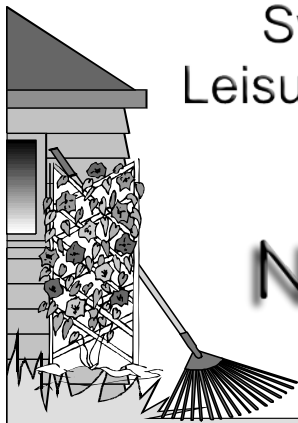


Swindon Allotments & Leisure Gardens Association

Registered Charity no. 1138814

Newsletter

Summer 2022



Report from the Chair



Talking compost

Trips, talks & tips



Monthly meetings

& much more!

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

We have just had our first in-person Annual General Meeting for 3 years. How good it is to be meeting together again.

Like all of us – and indeed all organisations – these have been challenging years. We managed to keep Salga, not only going, but thriving, with the Salga shop, zoom meetings and talks and even arranging the Horticultural Show, the Schools Garden competition and a holiday in 2021. Recently we had our first outing to the RHS's Malvern Show.

Salga has a number of volunteers who help in various ways and we couldn't run half the things we do without them. Examples are by running the shop, serving in the shop, unloading shop supplies from lorries, arranging speakers for monthly meetings, organising outings (and the 2021 holiday), helping produce the newsletter, arranging and judging the schools garden competition, running the seed scheme which gives us great savings on seeds, making tea at the monthly meetings, organising raffles, keeping the website up to date, as well as the Show Committee which runs a brilliant horticultural show each year, and our own committee who manage our finances and try and keep us legal and moving forward. (I hope I haven't missed anyone out.).

We do, however, have a need for more people to organise things and make decisions. Our committee is now quite small due to health and ageing, and we are losing our amazing secretary, Sue Stevens, who is retiring. Working with Sue has been a delight and I would like her to know that we would welcome her back at any time if she has a break and feels at a loss or misses us! We have luckily recruited 2 new committee members and are covering Sue's role with about 5 different people.

I've loved being Chair but am aware that having Denis as the membership secretary and myself as the chair does make Salga vulnerable. I propose to stand down as Chair next year, both because of this and also because I am getting older and think Salga would benefit from some new input. If anyone is interested in getting more involved, please have a word with myself or one of the committee, or leave your name at the shop and we'll contact you.

Meanwhile enjoy your gardening and have a good Summer.

With best wishes,
Cindy Matthews

SATURDAY 3/9/2022 HORTICULTURAL SHOW

After a one year's enforced closure, the Horticultural Show made its welcome return in 2021 to its new venue of the Pinetrees Community Centre.

The Show Committee has now started to plan for this year's show, and we are pleased that it will be held in the same location as last year.

The parking facilities for the exhibitors and public are much better as they are behind and in front of the Centre. This enabled the setting up of exhibits to be a lot easier and we will still have our teas and coffee available along with homemade cakes. (Any donations of cakes would be a great help.). For this year's show my wife Sandra Carter and her sister Christine Straford have agreed to continue to work in the kitchen. As in previous years the hall will be open from 8.30am for the setting up of exhibits. The public will be able to gain admission from 2.30pm free of charge to view the displays. We hope to have Ben Prater from BBC Wiltshire Sound returning to the show to hand out the awards for all the lucky winners on the day, and also the winning raffle prizes. The show will consist of the same classes as in previous years from flowers and vegetables to bread and cake making, to name a few, and we mustn't forget children's category. The schedule is currently being finalised and will be available towards the end of July, online for free and in paper form for a small fee to cover printing costs.

We are still looking for members to join the Show Committee to help with the planning and organisation on the day of the show, if not for this year, then future shows. If any member feels that they can spare a little time to join the Committee then please speak to myself or any other Show Committee members.

Could all Trophy winners from 2021 please ensure that any cups and trophies awarded are returned to the shop or committee member by July 16th, 2022, for engraving before this year's show.

Now is the time to think about what you need to plant not just for the show, but what you can produce for your own table, especially in this current financial climate and it always tastes better when you have grown and picked your own produce for the table. You never know how good they will turn out and we would love to see you at the Pinetrees Centre for this year's show.

