shed, greenhouse or polytunnel on your plot, but you must obtain permission from the Committee for this. You can get an **application form** and some advice from the **Site** **Secretary** on how to go about it. Do not keep valuables in your shed. On the rare occasions when we have been targeted by thieves, they have been looking for high value items like power tools. You may decide not to lock your shed, since thieves will naturally smash the lock. The completed form should be returned to the Site Secretary. (Email the site address – colchesteravenueaa@gmail.com)

**CHANGE OF CONTACT DETAILS**

You will be asked for your address, telephone numbers and e-mail address when you enter into your Tenancy Agreement. Your e-mail address is particularly important for contacting you with information on allotment events and the issue of Newsletters. So, if you change any of your contact details, please let the Site Secretary know or inform someone at the site shop so that we can update our tenant records and to help us to keep in touch with you.

**TERMINATING YOUR TENANCY**

If, for any reason, you decide to give up your plot, please contact Roger Williams (029 2049 2934). He will help you complete the necessary form to give notice to the City Council of the Termination of your Tenancy Agreement, arrange for the return of your keys and refund of your key deposit.

**ONE FINAL PLEA**

Please be considerate to your neighbouring plot-holders in everything you do on your plot, particularly when it comes to **WEED CONTROL!** Please try to keep your plot and the site in good order. There are regular plot inspections by members of the Committee who will not hesitate to issue you with a “Cultivate or Quit” notice if you don’t maintain and cultivate your plot.

**Gardening Courses**

Gardening courses are held in the Meeting Room on site. Look out for posters in the notice boards. The courses are led by one of the plot holders on site and are under the aegis of Cardiff’s Adult Education Department, so have to be booked via the Council.

CONTACT NUMBERS:-

Angharad Jones (Site Secretary) 07779 170662 colchesteravenueaa@gmail.com

Roger Williams (Keys, Plot letting) (029)2049 2934 rasw@btinternet.com

Julian Goss (Chairman: newsletter) 07974 015135 jbgoss2@gmail.com

Craig Smith (Equipment hire/weed suppressant fabric sales) 07944 417528

Val Finch (Shopkeeper) 07717 777972 valfinch@gmail.com