

DECEMBER 2022

MAGA



MARTIN WAY ALLOTMENT NEWS



That was the year that was!!!

What was it like for you? Weather wise it was one of the driest years on record and the water bill for our sites was a record high! But if you walked around the allotments the crops were really outstanding.

Sunday 27th February was our first wildlife walk round the plot organised by Alison Pelikan. Have you ever seen a Hairy Footed Flower Bee? You would if you joined us!!!



The new marquee was unpacked and erected and Andy Preece worked miracles on the Friday and when the volunteers arrived on Saturday morning, 9th April, the structure sat proudly in position.

Thank you to all the volunteers who smiled and cursed often in the same breath but the job was completed in just under 3 hours.

In May we held the annual plant sale and this was the greatest success ever and this was due to many of you that donated plants for sale. So a very big thank you to all those who donated plants. You helped boost the MAGA bank balance by well over £2000.

June saw the late Queen's Jubilee celebration. On Saturday 4th June over 60 people came along and the atmosphere was tremendous..... we showed that we can let our hair down and relax!!!

July was the driest month since 1935!!!

Sunday 7th August our second wildlife walk and well supported including several children. Walkers spotted white butterflies and a Peacock Butterfly and of course plenty of birds. In 2023 why not join us? Look out for the dates.

September welcomed the return of the Produce Show after a gap of three years. We were genuinely surprised at the number of entries and the variety of the fruit and vegetables being displayed. We took the opportunity to add a social event which was very well supported and demonstrated that you do like to sit down with a drink and snack.

MAGA Martin Way Allotment News is produced 2-3 times per year by Committee members and volunteers.

The MAGA committee accept no liability for any errors or views expressed in this publication.

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To provide a submission for the next issue, please email ivorstocker@sky.com

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Sunday 30th October immediately after the clocks went back was Pumpkinfest and what an evening that turned out to be!



On November 12th the marquee was dismantled for storage with the end of the year fast approaching.

A huge thank you to the working party volunteers and to Sue for organising.

Many thanks to the many shop volunteers and to Margaret for being shop manager for so long. Regrettably Margaret has resigned and we are looking for a new Shop Manager so if you are interested please send an e mail to ivorstocker@sky.com

Thank you to our anonymous plot inspectors, a thankless task but essential.

Thank you to Janina who quietly helps in the background.

When writing a review you always hope you have not missed any category to say thank you.

Finally I have to thank my fellow committee members, Andy (secretary) Paul (treasurer) David (IT), Ruth (Ecology Group) and Sue (Working Parties) for all your help and support - I value it immensely.



From the Chairman - I wish all of our plot holders a very merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

PRODUCE SHOW *Celebration*

After a 3 year gap we were able to celebrate the end of the season with our Produce Show again. It felt like everyone had been waiting a long time to show off the best of their produce as more and more entries arrived on the morning of the Show. All the display tables were completely full with a huge entry for the tomatoes (outdoor tomatoes doing particularly well this year) and lots of unusual fruit and vegetables being displayed.

Our judges, Sarah Wilson from Roots and All, and Jason Stevens from Veterans' Growth took their task very seriously having received some RHS training beforehand. They were ably supported by local baker John Green judging the cakes and photography classes. Thank you to all 3 of them.



Best in Show was awarded to a stunning plate of 5 small tomatoes from Paul Brace. The heaviest pumpkin weighed in at 25kg and tallest sunflower at 3.39m both won by Guy Cossey.

Congratulations to everyone who won an award and it was especially good to see the children who won rosettes in many of the classes.

Thanks also to Andrew and Shaun for organising the event and volunteers Margaret, Jane, Chris on the day.

PUMPKINFEST

A damp wet autumnal day gave way to a clear crisp Sunday evening, ideal for the reinstated Seed Swap/Pumpkinfest. Over 100 people attended and enjoyed not surprisingly homemade pumpkin soup (thanks Alison, Ruth, Alan and Paul) BBQ food and toasted marshmallows also went down well. We also received some delicious donations including pumpkin scones (who knew pumpkins could be so versatile) and cakes.



