**APAA Biodiversity Group Meeting**

**30 June 2024 10.30am**

**ATTENDING:** Helen Finch (Chair),Sally Chubb (Minutes), Sally Geeve, Hilary Thomas, Shelly Fennell, Zoe Norfolk, Andrew Allenson, John Collingwood, Cressida Foster.

**APOLOGIES:** Bob Hare, Peter Campbell, Jenny Bourne Taylor, Theresa Ball, Julia Lampard

**MINUTES OF LAST MEETING:** Agreed

**MATTERS ARISING**

**Front shutter hinges:** Zoe had reported at the last meeting that Peter thought the hinge shutters on the front of the shed could be changed so that they could be lifted off to reveal the white boards when the Meeting shed in use. Action: Sally will email Pete and check whether he is able to do this. If not, Hilary thought her partner might be willing to help.

**Tree Saplings:** Action: Helen will contact Mark Evison, Head of Ally Pally Park, to see if the Park can use our oak saplings. Some of our saplings were planted around the perimeter.

**Crops v. flowers:** Helen contacted Alison about the percentage of our plots expected to be for growing crops and how much for flowers and shrubs. Alison agreed the latest Tenants’ notes and the Tenancy agreement, which we all have copies of, are not that clear about percentages i.e.’ To use the Allotment Garden wholly or mainly for the cultivation of the production of vegetables, flowers or fruit crops for consumption by the Tenant or the Tenant’s family’. She concluded the general idea is that most of the crops grown on a plot should be edible and that a plot should be regularly tended, not left for nature to take it’s course!

**WHITEBOARDS**

Group brainstormed a list of summer tips to encourage Biodiversity on our plots. Agreed that suggestions should be positive and not a list of what not to do. Action: Sally will write up as bullet points, post on the whatsapp group for editing and suggestions, and write up on the board. Emphasis on covering bare soil on your plot with mulch, green manure or cardboard and bark chips to conserve moisture and improve the soil.

**BAT TALK AND WALK**

Action: Bob is checking dates in August with Cindy Blaney.

**NATIVE HEDGING AND HAZELS**

We probably need several work parties to clear the weeds around the hedging and the hazels. Zoe has recently cleared around the hazels at the bottom gate but it will need doing again. We need to be realistic about how much clearing can be done. There will be a certain amount of survival of the fittest saplings! Strimmers could be helpful but some of the perimeter is on a slope and would not be safe to strim there. Weeds can be left to lie in situ to rot down where possible. Other sites for piles of weeds to be researched. Action: Sally to advertise 2 dates: (1) Friday 12th July 10.30am to 3pm (Sally will give her mobile phone number as point of contact). Come for as long or as short as you can. (2) Sunday 4th August (before the Cafe) 10am – 12noon. Free coffee for all volunteers!!

**POND AND FROG SURVEY**

Hilary and Shelly have finished their pond survey! They counted 32 ponds so that is an increase of 6 ponds since the last survey in 2014. Hilary and Shelly described some very beautiful ponds and reported that there was plenty of wildlife in many. They have some lovely photos and wondered if they could become an allotments ponds calendar. Action: Hilary and Shelly will write up a report which Sally can send round on the news email, and a request for those tenants with expertise in making a wildlife pond to consider becoming Pond Champions available to offer advice. Action: Sally will ask Pete if pond liner could be stocked in the shop. Pond DNA Survey: Noeleen reported on the whatsapp group that unfortunately the samples collected by a student for DNA analysis were not processed in time. The Prof who was supervising the student is hoping to repeat the project next year.

**BIODIVERSITY STAND AT THE NGS OPEN DAY**

Our leaflets and the posters were available on the day. Many thanks to Helen for getting the Biodiversity on your plot leaflet printed up. Action: Sally and Helen to put together a file of our current information leaflets and ask Pete if this could be available in the Allotment Shop.

**A.O.B.**

**Composting bark chips:** Woody bark chips with little green foliage is valued on the site by many tenants, especially for paths. Andy proposes accepting more bark chip with foliage for composting as a mulch, to be kept separate from the Woody stuff.

**Composting Day:** Helen has written up the Composting Day information, including a very handy list from Andy on many different kinds of composting. Andy will add links to information on each method on google.

**Winter crops:** Andy plans to grow chard seedlings to plant in the Autumn for winter cropping. He suggests keeping them in the polytunnel and selling for a nominal amount in the Allotment shop. Keeps the soil covered and healthy over winter.

**Owls:** Helen has a tree surgeon friend who has offered to put up an owl box locally. She wonders if there is anyone on the site who would have the expertise to advise us on the kind of owl box that would be suitable for the allotments.

**Date of the next meeting:** TBA on the whatsapp group. Zoe has posted 2 dates.