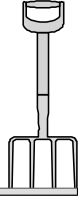
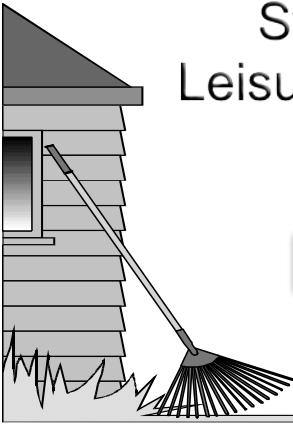


Swindon Allotments & Leisure Gardens Association

Registered Charity no. 1138814

Newsletter Spring 2023



Snowdrops Galore



Speakers

Hints & Tips for growing and showing



Trip to Blenheim Palace Flower show



& lots more!

Report from the chair

Happy New Year to you all. Life is full of challenges and now that the severe risks from covid have subsided, we are facing high inflation, particularly for energy, mortgages, rent and food, which are causing concern and anxiety. Our gardens and allotments provide sanctuary during these difficult periods.

SALGA is continuing with all its normal activities, including monthly meetings and outings. We opened the shop on Fridays and Saturday mornings last year and that seemed to find a balance between staffing and demand, and it is what we are proposing for this year, from the 17th February. This does, of course, always depend on having volunteers available as we have no paid staff.

It was encouraging that we had a good response to our request for more shop helpers and you will be seeing new faces at the shop when you go. This was because two of our regular helpers decided to retire. As I'm sure you know, we are a members only shop – we are not allowed to sell to the general public. This means you will be asked for your membership card when you go there.

SALGA does need some new committee members if we are to continue to thrive. In addition, we also need a new chair as I am standing down in May. When I took it on I said I would do it for 2 years and I have managed 3! Being chair can mean as much or as little as the post holder chooses. We don't have a job description and there is a lot of leeway to get involved with the things that interest you.

Being on the committee does not entail many regular commitments. We hold a committee meeting most months and currently this is held on the first Thursday morning in the month at the Western Community Centre. We know that our members join for a variety of reasons, some social, for the meetings or outings, and some for the shop or the seed scheme. The main thing is that we share an interest and an enthusiasm for gardening and appreciate what SALGA offers.

If you think you might be interested and would like to know more please get in touch. Or, if you can think of someone – who might be shy at nominating themselves – let us know and we'll approach them instead. In the meantime enjoy your gardening.

Cindy Matthews, Chair

Gardening is good for you?

It's generally accepted that "green spaces" are important to our health due to the number of people who engage with them in many different ways and for different reasons. Indeed, just a few weeks ago the Government announced an aim to ensure that, ultimately, everyone in the country lives close to either a green space or to water. Whether this ever comes to pass, and over what time scale, remains to be seen.



In 2016 the trustees of the National Gardens Scheme commissioned the King's Fund to research and report on the impact of gardens and gardening on our health. The Fund's report subsequently concluded that many studies, as well as anecdotal evidence, suggested a wide range of benefits across both mental and physical health. However, there had been an insufficient number of rigorously controlled studies to prove cause and effect with certainty.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has also been sponsoring research into this subject and published further findings in 2022 or early this year. I think it was this article to which one of the SALGA trustees tried to direct me, leaving me to "Google it". Sadly, without more precise information my computer turned up over twenty-five million articles in fifty-nine seconds, and I couldn't find the one to which he referred.

I became a "serious gardener" at the age of eight, when the Government directed my dad to work very long hours in a factory making Wellington bombers for the war effort, and I continued with few breaks, apart from National Service, until the age of eighty-three when Mary, my late wife, developed motor neurone disease which forced us to move from our house and garden into an apartment. So, with these credentials I feel qualified to add my pennyworth to the debate.

