

JUNE 2023

# MAGA

## MARTIN WAY ALLOTMENT NEWS

### Annual General Meeting

**11th June 2023 at 2pm in the marquee**

The AGM is a legal requirement and we occasionally have to ask you the tenants to cast a vote and this year is no exception. You will be asked to approve the Management Committee recommendation that an audit is not required for this years accounts and that an independent accountant's report is all that is needed.

The papers for this meeting have been circulated including a proxy form which enables you to vote without being present.

The very words Annual General Meeting seem to have an adverse effect and people turn off!! The meeting is really not that bad and it is the one time of the year you can meet the Committee members under one roof and socialise with fellow plot holders. Yes drinks and snacks are provided.....free of charge!!! Why not come along? The business element is usually around 75 minutes most taken up with "discussion" from the floor.

Hope to see you.

### This year's PLANT Sale



After a dreadful Spring, finally the weather turned, everything started growing and gardening began to be enjoyable again. The annual plant sale is our main fund raiser and can only be successful with help of many volunteers some who donate plants and others who help with the labelling pricing and setting up and running the stalls. On the day of the sale it is always a bit nerve-wracking, as we have to rely on word-of-mouth, a few local newsletter mailings lists, social media and of course our own emails sent to you our plot holders but true to form, the area around the marquee was soon buzzing with people.

The vegetable plants, donated by plot holders (including Henrik,Bill,Graham and a newcomer to our community. Agha), to whom many thanks to all, were snapped up quite early. The flowers were also flying off the tables and a special thanks to Jadzia for a wonderful array of rudbeckia and viburnum and thanks to the anonymous person who donated 50 geranium plants. With the sales on the day being so successful very few plants were left unsold and once again, Pippa is watering and the honesty box is working well.

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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.

The views of contributors do not necessarily match the views or policies of the MAGA committee.

To provide a submission for the next issue, please email [ivorstocker@sky.com](mailto:ivorstocker@sky.com)

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This year the debit/credit card reader was introduced into the shop and approximately 50% of sales are paid for by card. It was a no brainer to have a table set up in the plant sale area for the card reader. This was managed by Jill and Semra and it was a good move with approximately 30% of sales being paid by card.

Jadzia set up a wonderful raffle area, thank you Jadzia and a big thank you to Jadzia's granddaughter Ella who spent all day writing names and telephone numbers and a thank you to Jane and Judith who did lots of folding of tickets. There were many prizes donated by our plot holders so thank you, and a few local businesses donated a prize including Merton Post Office, David Lloyd Sports Club, Bonfleur and Blue Diamond Garden Centre. The raffle is a significant cash contributor to the success of the Plant Sale.

Kay and her team were, as always, inundated with demands for the beautiful home made cakes, adding their own contribution to the coffers. Thanks to all who helped and / or donated a cake.

The photos, courtesy of Jill, really capture the wonderful atmosphere of the day - thank you to everyone who contributed. The day raised around £2,400, thank you.

Many thanks to Sue Tickner for organising this event.

*Wonderful array of plants, Raffle cornucopia and a plethora of perennials;*



## It's GOOD to TALK

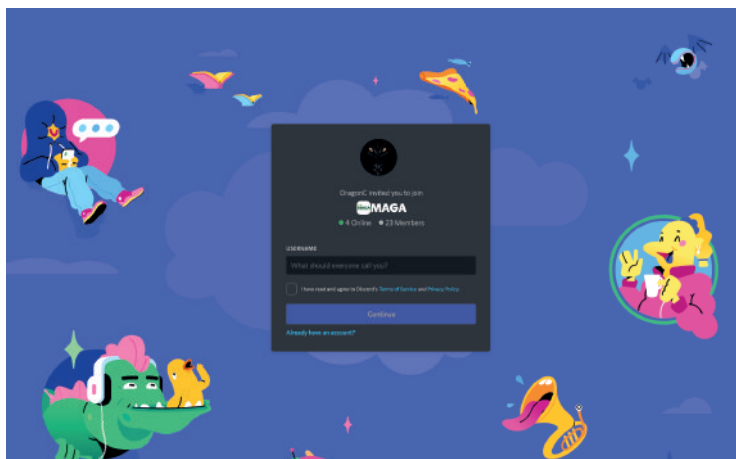
There have been suggestions about having a discussion forum on the website for us to be able to upload photos and chat about growing and helping the community.

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 process.....it really is quite easy.





# Coronation PARTY

Although the weather was not good for the Coronation itself the sun kindly shone on the Sunday for our Coronation Tea Party.

About 60 plot-holders, family and friends gathered to enjoy the afternoon and brought along all sorts of teatime goodies, plus lots of celebratory drinks. It was a great opportunity to meet old friends and mingle with plot-holders you might not have met before and compare gardening hints and tips as well as recipes.



