



Introduction

CFAGS Introduction

In some form or another there has been an organisation in Croydon to represent allotment plot holders for well over 100 years. The Croydon & District Federation of Allotment & Garden Societies, to give it the full title, was formed in 1919, just after the less well known, but equally important, contribution made by allotments to home food production during the latter stages of the First World War.

There are 18 allotment sites in Croydon which are managed in three different ways. "Direct Let" where each plot is let by the Council direct to the tenant, "Leasehold" where the site is self-managed by the local society, and "Private" owned and run. Each affiliated society sends one or two delegates to the quarterly meetings of the Federation, at which matters of mutual interest are discussed, and everyone kept up to date with what's going on.

The Federation has a formal constitution and exists to:

- foster and encourage the provision and the cultivation of allotments and gardens;
- protect the interests of allotment holders & home gardeners and to take joint action for the benefit of Members;
- obtain as far as possible security of tenure of all allotment grounds;
- maintain direct representation on the London Borough of Croydon Allotments Consultative Panel and liaison with the officers of the local authority.

The Federation is recognised by the Council as the representative body for all allotment plottolders and as such regular meetings take place between Federation and Council officers. It is also an active member of the London Allotments Forum.

Recent initiatives include:

ensuring money from the sale of disused allotment land is used to improve Croydon's allotments;
a common insurance policy to reduce costs;
greater police cooperation to combat vandalism and thefts.

The annual competitions for the best sites and best plots take place in July and are organised by the Federation. The trophies, some of which date back to the 1930s, are presented at its Annual General Meeting in November. The importance and interest in these competitions is evidenced by inviting the Mayor to present the prizes, and holding the event in the Town Hall.

Consideration for the overall best plot requires a nomination from the local society, which often uses its own competition to provide it. The Federation is happy to provide its own judges for these local competitions. The overall winner is decided by a judge from the Royal Horticultural Society register. The criteria are a neat and tidy appearance, freedom from weeds, regular composting of waste materials, quality and variety of crops, with the last two scoring the most points.

The best site or "Amenity" competition looks for the same criteria, but also includes site boundaries, main trackways and interplot paths. It is judged by the Federation delegates on a Sunday walk round in July.

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