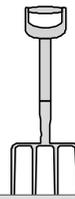
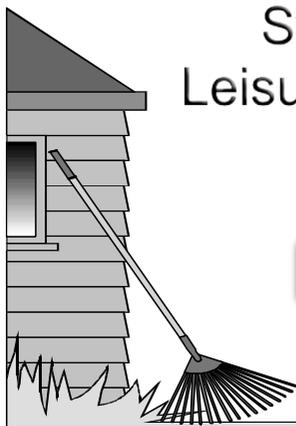


Swindon Allotments &
Leisure Gardens Association

Registered Charity no. 1138814

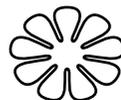
Newsletter

Autumn 2020



For Peat's sake!

Memorial Garden



Members shop

Monthly meetings



Coach Trips

& more!

Chair's Report

What an extraordinary time we have been living through for the past five months! Who could have envisaged schools being shut for months, examinations cancelled, large numbers of people working apparently quite successfully from their homes, overseas travel largely abandoned and quarantines (which only used to be mentioned in terms of dogs I think) enforced! It has been a testing time for many people and a very sad time for a number, including some of our members.

Salga's normal activities have largely been cancelled or postponed and the Salga shop at the Pickard's Field allotment site has been the hub of our activities. We are very grateful for the team who have kept things going there.

Many of us have found our gardens and allotments a source of enormous pleasure, this year, whether it be for keeping us active and occupied, providing us with healthy food and fruit, or just providing a safe place to relax and see occasional visitors. It appears many new people have become enthused about gardening and its satisfactions – as well as its frustrations, and we have a number of new members.

We have been having committee meetings by “zoom” and have introduced monthly “zoom” meetings in place of our normal monthly meetings. It has been lovely to see familiar faces on these, as well as lots of new faces. So far, we have had a Gardeners Question Time – and the amount of knowledge we had between us at this meant we had no need for “experts” for a panel! We have also had a gardening quiz (won by our own Gordon Staples) and are now beginning to hold talks and presentations.

We cannot envisage being able to meet in person for some months so Sue has put together a programme for the rest of this year. We generally have about 30 different households at these sessions. We could try for some more eminent speakers since zoom means they could do it from home and hence avoid travelling costs, but would need more people to join these sessions to justify this. Having said that, we do appreciate that not all of our members have a computer and/or feel confident about modern technology. We are pleased that our committee, including at least two octogenarians, have managed it and hope that might encourage more of you to join in.

In the meantime, take care of yourselves. Although the economy has opened up, unfortunately the pandemic is not over yet and we need to continue to be careful.

With very best wishes to you all,

Cindy (Matthews)

This years show

What a strange year this has been. In January no one could have foreseen the covid-19 problems and what they would lead to. Even when the lockdown began in March, I was a firm believer by September all the problems would be over.

Unfortunately, this was not the case and as the months progressed, we continued to have the monthly show meeting, making preparations ready for this year show at the Pine Trees Community Centre. I was also furloughed for 3 months and my allotment started to look the best it has done in many years.

By June we started to worry knowing we would need to be able to decide by July and the government guidelines were not changing very quickly. In July your committee decided in the best interest of the members it would not be acceptable to continue with this year's horticultural show. The sad decision was made to cancel the event.

We know that many members prepare well in advance for the show but we are guided by government guidance and with the new venue of Pine Trees community centre not having an official opening date as well as a number of other factors including gathering of groups, there was no other option.

I note that the seed catalogues are now available from the shop, so please pick one up and start to plan for next year's show at the Pine Trees Centre on September 4th 2021. Seems a long way off now but having seen what happened this year it will soon come round.



Mick Carter

Monthly meetings

In June we decided to hold monthly meetings online via Zoom. The committee believe it is important to keep our members engaged as much as we can.

The first one was a Gardener's question and answer session and in July we held a quiz. This encouraged us to go a bit further and in August we had our first guest speaker. Jane Caudwell gave a highly informative talk on preserving and using up excess produce.

We will continue like this for the remainder of 2020 and will review the situation again as to how we can go back safely to monthly meetings at Gorse Hill Community Centre.

