

JUNE 2024

MAGA

MARTIN WAY ALLOTMENT NEWS

Annual General Meeting



The AGM was held on Sunday 9th June and many thanks to those of you who attended. The Treasurer, Paul Brace, reported that income for the financial year ending the 31st March 2024 was £25,443, an increase of less than 4%.and this reflects the ability as a self managed site to keep the cost to members below other sites in the Borough of Merton.

The income was boosted by a successful plant sale in May 2023 which contributed £2,400. The plant sale in May 2024 was another significant success delivering a surplus of £3,570.

The Secretary, Andy Preece, reported on the a number of issues including the deliveries of manure and wood chips, the repair to the roads, the waste bays and the need for tenants to have their own compost heap to reduce the amount of green waste deposited in the waste bays on both East and West Sides.

During the last 12 months we have met with other Allotment Associations and exchanged information and ideas and MAGA is hosting the next meeting to be held in September.

David Cotterill who looks after our IT requirements reported on the re-development of the website which will include the ability to pay your annual invoice on line from October 2024.

Ruth Britten reported on the development of the Nature Reserve which is now ready for the pond lining to be installed, the planting of wild flowers, the installation of boxes for birds and bats and homes for hedgehogs. The area has been secured with new fencing and safety notices as the pond is deep!

The AGM traditionally recognises the contribution to our community and this year the Chairman's Award was presented to Paul Brace, our treasurer and chair person of the Working Parties...congratulations Paul. **The Margie Mulder Award** for the most improved plot in the last 12 months was as usual quite competitive and the winner was Plot 54 on the West Side which was taken over in October 2023 as a wilderness of brambles and various find of junk. Congratulations to Ken Boyt and Alison Banks.

Your Committee all agreed to serve for another 12 months but new Committee members are always welcome so if you want more details please make contact.

The meeting adjourned to the shop to partake in drinks and snacks.

Allotmeant

A lot was intended
A head full of ideas
Seeds of hope, excitement
Crops in rotation
Bounteous supplies
Of fruit, veg and flowers
My life reorganised
Dull routines, ended.

Oh La La
Quelle surprise
Thick coarse grass hides
Old plastic buckets and
Long rotten boards
Old carpet strips
Brambles, bindweed
(everywhere)
And old metal bars.

The ground is SO solid
With heavy clay which
Looks like The Serpentine
When it rains all day
I meant to get started
Weeding, pathing, digging
But soon had to stop
Looking horribly flord.

I do have plans
(I really, really do)
I bought some seeds to sprinkle around
For a cabbage or two
But the mud! What grows in that!
So, new commitment - I've decided
No MOW, No Paths, NO DIG
Best for Nature and my Hands.

I'm sorry it didn't quite work
- the bounteous excitement
- and rotating crops.
It must take a rare breed
With hard-working commitment
A gardener, through and through
Growing, Loving, Caring, Sharing
All, the best of a Holder's perks.

KJB June 24

MAGA PLANT SALE 2024 - An Amazing Success!!!



Thanks to a great team of extremely hard-working people, we raised a staggering £3570 for the site, money which will help all of us in maintaining the public areas, plumbing, fences, roads etc.

There was a great array of plants for sale at very competitive prices, mostly grown by a number of plot holders.

The shop was busy as always with tea and cakes being served to an enthusiastic stream of people – thanks to all who donated the delicious looking home-made cakes. There was nothing left by the Monday!

Thanks also to our wonderful donors (local businesses) in providing us with some exceptional raffle prizes. This, as always, was a great success and very popular.

The day had been promoted through social media (Next Door and My Merton), advertising in local Residential Association guide and Distribution lists, and of course by the posters distributed to local businesses who were willing to display this in their shop window. Many of the public came to us through that and word of mouth.

Well done everyone! And thank you!Jane

WORKING PARTIES

So far this year we have had 2 working parties, both of which have been well supported.

The teams have attacked a range of jobs with enthusiasm and hard work. The jobs included:

- Work to clear the boundary with David Lloyd has progressed well and will be finished at the next working party ready for new fencing to be installed.
- Potholes in the access road for the West Side have been lined with stabilisers and filled with stones, and many tons of stones have also been wheelbarrowed and spread on the East Side.
- Hedges have been cut and Ivy removed.
- The fencing by the marquee removed ready for the plant sale.



