

May 2019

MAGA

MARTIN WAY ALLOTMENT NEWS

Dear All

The weather is really warming up now and the soil is lovely and damp, just right for all those pesky weeds to poke their heads up to the sunshine. If you haven't started coming to your plot regularly yet, you may in for a shock!



The Allotment Committee has continued to be busy in the last few months. We had our AGM in April, 28 people came to see what was being done on your behalf.

There were also 6 Committee members present. The draft minutes will be out soon, so if you were there please check them and if you weren't able to come please read them to find out how the allotments are being run.



The main issue again is the self-management agreement, currently stalled because IdVerde and LBM cannot agree on our waste collections. We are supposed to get 6 collections a year from each side but in my opinion this is proving expensive and IdVerde are trying to reduce the service. This isn't helped by the sheer volume of the piles we have. The bottom line is if we don't start being more responsible we may lose the service completely.

Please read Paul's article about COMPOSTING – this would help reduce the green piles and also your own plot!

Robert has written an article about sustainable recycling on the allotments. We need to take some of his ideas on board and take home anything that can be put in your household recycling, eg cardboard, plastic and glass bottles, cans, etc. Larger items which can be recycled, need to be taken to Garth Road recycling depot. Anything on the non-green is destined for landfill. This isn't a legacy that we want to leave for our children and grandchildren.

HEALTH & SAFETY



Unfortunately this is being treated rather casually by some people but honestly it must be taken seriously on the allotments, especially if you are using the MAGA loan equipment.

There are now face guards and ear defenders with all 3 strimmers. Please use them, you only have one set of eyes. If you get hit in the face with debris when strimming it can result in a serious injury. In a similar vein please make sure you wear long trousers and suitable footwear. Stones flicked on bare shins hurt! Please read the operating and safety instructions before use. You must also take care when using any equipment and be aware of those around you, so that you don't endanger them.

Jadzia (MAGA Chair)

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

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PATHS

On a recent walk around the site it was very difficult to get down some of the paths between plots. In fact some of them are impassable due to plot holders extending into the paths or erecting fences right on or over their boundary. Please be aware that the paths should be a minimum of 39" (1 metre) so that a loaded wheelbarrow can pass. Historically, some paths are narrower than this but they should still not be encroached on by water butts or pallets, etc. When plots are re-let we endeavour to create paths that are 39" wide around plots.



HEIGHT BARRIER & GATES

HOORAY! The gates are being kept shut almost all the time now, which is brilliant. We need to do this to prevent trespassing and fly tipping. Please could the height barrier be kept closed too? The east side height barrier seems to be left open regularly and this puts the east side in danger of fly tipping. If you are the person leaving the height barrier open while on your plot, please close it, it only takes a few seconds more.

NEW NEIGHBOURS

SAY HELLO TO YOUR
neighbour

Six people have taken on plots since the beginning of the year - **23A, 66, 66A, 119, 121, 145**. If these are your new neighbours please say hello and make them feel welcome! PS - While on the subject of plot numbers, it is a condition of your tenancy that your plot number is clearly marked somewhere on your plot. If your number has disappeared please make an effort to replace it. You can paint it on your shed or some other structure, or put a post with the number on it in the ground.

Jadzia (MAGA Chair)

JUNE WORKING PARTIES - Saturday 15th or Sunday 23rd June

How do you feel about a Sunday working party in June? The date proposed is Sunday 23rd June. As you know, we expect every plot holder to spare a few hours a year to help maintain our plot but some people have regular Saturday commitments which have prevented them from joining us so far. I'm hoping the offer of a Sunday Working Party will enable more people to come forward to join the team.

Please email me ASAP to let me know if this will work for you, so I can finalise the date: please supply your name, mobile number and plot number.

Other dates this year are Saturday 17th August and Saturday 12th October, so if you can't manage to join us in June, please put these dates in your diary and commit to joining one of the other Working Parties. We usually meet at around 9.30 and aim to finish by lunchtime - tea, coffee and brownies are supplied! No special skills required, just a willingness to lend a hand to help maintain the site to the standard we all appreciate.

