

APRIL 2020

# MAGA

## MARTIN WAY ALLOTMENT NEWS

### Message from the Chair



We are all going through a very difficult time but one of the good points is that we are still allowed to come to our allotment. Some of the plots are beginning to look untidy but this is because some of our plot holders have been told to self-isolate for 12 weeks and others may be key workers who are probably exhausted supporting us all. If you are a key worker we are very grateful for the sacrifices that you are making for us. The allotments have been very busy with some plots looking better

than ever but please remember to follow the government and the NSALG guidelines. Copies of the **NSALG guidelines** are on the gates and notice boards.



#### Some main points are:

- Wash your hands or use hand sanitiser before and after opening/closing the gates.
  - Do not use water troughs for washing your hands.
- Keep to your own plot, if you take your children to the plot, ensure that they stay within its confines and do not run around on communal paths and spaces.
- Do NOT use the toilets – we are unable to clean them to the standards specified.
  - Observe social distancing – keep 2-3 m apart.

#### As we haven't been able to hold our AGM yet, here are a couple of notes from the Chair.

The committee are volunteers (please see map on notice boards for names and plot locations) acting for the benefit of the allotment community. Each tenant has an agreement that they sign which outlines their responsibilities and duties as a tenant. MAGA issued a set of guidelines in 2018 which each plot holder should have seen. They were available in paper form at the 2018 AGM, are in the shop and are available on the website. These explain in a bit more detail how we have agreed the allotments should be run. We are all tenants of Merton, we do not own our plot and as such we have to follow the agreement we have all signed. If you are unsure please ask [committee@maga.org.uk](mailto:committee@maga.org.uk) or contact us on **07752 290921** (text or call).

Day 7 of the quarantine  
My wife took up gardening but won't  
tell what she's going to plant



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## ALLOTMENT PATHS

This is one of the areas where the committee receive most complaints from plot holders. This ranges from plants or branches overhanging the path or fences or sheds being erected right on the edge of the plot and making passage difficult. The guidelines say the path width should be 40 inches or 1 metre clear between plots so that a loaded wheelbarrow can pass unimpeded. Around the site there are many places where paths are much narrower and therefore quite difficult to use. We are trying to address this



as plots become vacant by measuring and marking plot boundaries so that paths are reinstated where possible. We are not always successful as we run out of time (we are just volunteers).

However, we can all do our bit to keep the paths clear by not planting trees or anything right on the edge of your plot as they may later overhang the path causing a nuisance or get damaged by people passing by. Please see the guidelines for location of shed and greenhouses (remember to contact the committee before putting up a structure). If you are asked to move something or cut something back it is with these reasons in mind. Please think about the path width when you are cultivating your plot so that you don't end up digging into the path! We hope that over time the paths will become easier and safer to use and everybody will see the benefit. If you would like to put up a fence around your plot please make sure that the path width is maintained as given in the guidelines.

**We hope to rearrange the AGM when current restrictions are lifted. Everybody is welcome to come and show support for your allotment community.**

## MANURE & WOODCHIP

Manure and woodchip have been requested but the tree surgeons and hauliers aren't doing non-essential work.

Please try and pile up the rubbish in the waste bays as neatly and as tight as you can, as they won't be emptied in the near future either.





Ever wondered where Martin Way honey came from? I always watch where “my” bees land and try to work out which plants are their favourite.

Last year (2019) I decided to take part in a scheme called the National Honey Monitor-

ing Scheme run jointly with the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH). The latter have a team who send out sample tubes (honest!) to us beekeepers and once returned they analyse the top 15 taxa found within the honey samples via serious science including spectral analysis, but I may have made that bit up. Oh and via DNA sequencing. What I hear you ask does taxa mean? Simply means the different species or different kinds of plants found within each honey sample.

So, once I managed to navigate my way through their confusing website I got my first two sample tubes delivered. By then it was around June 2019 and although they prefer beekeepers who can submit samples in Spring/early summer as well as later summer, it is okay to submit just one a year. I basically ran out of time and honey by late summer so just did the earlier June sample.

To take a sample I had to find a capped area of honey, which means that it is ready as the bees have sealed it over with wax. Then I had to scrape out enough to fit into the two tubes right to the top, which I can tell you is not easy with bees flying around wondering what I am doing and trying to eat the honey I am putting into the tubes! And of course all the sticky mess that goes with anything involving honey extraction. So honey all over the tubes, my gloves, my hair and basically everywhere by the end! And I had to be very careful about wiping up any spilled honey as any honey accidentally left on the ground in the Apiary or stuck on the side of a hive could encourage other bees/hives to start robbing mine. And once bees start robbing it can be very difficult to stop them.....this is known as a robbing frenzy and having once seen this happening to a hive of mine at Morden Hall Park I know how bad this can be.