We would like to thank the working party volunteers for their time and hard work.

As always, there is still plenty of work to be done and we hope to see some new faces join the regulars at future sessions.

Paul

PRODUCE SHOW

What do you mean growing for the Produce Show it is not until 14th September?

Yes we know but if you are planning to be part of this great day you have to plan now. The 2024 event will be organised by Philippa Tribler and we are most grateful to Philippa for taking up the challenge yet again.

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.

This year your Committee are planning to award a shop voucher to the overall winner and maybe other categories so watch this space



COMPOSTING



NO APOLOGIES for repeating this article but it is essential the amount of green waste deposited in the bays in both East and West sides is significantly reduced or there is a risk of the bays having to be shut

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.





Dear Allotment Community,



Have you noticed that one of our most melodious songbirds, the blackbird, has become very scarce? Once common everywhere, blackbirds are now an increasingly infrequent sight. Numbers are dwindling due to habitat loss and declining food sources. During the COVID-19 pandemic our quest for the outdoors disrupted their nesting season, and the new trend of over-manicuring parks and using paving and astroturf in gardens has made natural habitats and food difficult to find. We should all ensure our allotments are safe and welcoming for these birds so we can once again enjoy a glorious dawn chorus. Blackbirds help us by eating caterpillars, spiders and snails. We really need to welcome and protect them!

Recently, I was pleased to see two blackbird fledglings pecking around a plot in our allotment. As it had been a long time since I had seen any young blackbirds, I came closer. However, I was horrified to find them on a plot scattered with blue slug pellets. These toxic pellets can cause severe health issues or even death for birds. Even organic pellets are not safe.

Organic doesn't mean safe; deadly poisonous mushrooms are also organic! The RHS advises against using any slug pellets due to their negative effects on wildlife. Check the link: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/biodiversity/slugs-and-snails>

To control slugs, it is better to encourage their natural predators and use cultural and biological control methods. Here's what works for me:

1. Handpicking: Regularly inspect and remove slugs/caterpillars by hand.
2. Barriers: Use copper tape, sharp grit, sheep fleece or coffee grounds around plants. I also use cloches from cut water bottles and rough pavers.
3. Natural Predators: Create habitats to attract hedgehogs, frogs and birds.
4. Plant Selection: Opt for slug-resistant plants, use companion planting and wait until plants toughen up before planting out. Plant a few extra to account for losses.



Other effective methods include:

- Beer Traps: Use small containers of beer to lure and trap slugs.
- Feeding the Slugs: Place kitchen scraps near vegetable beds to lure slugs away, then move the scraps to the compost once they're covered in slugs.

As we embrace the growing season, let's reflect on how our gardening practices can coexist harmoniously with local wildlife. By choosing eco-friendly methods, we can enjoy our plots' beauty and bounty while protecting blackbirds and other native animals.

Happy gardening!.... **Sylvie** (Eco Group, MAGA)



SOURCE: DAILY MAIL 2ND JUNE 2024

Editor's Comment

Are slug pellets banned ? Not all slug pellets, only those containing Metaldehyde which were banned in March 2022. Alternative slug pellets containing Ferric Phosphate (or Iron Phosphate) are legal for use and are usually labelled 'organic'.



Ferric Phosphate is practically non toxic to birds based on testing with quails. Beetles and earthworms were not affected in the studies carried out.

But there are alternatives which deter slugs and snails but not necessarily stop them such as fine grit, beer, garlic and Strulch which is a straw compound. And I'm sure there are other solutions and if you have your own which is successful then please write in and share this with the rest of the plot holders.

PUMPKINFEST 2024

Are you growing a pumpkin for the 2024 Pumpkinfest to be held Sunday 27th October? Do you fancy homemade soup and cakes? mulled wine? Food from the BBQ ? And maybe some beer?

Or can you be imaginative and carve a pumpkin? This year we would like to see more children participating please!!!!!!



Do put the date in your diary and this year let's hope the weather is a little kinder.

You don't have to grow a pumpkin this large!!!



THE SHOP

Hello all!

