



COMPOST CORNER

The periodic newsletter of
Charnwood Gardening Project

New Year 2011 Edition

Dear Readers

Christmas is behind us and there is just time before the end of the month to wish you all a Happy New Year. Many of you, I know have started off with vicious bouts of flu and other ailments so I hope you are all now well on the way to recovery and can look forward to a healthy remainder to the year.

The extraordinary weather before the holidays led to some disruption to the Project and I apologise to anyone who was inconvenienced by it. We do our best to carry on but when the ground is frozen and it is so cold, it is not fair or wise to expect people to turn out.

Our Christmas meals did go ahead despite icy conditions and everyone enjoyed their visit to the Forest Gate for a carvery lunch.

We have good news and some bad to pass on so please read on to hear about our plans for the coming year.

Welcome

We would like to welcome Nigel Budworth who has recently joined us for two days a week. Nigel previously attended one of our courses and has now 'graduated' to volunteering with us.

Hello to Dean and Luke on work experience from Holmefield College.

Sam has rejoined us and has begun work on paving the entrances to the new polytunnel. He has been joined by a new volunteer, Jon Arnold, and together they look like making a great team, taking on many of the maintenance and site improvements that are beyond me.

Welcome also to Senesi Vandy and Pauline Jabu, both first year social work students from DeMontfort University who will be with us 3 days a week on a 40-day placement as part of their degree studies. They will be helping to introduce the individual well-being plans and working with the groups to develop learning and activity packs that we hope will inject a little fun into learning on the Project.

On Site Developments

We were partially successful in our application to the East Midlands Airport Community Fund and will receive £740 towards the cost of installing a solar panel on our shed (the balance will be met by funds raised from plant sales). This will power three LED lights in the shed and enable occasional use of our laptop. The Well-being Group that runs on a Friday afternoon will benefit in particular. At this time of year, we are literally working in the dark by the time the session finishes at 3.45 pm. **Stop Press** Installation was completed as this newsletter was being proof read. The system is up and working!

Another great development is that the kind people at Cemex have just supplied us with 16 tonnes of gravel to refinish the paths around the stock beds and to finish off around the new polytunnel. In addition they are arranging for the supply of the 150 slabs we need to lay a wheelchair friendly path all down the length of the main site. I have made tentative enquiries of a local firm who may be able to provide the labour to lay the path. Otherwise, stand by your trowels!



Before the bad weather set in, Lynn Whitworth and Neil Clarke put up fence panels, including those donated by Rowena Garden Centre, inside the hedgerow on the Epinal Way side of the Project. These have provided an effective screen and added to the security of the site. When time and weather

permit, they will continue with the trellising that will divide the paved area from the neighbouring plot.

Back in November we held a bulb planting session on a Saturday morning as a start to the Stick Garden that will be our showpiece this summer. I am most grateful to those who turned out, 2 'chaps' from the Thursday gardening group and some of the new friends we made last spring and summer when employees of RBS joined us. We will soon start work on other parts of this feature and have loads of seeds waiting for those sun soaked months that are just around the corner.

As our funding arrangement ends with Adult Social Care on March 31st, we will be changing our current portaloo, which they fund, for one that can accommodate disabled users, as promised. This should happen in the second half of March and may cause some disruption to our service as the changeover takes place. I'll keep you updated on this.

Funding changes

We have now received written confirmation that our Commissioning Agreement from Leicestershire County Council (£27,000 for the 2010/11 financial year) will end on March 31st. This has funded three days of the Project's 5-day week and its withdrawal is a serious loss. We are, however in the very fortunate position of having reserves that should enable us to continue to operate for another year during which we will be looking at alternative means of ensuring the continuance of the Project. This is a situation faced by many services provided by voluntary and charitable organisations county and nationwide, as I'm sure you are aware.

Unfortunately this does mean that we will have to introduce charges to those who are currently funded by Adult Social Care. We will do our best to keep these to a reasonable level. We hope that some of the users will be eligible for funding from Leicestershire Adult Social Care in the form of either a Direct Payment or Personal Budget to help cover this cost. We are looking closely at how we currently deliver our service and have every intention of maintaining our present standards. In fact, with the planned introduction of personalised well-being plans, we hope, if anything to improve on it.

There will be a meeting for parents and carers to explain the changes and provide information about how to apply for financial support, on **FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 25TH, 1.30pm to 2.30pm, at John Storer House** Please make every effort to attend; we will welcome your views, comments and support.

Seeking New Partners

As mentioned in the previous newsletter, I have had a very good response from local schools that have shown an interest in gardening and would like to visit

the Project. To date I have heard from 9 schools and just before Christmas, sent out letters to a further 12. Several visits have already been made. At the moment we are offering them some of our spare stock for their gardens but hope that we can develop closer working relationships. Sufficient interest could lead to us applying for funding to cover the cost of workshop sessions with the children.

Although we did have a positive response from several students at Brooksby College, it was not possible to set up work experience placements before the holidays. I hope that those students may join us later in the year

Courses

The Friday Well-being Group (Gardening for Health and Well-being) resumes on Friday the 21st with a further 5 weeks to run. There will be a new 15-week course starting on March 4th. Fees are £10 for the entire course. Please contact Julie Booker on 07961098105 or email on juliebooker1@hotmail.co.uk to enrol.

Open College Network course for learning disabled begins 21 February 2011 10.30am to 2.30pm – **please note new times. These have altered again.** Places are still available.

Contact Melanie Willcocks on 07949786237 or email on mel.willcocks@leicsals.org.uk to enrol. A £10 fee covers the 15- week course. **Note: This was originally to be 3 hours/week for 20 weeks but is now 4 hours/week for 15 weeks.**

We do expect that accredited courses will continue to be subject to the fees set by the respective colleges.

Many thanks for your continued support. We just wouldn't be able to accomplish as much as we do without it.

Bobby and all the Garden Gang

Contact me on 01509 631774 or email me

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Further details about the project and Voluntary Action Charnwood are available at

www.voluntaryactioncharnwood.org.uk