Right, sample taken, area left clean and tubes sent off. CEH were hoping to do all their analysis and give us the results by late 2019 but as often happens it turned out more complicated and time consuming to do this than they had thought. So, at long last, I got my results in February this year.

My results are very interesting and took me by surprise. One would possibly think that, as we are an allotment and so many of us grow bee friendly plants plus of course fruit and veg, that these plants would be up there in the results. Hmm.

**Take a look at the honey analysis results for one of my hives overleaf:**

80% from Forget me Not  
 9% Green Alkanet  
 7% Field Maple  
 3% Wild Cherry  
 2% Ilex perado (Holly of some kind)  
 1% Three cornered Garlic

And then a tiny percentage of the following :  
 small leaved Lime/Ceanothus/Sycamore/  
 Ramsons, another type of Garlic/Berberis/Lawson's Cypress.



So they found a total of 12 different species of plant within the sample I took from one hive. And the hugest proportion was Forget me Not!! The other species include quite a few wild flowers or so called "weeds", plus a few trees, as trees that flower produce far far more flowers for the bees to gather nectar from than a patch of perennials/flowers.

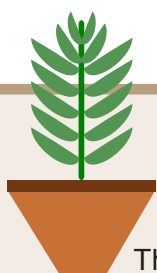


However in spite of these results please don't stop growing all those lovely bee friendly plants! Bees will take nectar from a huge variety of plants and of course this analysis only relates to honeybees whereas we have around 275 species of bees in total in this country! And all those other bees also need our flowers.

I had intended to complete both the Spring and the later summer sample this year as it would be really interesting to know the top 15 plants that the bees collected nectar from later in the year. However of course Coronavirus has delayed (we are being optimistic here!) all this. I now have two new sample tubes ready for collecting Spring honey, if there is enough to spare, but CEH have advised us that although we can go ahead and collect the honey samples we cannot send them in for analysis until we are advised things are okay.

Once this year's honey samples are able to be analysed and results given out I can let everyone know about where my bees have been this year. I just thought that those people who have bought honey from me might like to know what is in it! If you have bought honey from another beekeeper in Martin Way their bees may or may not have visited the same flowers as mine. This is one of the endlessly fascinating aspects of beekeeping!

**Enjoy your plot. Stay safe and well. Best wishes to everyone. Alison.**



## PLANT SALE

If the restrictions are lifted this growing season we will try and run a small plant sale. This may be extra plants people have grown on the allotments and will be only to other plot holders. We will let you know if we are able to organise something.

## ROADS ON OUR SITE



So, after the wettest 4 plus months since we decided to repair the roads on the site, the weather has now relented sufficiently for the work to have been completed. Not that Fate hasn't thought about putting another barrier in place to prevent us from enjoying our allotments to the full!

We hope that your car suspension will also enjoy a smoother journey and would crave your indulgence to help ensure that the surface has a long lifetime.



### PLEASE

1. Observe the speed limit. The 5mph is just over walking pace and is primarily for the safety of all plot holders. It will also help minimise wear and tear to the surface.
2. Accelerate and brake gently for the same reasons.
3. Take corners slowly and carefully as these are the areas which tend to wear the quickest.
4. Only park in the designated parking areas:-

West side car parks - entrance car park, the top car park and the summer car park.

East side - entrance car park.

Please do NOT leave your car in the road or in front of the waste bays or in the passing space on the west side, except for unloading. Your car MUST then be moved to a car park so that it doesn't cause a nuisance to other plot holders. If there is no space in the car parks you may have to park outside on one of the local roads.



Thank you in advance.



Chinese Cabbage



Pak Choi



Tatsoi



Mizuna



Komatsuna

## A SHORT GUIDE TO ORIENTAL BRASSICAS

Have you ever wondered if you can grow oriental brassicas ? To be honest I have no experience so I raided the Real Seeds web site for this article. These quick and tasty greens are grown in late summer and crop for several months. They can be used in salads or cooked as a vegetable. Below are detailed just a few to wet your appetite. Give it a try, I am definitely going to order seeds.

**Chinese Cabbage** also known as Chinese leaves, sow from May onwards and harvest from July until the first frosts.

**Pak Choi**, a name many of us are familiar with, sow in late July, water well and start picking the young leaves within 3-4 weeks. Steam or stir fry.

