

August 2018

# MAGA

## MARTIN WAY ALLOTMENT NEWS

### WORKING PARTIES

Helping to build **community spirit** in our self-managed allotments



The first two of this year's working parties were held on Saturday mornings in May and June, with a total of 32 people getting together to tackle some essential jobs around the site. These included clearing the main access road on the west side, re-instating paths on both sides and mending one of the woodchip bays, along with ad hoc tasks like pruning the grapevine near the marquee.

Starting at around 9.00, most of us were back on our plots by lunchtime, despite breaking for a much-needed brownie-fuelled tea break. People really appreciated the opportunity to meet and chat to fellow-plot holders, whilst doing something worthwhile.

**Two more working parties are scheduled for 2018, Saturday 18th August and Saturday 20th October.**

We have had a good response to the call for volunteers but we need all plot holders to play their part, so if you haven't joined the team yet, now's the time!

Please email **Sue Tickner** at [sue\\_tickner@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sue_tickner@yahoo.co.uk), giving your name, plot number and mobile phone and indicating which date works for you.

You can call Sue on **0780 869 3648** if you want to know more.

**Is one morning a year too much to expect from every plot holder?**



## NEW PESTS — The Spotted Winged Drosophila (*Drosophila suzukii*)



Last year our cherry crop was wiped out by the dreaded **Wing Drosophila (SWD)**. This is a fruit fly that was first reported in the UK in 2012. Unlike our usual fruit flies which are attracted to already ripe and spoiled fruit, i.e. the ones you see hovering around your compost bucket, these are attracted to developing and ripening fruit.

The females lay their eggs on perfect and unblemished soft and stone fruit including **strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, currants, blueberries,**

**grapes, cherries and plums**, see: (<https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?PID=852>).

So it wasn't until we started to process (or rather eat) our precious crop that we discovered the infestation. Cherries which looked perfect to eat were in fact little more than a skin containing a pulpy mass containing numbers of wriggling little 2mm long grubs and a pip. Ughh!!

Kilo upon kilo of cherries were ruined, when the previous year they had all been perfect! Talking to other allotmenters later in the year they had experienced similar problems with blackberries which had been utterly ruined (and in fact wild areas with blackberries act as a reservoir for these fruit flies where they will very happily sit the winter out and be ready for your early fruits the following year).



So how were we going to combat this pest in the future and enjoy our precious cherries? We did a lot of research on the internet and came up with two possibilities.

I found a website where you can get the plans to print your own traps for free if you have, or have access to, a 3D printer. (<https://www.thingiverse.com/thing:432502>) I must admit that I adapted the design a little using transparent material for the container and a bright red for the top. Printing took about 1 ½ hours on my printer and was pretty straightforward. You can also buy these traps from a number of websites, e.g. <https://www.agralan.co.uk/spotted-wing-drosophila-trap-swd-trap.html> There is some very extensive information about these new fruit flies and advice on how to use these traps on the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board website at <https://horticulture.ahdb.org.uk/swd>

Madeleine looked at the barrier approach and found a tree net from Haxnicks which appeared to be just right for the job (<https://www.haxnicks.co.uk/fruit-tree-net-cover>). The only problem was that in the UK you can only get the small (2m x 2m) version and our tree was a little broader. Undeterred, Madeleine contacted that US suppliers and after quite a bit of persuasion managed to get them to send us the medium version (3m x 3m) which arrived a few days later.



In the end we decided to opt for the barrier method. Our research had highlighted a problem with the "trap method", in that the bait in the trap (e.g. red wine vinegar) necessarily attracts the flies but if for some reason they don't enter the trap then they are likely to choose your precious cherries. We would need to site our traps far away from our soft fruit – and that of our neighbours. So a net cage it was going to be.



The fruit tree protector is a large dome-shaped green net with a Velcro fastening and a drawstring. It takes two people, each equipped with a long pole, quite a bit of pushing, pulling and fiddling to place the net carefully over the tree without damaging the blossom. Then once the Velcro has been securely closed and the drawstrings pulled tight around the trunk, one can only wait and wait until the fruit is ripe before knowing if one's travails have been successful.



Timing is essential as the fruit buds need to be pollinated before the net is installed because otherwise you will have excluded your pollinating insects too! So we kept a close eye on the blossom and fruit set and left it as long as we dared before installing the net.

Come early July this year, the fruit was looking good and ripe and it was time to see what had happened. First pickings of about half the fruit came to almost 3kg. Madeleine, with not a little trepidation, cut open a particularly fine specimen which, to great joy, did not contain one little grub. Hoorah!

Second pickings, a week or so later, produced a further 2 ½ kg. We have enjoyed many great fruit salads and made cherry ice cream. Oh, and simply eaten them straight from the bowl – so moreish! The very last ones are going to be soaked in brandy and put away for Christmas, and crystallised for some delicious cherry cakes in the winter months.

*PS. You can also now buy individual sleeves from Agralan which you place over each fruiting branch and is you only have a small tree these might work for you in the short term. But I don't know how long these are.*

See:

<https://www.agralan.co.uk/catalogsearch/result/?q=sleeves>

Or of course you could always make your own.