The addition of mulled wine and Prosecco proved popular as did the barrel of Guest real ale. There was an amazing range of carved pumpkins for the pumpkin competition and the judges were very impressed with the high standard of carving and originality. Henrick's imaginative use of vegetables and a banana hook will stay long in the memory. A massive thank you to all those who helped in particular Andy and Michael, bonfire maestros and

Alison, Ruth, Alan, Judith and Paul for helping to make this evening such a success. **Miranda**

BEES in our Apiary



This has been a crazy hot dry summer then rain more recently as we all well know! This weather pattern may not be good news for our honeybees as they would normally be forming their winter cluster in the (usually) cooler months and therefore not flying and foraging outside so much. However I've seen many of my bees flying back with yellow pollen in their pollen baskets, much later than normal. This would tend to indicate (without opening the hive) that their Queen is still laying eggs so the nursery bees still need incoming pollen to convert to bee milk

to feed young larvae. That in turn means the adult bees will need to eat precious honey stores for energy, possibly depleting what would have been winter stores. So we will need to be extra vigilant over winter to ensure our hives don't run out of honey stores, even though we have all left plenty! We do this by hefting the hives (too cold to open and disturb them) during the cooler months and as we feel them getting lighter we can decide if they need an additional feed of fondant. As said, ideally they have enough of their natural food but beekeeping is often a guessing game!

We've also put on mouseguards to protect each hive from an eager mouse for whom a warm dry hive would make a welcome hibernation spot. This strip of metal has bee sized holes in it to allow a bee access but nothing larger.

Another winter protection is to surround each hive with chicken wire to protect against Green Woodpecker attacks. We know we have these beautiful birds on site so it's a useful precaution. The main other tasks we have during winter is to clean up all the hive parts from Spring, when we completely change all hive parts for clean ones. This can take a long time as I need to scrape off propolis and wax, wash each part then scorch all wooden parts with a flame gun against disease. So it's a bit like having an allotment plot.... There's often more work behind the scenes than is done up front!!!



Enjoy your winter. As ever please do ask me if you have any queries about our hives or would like me to take you (safely!) into the Apiary.

All the best, **Alison**



HEDGEHOG *Welfare*



Since our recent information (26/10/22) about looking out for hedgehogs on the allotment, sadly, another hedgehog was found dead (03/11/22).

As this latest hedgehog was young, had no obvious injury and seemed a good weight, the Eco Group has arranged for a post-mortem. This was not easy, as wildlife charities are busy saving lives. Luckily, Sarah Fowkes, a Wildlife Veterinarian and Research Associate at the Institute of Zoology from the Zoological

Society of London, has accepted to help, free of charge. We are awaiting the results and we are extremely grateful to her.

On our complicated quest to finding help, we contacted St Tiggywinkles in Aylesbury. Although they could not help with the post-mortem, they were concerned to hear our news and asked questions about our allotments. Following this, they offered advice on these three points:

1. Regarding slug pellets, they are celebrating the banning of metaldehyde - "a terrible poison" - but warned that "Wildlife Friendly Slug pellets" are still not safe to hedgehogs either. Please look at the following link for their advice to us vegetable gardeners, regarding slugs:
<https://www.sttiggywinkles.org.uk/metaldehyde-slug-pellets-are-now-officially-banned-in-the-uk/>
2. They also pointed out that on the allotments, netting, discarded broken glass and rusty nails, pots and other items are a great danger to hedgehogs. Once a hedgehog walks into netting, its spines prevent it from reversing out of the netting. The link below explains how to use netting safely; eight inches off the ground!
<https://www.gracethehedgehog.co.uk/garden-netting/>
3. Habitat: If we suddenly see hedgehogs that we previously did not know were there, St Tiggywinkles suggests that their habitat must have been disturbed. The Eco Group thought this could either be from the gardens in Whatley Avenue (where most front gardens have been paved over), or the disturbance caused by new fencing/plot clearing at the allotment. Whatever the reason, every one of us at the allotment should try to look at our plot from a hedgehog perspective.

