

DECEMBER 2023

MAGA

MARTIN WAY ALLOTMENT NEWS

News from the Chair

2023 So what was it like for you ?

Walking round the two sites it is rewarding to see so many of you being successful and harvesting crops for your own consumption. This year there seemed to be a surplus of runner beans, marrows and didn't the courgettes do well.

The Newsletter is an opportunity to voice concerns and one of them is the maintenance of the path between plots. When the grass is allowed to grow long it becomes a safety issue which is the responsibility of the tenants. The main pathways are cut regularly and in September this year the Committee elected to have all of the paths between the plots cut. Please do maintain the paths as it is for your safety.

Let's look on the bright side for 2023! The Nature Reserve is nearly completed with just the pond liner to be installed and the ongoing maintenance will be handed over to the Ecology Group. The old shed roof has been replaced. The Working Parties do a great job and this year has included repairing holes in the entrance road on the West Side and this work will be continued in 2024.

- * The Plant Sale was very well supported and swelled the finances.
- * The Social event had over 60 people in attendance and was very enjoyable.
- * The Produce Show saw some great entries and adding the social side at the end works well.
- * The Pumpkinfest survived the bad weather and with the help of food and drink (soft and alcoholic), a bonfire and your support was a great success.
- * The shop continues to serve your needs and will re-open in February 2024.
- * Financially your Association is on a firm footing and the first six months of the current financial year we're on budget

Finally I have to end this article by saying a big thank you on your behalf to the Committee members and to the many volunteerswithout whose help the allotment wouldn't survive!!

Thank you all and on behalf of the Committee,

Have a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year



Is your plot showing its reference number? Yes here we go again but

The terms of the tenancy agreement you signed states clearly that your plot must be numbered. In 2024 the plot inspections which are designed to measure the level of cultivation on your plot will include a question on whether or not your site is clearly showing its plot reference number. The tenant of a plot not showing the reference number will be liable to a monetary fine which will be used to fund and install your reference number.

The Committee when it meets in January 2024 will agree the level of the fine and the date of inspection which is probably at the end of March 2024. If you are 'guilty' of not having a clearly visible reference number please do take the opportunity in the next three month to do so. Paint the number on your shed or perhaps on a clear plastic bottle on the end of cane?

Please do co-operate, your Committee doesn't want to appear to be heavy handed in its management, but our plot inspectors are often having to guess the number of a plot. As Chair I walk both sites and so many plots are guilty!



REMEMBER - REMEMBER - Plant Sale 18 May 2024



It might be the season of cold and frosty weather but there are still some tasks to be getting on with and to think ahead to the Plant Sale in May next year, such as taking hardwood cuttings, sowing broad beans and sweet peas, various herbs and winter lettuces.

The arrival of seed catalogues signals an exciting moment: seed ordering time, but before getting carried away, check any packet of seeds you may still have. If they are still usable, perhaps you can sow these for transplanting in time for the Plant Sale.



A Cosmos plant bought at the 2023 plant sale

Your help is needed to make this event a great success. It doesn't take any effort to make some extra sowings whilst you are planning for the new season. It would be great if everyone could hand in a tray of 12 plants for the Plant Sale.

There will be trays and pots available once the shop opens in February.

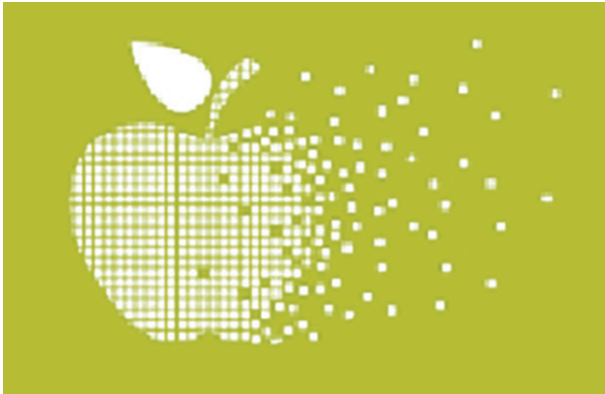


Happy Christmas to everyone!

