

The **HARTHILL** Plot

Festive vandal-proof issue

December 2017

ACTION TAKEN OVER VANDAL THREAT

The Association is taking action to deal with the growing menace of vandalism at Harthill.

Vandalism at the site has included the burning of fruit trees, insect houses and pallets, smashing of glass and damaging equipment such as chairs and compost bins. We are working with the Police and the City Council to counter this behaviour and catch the offenders. This is easier said than done, of course, on an open site such as ours. Action agreed, and reported to the AGM, includes:

- ***Police monitoring - signs will be put in place to alert people to this.***
- ***A motion sensor camera at strategic points.***
- ***Brambles and other suitable deterrent plants near the sandstone walls.***
- ***Continuing reporting to the Police.***

Some things we might like to do are not allowed - not just the moat with piranhas and crocodiles - we can't for instance use anti vandal paint on the listed sandstone wall. Some of these may take a bit of time, such as the plants, but if you have any spare brambles, please plant them near the wall. Plants should be about 50 to 75 cm from the wall, at intervals of about 1 m - try not to disturb the ones that have already been planted out.

It seems that some of the culprits have been using Harthill as a venue for drug taking, even using allotment holders' chairs to make themselves comfortable! So wherever possible, put chairs away in the hut when you leave. Also, can you number your chairs to avoid confusion. We are looking at the possibility of a fence but an effective one is likely to be extremely expensive.

Obviously this problem is not restricted to our site and other areas of Calderstones Park and Harthill are being targeted, so the Police and the Council are taking the matter seriously, though it's hard to see how it can be stopped completely. If you have any evidence of vandalism, please let the Police know as the best deterrent would be for some of these people to be caught.

RATS

They used to say that you were never further than six feet from a rat. This is apparently an urban myth, but sometimes it feels as if it's true at Harthill!

The rat population nationally has grown in recent years, encouraged by a series of mild winters. In our case it has probably been exacerbated by the disappearance of the local fox population. There are a few signs that some foxes may be coming back to the area and it does seem that they deter rats. Prettier, too.

Poison and traps aren't a realistic option so the best way of dealing with this is by good housekeeping - keeping plots tidy, clearing windfalls, turning compost and so on. The committee will be sending detailed guidance to all tenants, based on advice from the council and the experience of other allotments.

AGM, Beanfeast, work day and elections

Thanks to everyone who attended the AGM, beanfeast and work day. A lot of work was done, essential to keep the site in good shape. All of this work is done by volunteers, we don't have professional help via the Council so please continue to support Group Help Days.

Elections - the existing committee was re-elected, except for Jane Loveday who has had to resign. Jane (who is retaining her plot) will be much missed, especially for her expertise with grant applications. Chair is *George Willan*, Secretary *Emily Gerrans*, Treasurer *Barbara Rigby*. Committee members are *Mike Curtis*, *Alan Taylor*, *Andy Thomas* and *Pete Cresswell*.

New members would still be welcome so if you are interested please let us know.

TENANCY RENEWALS

Rent renewal notices will be going out by post in December. If anyone wants to take a break from allotmenting please let us know asap so the plot can be re-let as soon as possible. If you change your postal address, please let us know.

AS USUAL, DON'T FORGET TO -

- Scramble the locks.
- Keep paths clear and straight.
- Park carefully.

AND FINALLY.....

***It's a bit early for this, but the Harthill Plot wishes all allotment holders and their families a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!
Here's to a great 2018 of vandal free, ratless gardening.***