

Hope allotments blog – September 2021

August was mainly warm and wet despite the predictions of heatwave towards the end of the month. Late August and early September were both very dry which meant we were back to watering the plots.

Tomato blight got all our outdoor tomatoes but fortunately most of ours are grown in poly tunnels which gives some protection.

One interesting thing has come out of growing our outdoor tomatoes though. We had been told that something in the roots of tomatoes discourages couch grass (*Elymus repens*) and this indeed seems to be the case. The tomatoes were planted in the raised beds bordering our wheelchair access pathway and arch and had been filled with topsoil from a plot which had an infestation of couch grass. After the removal of the tomatoes there is no sign of couch grass in either bed although there is still bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*) which shows that it was not weedkiller that eradicated the problem even though we had not used it on the beds anyway. Last year we tried the same experiment in one of our glasshouses which had the same problem and it too has been clear of couch grass so it looks like tomatoes may be the organic cure for couch grass (do you think we'll get a Nobel prize for that?)



Adrian 'What do you think of my new moustache?'

With the loosening of COVID restrictions we are starting to get groups of corporate volunteers back and we would like to thank the teams from T & W civil engineering and Shoosmiths solicitors who worked like Trojans on the plots this month. Without the help of

or corporate and regular volunteers we would struggle to keep the plots in the condition that they are where we can produce award winning crops for our service users and clients.

Talking of award winning....



We got a pretty good tally of commendations at the Northampton Flower & Produce show.



Susana and Charlene both got first place for their home made jams and Beth managed a very creditable second place for her vegan cake which was reported to be 'delicious'

We were very pleased to get another award for our tomatoes after first place in the 2018 East Haddon village show and our courgettes, marrows and squashes also all got firsts.



It is very gratifying to achieve awards for our work but the main purpose of the Hope allotments is to provide food and therapeutic help for people who need it and we must never lose sight of this.

Looking forward to October.

October can bring the first frosts and heralds the coming of autumn and shorter and cooler days. With the aid of poly tunnels, glasshouses and fleeces we can extend the growing season but care must be taken with tender plants not to lose them on a cold, frosty night.

We may be lucky and October may be mild but predicting the weather is still an uncertain art and constant vigilance is necessary to avoid the vagaries of the climate.

Finally,

Always remember that you can tune a piano but you can't tuna fish

Have a happy gardening month and see you in October.

Joe - the Hope gardener