Our thanks to all those who helped to set up and tidy away, and especially to all those who donated so many delicious cakes and savouries. Many thanks to Philippa Tribler for organising.



## Do you want to HELP?



Your allotment is self managed which in simple terms means there is no involvement with the London Borough of Merton either financially or in getting repairs such as roads carried out. If we want something done we have to do it ourselves which is no bad thing because it gets done!

We have a small committee consisting of Andy Preece (secretary), Paul Brace (treasurer), David Cotterill (data management), Ruth Britten (ecology group), Sue Tickner (working parties) and Ivor Stocker (Chair).

We are helped by many people including Kay who looks after the shop roster and John Paul Flavell who has kindly agreed to manage the shop, who are supported by a large group of shop helpers. We also have many helpers who regularly support Sue Tickner on the Working Parties.

But in truth you can never have enough help. There are roads to repair, hedges to cut, overgrown plots to clear and bring back into production. On some allotment sites it is part of the tenancy agreements that the tenant has to provide help for 3 hours a year. MAGA has considered and rejected this approach as we believe a volunteer is better than using a strong arm approach.

The Committee appreciates you have your own plot(s) to look after but now that you know your site is self managed and dependent on a few people perhaps you will consider giving us 2-3 hours a year of your time to help achieve the objective of a successful site. Just write to [newsletter@maga.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@maga.org.uk)

Thank you



# Why we should improve our NATURE RESERVE!



The main purpose of our nature reserve is to serve as a dedicated soaking area during periods of flooding. By improving the nature reserve's planting and water storage capabilities, we can provide an area that can better absorb excess water during periods of heavy rain, resulting in our plots and paths being less likely to flood.

With a few additions such as log piles, ramps to climb out of flooded ditches, bird and bat boxes, the reserve will provide a much-needed haven for various plant and animal species that are native to the area. Hedgehogs, bats, frogs,

newts and slow worms are very beneficial to gardeners but struggle to find safe places to ensure their next generation. The nature reserve could be their safe shelter after they have had a good meal of slugs and snails from our plots. Who knows, maybe the little owl, from nearby Cannon Hill Common, would enjoy this quiet spot too after feasting on our mice!



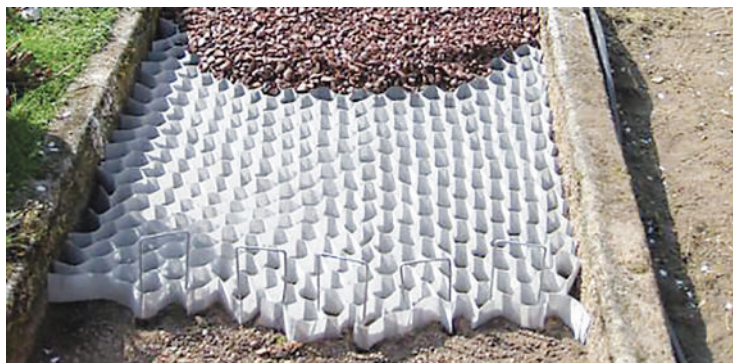
Many animals rely on wetland habitats for breeding, nesting, and foraging. By establishing a well-designed nature reserve in the allotment site, we can support the local ecosystem, promote biodiversity, and contribute to the conservation of endangered or vulnerable species. While for safety reasons, the nature reserve will be closed to visitors, a seating area with a view over the new pond will be created to provide a tranquil and beautiful place for plot holders to relax after working hard and enjoy flowers, birds, dragonflies, butterflies, and other natural beauties.

Although its primary function is to mitigate flooding and protect the allotment site, the nature reserve will become an increasingly crucial tool for flood management, ecological benefits, and long-term sustainability on a wider scale. Therefore, should the council ever want to do away with our allotment sites, we can effectively convey the need for its protection to nearby housing associations, environmental organisations and flood management agencies who may support us in our efforts to protect our allotments.

## POTHoles



Yes the allotment has many potholes on both east and west sides. A few months ago and purely as a pilot scheme the large pot hole beside the pedestrian gate on the West Side was chosen for treatment. Ground stabilisers were ordered together with a very large bag of gravel.



Thanks to Andy Preece (MAGA secretary) and Paul Brace (MAGA treasurer)....yes two committee members, the area was dug out using a pickaxe and shovels, stabilisers inserted and then filled in with gravel. This was nearly 6 months ago and in that time many lorries, vans and cars have visited and so far the work done is surviving the pounding. So far four holes on the West side have been repaired.

You do not need telling this is hard manual labour and the traffic flow has to be managed but if any of you fancy your hand with a pickaxe or shovel (safety gear is provided i.e. goggles and a hard hat) please write to the committee. Just write to [newsletter@maga.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@maga.org.uk)



# What are you growing for the PRODUCE SHOW?

**What do you mean growing for the Produce Show it is not until September?**

Yes we know but if you are planning to be part of this great day you have to plan now. The 2023 event will be organised by Philippa Tribler and we are most grateful to Philippa for taking up this challenge.