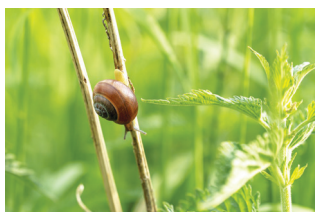
It's been an excellent year in the shop with several new plans in place to give the best experience for you, our allotment community.

A new roll stand arrived early in spring allowing volunteers to more easily measure out netting and ground cover which has been a huge success. I am also gradually adding fertilisers to boxes instead of bags to give the shop a more professional feel and make it easier to dispense into bags.

I am especially pleased with how the seed potatoes flew off the shelves with all four sacks selling out! We had Red Duke of York, Cara, Pink Fir Apple and Maris Piper. The Red Duke of York and Pink Fir Apple sold particularly quickly and there were lots of happy people to see we've got them! I had several questions about Charlotte which I have noted for next year, although obviously we can't get every possible variety! Lots of you also asked me about onion sets which I wasn't able to source this year but again have noted for next year. As ever if there's anything you would like to see in the shop please let me know. I can't promise to find it but will certainly have a look.



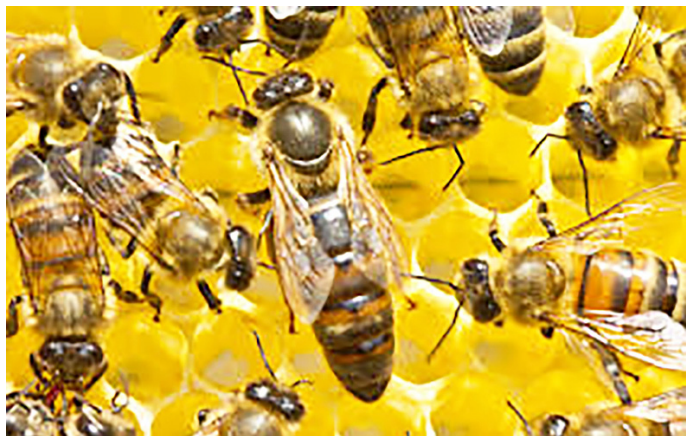
Compost continues to be a great seller and we are lucky to be able to source it so cheaply! Remember though that the cheapest compost is the stuff you can make yourself. Pallets can easily be secured together to create a simple box into which I put all my allotment green waste. Only the bindweed and other perennial roots are excluded!



It will surprise no one that inquires about slug repellents have been frequent this spring, the wet weather has given them far too much free rein. We have several products and I am looking at others. The best solutions are encouraging slug predators like big beetles, frogs and hedgehogs although unfortunately we can't sell them!

Finally, I will take this opportunity to thank all the shop volunteers who run the shop on Saturdays and Sundays, giving up just a couple of hours of their time. Kay in particular who coordinates who goes when. We couldn't do it without them! If you would like to help, please contact me or Kay.

Thanks.... John-Paul Flavell

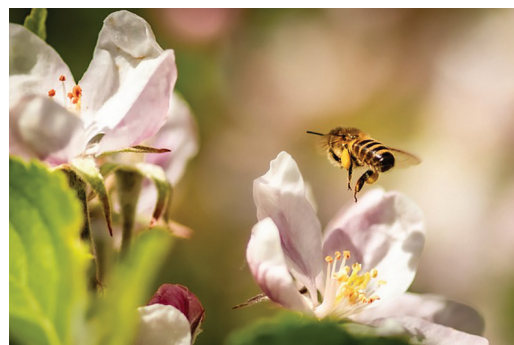


As beekeepers we have a tendency to say....."well, this season is different with strange new challenges for the hives". But as we say that EVERY season it clearly means that with climate change and other variables that we never can predict what our bees will do! Just as with our plots.

