Angie Ng-Thomas at her award-winning allotment. Photo by John Lawrence

# Angie's A-list allotment

By John Lawrence

**A tour of Angie Ng-Thomas's allotment is like a round-the-world trip. At the peak of September's harvest season, Italian Lollo Rosso lettuce rubs shoulders with oriental pak choi, fiery Latin American chilli plants sit side by side with Mediterranean peppers, and traditionally British vegetables like cauliflowers and peas nestle next to Chinese morning glory leaves.**

It's quite a sight, with every inch of soil put to good use, and now all the hard work that Angie invests in her plot on the Pointhills site, off Long Lane, has earned her the award for best allotment in Barnet.

Angie, of The Mead, N2, is a mother of two who works full time as a dental nurse. She finds the time to cultivate during the evenings and usually all day on Sundays.

"I love the outdoor life," says Angie, whose parents were virtually self-sufficient during her childhood in Malaysia. "I get exercise from it and I never have to buy vegetables during the summer."

### Transformation

Her 60-metre plot was all weeds and grass when she took it on four years ago. She planned on paper how she wanted it to look and, one bed at a time, it has been transformed. Besides the growing areas, there's a potting shed, a greenhouse, fruit trees and an ingenious seed nursery area covered with large offcast plastic moulds donated to allotment holders by Talbot Designs across the road.

This was Angie's third year in the allotment competition; she came runner-up last time round. Judges were looking for a plot with good structure, a wide variety of produce, absence of weeds, with plenty of recycling and mulching going on.

Angie adds: "It's been an excellent harvest this year after all the sunshine. Cucumbers and tomatoes have been particularly good. Mind you, last year was a real chore, dodging the rain all the time."

She avoids a glut by planting in stages, and then by sharing what she has with friends and family, or in an emergency asking them to store it for her in their freezers.

My tour over, I'm about to leave when Angie points to another 60m plot, with a greenhouse and some crops in the soil. "This is mine, too," she says. "Plenty more work to do here."

## *Angie's six steps to a successful harvest*

*1. Always keep on top of your weeds*
*2. Grow what you want to eat and sow little and often to avoid a glut*
*3. Visit your allotment as often as time permits*
*4. Make time to socialise and build up a network of friends nearby (this is useful when you are unable to visit your plot)*
*5. Take advice from other plot holders; you can learn a lot very quickly*
*6. Always make your own compost*

# Bike vending machine

**Next time your bike has a puncture, just make sure it happens in Minneapolis, US. Cyclists there can use self-service vending machines, open every day of the year. They can pop in to self-service kiosks to buy an inner tube or patch kit, pump up tyres for free, or make simple adjustments using supplied tools. And to set them up on their next stage, this wonderful vending machine also sells snacks, drinks and sunscreen.**

*Three of the Challenge Network students show off the potatoes they dug up at Vale Farm Allotment. photo Mike Walsh*

# Students go back to their roots

**Vale Farm Allotment on Tarling Road hosted 10 Challenge Network students for a day's training about vegetable growing and organic cultivation at the start of September. The Challenge Network is a UK-wide charity that runs community programmes for young people from a wide range of backgrounds. The students, all from north London, planted daffodil bulbs, painted gates and dug up potatoes.**

# Mystery of fox deaths on allotments

By Cathy Schling, East Finchley Allotment Association

**Opinions are divided about the foxes with whom we share the allotments in East Finchley. Some people are slightly annoyed by the loss of one of a pair of shoes or gloves, a few regard them as vermin, while most allotment holders seem to really enjoy the presence of all the wildlife around our site and some become very attached to the foxes which frequent their plots.**

During August we were shocked to realise that three different foxes had been found dead on the site, off Plane Tree Walk.

This realisation struck home when a plotholder contacted a member of the committee to ask for help burying a badly decomposed fox near her plot. Two other allotment holders then said that they had recently found dead young foxes and buried them. One of these had crept into a greenhouse where it was found and had to be removed as soon as possible.

### Possible causes

We were concerned that these deaths might be due to some form of poisoning and contacted English Nature. They advised us that they were seeing an abnormal number of deaths among young animals, which have to fend for themselves at this time of year, when their mothers have a new family. They believed this was due to the very dry weather, which had made food scarce.

We were also told to keep an eye out for any signs of poisoning amongst other wildlife such as birds and small mammals and all plotholders have been told about this. It is an offence to put down poison with unrestricted access and the police have a unit which will deal with this. We are hoping that only live foxes will be seen from now on.

**All Saints' Church,**
**Durham Road, East Finchley**
**Church of England**

**Sunday masses at 8.00 a.m. and 10.00 a.m.**
**Weekday masses at 10.00 a.m.**
**(Refreshments are served after mass on Sunday and Thursday)**

**Prayer requests are gladly accepted.**

**The Parish has a flourishing social life.**
**Contact the Vicar, Fr Christopher Hardy,**
**on 020 8883 9315.**

**All Saints' also has a strong musical tradition and an enthusiastic choir of both adults and children.**
**Experienced singers are always welcome.**
**Contact Geoffrey Hanson on 020 8444 9214.**

**http://www.allsaints-eastfinchley.org.uk**