Do get back to me as soon as possible,

Sue Tickner sue_tickner@yahoo.co.uk 0780 869 3648 Plot 53/53A

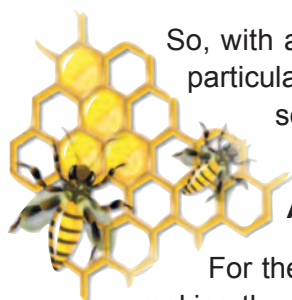
BEES at MARTIN WAY APIARY



Well at last we have sun and warm weather.....and our bees are loving it! They also loved all my forget-me-nots which although they are a pain to remove now, gave the bees a much needed early Spring source of nectar. They were always to be seen foraging on these flowers whenever it was warm enough. And of course both Honeybees and Bumblebees love Dandelions which are very rich in nectar and are also an important source of early forage. Not all



flowers have equally rich nectar and so our bees may choose some over others if we give them the choice, which is the beauty of our allotment as we all grow such a variety of plants. If you are ever curious about what bees like and how to provide plants for them, there are a couple of excellent websites to look at; Beehappy plants and the British Beekeepers association pages too.



So, with all this forage coming in the hives are expanding fast, which means one thing in particular.....**SWARMING!** We need to be a step ahead of the bees here to control this, and so far I have already split a couple of my hives in order to make the bees think they have swarmed whereas in fact I have done it for them.

And luckily I have seen two of my new Queens, phew.

For the first time in 10 years my hives have a fair amount of Spring honey being stored, making the honey "supers" (so called as they are boxes which we place above/superior to the brood nest boxes) very heavy to lift. So inspecting my hives is a mixed blessing as I have to prepare for heavy lifting whilst also being pleased both for the bees' sake and for mine, that there is a good amount of honey Spring honey tends to be lighter in colour than summer honey and often tastes sweeter too. Of course this all depends on what flowers the bees have visited. Honey is the bees' equivalent of carbohydrates and pollen is their equivalent of protein. So fingers crossed that this summer gives us and the bees some more fine weather so they can build up really good honey stores.....they need at least 45 pounds/35 kilos (not an exact translation here!) for each hive to overwinter with enough of their own food supplies. We only remove any honey that is in excess of this.

Alison Pelikan



Smallest ever McDonalds - A fully functioning beehive

MAGA PLANT SALE 2019 - *A truly joyous day!*

I think Pippa summed it up when she said this was a truly joyous day – thanks to a small team of extremely hard-working people, we raised well over £1,600 for the site, money which will help all of us in maintaining the public areas, plumbing, fences, etc



There was a terrific array of plants for sale at very reasonable prices, both flowers and vegetables, mostly grown by a few plot holders. **Highlights of the day included Alison, talking about bees, Pippa extolling her chickens, and Faith with her delightful paintings and cards featuring allotment scenes.**



Headway were also there, to explain how their allotment helps their clients, people recovering from brain injuries. Kay, Andy, Paula and Tim were kept busy in the shop serving tea and cake to an enthusiastic stream of people – thanks to all those who donated the delicious home-made cakes. Not one was left by Monday, with just an empty crumb-strewn plate telling the story!



We were fairly lucky with the weather but pleased with the two gazebos when the occasional sharp shower arrived: setting Alison, Pippa, Headway and the raffle under the gazebos meant people were happy to wait for the shower to pass,

buying more plants, chatting about chickens and bees, finding out more about Headway, or buying raffle tickets.



The tool-sharpening service was a great success, with several people going home to bring back tools and Adam kept flat out all day – he'll definitely be back next year!

Apart from a scattering of posters, the day had been promoted through social media and many of the audience came to us through that, and word

of mouth – we hope to attract a much-higher attendance by plot holders next year and possibly including a BBQ (perhaps you could volunteer to man it?).

Please send us your ideas to make this work better next year, or indeed to persuade you to come along yourselves. **Email: sue_tickner@yahoo.co.uk**

Sue Tickner



MAKE YOUR OWN COMPOST



Every time I walk past the green waste bay on the way home from the plot I'm astonished by the amount of wonderful free plant food that so many of you chuck away. There's turf, topsoil, piles of weeds, vegetable stalks, grass clippings and all sorts of other greenery that could so easily be turned into compost to help grow a new-season's fruit and veg.

