

NOTES OF BOGS MEEETING 21st March 2012 NEW DELIGHT

Janman (chair); Jan; Jac; Cyn; Jenni; Pat; Roger; Judith; Paul; Gail; Steve; Ash.

Apologies : Finn; Phil; Edith.

1. SCRIBING - Roger agreed to take notes of the meeting.

2. FROM LAST MEETING. Janman reported back that :

- Gordon Nelson has provisionally agreed to come either next time or the time after for a Q and A session (He will follow this up).

- Fete (Produce Show) : Produce categories are difficult to achieve, (e.g. three identical of one kind of veg) and show veg are the opposite of what 'real' veg growing is all about (i.e. show growing is all about size, uniformity and perfection).

- It was suggested that this could be a subject for discussion with Gordon Nelson.

- Incredible Edible Growing : He has spoken to Nick and a booking has been made to visit Walsden on 20th June.

- No response yet from Ben Campbell re August visit.

- Jan has spoken to Sue at Wicken Hill - they would be happy for us to visit but Wednesday is not a very good day.

- Nothing further to report re sponsoring children's prize and schools involvement.

3. DISCUSSION TOPICS

There had been an email query about keeping cats of veg beds. We discussed possible solutions : you can get proprietary repellants, also sonar high-frequency deterrents. Pat and Roger lay tree branches ('pea sticks') across beds. BUT - Jan and Janman lost their cats, as did their neighbour, and now they are losing all their bulbs (daffs etc) through rodents.

Cyn reported on one night last week when all the slugs in this part of the Pennines went on a garden visit to her garden.

Janman had proposed a discussion on 'Managing the Soil, and he kicked this off with some comments drawn from personal experience and some Hydra information. He had learnt about soil management by watching his dad, who used whatever organic matter was to hand, and always fed the soil rather than the plants (the one exception being diluted pig urine on onions) When he first began his veg plot (Janman, not his dad) he dug two spits depth and added gypsum into the bottom to break up the clay.

We then had a discussion about the relative merits of raised beds.

We talked about soil improvers, liming etc, and how the addition of these needs to follow the crop rotation pattern :

- plenty of manure for peas and beans
- lime (dolomitic is best) for brassicas
- possible mucking for potatoes
- nothing for root crops (muck will encourage forking of roots)

Never lime and muck together.

Comments were made that mucking trenches for potatoes encourages slugs, and that it is beneficial to grow a sacrificial crop for wireworms.

Green manure (winter rye) helps to lock in nutrients, but doesn't rot down easily and our season tends to be too short for this. American land cress, mustard or field beans would also do.

A comment about a possible problem concerning horse manure for horses that have been wormed affecting plant growth was followed by a very informed and specialised discussion about equine worming, how frequently it was done, sheep worming, and the breakdown of common worming products under exposure to light.

Useful soil improvers which were recommended included sheep dags and pelleted chicken manure (fresh chicken manure is a great additive to compost heaps).

Sheep dags are great for forming a blanket to deter slugs.

The usefulness of horse manure depends largely on the type of bedding used in the stables, with straw being the best.

There is a knack to stacking muck (not compost!) to rot down quickly - compact it and cover it.

Compost heaps need to be turned regularly to introduce air and help decomposition.

Janman uses seaweed meal as a top dressing. He will email out copies of advice sheets about nutrients.

4. TOPICAL TIPS.

There were no real TTs, but a discussion about the Chapel's plant sale on 12th May. Steve has some 4 year old sheep and goat muck.

5. NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 18th April 8 pm New Delight (apologies from Roger and Pat)