To fully enjoy the mental health benefits of gardening it must not become a burden. Don't be too ambitious or "bite off more than you can chew". If what appeared a simple goal becomes too challenging, then leave it for another day. Remember, the soil's been there for millions of years and will outlast us gardeners by millions more. Personally, I always made sure that I spent at least one day a week fishing on the Thames or the lakes.

In later years, having a brain like a sieve, I used to write a “programme for the year” of what to plant and when, usually in conjunction with doing my seed order before Christmas. Mary used to take the Mickey, but it worked well! I almost always got the ground prepared and got the stuff in on time.

Social interaction with other gardeners is one of the mental health benefits that’s often mentioned, although that probably relates more to allotments than to household plots. In any event it must depend on how sociable the plot holders or neighbours are.

From a physical point of view, the exercise associated with gardening is generally beneficial, leading to more enduring strength and mobility as one grows older as well as, in many cases, less weight problems. This assumes, of course, one doesn’t “overdo it”, straining a perhaps already weakened heart. Here again there are caveats. At least fifty years ago now a friend of mine took on a plot on the land behind the recreation ground on Wootton Bassett Road. He toiled away each weekend to dig the plot from end to end but had to miss a couple of weeks after he got a really bad back. When he returned the “old hands” on nearby plots said, “You started at the wrong end, that’s what the problem was”. On a level site he thought this was incomprehensible until they explained they meant he’d been digging with the prevailing cold wind blowing on his back, whereas they always dug with the wind in their faces.



The avoidance of injury is another, more immediate, aspect of physical health. The week following my eighty-first birthday I was removing the bird netting from some soft fruit after the crop had finished, when I caught my foot in it, fell, and broke my arm. I doubt the bone would have gone if I’d been thirty years younger but that was an avoidable injury, and I should have taken more care.



Using the correct tools for each task also reduces the chances of injury, as does keeping them sharpened and well cared for. My younger son, who’s a carpenter and kitchen fitter says, “You have less accidents when using the correct tools, properly sharpened and maintained”.

SALGA arranges for a tool sharpener to visit Pickards Field from time to time and most members seem happy to pay the £5 fee per item that he charges.

Finally, particularly in these straightened times, I believe that producing edible crops of fruit and vegetables also aids mental health, merely by taking some pressure off the household budget. Even quite a small area can be worth cultivating, particularly if it's used wisely. I used to say, "If you're digging main crop potatoes but buying courgettes, you've got it wrong!" But with the price of potatoes these days I'm not so sure!

Back in the 1980s and '90s a lecturer from Lackham Agricultural College was one of our regular speakers. I believe his name was Mike Burgess. He advocated growing crops very much closer together than was customary. It was almost a "bee in his bonnet". It wasn't until some years later that I saw an example of what he recommended on a site in Pouzauges, in southern France. All the plots in this French equivalent of allotments were divided into narrow growing areas that were simply packed with produce. Obviously, no one stepped on them because you couldn't see any clear soil.

On my return I decided to give it a try. It took a couple of years to set it up, but the results were astonishing. And that was how I managed my garden for the last twenty years or so. It was so easy that I would have been able to carry on many more years if we hadn't been forced to move.

Don Reeve



Horticultural show 2023

Class Changes

As spring emerges and we start to sow our seeds and tend our plots, our thoughts might go to what we can grow to exhibit in our members-only show – which this year takes place on Saturday September 2nd 2023.

Despite very difficult growing conditions, the 2022 show was a great success with an increase in both member and visitor engagements. During the show, the Show Committee recorded some good suggestions for changes to the show schedule, which we start to highlight below.



Firstly, many of our chilli growers, and those who garden on a small balcony or window sill, make their chilli and other small fruiting plants into very decorative pot plants. So the two “flowering” pot plant classes (F35 and F36) have been expanded to include “floral or fruiting” to accommodate a wider variety of entries.

Secondly, members often want to show more than one entry in classes such as ‘V38 Any other vegetable’ or in the dahlia or other floral or domestic and handicrafts classes. So, in line with other shows, this year members will be able to show up to a maximum of three entries in each class, but an individual exhibitor will not be allowed to take more than one prize in any class.

