

Portsmouth and Southsea Tree Wardens

Notes of the training event held on Thursday 18 July 2013 at 6.30 pm with Jon Stokes, Tree Council, at Hilsea fruiting hedge

Line no

Present: Jon Stokes (The Tree Council), Pauline Powell (Coordinator, Portsmouth and Southsea Tree Wardens), Nita Cary, Steve Jeal, Heather McDaniel, Nadya and Mark Pearson, Malcolm and Dorothy Reeves, John Scott, Emma Toomey, Rachel Woodise

5 Jon said the purpose of the event was to see how the hedge is faring, to give tuition if we need it on anything we find, and for us to sample food that Jon has made from fruit he had collected from other hedges.

Jon commented that the hedge is nearly three years old. He asked participants to walk the length of the hedge from south to north to look at it and make a little analysis of what we see.

Jon invited comments. Comments were:

- 10 a) It is a developing hedge.
- b) It is suffering from drought.
- c) Some leaves look a bit yellow.
- d) Saw two hazel nuts.
- e) Currants have disappeared
- 15 f) Hawthorn is overgrowing some of the other bushes.

Jon would give the hedge 8 or 9 marks out of ten.

Jon commented that the last significant rain was in December, so everything has been using up last year's water reserve. The yellow is not drying out but **chlorosis** – a lack of 'vitamins' in the soil. That goes if you add some mulch. Put that round those that are going yellow.

- 20 Pauline reported that the Council contractors had strimmed down all the weeds.

The group then walked south along the hedge discussing it.

John questioned whether it will last another five weeks and suggested keep an eye. The pear is the only one suffering drought stress. Symptoms to be described later.

- 25 Your planting is a random one. There are some places where plants are starting to crowd each other.

Jon had come out with secateurs, but said we do not need to do a thing: the hedge is in good heart.

The currants have been stripped: there were obviously lots.

Jon said put in some mirabels, before the yellow fruited rowan, he would supply them.

- 30 The group discussed a cherry tree which had been damaged previously and had recovered.

Pear tree. Spot the drought stress, because the leaves have wilted. Should give heavy, infrequent watering – about two watering cans. Saturate the ground.

Hazel. The hazel may snuff it, the soil is not good.

Apple. The first crop of apples.

- 35 Cherry.

Mulberry. Doing extremely well. Pauline commented that she had cut off some dead tips.

The first really decent size apple is here. Pauline commented it is a James Grieve. Jon remarked that it is never a good idea to leave fruit in the first year. It reduces the growth of the tree. This winter, think of taking off the bottom branches.

40 Apple. In the spring we took the top off this one – see all these side branches, it is putting all its effort into sideways growth. Wood for growth is vertical; wood for fruit is sideways.

Hazel. Your first hazel nuts – properly, they are cob nuts rather than hazel. In about four weeks they should be ready.

45 Quince. Jon commented we are the only hedge with quince out of 38 or so hedges he had seen.

This little walnut is a ‘blow in’.

Mildew on hawthorn is unusual.

Jon said he was very impressed.

Caterpillars on hawthorn. Not browntail moth, but Jon did not know what it is.

50 Jon concluded that overall the hedge is in very good nick. He would place its health in the top ten.

Jon passed round a few things he had made from hedge row fruit for us to try, and discuss.

1. Plum chutney. Eaten on cheese.
2. Gooseberry jam with elderflower cordial, mustard and ginger. Eaten on cheese.
3. Plum jam, from mirabels. Eaten on bread.
4. Wild cherry jam. Cook for about 15 minutes. Eaten on bread.
5. Blackcurrant jam. Eaten on bread.
6. White currant ‘jam’ with fruit from Merton. Jon put it through a sieve to take out the pips. This jam is rare. Eaten on bread.
7. Elderflower cordial. To make it last, add citric acid to preserve.

Recipes are on the Tree Council’s Hedgerow Harvest web site.

Jon outlined phase 2 of the Hedgerow Harvest project, funded by the Lottery. It comprises:

1. Oral history
2. More hedges
3. Events.

65 People who foraged through the war or are from Eastern Europe, where foraging is mainstream. Rachel will start the ball rolling in Portsmouth. There will be a training day in October. Stories will be recorded on tape. Will be tested in Hampshire, Isle of Wight and West Sussex. The British Museum has offered to house the archive.

70 Thanks were given all round and the group dispersed at 8pm.

References:

- Portsmouth and Southsea Tree Wardens
<http://www.portsmouthtree.hampshire.org.uk> (new address)
- 75 <http://www.facebook.com/portsmouthtreewardens>
<http://twitter.com/portsmouthtree>