Jane



DIGITAL FUTURE



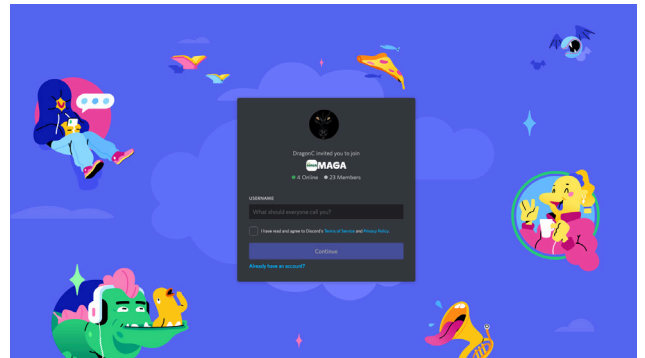
Growing fruit and vegetables is a very analogue endeavour, and yet we live in a modern world where we interact with a very digital society. There really should be a way to join those two disparate halves. To that extent, this year we started taking payment by credit card in the shop. This has been a huge improvement for the shop helpers and shoppers alike. We've even had some people pay their allotment bills via this method.

Then there is the social discussion. I've lost track how often I've had conversations with other plot holders. We are all brought together by a mutual interest. Whether it's growing

food to feed the family, or just to get out of the house, there is a social interaction that happens regularly. Indeed look at the recent pumpkin festival and produce show. They were very well organised and those that attended had a great time. But these are one-off events. To have a continuous conversation we need a forum, and so we introduced the use of Discord where we can upload photos or social media, and carry on a community discussion. Indeed, the Committee has been using it to hold video meetings on a regular basis and it works really well.

You can join the forum at:

<https://discord.gg/DjzxKjhyr3> and get involved in the discussions.



Our website is our public presence on the internet. But it is a very static system which is not the easiest to maintain. Whilst it looks good there are a few issues with it, which is why we're moving the site to a new server. Hopefully in the future you will be able to pay your allotment bill directly through the site as you would pay any normal online shopping bill, although the exact mechanics for this have yet to be determined as it will very much depend on the requirements dictated by the bank.

Now the first thing that people are going to point out is the security of the website, since we'll be handling payments. The new server already runs e-commerce sites so having one more there is no hardship. Also your personal information will not be stored on the site anyway.

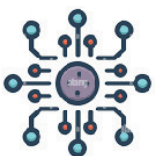
The second issue would be the emails. At present we have the main committee@maga.org.uk which simply re-sends any inbound email to all of the individual committee's email addresses. This is not much of a problem as we can then reply from whoever is responsible for that particular issue (usually the Secretary!) Where it is a problem is with spam/junk emails. There is no protection against these and it is often that the committee ends up receiving whatever shoddy sales pitch enters the spammers minds. The new server will help alleviate that problem as well as giving the ability for the committee to reply directly from the main address.



mailchimp

At present all of the mass emails are sent from Mailchimp. It is a useful service that automates the sending of emails as well as gives us useful stats whenever anybody leaves or joins the mailing list. Whilst we do not see a need to leave this service at present, the new server would give us the flexibility of handling our own mail solution should the need arise.

So, on the whole, there will be a number of changes to the digital side of managing MAGA - none of which you will actually see directly. To us as the Committee things should be easier to manage with a lot of potential benefits to come in the future.



Here's to the New "digital" Year

David



COMPOSTING



Plot holders are increasingly dumping green material mixed with soil in the waste bays which can easily be composted on their plots. By taking soil and green material off the plot you are gradually reducing the plot soil level and causing it to flood during very wet periods.

Ideally a compost bin can be made from pallets or any spare wood that you can find or self assembly wooden compost bins can be bought in garden centres or on line. You don't even really need a bin - just pile the green material up on the soil in a corner of your plot

and it will rot down by itself in a few months. If you chop up the material with a pair of shears it will rot down even faster. If you cover the heap with jute sacking or similar to let in the rain the top layer of the heap will also rot.

The compost heap or bin must be in contact with the soil to allow worms, woodlice and other insects to enter up into the heap. The insects help to chew the material and make it rot down more quickly. Let nature help the composting process - a compost heap with lots of worms in it is a sign of a healthy compost heap.