The meetings for the remainder of the year will be as follows:

September 17th

Glynis Hale will be talking about wildflower corridors

October 15th

A representative from the Prospect Foundation – more details to follow

November 19th

Philip Aubrey will be talking about ponds and water features

December 17th

Gardener's question and answer session.

Getting to grips with technology is not always easy but if you have a computer/iPad and an email address you should be able to join in. If you need any guidance with this, please let me know. I will happy to help.

Sue Stevens

Member's Shop

Despite a difficult year, the member's shop goes from strength to strength thanks, in the main, to Christine Bentley, who took over after we lost Mick Northcott, and the team of volunteers. The shop income is up 50% on the same time last year, helped by being open all the winter and by new members visiting when the Garden Centres were still closed.

We are always seeking ways to please our members and are currently looking to see if we can stock more environmentally friendly products. If there is anything specific you would like to see in the shop, please let Christine or any committee member know, and we will try to source it at a competitive price.

Again, this year we intend to keep the shop open throughout the winter on Saturday mornings only, so from 31st October onwards, the shop will open between 9.00am and 12 noon on a Saturday until the end of February when we will revert to Saturday, Sunday and Monday mornings.

Please continue to support the shop and if you can spare an hour to help out every now and then, I know Christine will be pleased to welcome you.

Potato Day 2021

Unfortunately, Pennards have decided to cancel all its' Potato Days for 2021. This is a big disappointment for many people but equally quite understandable as it does get extremely busy.

They are currently looking at alternative ways and it seems likely that they could issue us with a discount code. We would need to order individually, online, and claim the discount at the checkout.

In these difficult times we are all having to change how we normally do things but please be assured that if you are not able to access the internet, we will do our best to try and help.

More information will be given to you as soon as we have it.

Sue Stevens

Coach Trips

At long last, we are offering 2 coach trips scheduled for the remainder of 2020. We intend to adhere to the Government Social Distancing advice. Couples, and those in “social bubbles” will be able to sit together. Our aim, at present, is to have about 25 people on a 53 seater coach on each occasion.

Tuesday 6th October – Cardiff 9 a.m. start from Gorse Hill.

We shall leave Gorse Hill Community Centre at 9 a.m. We shall be dropped off near Cardiff Castle. You are free to use the time for sightseeing, shopping, walking by the river, or visiting the museum (if open).

Cost £25 to include travel and driver’s tip. Return departure at 4.00 p.m.

Tuesday 8th December – Birmingham 9 a.m. start from Gorse Hill.

We shall leave Gorse Hill Community Centre at 9 a.m. We shall be dropped off near Birmingham City Centre. It is unclear at present whether the Christmas Market will definitely be taking place, so this will be a shopping and sightseeing trip. We last visited Birmingham as a group in 2013, when everyone had a lovely time but all did different things!

Cost £25 to include travel and driver’s tip. Return departure at 4.00 p.m.

I should welcome your support for either or both trips. Please ring me if you are interested.



Best Regards,
Marilyn

Marilyn Stott Tel: 01793 861657

Preparing your allotment for winter

Throughout the year much emphasis is given to planting and growing. However, it is just as important to have your plot in the best condition possible. Here are a few tips to help:

1. Clean up rotting and finished plants:

Besides looking untidy, old plants can harbour disease, pests, and fungus. Unwanted insects feeding on your crops throughout the summer may lay eggs on the plants' stalks and leaves. Removing spent plants from the soil surface or burying them in garden trenches (if they are disease-free) prevents pests from getting a head start come springtime. Burying old plants in your garden also adds organic matter to your soil, improving soil tilth and overall health. However, providing you're not plagued with badgers it's perhaps worth setting up an untidy corner somewhere to try and attract an over-wintering hedgehog.

2. Remove invasive weeds that may have taken hold over the growing season:

Remember the bindweed that colonized your raspberry patch? Now is the time to deal with those renegades. Dig them up and place them in the rubbish or burn them on autumn's burn piles. Most invasive weeds remain viable in a compost heap or weed pile, so resist the urge to simply shift them to another part of your garden. Removing invasive plants completely is the only way to prevent those plants from sprouting all over again and disrupting next year's crop.