**Robert and Madeleine Jude** (Plot 133A)



## PLOT LETTINGS – New Plot Holders

So far this year 7 new members have joined MAGA (Martin Way Allotment Gardens Association) and there are still 4 plots available. A big welcome to all the new Plot Holders.

Congratulations to those of you who despite having taken on a plot only a few months ago have already made tremendous progress! Taking on an allotment is very exciting and scary and can be a daunting prospect especially if you have inherited an overgrown plot but it can also be a rewarding pastime. All you need is a bit of time and patience.



Do try to speak to your neighbours who might be more experienced allotmenters who will know instantly what does and doesn't work, saving you time and effort. You'll also gain a green-fingered friend who can help you through your first year.

**So happy Gardening and start growing some vegetables/plants for the**

**PRODUCE SHOW IN SEPTEMBER**

## FROM THE APIARY



It has been a while since I last wrote anything about “our” bees at Martin Way. I say “our bees” as it is always so lovely when people come up to me and say that my bees are on their plants. Of course, with several different beekeepers within the Apiary the bees may be from any of the hives or indeed any nearby hives, but I too like to think when I see bees on my own plants that they might be from my own hive, completing a wonderful circle of life (okay, a tad cheesy!). Looking back to the past (Winter and early Spring), the weather back then was so totally different and brought with it challenges to the bees as either the weather was too cold for the honeybees to fly (they need about 10 degrees and above to fly efficiently) or the plants could not produce much nectar or pollen due to the cold. Bumble bees can fly at lower temperatures as they have larger bodies. So hives were slow to build up, but then this hot weather came along and things took off fast. Initially it was great as the bees were bringing in loads of nectar (to turn into honey) and pollen (they need this to feed their young) but as it continued with no rain, we may be back with problems as I suspect many of the flowers cannot produce much nectar once again but this time due to lack of water at their roots. Certainly the amount of nectar being brought back by the foraging bees is reduced. One specialist task for the bees is to collect water, which they use to thermo-regulate within the hive. So I provide them with an upside down dustbin lid filled with stones and kept topped up with water. I love watching them pile onto the stones and sip up the water. There is often a queue. Then they take it back to the hive and spray it around inside thus helping to regulate the inside temperature. Clever!



There are many pests and diseases that our honeybees have to deal with. One of the main tasks of a beekeeper is to learn about and constantly monitor the state of the hive with regard to the health or otherwise of the bees, both adult and young (larvae). We manage our hives with a combination of chemicals (which can be organic if preferred) and bio-technical methods. The latter simply means that there are some methods at certain times of the year that we can use that don't involve adding any treatments as such but rather work with our knowledge of the bees lifecycle and the lifecycle of certain pests in order to reduce (for example) the amount of varroa mites within



the hive, **varroa mites** being one of the main challenges facing bees.



*Asian Hornet*



*European Hornet*

Talking about pests, have you heard about the latest threat to honeybees that has recently come over via France?? This is the **ASIAN HORNET**. It “hawks” outside the hive in late summer, catching returning foragers, biting their heads off and

taking the protein rich thorax back to the Hornet nest to feed their young. It has become a serious threat to hives in France. We have had a few Asian Hornets spotted here in the UK but so far they have been tracked and destroyed. This is all down to the alertness of the public. Please note though that our own European Hornet is NOT a threat at all! The Asian Hornet is smaller than our own with **YELLOW LEGS** and a more dark abdomen. Do have a look at more information about it on line as **YOU** may be of great help if you ever spot one! If suspected, please contact the Non native species directorate or the National Bee Unit.

Thank you.

**Alison Pelikan**



# PLANT SALE Saturday 26th May

The plant sale this year was on a much smaller scale than in the past, due mostly to the lack of volunteers to lead it and to do all the growing on necessary to reproduce the massive events they have been in the past. Many thanks to those who have stepped up before.

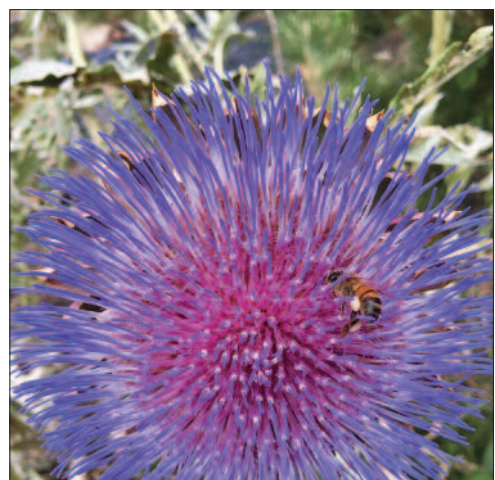
Rather than cancel a popular event I proposed a **bring and buy format**. This worked really well with not too much input from **Simon Mawson** and myself apart from setting up the night before and pricing donations on the morning. A gaggle of volunteers turned up on Saturday willing to sell and give advice, and **Andy and Kay's team** in the shop did a magnificent job selling cakes and refreshments.