So what's stopping you making compost? The amount of work involved is probably far less than all those trips to the green dump

with your wheelbarrow. It will save you shedloads of cash on bagged compost from the garden centre. And you'll be doing a bit more to save the planet whilst accumulating eco-points to keep that young Swedish lass happy and stop people having to glue bits of themselves to the road. More to the point you'll be helping keep your plot rent down by saving MAGA a load of money on unnecessary waste disposal.

It's not difficult - all you need is two heaps [one is no good - see below] or two "bins" lashed together from pallets. You do not need a fancy plastic rotating bin with a handle - don't be a mug. You need two because the most important thing you can do when making your compost is to turn it from one heap [or bin] into the other, as often you can be bothered to do it. About twice a year works for me!

You can put more or less everything that comes out of the soil on your plot into your compost. You can also use green stuff from the garden at home [grass clippings from mowing the lawn are fantastic - worth blagging off your neighbours] and all your kitchen fruit & veg trimmings. Yes you can put rhubarb leaves in. Yes, they are poisonous but as long as you don't plan to eat your compost all will be well. The trick is to make sure everything is nicely mixed together. Don't just bung in a big pile of this and a big pile of that. My own "don't risk it" list of things NOT to put in the compost in case they come out much like they went in is just: horsetails, couch grass, bindweed - that's it.

Apart from turning the heap over to get some air in there are a couple of other tricks to help you make good compost:

- Chop it all up [as much as you can be bothered]. If you have a shredder you're really laughing; otherwise just do what you can.
- Get a good mix of green stuff and brown stuff.

"What brown stuff" I hear you cry –

"you never mentioned that before." OK, bear with me, quick science lesson. Good compost needs a mix of stuff rich in nitrogen [green stuff like leaves and chopped up stalks] and stuff rich in carbon [brown stuff like twiggly bits and cardboard boxes].



Don't tell me you haven't got cardboard, everybody has cardboard. The big brown boxes that booze comes in are the best. Soak them in your nearest water tank for ten minutes then tear them up, chuck the bits in and put some green stuff on top.

- **Keep the heap damp [but not soggy]. Water it a bit in dry weather and stick an old bit of carpet over the top of the whole heap to keep the moisture and heat in.**



Another science lesson - you can make hot compost or cold compost. If everything is shredded finely, well aerated by turning and the mix of green and brown is ideal [no, I don't know what ideal is] and the moisture content is right [nope, that neither] then the heap will heat up amazingly and you'll have useable compost in a couple of months. Or at least that's what the manufacturers of the expensive spinning bins will tell you. Back in the real world you will have cold compost that may be ready for use next year. Just be patient. The next time you turn it might look black and crumbly in the middle and smell rather nice like compost. This is because it IS compost - and once you've removed the bits of plastic sticky tape [that you should have taken off the cardboard boxes in the first place] you can spread it on your soil and grow stuff in it. If you're really fussy, or if you want to use it as seed compost you can always riddle it to remove the bits that haven't broken down yet. These bits go back to the bottom of your next heap. You get to recognise some of them the fourth time around.



If you can't be bothered to wait until it's nice and crumbly you can still use it. Dig a trench, pile it in, re-fill the trench and grow stuff on top of it. It will slowly decompose and feed your crops from underneath. **Pumpkins and squashes love this sort of thing.** Old allotment codgers grow "trench celery" using just this technique.



Once you get the hang of it making compost becomes part of your allotment life. You start to look at weeds in a new way [as potential compost of course]. People [no names] have been known to "help" neighbouring plots with their weeding, especially if they have a lush growth of **stickyweed** to cover up the last bit of damp cardboard. Growing crops just to put in the compost may be pushing it too far [although for what other use is that second row of beetroot?]

Anyone wishing to develop a compost obsession, or just to know more about it is welcome to talk to me on plot 116. It's the one with the 8 compost bins.

But if all you can do is pile stuff up in a heap - well that's better than nothing and at least you're not pushing that barrow down the dump.