In addition, there will be a couple of new classes. These include a fun class for the curliest bean and a new cake class, suggestions from members for this class are welcome.

The Show Committee always welcomes feedback so if you have any comments or ideas for changes to the schedule then please contact any member of the Show Committee. Future newsletters and emails will outline other possible changes, including a review of the children’s classes in terms of age ranges and content.

Mick Carter, Show Committee Chair

Preserves and chutneys

Hints & tips for showing

Be prepared by making preserves and chutneys so you can enter this year's show following advice from Jane Caudwell given at her talk on preserving food gluts.

READ THE BRIEF!

Judge will look for the following:-

- No air bubbles
- Good colour – clear if jelly.
- Good set
- Full jars.

Flavour -chutney needs at least 3 weeks to mature

Make 3 jars – 1 to eat, 1 to display and 1 to open on morning of show to check for mould!

Correct and intact seal / lid!

I'm not a fan of waxed disc lids as they are messy once opened. Some shows insist on you use them or using brand new lids!

For chutney / pickle lid must be acid proof, not jam jar lid.

Clear label / Clean jar – no old label!

The SALGA show is held annually on the first Saturday of September

A sign of things to come?

Josie Lewis was at a Wroughton Parish Council meeting where they discussed plans to introduce a £50 deposit scheme for allotment holders, like the arrangements for tenants of rented dwellings. The purpose is to discourage users from giving up their plots and failing to leave them in a reasonable condition. Outgoing tenants may forfeit their deposits if they do so.

Snowdrops galore

SALGA's first coach trip of the year was to the gardens at Welford Park house to see the snowdrops. It was on Thursday, 9th February. Having had frost and glorious sunshine for several days, thirty-seven of us joined the coach to leave Gorse Hill at 10 a.m. under damp, grey skies. However, the lack of overnight frost was welcome by those that must park their cars in the open.



On arrival it's apparent that much of the surrounding area, as well as the grounds, are simply awash with snowdrops. Fortunately, the sun broke through just after our arrival although it was still quite chilly.



The site dates back several centuries having originally been a monastery or something similar. The river Lambourne runs through the grounds with many little rills running into the mainstream. The walk to the main snowdrop display follows this upstream on unpaved, mainly hardcore, paths until you reach a wood that's absolutely carpeted with the blooms.

Apart from this main attraction there was much to see in the vicinity of the main house. The yellow of aconites mingled with the snowdrops and there was a whole bank of them close to a glowing mass of red dogwood stems. A statue of a leopard, cleverly constructed from strips of metal added to the interest while a smaller planting of yellow dogwood sat close to a weir on the river. I spent quite a time looking for trout in the water without seeing any, as did our driver Phil, another former angler.



A pair of red kites seem to have adopted the area near the house as their home territory, occasionally soaring round and then perching again in the tops of the mature trees. Several of the trees were festooned with mistletoe and there were one or two hellebore dotted about.

There was also one of those traditional shepherd's huts which appeared to be open for inspection, but I didn't pay it a visit because I wanted a cup of coffee before we got back on the coach. Snowdrops and other bulbs and plants were on sale outside the refreshment marquee and there was the inevitable gift shop with a viburnum in full bloom outside, against the wall.



A gate just there led through into the churchyard, the main access being from the public highway on the other side. I went into the church which was very close to the house and quite large for a small village. It was almost entirely constructed of flints, which is quite unusual.

At about two o'clock, the cloud built up quickly and the sun disappeared. As we walked back to the coach the temperature plummeted and it got two jackets colder as my father used to say.

It was shining again before we returned to Swindon, rounding off what I thought was a very nice day.

Don Reeve

Photos: John Stott



Speakers 2023

February 16th

Charlotte Hitchmough **“Action for the River Kennet” (ARK)**

Charlotte has been working with ARK over a decade. She has built up knowledge affecting chalk streams and the Kennet in particular.