3. Prepare your soil for spring:

Despite the fact that most people reserve this activity for the spring, autumn is a great time to dig in soil improvers like manure, compost, bone meal, kelp etc. In most climates, adding nutrients at this time of year means the additions have time to start breaking down, enriching your soil, and becoming biologically active. It also means you won't have to wait until your garden dries out in the spring to work the soil for the first time. Amending, turning, or digging soil now means you'll have already done some of the work when the busy season hits. Digging now may also help improve drainage before extreme weather becomes a reality. Once you've added any improvers to the soil, you can cover the bed with sheet plastic or other covering to prevent winter rains from washing the improvements below the active root zone. This applies especially to **raised beds** since

they drain more readily than in-ground beds. Remove the sheeting in early spring and till lightly with a hoe in advance of spring planting.

4 Harvest and regenerate your compost:

Now that the heat of summer is over and nature's microbes are settling in for their winter's nap, you may be tempted to ignore your compost heap. This would be a missed opportunity in two ways. First, material composted over the summer is probably finished and ready to go. Using this rich material to top up garden beds, amend deficient soils, or fertilize lawns and landscaping will nourish your soil and jumpstart growth come springtime. Second, cleaning out finished compost means making way for another batch, which—in most areas—can be insulated against winter's chill. To keep those microbes working a little bit longer, build your autumn compost heap with plenty of autumn leaves, straw, or sawdust layered with kitchen scraps and other active, green matter.

5 Replenish mulch

Mulching in winter has many of the same benefits as **summer mulching**. These include reducing water loss, protecting the soil from erosion, and inhibiting weeds. But winter mulching has other benefits as well: as the soil transitions to colder weather, the freezing and thawing of the earth can adversely affect garden plants, whose roots suffer from all that churning and heaving. Adding a thick layer of mulch to the soil surface helps regulate soil temperatures and moisture and ease the transition into winter. A thick layer of mulch around root vegetables left in the garden for your winter harvest can also buffer against hard frosts and prolong your crop and as the mulch breaks down it incorporates fresh organic material into your soil.

6 Clean and sharpen tools:

Although most gardeners know they should keep tools clean and well-oiled throughout the year, it's difficult to keep up with this task when gardening is in full swing. Autumn is a great time to rejuvenate your tools' lifespan by giving them some attention. Begin by washing tools to remove dirt and debris. If rust is present, remove with sandpaper or a wire brush. Sharpen hoes and shovels with a basic mill file and a whetstone works well for pruners. Finally, rub the surfaces of your tools with an oiled rag coated in light machine oil. This will help seal the metal from oxygen and extend your tools' lives for another year.

Kings Seeds

We do hope you have all managed to stay well during this very difficult year we have been experiencing to date with the Covid-19 pandemic. Outdoor spaces and gardens have been widely appreciated and those of you able to get out will have enjoyed all that these have to offer.

Kings seed catalogues and order forms are available in the Shop. If you ordered seeds last year a catalogue has been reserved for you. Don't forget there are large discounts applicable to items in the catalogue – 45% discount on seeds for example. We have a limited number of spare catalogues which will be issued on a first come first serve basis. Once they are gone, they are gone.

Those of you sending in orders, I should be pleased to receive them as soon as possible to avoid a large pile near the closing date of 29th November 2020. Full details of all discounts are shown in the letter and order forms you receive with the catalogue.

In addition you may also send me your membership fee of £5.00, or place an advance order for items from the shop. These may be sent to me or direct to Christine Bentley.

| | | |
|---------------|-----------------------------|--------|
| 25 Kilo bags | Blood, Fish and Bone | £16.30 |
| | Compost Activator | £17.00 |
| | Growmore | £22.52 |
| | Magnesium Sulphate | £24.08 |
| | Rose Fertiliser | £24.76 |
| | Sulphate of Potash | £41.86 |
| | Bone Meal | £20.12 |
| | Calcified seaweed | £27.93 |
| | Hoof and Horn | £40.54 |
| | Superphosphate | £24.54 |
| | Trench Fertiliser | £31.93 |
| 40 litre bags | Groworganic | £ 7.00 |
| 25 kg bags | 6X pelleted chicken manure | £ 9.80 |
| | bag of Horse manure compost | £ 2.50 |

We look forward to a better year next year, a good growing year and hope to see you all at the Show 4th September 2021 displaying the results of your labour.