The event made a respectable £500 and was a lot less effort than previous years. Maybe we could do this again next year but ask people to choose from a list of plants to grow. That way we may end up with more selection and not quite so many tomatoes, although they were wonderful!

Many thanks to all those who contributed in any way, your efforts are appreciated and a good day was had by all.

Thank you.

**Jadzia Bruton**



Photos taken by Simon Mawson around the allotments



**PRODUCE**



**Saturday 8th September**

The next event in the MAGA Calendar is the **Produce Show**, so please make a note of Saturday, 8th September in your diaries. This is when you have the chance to display the results of your hard work and efforts during the year.

**Staging entries will be between 10 - 12 noon, followed by judging and the marquee will reopen at 3pm.**

More details of categories of entries will be communicated in due course but meanwhile if anyone would like to set up a stall to sell home produce/crafts or to raise money for charity, do let us know.

Volunteers will be needed to help with the setting up the day before on the Friday afternoon, as well as on the morning of the event. Please let us know who you are! The more the merrier.

## ROAD SAFETY & COURTESY

Slightly dull but rather important are phrases which might be deployed to describe a range of MAGA committee duties, and in this vein it falls to us to beseech drivers to use the allotment tracks with safety and consideration for others at all times.



Plot-holders are reminded that priority should always be given to pedestrians, then cyclists, in that order, and that cars and trucks should be driven at a walking pace. Drivers are also asked to avoid unnecessary acceleration as this can damage the tracks, and to stay well back from any pedestrians who may be using the tracks ahead.



**Thank you for your cooperation!**

**Peter Fox**



# GATES & HEIGHT BARRIERS



**Please, please, please close the gates behind you every time you enter or exit the allotments.**

Leaving the gates open, even if you are just 'popping in', is an invitation for people to visit your allotments to fly tip or help themselves to your or your neighbours produce.

**If the gates are open when you arrive please close them behind you and remind others to do so.**

On the east side the gates are getting more difficult to close partly because they are being

left open so frequently. The weight of the gates is making the posts lean into the allotments so the gates are out alignment. If they were closed every time the effect of this would be minimised. The height barrier is also getting left open and instead of the right hand post being held in the correct position the gate post is leaning inwards so that the gates are really difficult to close.



On the west side we are struggling with the height barrier as it has been damaged several times by someone driving into it. We have checked the CCTV but without knowing the date of when the incident took place we cannot find who did it. It now has a large curve in it and can no longer be locked in position. This damage is potentially going to cost us all a lot of money. If you notice that damage has occurred please let the committee know straight away so that we can perhaps identify the culprit.

We have asked IdVerde to have a look at both the east and west side gates/height barriers/posts but as they are only contracted to do minor repairs we may well have to foot the bill.

**Jadzia Bruton**

## FLOODING - on West Side Allotments

Following on from the AGM when the committee was directed to look into options for plot 92 which floods regularly on the west side, the committee have decided to take the advice offered by the Royal Horticultural Society on ways to alleviate the problem.



In the first instance, when the weather improves and the soil is less dry, we will get a digger to create a ditch and bank system on 2 or 3 sides around the plot. The recommended size is for the ditch to be 1 metre wide by 50 cms deep (that's just over 3 ft wide by 18 inches deep in old money). The soil from the ditch will be used to form a bank on the inside of the plot which will initially be planted with moisture loving plants, shrubs or small trees.

The plot will be monitored over the coming year to see how it affects the surrounding area.

**Robert Jude**

# WATER COLLECTION & WATER BUTTS



Well, if it rains ever again then we may be able to harvest the water. If you have a solid structure i.e, shed or greenhouse. The roof can be used to catch water running off by using guttering and a water butt to collect and store the water. Please do not hesitate to contact me for advice on this.

## Water Butts

If you are using water butts on your allotment please be mindful not to use a mister or spray for dispersing the water, use

your watering can or hose without a rose or sprayer as there is a risk of Legionnaires Disease from making the water airborne and inhaling.

Thank you

**Enda Lavelle**

## TOOLS - To borrow from the shop



In case you didn't know we have a range of tools that you can borrow from the shop. There are 2 battery powered strimmers, each one runs for about 40 - 50 minutes on a charge which is more than enough to trim the paths around

your plot. The Stihl strimmer has 2 batteries so can be used for longer periods as it takes about 50 mins to charge a battery. We also have a petrol strimmer for really serious work. It's heavier to use but gets through thicker stuff.

There is also a petrol rotavator if you want to do some serious tilling. It is hard work to use but the results can be impressive. We also have a petrol lawn mower for use on the paths. Please ask when you borrow any tool for instructions on how they should be used safely.

We ask for £1 donation each time you borrow the tools and you are asked to return them clean and ready to use for the next person. If you have a problem please let us know.

## SUPERHERO



that morning  
sunny morning  
birds singing  
he decided  
instead of  
saving people  
communities  
towns -cities  
worlds -planets  
systems-galaxies  
even universes  
and all the rest  
just to take  
take the day off



to weed his  
veggies peacefully  
on his allotment  
and relax a bit  
tend his plants  
put up his feet  
sip his tea  
footele  
just  
footele

*pmcmanus*

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