Paul (116)



SUSTAINABLE WASTE DISPOSAL

As plotholders at the Martin Way Allotment Site, we have been fortunate for some time to have “Green” and “Non-Green” waste disposal bins which miraculously empty from time to time. The waste collections are made by a company called Idverde on behalf of Merton Council and is achieved thanks to constant barrage of correspondence by the Management Committee.



As part of the ongoing negotiations of formally completing the self-management agreement with Merton Council, the Council are expressing concern over the waste policy at all allotment sites. You will, no doubt, be aware that many other self-managed sites, such as The Paddocks, do not have waste disposal as part of their agreement.

As local and national government are becoming increasingly concerned over waste, recycling and land-fill it will come as no surprise to discover that allotments in general are in danger of not complying with waste management policies.

As plotholders we greatly value our ability to grow our own food, cutting down on “food miles” and generally contributing to a healthy, green and sustainable lifestyle. However, in the area of waste we are certainly lagging far behind the requirements for household waste and recycling. The Management Committee believes that we must change our ways and demonstrate a more sustainable attitude to our waste disposal – before we are forced to do so by policies and legislation.



Our green waste bays are often full of material which could be disposed of in other ways such as composting. Pernicious weeds should be burnt or drowned on your plot, so as not to increase the risk of spreading the problem to others.

Our non-green bays are only for allotment waste – not for car tyres, old batteries, engine parts, kitchen units etc. which have often been dumped on site. Please take these sorted items to the local recycling centre for disposal. Please remember that non-green waste collected from our site will likely go into land-fill and not be recycled.

Given my thoughts above, on behalf of the Management Committee, can we humbly ask all plotholders to consider taking action on waste in the future?

Re-use • recycle • compost • “drown” – and keep our waste heaps to a minimum.

Robert (133A)

LEARN TO MAKE JAM, CHUTNEY & CORDIALS & LIQUEURS

Abundance Wimbledon are running 3 courses in June introducing the principles and practices of making homemade jam, jelly, chutney, cordials and liqueurs. Courses cost £20 and will include all ingredients (apart from the alcohol base). Everyone is asked to bring their own jars and containers for the finished product.

TUESDAY 11TH JUNE - 10.00am to 12.00 midday
Jams and Jellies.

THURSDAY 13TH JUNE - 10.00am to 12 midday
Chutney.

TUESDAY 18TH JUNE - 10.00am to 12 midday
Cordials and liqueurs.

Classes are held in SW18 and SW17

Participants will also have the chance to join other Abundance jam makers, using up unwanted fruit over the summer. If you would like to come along or want more information, please contact **Sue at lovellgreen@aol.com**.

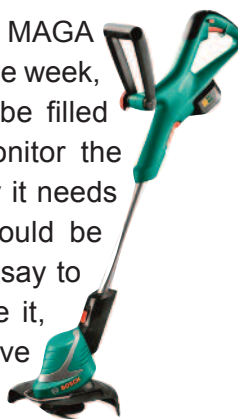
MAGA SHOP

Don't forget you can get many of your allotment supplies in the MAGA Shop, which is open from 10.30 to 12.30 on Saturdays and Sundays (Sundays only during July and August). All packet seeds currently have **50 pence off the marked price**, making them a bargain. Prices are kept as low as possible which means they are often lower than in other shops. Your support and custom are needed to keep the shop going so do shop with us whenever possible.



MAGA EQUIPMENT

Just a reminder that, when using any of the MAGA equipment, either at the weekend or during the week, a hire form (in the Yellow Folder) should be filled out on each occasion. This helps us monitor the usage of the equipment and how frequently it needs repair/replacement. All the equipment should be returned in a clean condition, and if you try say to replace the strimmer line but don't manage it, please let the Committee know, don't just leave the disassembled strimmer in the shop!



Margaret Rixon

FUTURE EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

PRODUCE SHOW
Saturday, 7th September

PUMPKIN FEST
Sunday, 27th October



WHOLE WORLD

that morning
he felt good
he felt great
and decided
to take on the
whole world
in single
hand to hand
unarmed combat
but finding it
such a walkover
then had time
to go to sort out
his allotment
which proved



to be sadly
much more
of a challenge

pmcmanus
s439