There are numerous categories to enter and details will be circulated very soon but below is a photographic reminder of just some of last years winners.



## COMPOSTING



We notice that a lot of the material being tipped in the green waste bays can be easily composted on your plot. In particular some tenants have been tipping a mixture of soil and weeds in this area, sometimes substantial amounts of soil.



The problem with removing soil from your plot is that it gradually lowers the level of the plot compared to the surrounding area and then attracts flood water, particularly in the winter and more recently in this recent wet spring. If you take soil off your plot then you must replace this with fresh topsoil and probably you will need to buy one of these large jumbo bags of topsoil, have it delivered to the car park area and then transport many times by wheelbarrow to your plot.

It is easy to compost such green material/soil on your plot. Ideally you can erect a compost bin from pallets or similar wooden structure, but if that is not possible then just pile the mixture of soil and weeds in a heap on a corner of your plot and leave it there for a few months. You will find that after removing the top layer of the heap the material below will have rotted down and you can then

spread this around your plot and it will feed and improve the soil which in turn encourages much healthier plants and vegetables to grow. Ideally you should have 2 or 3 compost heaps on the go - one to use after the first year and the second the next year and so on.

It is a continuous process of rejuvenating the soil. If you chop up the weeds/green material with shears the material will rot down more quickly and will encourage the worms and other insects which are a sign of a healthy compost heap. You can also turn the heap with a fork every couple of months to aerate the heap which will help it to rot more quickly.





# Our APIARY in Spring



You may think that the long cool wet winter put our honeybees off in the same way it put some of us off.....but not at all. We were not able to look inside our hives until nearly the end of March/early April, which is way later than I have ever experienced. So at my first inspection of this year (this is what we call the method of looking carefully through each hive and inspecting the bees and larvae on every frame within the hive) I was amazed to see just how bursting at the seams most of my hives were! Urgent action was needed to add "supers" (the name for the shallow boxes where the bees store nectar and turn it into honey) to the hives so that they didn't become too congested within the brood box (where the young larvae are) as lack of space for the Queen to lay eggs is a contributing factor to swarming.

I also, along with nearly every other beekeeper I know, had to do swarm control on every hive I have, meaning lots of manipulations to try to ensure the original Queen doesn't leave (swarm) along with half of the hive. So I have ended up with numerous small colonies called Nucleus boxes or Nucleus hives, containing just 5 frames of bees, whilst waiting to see if the manipulations have been successful in bringing on a new Queen. An average hive will contain 22 frames of bees. Once all sorted then these small Nucleus boxes can be re-united with the parent hive.

If there is a new Queen then the next wait is to see if she successfully goes out on her mating flight (she needs to mate on the wing with around 15 drones/male bees!) AND if she successfully returns to her hive AND if she manages to lay enough eggs to satisfy the colony. Phew. Anything can



happen to Queenie during this time.....such as being eaten on the wing, being damaged or killed by another Queen in her hive if I have mis-judged the situation, or becoming a drone laying Queen, meaning she has not mated with enough drones and the hive is doomed unless I intervene (again!).



I teach and mentor new Beekeepers within our Association and we are currently doing practicals with our 20 students at Morden Hall Park Apiary. So each Sunday I, and a few others, take a few students to inspect a hive and they work through it to learn the hands-on side of this craft, as they have already spent several weeks learning about the theory. It is always great to see new students gain confidence and experience in this way.

What is also interesting and very important to me is that nowadays many of the students attend our course in order to learn about the bees rather than with the intention to keep bees themselves. There is growing awareness of the wider situation for pollinating insects and the challenges they face, so that having a hive is not necessarily the best way forward.

This is one of the reasons I have always kept a strict limit on the number of hives in Martin Way Apiary, in spite of pressure sometimes to increase. One must know one's forage, one's environment and the needs of all the other insects!

Thanks as always go to those who are growing pollinator friendly plants! And for your continued (or new!) interest in our Apiary.



Wishing you all a very enjoyable growing season. Alison (Apiary Warden).

## 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



## 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



## CHRYSANTHEMUM

when he told  
his fellow  
allotment holders  
of his plan to  
advertise in Japan  
trips to his allotment  
at one hundred  
pounds per head  
including  
a conducted tour  
a cup of tea  
and a freshly grown  
chrysanthemum

they laughed at him

but  
later in the year  
with luxury coaches  
regularly laid on  
from Heathrow  
from Tokyo  
there was a  
definite  
change of mind  
change of humour  
and a little envy  
of his plots  
flourishing  
bank account.

*pmcmanus*

S895



Red chrysanthemums symbolize love and deep passion. Yellow chrysanthemums symbolize neglected love or sorrow. White chrysanthemums symbolize loyalty and honesty. Violet chrysanthemums symbolize a wish to get well.