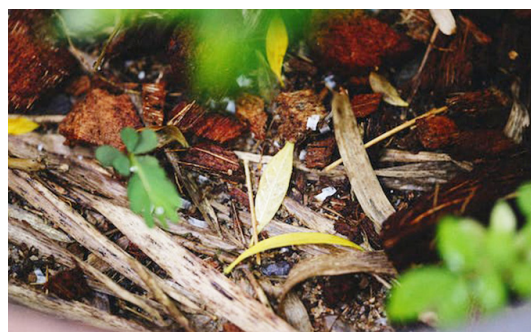
After a few months take the top layer of material off the heap and you will find the rich, dark rotted compost below and then spread it around your plants and crops. It will also keep the soil on the plot in a healthy condition and you will observe the improved quality and taste of fruit and vegetables and prolific flowers.

Woody material can be placed in the green waste bays, but some of it can be chopped up and added to the compost heap, although it will take longer to rot, and perhaps has to be added to the next heap. Ideally start the next compost heap in a different location on the plot.

The experienced allotment holders have 3 or 4 or more compost heaps on the go, each at different stages in the composting process. They also turn the heap with a fork to make sure as much green material rots, including the top layer and also mix in some manure. Feel free to talk to them and they will be pleased to give you guidance to help you with composting.

Happy Composting!

Andy



PRODUCE SHOW

The Produce Show held in September is an event that all of the tenants have the opportunity to participate and it was very rewarding that there were so many entries in the 27 adult categories.

The four categories for children were not so well supported this year and that is disappointing but thank you to those that did take part. There was some confusion in the jams and chutney categories when some entries were eliminated by the judges because the jars were not filled to the very top !! So in 2024 a note pointing out this requirement will be included on the entry form.

There is not enough space to show all the winning entries but below are a few for your perusal.
Thank you to everyone that entered and congratulations to our winners.



Graham Fuller



Max Jones



Philippa Tribler



Jane Nicanovich



Maria Lil Anderson



Bill Eaton



Matthew Sweeney



Paul Hockney

Happy Christmas
Philippa Tribler

Best in Show:

Mixed Dahlias
Graham Fuller

First Prizes:

Children's funniest fruit
Max Jones

Tomatoes
Philippa Tribler

Peppers
Jane Nicanovich

Tallest Sunflower
Maria Lil Anderson

Onions
Bill Eaton

Large Pumpkin
Matthew Sweeney

Beetroot
Paul Hockney



The Eco group has had a productive year designing and preparing the nature area, the latter with the help of working parties, for an improved pond that is larger & tiered, thus giving greater diversity of species. The fence around the area is in place, this was felt necessary in view of deep trenches & the pond. Spring will be a time of planting native meadow seeds so watch this space.

The group has been very concerned with a number of dead hedgehogs found earlier in the year on site. One death appeared to be a cutting injury, so do take care when using strimmers in long grass. We also try to encourage the use of organic slug pellets or other methods. With slugs part of the food chain for larger animals including hedgehogs so using non toxic methods of control are kinder.

Another area of concern is the use of carpets, which in the short term appear a marvellous control of weeds which proliferate far more than the vegetables that one has planted but the carpets leach toxics into the soil and if not removed the weeds just grow through. I'm sure all allotment tenants have had at some point lifted 3,4,5 & more layers of carpet in

their allotment career! One of the Eco team has set out on a personal crusade to remove all the carpet on a particularly wet flooded path & it will certainly improve drainage. Well done it is much appreciated.

Another member of the group led a nature walk when the weather was kinder and a great success too. Let's hope this can be repeated as I've yet to do one.

Please look to the sky, the migrating birds about are Redwings and Fieldfares, I've yet to see the latter but have it on good authority, an allotmentee with a pair of binoculars has.

Do enjoy your space

Ruth



PUMPKINFEST



A massive thank you to all those who braved the elements and attended the Pumpkinfest. Despite a downpour at the start people stayed to enjoy homemade soup and cakes, mulled wine and kegs of beer and some great food from the bbq.

There was some imaginative pumpkin carving and some worthy winners with a chocolate lolly for every entrant.

Thank you to all the contributors and helpers for once again making this a lovely social event.

Miranda



2023



After over fifty years on these allotments more on others it felt time to hang up his spade fork and trowel then he fondly remembered back in the wartime with his grandad planting tomatoes in the newly dug up lawn near to the half sunk galvanised damp gloomy air raid shelter and the dusty old wooden coal bunker



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