Michael Carter

SPEAKERS: JUNE-SEPTEMBER 2022

June 16th - A representative from The Botanic Nursery & Gardens, Atworth (between Melksham and Box), will talk about their collection of foxgloves, hollyhocks, salvias and peonies, and bring some specimens for sale. The Botanic Nursery & Gardens is run by Mary & Terry Baker and is the home of the National Collection of Digitalis (Foxgloves).

July 21st – Roger Umpleby talking about Pest Control without Chemicals.

August 18th – Tim Craven will give an illustrated talk on the life and career of the artist and cartoonist Norman Thelwell (1923-2004), whose work extended well beyond the small, fat, hairy ponies ridden by alarming-looking young ladies, for which he is most often remembered.

September 15th - Growing Tomatoes

Nicola Hope admits she "loves her tomatoes".

Perhaps you have a good year with yours or a failure? Maybe you won at the SALGA show earlier in the month?

She can answer questions on the subject and might inspire you to order seeds of a new -to you- type.

And a message from Irene who has again taken on the role of booking speakers for our monthly meetings

Sue Stevens did a wonderful job booking speakers over "Covid Times" and then for back to live sessions since September 2021. This was as well as all the secretary jobs! She deserves a rest from SALGA.

I am now arranging talks for September 2022-2023.

First I have to see which speakers are back on the road themselves.

Like us they have all got older and many much more expensive too!

Then if you hear a good speaker yourself please pass on their details.

Or, if you notice that one of your favourite subjects has not been covered in recent years please let me know.

Just like the BBC charter, SALGA as a charity, has the task to educate and entertain. We hope to do so.

TALKING COMPOST

My wife and I moved into a house on the town side of Okus road over fifty years ago. An elderly widow had been living there for a good while and the back garden, (my domain), was devoted almost entirely to Michaelmas daisies. It was January and as soon as the snow had gone, I cleared a patch and planted out two pounds of seed shallots, but the soil was impoverished and later in the year I harvested less than I had planted. Other crops showed similar disappointing results and I spent that autumn and winter double trenching the whole plot, working plenty of stable manure, weeds and the afore-mentioned daisies into the bottom spit. The plot soon developed into a highly productive garden, producing runner beans and broads, (neither worth buying from the supermarkets anyway), baby turnips and asparagus, salads and other easy crops. We were also getting about two hundred pounds of soft fruit a year, (yes, Mary weighed it just to see how well I was doing!).

A couple I know also moved in the 1970s, to a house in Stratton-St-Margaret. Like me, the husband found that the soil was poor and his early attempts to grow vegetables failed. So, he laid a lawn with herbaceous borders round the perimeter, and, to this day, the ground has produced nothing for the table. Moreover, I don't find it a welcoming space in which I would want to sit. It gives the impression of having been "groomed to death" with nothing out of place, no dead heads, no footmarks on the grass and not even a compost bin. Apparently, my friend passes all the waste across the road to a neighbour who makes it into compost. He tells me that although the neighbour lives so close, he's able to grow vegetables because he "has much better soil". Of course he has, he's obviously feeding it! Which brings us on to compost.

The RHS conducted a recent survey which suggests that only one third of gardeners make their own compost, which I find surprising. Almost anything can be composted, and it saves money, either on soil conditioner or a green bin or both. The process is simple enough; you need waste material and moisture contained in such a way that it facilitates a build-up of heat. There are chemical additives to kick-start the "brew" such as compost activator or sulphate of ammonia, but horse/cow dung will do a better job, if available. Human urine is certainly available, and I can attest that also works brilliantly! Back in the day when I was still gardening, I used to collect bags of horse manure that had been left beside the road from

the A419 into Castle Eaton past Seven Bridges Farm, for anyone to pick up and take home. It was too fresh to be used on crops, but ideal for “layering in” between the plant material in the composter.

I constructed my own compost bins, using reclaimed timber from a yard in Kingsdown road. In the end I had three adjacent compartments, each about two foot six square. Three foot six high at the front, tapered down slightly to the rear. There were three separate, felt covered, waterproof, removable lids but no base. The woodwork had slight gaps because you need some air to make compost. The separate fronts could be removed to empty each “bay” when the compost was ready.