SALGA Cliftonville, Kent Holiday

31/05/21 - 04/06/21

This holiday has been re-scheduled from our original June 2020 trip due to Covid-19. All who signed up have been informed and their deposits are safeguarded by Barnes Coaches under the Coach Holiday Bonding Scheme.

In the next few weeks, I will be contacting and, hopefully, re-booking, the venues we planned to visit. Prices may have to change but members will be kept informed. There may be some people who, for personal reasons, decide not to come in 2021 so if spaces do arise, I can let members know. Until we get a vaccine on board it seems that none of us can predict the future, but it doesn't stop future planning!

Any queries, please give me a ring on 01793 523048.

Jan Flanagan

Reference Library for SALGA?



Does SALGA need a reference library?

I ask this question because, when dealing with my late friend's estate, I found a number of gardening books. This started me thinking that we could set up a library in the old shop building at Pickards Field.

Does anyone have any old bookcases or shelves that they no longer need which could be used to display the books? Or does anyone have any gardening books they would like to donate?

Please ring Jan Flanagan On 01793 52308 or Sue York on 01793 532625 who will be happy to collect any donations.

Sue York

The Memorial Garden at Pickards Field

Some of you that use the SALGA shop may have noticed the construction of a garden to the rear of the shop. This was started by the late Mick Northcott and Brian Reynolds as somewhere to rest awhile and ponder. Volunteers from the Community garden which Mick started with five others decided the good work must continue and so in his memory work at the garden continues with raised beds of flowers both annual and perennials. However, there is always room for more. A Pergola has been constructed and seating installed in Mick's memory. SALGA is also going to donate a bench to the project.

This garden is for all to use. You may place a plaque, flowers, or shrubs to remember your own loss if you would like to. Several SALGA members have already begun planting with a special thank you to Jan Flanagan for embarking on a wonderful pond and wetland feature. This is an ongoing project and if anyone could give an hour now and again please speak to any one on the community garden or at the shop when open.

A previous tenant tried to deter birds and rabbits from eating her veg and placed bottle caps all over the plot, not a dozen or so but thousands of them over the years. This has been a great source of amusement to Brian and others as we have tried to tame the plot. 3 tons of soil improver and many bags of compost have gone into the project so far.

So please feel free to enjoy the garden, plant a spare plant, pull a few weeds, and remember those close to you.



Jim Manley

Organic Range in Shop

In the shop the plan going forward is to include a larger organic section of products. We are already offering 2 different organic slug pellet options as an alternative to the traditional poison. These are:

- Wool pellets that act as a deterrent
- Ferric phosphate pellets prevent slugs feeding on produce but protect all other wildlife.

In future, a range of other items will be added including 2 brands of peat free compost, which we hope to have in stock shortly.

An option being considered is reusable containers for small amounts of bulk items such as specialist fertilisers. The idea would be that customers could bring their own containers and pay for their items by weight meaning that plastic bags will no longer be required. Another option is that we re-use plastic milk bottles. Using these for the fertilisers would reduce the plastics being thrown away and the bottles could be returned to the shop for re-use many times .

However, if there are any other re-usable or compostable alternatives which you think we should be aware of that may work then we would be happy to explore these.

Christine Bentley



For Peat's Sake!

At the highly successful online SALGA meeting in June, my question was: 'What more can SALGA and all of us as members do to promote the reduction and phasing out of the use of peat from our allotments and gardens?'. I hoped that the question would prompt a bit of debate and we had a useful discussion with the immediate outcome being that I was asked to write a piece for the next newsletter (careful what you ask for!).

We all garden and grow in different ways, some are organic, others use herbicides and insecticides, while others of us try to use less but sometimes find ourselves resorting to the odd chemical in desperation! We all make our own choices. One issue that I am passionate about is gardening without the use of compost containing peat. While peat can be a useful growing medium, unfortunately its extraction is environmentally damaging and despite assurances from some of the big brand producers, can never be 'sustainable'.

Peat and peatlands

Peat is partially decomposed plant material. It doesn't sound much, certainly not much to get excited about! But its real value lies in the carbon it stores and the wildlife it supports when safely intact in its original location.