Is there a place for safe nesting? For example, under the shed or in compost? You could even build a nice hedgehog home. Here is a link to guide you on what could be a lovely winter project- building a home for a hedgehog!

<https://www.gardenersworld.com/product-guides/nature/best-hedgehog-houses/>



The Eco Group would like to invite you to join us for a Winter Shop Session for more information on hedgehogs, where useful leaflets will be available free to take away! We hope to see you Sunday 8th January 2023 from 10.30 to 12.30 at the allotment shop. **Slyvie**



HORSETAIL Weed

We've tried many ways to kill horsetail but nothing has worked. Please can you advise?

The horsetail weed is the bane of many gardeners' lives and nothing will get rid of it other than good drainage. The roots reach 2.5m or more so weed killer has no effect. The best solution is to cut it back constantly.



TOMATO Blight

Tomato blight occurs most years but you can help reduce the risk....

1. Buy tomato seeds which are blight free
2. Tie up or stake plants
3. Remove lower leaves as the fruit develops
4. Water in the morning
5. If you think you have blight remove the plants immediately, place in a bin bag and put in the waste bayNOT in the green waste bay

Tomatoes grown outdoors are more susceptible than those grown in a greenhouse or poly tunnel. Buy blight resistant varieties such as Tomato Merrygold, Tomato Cocktail Crush and Tomato Crimson Blush.



You can't stop tomato blight altogether but you can take the steps above which will help reduce the risk. You can also buy blight resistant/tolerant seed potatoes.

MANURE

It is currently provided free of charge to plot holders but the Committee accepts no responsibility for the quality of the manure or its contents. To give all members an opportunity to take advantage of this service, plot holders are requested to take no more than 1 wheelbarrow per rod per plot per delivery.



STONES

What are the bags of stones forthe paths?

How many times have I been asked that question!!! There are 8 bags of stones which we will be using at the beginning of the year to help improve drainage. The date of the work is very dependent on the state of the ground as we are hiring a dumper truck to move the stones to the location and a mini digger to move lots of earth.



There is one big bag of stones that is being used in conjunction with ground stabilising tiles. This pilot scheme is to fill a large hole on the West Side at the gate entrance. Hopefully those tenants who have visited the site in last two weeks will have noticed the improvement.

COMPOST Bins

More pallets are being sourced but please do not use these pallets for fencing.....we need all of our tenants to have a green composting mindset which help reduce the overloaded green waste bays and put back into soil much needed nutrients. If you can source pallets and let us know where they are, we can arrange to collect them.



If by chance you have any spare pallets on your plot please tell us and we will collect and recycle.

Your co-operation will be appreciated.

It's GOOD to TALK



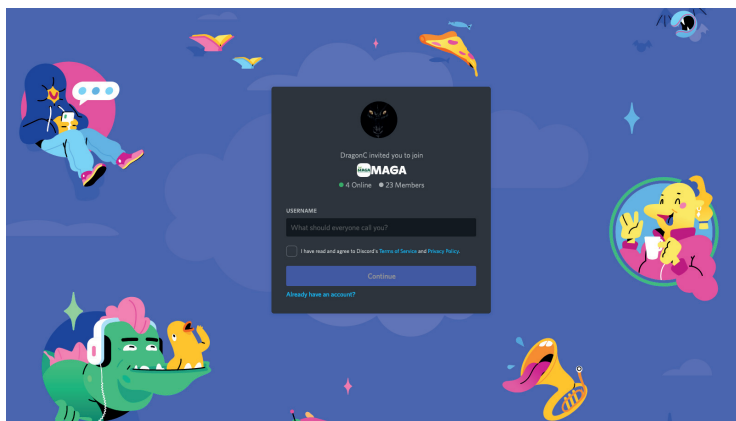
There have been suggestions about having a discussion forum on the website for us to be able to upload photos and chat about growing and helping the community.