Coming from a background in the water industry and science communication, she has built up the charity’s activities. These include river habitat restoration, work with schools, farm advice and most recently rain gardens.

March 16th “Patagonian Garden Plants,”

Dr Keith Ferguson will talk about plants we grow here coming from places like Chile & Patagonia.

Dr Keith Ferguson was deputy keeper of the Herbarium (dried flower collections) in Kew Gardens. He has travelled, plant hunting, in many parts of South America. He and his wife set up a new garden in 1996 in West Gloucestershire.

April 20th Millie Carmichael is enthusiastic about one of her latest venture the **“Crop Drop”** project in her area where producers pass on surpluses to their Community.

May 18th The AGM and member plants sale!

June 15th Maria Wheatley

“Water Divining and its links to Gardening”

Maria is an international speaker on this subject who is happy to speak to us as a local group, supporting us by charging only a basic fee. This is a subject many of us know nothing about! We may dismiss it as superstitious or out of date ancient knowledge but there are many who are convinced of the subject. Why not come to hear a passionate expert and perhaps change our minds?

SALGA membership

Membership can now be renewed for 2023 at the shop, at meetings, by post, by email or included in the seed order if ordering seeds this autumn.

1. At the Shop at Pickards Field – Renewals and new members.
2. Electronically – using a Membership form submitted by e-mail to **deniswmatthews@gmail.com** and payment of the £5 by bank transfer. Membership cards can be collected at the shop. If you would like your card posted, please add an extra 65 pence to your bank transfer to cover postage.
3. By Post – Existing members, send me your name, address & a cheque for £5. New members, please complete a membership form which is below, or under “Membership” on the SALGA website **salga.org.uk**, A stamped and self-addressed envelope would be very welcome if you require your membership card sent to you.
4. At live monthly meetings.

We would very much like you to pay by bank transfer as our bank has introduced significant charges for cheques. Bank details: Salga Account **00020536**, Sort Code **40-52-40** and **include your name** as a reference. Please supply the following details for any new membership

Membership Number (for renewals).....

Name

Address

Post Code..... Telephone.....

E-mail address (please write clearly).....

Allotment site, (if any).....Plot number

GIFT AID *If any member of the household is a UK taxpayer, SALGA asks that the membership is made out in that person’s name and the declaration below is signed accordingly. For every £5 subscription that is “Gift Aided” SALGA receives £1.25 from the exchequer at no additional cost to the member.*

I am a UK taxpayer and would like SALGA to treat all subscriptions I make from the date of this declaration, until I notify otherwise, as Gift Aid contributions.

Date..... Signature

IF YOU HAVE SIGNED THE GIFT AID DECLARATION PLEASE GIVE
YOUR FIRST NAME IN FULL

.....

Denis Matthews, 3 Clevedon Gardens, Wroughton, SN4 9EZ

Kings seed order scheme

A big thank you to those of you who ordered seeds in 2022. It was another good year with SALGA earning £230 In commission from Kings despite orders being overall slightly down on last year. Orders were once again received gradually over the weeks which meant I rarely had lots of orders to check at once. I also enjoyed reading any notes you included with your orders too. In addition the Shop at Pickards Field gained around £600 In advance orders too, which helped with the forward planning with suppliers.

A lot of your seeds may have been planted by the time this newsletter comes out, but any others will be planted soon. We hope you have success with all the seeds you plant – whether its vegetables or flowers and have a really good yield. Perhaps some of you will be displaying the end results at our annual Horticultural Show to be held on 2nd September this year. It would be great to see you there even if only as a spectator looking at other people's achievements. Happy planting.

Dressability

Members at our January meeting on preserving food, also showed an interest in a local charity, **Dressability**.

Dressability say they work to tailor clothes to fit a client's needs.