So, the recent changeable weather has meant that we have had to deal with very early swarm manipulations, huge sudden build up in colonies, plus now a sudden stop in forage incoming. Hmmm, what does that actually mean? It means that we needed to make up what we call "artificial swarm" nuclei (basically, small versions of a hive) in order to prevent our bees from swarming and depleting the hive. To do this we need to first find the Queen, often easier said than done with around 60,000 bees per hive. Then we place the Queen from the parent hive into said Nucleus hive together with some other frames of brood (larvae and eggs) plus some honey and pollen stores for food. Then we must select one Queen cell in parent hive for the bees to bring on as their new Queen, hoping we've chosen well (often the bees disagree and destroy our chosen cell and replace

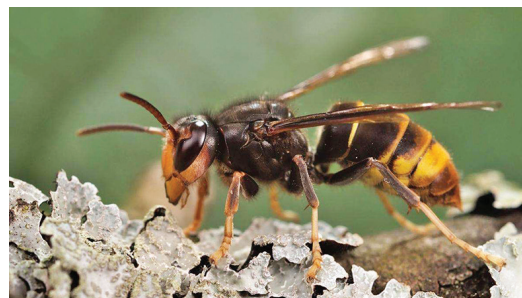
with another!) and that once this new virgin Queen emerges she is able to mate well and lay worker eggs to continue the hive as a viable colony.

Then we had an early nectar flow, meaning lots and lots of nectar (that bees will process into honey) streaming in, panic to be ready with the necessary supers (boxes for bees to store nectar/honey) followed recently (time of writing is late May) by little nectar as there can be a natural lull between the plethora of Spring flowers from fruit trees and more, until the main flowering time starts. We used to call this lull "the June gap", but in some years there is no gap in nectar flow at all and in others, like this year, it comes earlier than in previous decades.



So beekeeping is very much linked with the environment, weather cycles and altering climate.

As you will by now hopefully have read about, we are anxiously monitoring the ASIAN HORNET in the UK. Also known as the YELLOW LEGGED HORNET. Not to be confused with our native European Hornet. So far this year there have already been several sightings of the Asian Hornet, notably in Kent and Sussex, due to their being sited near ports/sea.



So do please keep your eyes open for this invasive species and pass on the word about it to at least one other person! That is THE most helpful thing you can do to help us protect ALL our native bee species. More information can be found at www.nonnativespecies.org and at www.nationalbeeunit.com. There is also a handy App which you can download for free.

Thank you! Wishing you a good growing season.....**Alison** (*Apiary Warden*).

MANURE SUPPLIES



The source of manure has been researched previously in recent years and our supplier is the Equestrian Centre at Lower Morden who can provide the quantity (2 large lorry loads) and frequency of delivery (every 6-8 weeks) our two sites require The manure is good quality and contains a lot of straw where many riding schools use sawdust.

However the manure does contain very small pieces of tyre rubber which is used by the stable to protect the feet of the horses This is not an ideal situation but to date no alternative source has been found in the area that can meet our needs and it is necessary to have a 'local' supplier as the transport costs are prohibitive.

If any plot holder would like to search for another supplier please feel free to do so and advise the committee.

Tenancy Agreement



You are all aware that inspections are carried out to check that your plot is being maintained at a reasonable level of cultivation. If you are falling behind the standard required then you will receive a letter from the Secretary asking for action.

Last year your Committee took the decision to give you notice of when an inspection will take place to give you the opportunity to do some work or to inform the Committee of circumstances which are preventing you working on the plot....you have to take this action we are not mind readersbut we believe we are a Committee which cares about out tenants and wants to be helpful so do take the opportunity to keep us informed

We are now giving you notice that on the next inspection two items are being added to the inspectionthe maintenance of the footpaths which is a shared responsibility with your neighbour(s) and secondly that you have a number on your plot clearly visible to the inspection team. If one or other of these tenancy rules are not observed you will receive a letter from the secretary asking for action to be taken within 21 days.



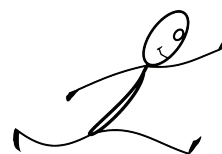
Is this really necessary? Is it draconian? Yes it is necessary and no it is not draconian as you signed up to these actions when you signed your tenancy agreement!! The numbering is necessary to correctly identify your plot and the maintenance of the paths is a safety factor.

Thank you all in anticipation of your co-operation.

INVALUABLE



By profession
She was a
Well qualified
Dog trainer
And found
Her experience
Invaluable
After
Her marriage
And had
Soon trained
Her husband
to sit
to go
to fetch
to stop
to heel
to beg
and
to bed



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