**Tatsoi**, a close relation to Pak Choi. Tatsoi has spoon shaped leaves that splay out in the shape of a rosette. Grows quickly and needs to be harvested regularly. Steam or stir fry

**Mizuna**, the leaves look rather like a deeply serrated form of rocket and have an equally peppery, mustardy taste. Grow it in the summer for salads.

**Komatsuna** is sometimes referred to as either mustard spinach or spinach mustard! It's upright dark green or red leaves taste midway between spinach and cabbage. Grow for cut and come again salads or as leaves for steaming and stir frying well into the winter.

If you are behind in planting your normal brassicas you may want to try these oriental plants that grow much quicker and will help fill that gap. There are many more varieties to explore.

**For more detail visit [realseeds.co.uk](http://realseeds.co.uk)**

## CLOSURE OF MAGA SHOP

As you know, the MAGA Shop had to shut following government advice to close all non-essential retail shops as part of the anti-coronavirus measures. It would be very hard to maintain appropriate social distancing within a small shop such as ours, and there was also the potential risk of contamination of the premises and merchandise (it is thought that the virus can survive on hard surfaces for several days). We have been making available the seasonal stocks of seed potatoes by putting bags (£1 each) on the table outside the shop and will do the same with the remaining onion and shallot sets (please put payments into the shop letterbox). Our compost stocks are already finished and new supplies are difficult to source at the moment.



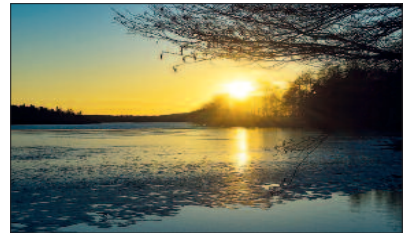
The toilets must also remain closed as we are unable to provide the twice-daily cleaning required under current regulations. This includes the toilet in the shop and the toilet outside. Please do NOT try to use the toilets.

If you see someone in the shop please do NOT ask them if you can buy anything. The only reason they will be in there at the moment is because they are on allotment business.

The current situation is particularly frustrating at this time of year when gardening supplies are much in demand but we will let you know as soon as the restrictions can be eased.

# IN THE TIME *of Quiet*

No one's told the daffodils about the pause to Spring  
And no one's told the birds to roost and asked them not to sing  
No one's asked the lazy bee to cease his bumbling round  
And no one's stopped the bright green shoots emerging  
through the ground  
No one's told the sap to rest, deep within the wood  
And stop the sleepy trees from waking, wreathed about in bud  
No one's told the sky to douse it's brightest shades of blue  
And stop the scudding clouds from puffing headlong into view  
No one's asked the lambs to still the springs beneath their feet,  
To stop their rapid rush and quell each joyful bleat  
No one's told the stream to halt its gurgle or its flow  
And warned the playful breezes, not to gust and blow  
No one's asked the raindrops not to fall to upon the earth  
And fail to quench the soil in the season of rebirth  
No one's locked the sun down, or dimmed the shimmer of the moon  
And even in the darkest night, the stars are still immune  
Remember what you value, remember who is dear  
Close the doors to danger and keep your family near  
In the quiet all around us take the time to sit and stare  
And wonder at the glory unfurling everywhere  
Look towards the future, after the ordeal  
And keep faith in Mother Nature's power and will to heal.



## WHEN

he prayed  
he prayed to God  
God on high  
that morning  
and later  
around lunchtime  
answering  
the knock  
at the door  
was sadly  
disappointed  
to see that  
it was only  
the Archangel  
Gabriel



*pmcmanus*  
*s560*

History repeats itself.  
Poem written in 1869, reprinted  
during 1919 Pandemic.

### This is Timeless...

And people stayed at home  
And read books  
And listened  
And they rested  
And did exercises  
And made art and played  
And learned new ways of being  
And stopped and listened  
More deeply  
Someone meditated, someone prayed  
Someone met their shadow  
And people began to think differently  
And people healed.  
And in the absence of people who  
Lived in ignorant ways  
Dangerous, meaningless and heartless,  
The earth also began to heal  
And when the danger ended and  
People found themselves  
They grieved for the dead  
And made new choices  
And dreamed of new visions  
And created new ways of living  
And completely healed the earth  
Just as they were healed.



## PRIZES



in his time  
he had  
got some  
real biggies  
triumphed  
golden glitter  
diamond dust  
  
now fielding  
a couple  
of Nobels  
several Oscars  
and a Bafta too!

but this year  
he was going  
for the big one  
the hyper challenge  
of his long life  
and so bravely  
entering  
for the class  
'Best Roses'  
at this autumn's  
flower show  
become champion  
king of his whole  
allotment!

*pmcmanus*  
s609