Almost anything can go in the compost. Raw and cooked kitchen waste, dead mice or rats from the traps, all the stuff from the Hoover bag, small amounts of sawdust from DIY jobs, autumn leaves from trees in your road, (if any), and, of course, all the stuff from your garden. Obviously, it’s best not to include dock and dandelion roots or things like ground elder if you’re unlucky enough to be plagued with that. Shrubby, woody material may need breaking down first. The expensive way is with an electric shredder, or you can just chop it up with a machete. I found it quite easy with a block set up to chop it on.

I always started each compost bay with a loose, slatted base so that air could get in from underneath. Then I just built it up with layers of material as and when it became available, trying to make sure there was a mix of coarse and fine. Horse manure in moderation, or wee, or both was added as I went along. The lids were essential to control the amount of moisture and, until I got the hang of it, that was what I found most difficult. It’s a bit like trying to make a fruit cake. The recipe says “two eggs”, well beaten, and then add a little milk if necessary, but only experience can teach you to recognise when more liquid is needed.

Despite what some people recommend, I never turned the compost while it was “brewing” in the bays. When I got it right, the compost would get quite warm, even hot sometimes. It was also surprising how much it had shrunk down by the time I got round to using it but, judging by how productive the garden was, I must have been doing something right.

Don Reeve

PROPOSED COACH TRIP



After a successful trip to Malvern Spring Show, we have a few places remaining for our forthcoming trip to RHS Wisley, as detailed below:

Tuesday 13th September – Visit to RHS Wisley

We shall explore the beautiful planting styles, experimental garden design and growing techniques. A walking tour lasting 45 minutes can be booked at **£3 each**. We also have the opportunity to enjoy a Cream Tea in the afternoon at **£6.50 each**.

Depart Gorse Hill: 9.00 a.m. Depart Wisley: 4.30 p.m.

Cost £20 – reduced cost due to our affiliation with the RHS. (This includes driver's gratuity)

Wheelchair Users:

We are happy to take wheelchair users on trips provided that they, or their carers, can load them into the coach. Barnes coach drivers are not permitted or insured to help with this.

To book a place on this trip, please call Marilyn Stott on **01793 861657**

COFFEE AND CAKE

Coffee and cake morning Saturday 9th July, from 11am to 12.30 pm at the Pickards Field Allotment Site.

It's an opportunity to renew your membership - if you haven't done so already - buy items from the shop, meet up with old friends and hear from our Show Committee about plans for this year's Horticultural Show.



SEED ORDERS FROM KINGS

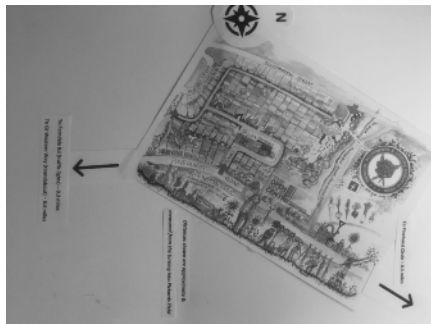
We shall again be arranging for members to purchase seeds from Kings catalogue this Autumn. Catalogues will be available from the Shop at Pickards field in September. Full details of where and when to send your order will be available with each catalogue. We enjoy very high discount terms with Kings, and Seeds purchases are very good value with a discount of 45% off catalogue prices. So even ordering only a couple of packets will cover the small delivery cost that is charged.

Further updates will be available by email when we know exact dates. If you have not already done so, please pass your email address to Denis Matthews, so that he may add you to the distribution list.

MEMBERSHIP

I will shortly be updating the membership list and will delete those members who are in arrears with their membership. This year's membership cards are Mauve. If you don't have a mauve card, and you have paid your membership through the seed scheme, your card will be at the shop. If you haven't yet paid, you can renew at the shop, at monthly meetings or using the membership renewal form in this newsletter. You can also use the form on the Salga website www.salga.org.uk, or by sending me a cheque, payable to Salga for £5 to Denis Matthews, 28 Tithe Barn Crescent, Swindon SN1 4JX. We will not be sending future newsletters to those who haven't paid by the end of June.