The enterprise adapts clothes so that we are “**seeing beyond disability**”

A talk by Sharon Toombs has been arranged for the Autumn, when the speaker's fee will go to this Charity.

In the meantime you might keep an eye out for items to donate.

The list required:-

- Sewing thread
- Zips (un-used)
- Fabric
- Other items of haberdashery

Of course donations will be welcome too.



Dressability
www.dressability.org.uk

Our contact will be **Jane Caudwell**, who has the leaflets and supports this charity. It seems she sews too!

Coffee and Cake!

Coffee and Cake Morning

Pickards Field allotment site

Saturday 25th March

11 - 12.30.

We have arranged for a blade sharpener to attend so bring along your shears, loppers, axes etc.

It's also an opportunity to renew your membership, buy items from the shop or meet up with old friends.



Swindon Primary Schools Gardening Competition 2023

The Primary Schools gardening competition will be held again this year. As before we intend to send packets of seeds to interested schools. They will also be invited to enter the competition. Judging will take place in late June/ July and the winners will be presented with their trophies at the SALGA show. To help and encourage schools to get involved in gardening, we will be holding a webinar for school staff to give some hints and tips.

If you are interested in helping or visiting schools to judge their entries, please contact salgacontacts@gmail.com with your name and contact details.

Chris Cossey

Shop news

We wish to make members aware that our suppliers, particularly of composts and fertilisers, are experiencing significant price rises and have no choice but to pass those increases on to us and other customers.

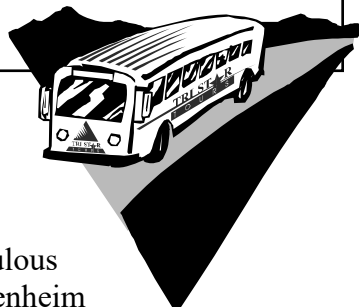
SALGA will try to absorb some of the effects of the price increases but will, as with our suppliers, have no choice but to pass on a portion of them to you, our customers.

A revised price list will be in effect from 17 February, when the shop re-opens. Existing stock will, of course, be sold at pre-increase prices.

We ask for your understanding in our efforts to keep the shop running in a sustainable manner.

John Edgerton
Treasurer
February 2023

Coach Trip 2023



Saturday 24th June Visit to Blenheim Palace Flower Show

Celebrating its 10th Anniversary year, this fabulous show returns to the beautiful grounds of Blenheim Palace to showcase the best of British gardening.

Featuring more stands and entertainment than ever before, this year's show also welcomes the return of the magnificent Grand Floral Pavilion, as well as incredible floral displays in 'Floral Street', a brand-new plant inspired 'Insect Trail', talks and demonstrations from gardening experts, fabulous food and drink, homeware and crafts, plus live music.

Depart Gorse Hill: 9.00 a.m. Depart Blenheim: 4.00 p.m.

Cost £32 – to include admission to the grounds and the Show.

**Cost £42 – for those wishing to visit the Palace in addition to the
Show and the grounds.**

(This includes driver's gratuity)

Wheelchair Users:

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

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

*******ADVANCE NOTICE*******

Date for your diary

Thursday September 7th

A trip to the Severn Valley Railway, including a ride on a steam train
Further details to come.

SALGA officers & committee members

Chair	Cindy Matthews	01793 312114
Secretary	Ida Walker	01793 637484
President	Don Reeve.	01793 423918
Treasurer.	John Edgerton.	01793 642965
Membership Secretary	Denis Matthews	01793 312114

General Committee Members

Sue Camburn.	01793 341482
Viv Dipper.	01793 322421
Josie Lewis.	01793 845154
Patrick Hawker	01793 526944
Emmeke van der Vaart	07453 189807

Show Committee

Chair.	Mick Carter	07769 721739
Acting Secretary	Glenys Dingwall	01793 274653
	Holly Barrand	07877 204047



Website: www.salga.org.uk