Under waterlogged conditions, peat accumulates and we see the creation of special habitats like upland blanket bogs which top the Pennine hills and lowland raised bogs such as the Solway Mosses in Cumbria. These peatlands play an important role in combatting climate change. In their natural, wet state, they 'grow', storing ever more carbon within their peaty layers. As more carbon is locked up in the peat, that means there is less in the atmosphere as carbon dioxide to contribute to climate change. Indeed, there is more carbon stored within the UK's peatlands than in the forests of the UK, France and Germany combined. When these sites are managed correctly, they can go on storing carbon year on year – a real benefit for us all.

Peatlands are also special places. Today, lowland raised bogs are a particularly rare habitat that provide a unique home for a wealth of plants and animals. Colourful, sponge-like *Sphagnum* mosses form the building blocks of the bog and carnivorous sundews often thrive in the nutrient

poor conditions. Raised bogs are particularly important for the insect species that they support, such as the rare large heath butterfly and several species of dragonfly.

What's the problem?

To fill bags of compost, peat is extracted from these wildlife rich lowland raised bogs. Historically, peat was harvested from UK sites and while much is now imported from the Republic of Ireland and the Baltic countries, the environmental damage is the same. As peat is removed, the sites lose their ability to act as a store for carbon. The rate of removal will always be much faster than the rate at which peat forms, so for that reason it cannot be considered a renewable or sustainable resource. The process of extraction also destroys the sites as habitats for rich and varied wildlife. Restoration of the sites is a long and expensive process, if it ever happens at all.

What can we do?

On our allotment, we choose not to buy any compost that contains peat and look for the alternatives instead. I won't recommend any particular brand here but there are plenty of reviews of the different products available online. We also try to make as much of our own compost as we can, but of course, there is just never enough!

Talk to friends, family and neighbours about their choice of compost – spread the word! It is surprising how many people aren't aware of the issues.

If you don't ask, you don't get! The next time you are buying compost, ask whether they stock a peat free version, the more people that ask, the more likely that retailers will see that it is in their interest to stock a good variety of alternatives.

If you have any comments or ideas for what we could all do to reduce our reliance on peat, do get in touch.

Andy Lloyd (arlloyd22@hotmail.com)

Pork & Apple Hotpot



- 1 ½ lbs of pork, cut into cubes
- 1 tsp mustard powder
- 1 tsp freshly chopped sage or ½ tsp dried sage
- 1 large onion, peeled and finely chopped
- 2 large cooking apples, peeled, cored and soaked in water mixed with juice of ½ lemon
- 4 tablespoons cider
- 4 large potatoes, boiled and mashed with butter, milk and 1 beaten egg
- Salt and pepper
- 1oz butter

Put the pork into a casserole dish and mix in the mustard, sage and salt and pepper.

Add the onion and drained apple slices and mix well.

Pour over the cider, cover the casserole and bake for 2 hours (180C or Gas 4) or until the meat is tender.

20 minutes before the end of the cooking time, remove the lid, adjust the seasoning and spread the mashed potatoes over the top. Dot with butter and return to the oven without the lid and cook until golden.

SALGA OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chairman

Cindy Matthews 01793 644388

Secretary

Sue Stevens 01793 881198

President

Don Reeve 01793 423918

Treasurer

John Edgerton 01793 642965

Membership Secretary

Denis Matthews 01793 644388

General Committee Members

Sue Camburn 01793 341482

Viv Dipper 01793 322421

Josie Lewis 01793 845154

Gordon Staples 01793 538553

Christine Bentley 01793 539780

Patrick Hawker 01793 526944

Show Committee Chairman

Mick Carter 07769 721739

Acting Secretary

Glenys Dingwall 01793 274653

A valid reminder from one of our members

COVID-19, CoronaVirus

CoronaVirus (COVID-19) is a pandemic that is having a devastating impact across the globe - UK, Wiltshire, Swindon. It is changing the way we live our lives.

There is no direct treatment for COVID-19, and a vaccine is not around the corner.

However, we must take action to stay safe, that is, maintain social distancing, regular hand washing and wear a mask. Follow the rules, remind others to do the same, and if this is done the sooner this pandemic and sad crisis will be over.

More information can be found here;

Get the latest NHS information and advice about coronavirus (COVID-19).

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>