Denis Matthews



SALGA'S WEBSITE - KEEPING YOU INFORMED

Our website is a useful resource for members to find out up-to-date information on all of SALGA's activities. The address is <http://www.salga.org.uk/>.

Topic headings and subheadings include:

About SALGA

Brief history

Member benefits

Officers & Committee 2021-22

Joining SALGA and getting involved

What's On

Monthly meetings

Schools gardening competition

Annual produce show

Holidays and trips

Special events

- **SALGA Members' shop – opening hours, location, indicative price list for more popular items**
- **Recent newsletters**
- **Useful links**
- **Contact us**

Please visit the site to check up-to-date information on any of these topics.

TOP GARDENING TIPS FROM OUR MEMBERS

1. Getting value from growbags

Last autumn, after my tomatoes had finished in the grow bags, I thought about how I could reuse them. I put all my pelargonium cuttings directly into the soil, still in the bags and over wintered them in the greenhouse. This spring, after potting them up, I added some old seed potatoes to the same bags, and they seem to be growing well. We shall see in a month or two if the original bags can do three tasks before throwing the contents onto the compost heap.

2. Cat deterrence

It's an old one but it seems to work!

The issue of cats using the garden as a playground and toilet. Having tried various plants to deter, sticking twigs upright into the soil (some of them rooted, not quite the outcome intended!), we now have cut up pieces of chicken wire from a lucky skip-surfing find during lockdown walks. Cats appear not to like walking on it. Not the best look, but successful. If anyone has a better idea, we would like to know about it.

3. Never water just with water

When we took on our allotment, one of the guys there always says never water with water. Always add a pinch of something to your watering can, e.g.: a pinch of sulphate of ammonia for leaf growth or sulphate of potash for fruit/flowers.

4. Tomato leaves yellowing

Tomatoes and other plants that have yellowing lower leaves, give them some Epsom salts and an aspirin.

5. Natural Alternatives to fertilizer

I don't buy fertiliser. I use comfrey tea while the plants are seedlings, and nettle tea when they are beginning to flower.

6. Use for old toilet rolls

Use old toilet roll tubes for sowing corn and runner beans. Minimizes root disturbance.

7. Use for lupin heads

When you cut lupin heads off to encourage the new ones coming through, I strip the seed heads off the stem but put the still flowering top in a vase to leave in the garden. The bees are not bothered whether it's on the plant or in a vase! It also looks quirky in the garden?

8. My favourite tool in the garden

Fiskars scissors, not cheap but very sharp and can be used to dig a shallow weed out. Fantastic to cut up compostable material.

9. Hoe and hoe again

The National Trust keeps its beds looking good by hoeing all the earthy areas between plants each week, regardless of whether any weeds can be seen.

OPEN GARDENS IN OLD TOWN

On Sunday, 10th July a number of residents in Old Town will be opening their gardens in aid of charity. At least three of our SALGA members are known to be participating, so do pop along to give them all your support.

HISTORIC FOOTPATHS

A deadline to register historic rights of way by 2026 has been abandoned by the Government following a campaign by various walking organisations thus allowing more time to identify and register more ancient paths that may otherwise be lost for good. We have some members who are quite passionate about the preservation of these ancient rights.

ROSE OF THE YEAR

Every year, experts and breeders chose a "rose of the year". The one selected for 2022 is named "It's a Wonderful Life". Described as having "frothy pink-peach blooms that keep appearing for many weeks", the flowers are long-lasting with a delicate scent. The breeders' recent choices were the yellow Belle de Jour in 2021 and the apricot Sweet Honey in 2020.

SALGA OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chair

Cindy Matthews 01793 644388

Secretary

David Smith 01793 420156

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

Emmeke van der Vaart 07453 189807

Ida Walker 01793 637484

Show Committee Chair

Mick Carter 07769 721739

Acting Secretary

Glenys Dingwall 01793 274653



Website: www.salga.org.uk