Unfortunately our website is not capable of running such a system. This is why we've turned to a free resource in the form of Discord.

Discord allows people to upload photos, and discuss whatever they need to. We've even used it to hold our Committee meetings via it's video features. Discord will increasingly be used to promote events etc and you can now read the Committee Minutes on Discord.

So why not have a look for yourself: <https://maga.org.uk/p/resources/community-forum>. You can cut and paste.

If you are worried about joining, please send us an email and we will talk you through the processit really is quite easy.



WORKING PARTIES



Idea



To do



Doing



Done



This year has seen some very successful Working Parties but we do need more people to join the team. The work of the Working Parties continues through the winter

Anyone wondering why we have a whole bunch of large sacks full of stones in the General Waste Bay? The stones have been bought to help drainage on the Nature Reserve, an area which has been set aside to provide a sump to reduce flooding at the back edge of the site, while providing a haven for wildlife. Work on this had to be cancelled due to

the excessive rain last month but we still hope to complete it early next year. Another job which needs to be done during the winter is the planting of the conservation hedging along the David Lloyd boundary.

We expect everyone with a plot to contribute something to the site, be it helping in the shop, organising social events, growing plants for the plant sale or joining the Working Parties. What will your contribution be?

Please contact Sue Tickner on suetickner46@gmail.com if you'd like to be included on the Working Party team.

MURAL for Shop Wall



As you know, we recently re-surfaced the shop wall, fronting onto the green waste bay. Jim Vision, one of the UK's top graffiti artists (**Google Jim Vision**) has offered to do an environmental mural on the wall but the weather has ruled this out so far.

Fingers crossed, we shall see some better days in the Spring and we can look forward to something beautiful appearing there. If you have any ideas of what might be included, do let us know, although the artist will, of course, make the final choice.

Allotment Wander on 7 August



A group of about 12 of us gathered on a warm Sunday in August to see what wildlife we could spot on our site. I was very happy to see several children joining us and their keen eyes meant much more was seen!

We saw various White butterflies plus Peacock butterfly, dragonflies, Hoverflies and a variety of different Bee species. Also of course a variety of birds.

It was great sharing knowledge between ourselves in such an enthusiastic group.

I look forward to running more such wanders and hope you'll join in.



Alison

OUTRAGE



Shocked
There he
was peeing
Yes peeing
brazenly
On his allotment
Didn't he know
That he could
Be fined a
Thousand pounds
That there is
A hosepipe ban?

pmcmanus
S955



2023 PROVISIONAL EVENT DATES

- Sunday 8th January - Social Event/Talk in shop and New Year drink
- Saturday 18th March – Working Party/Nature Area works
- Saturday 8th April – Erect Marquee (weather permitting)
- Saturday 13th May – Plant Sale
- Saturday 25th May – Working Party
- Sunday 10th June – MAGA AGM
- Saturday 25th June – Working Party
- Saturday 12th August – Working Party
- Saturday 9th September – Produce Show
- Saturday 8th October – Working Party
- Sunday 29th October – Pumpkinfest
- Saturday 4th November – Dismantle Marquee

PUMPKIN Soup



Winter warming recipe:

All the way from Australia comes this winter warmer, equally successful with pumpkin or butternut squash, I make it in bulk and bottle as a concentrate, watering it down with stock and sometimes coconut milk. Enjoy!

- 1 Large pumpkin (or squash), peeled and diced
- 2 Cooking Apples, peeled and sliced
- 3 Leeks, cut into chunks
- 1 Large Onion. sliced
- 1 TBS Curry Powder
- 1 Litre water
- 2 stock cubes (chicken or vegetable)

1. Fry onions, leeks and apple with curry power until soft
2. Add pumpkin, stir a little
3. Pour in stock
4. Bring to boil, season to taste, then simmer until pumpkin is very soft
5. Put through liquidiser, bottle or freeze as required.

When you're ready to eat, re-heat, adjust liquid to taste, drizzle cream/coconut milk and add chives.