

Alsager Gardens Association

Newsletter 23 – Summer 2017

Web:- <http://www.alsagergardensassociation.org.uk>

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Dear Member

In the words of an old American folk song, Sixteen Tons, "another day older and deeper in debt". THE SHOW reminds us that we are another year older and maybe deeper in debt. We think back over the last gardening year with its ups and downs. Let's get rid of the down side first. Garlic on the Cedar Avenue site has been ravaged by rust although the bulbs seem to have grown ok.

We have lost the services from the Cedar Avenue management committee of Mel Buckingham and Peter Dobson who are sadly missed. I thank them for the work they have done for the association. Mike Hubbard has taken on the role and has made a promising start.

The "old stagers" continue and I thank them as well for their continued commitment and success.

Now we should look at the up side of the year. The Asparagus year has been a huge success with the best ever results. The relationship with the Town Council is going from strength to strength under the guidance of our secretary, Keith Biggs, and the Council's asset manager Eddie Attu. We don't get everything we ask for, and sometimes the wheels of progress grind very slowly but we have got action, or part action on the dangerous trees on Cedar Avenue and improvements on the footpaths on the Lawton Road site. The open day was a great success with a number of visitors particularly on the Cedar Avenue site where we put on a plant sale and provided refreshments. Visitors were shown round by members and a number of plots were leased out. Colin Cartledge was able to point out improvements to his disabled access project.

And now for the show. Let us all make the effort and put our products into the show. It is not the glory or the prize money, it is playing our part in Alsager life in what is one of our longest-standing events.

Derek Hough – President

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Dates for your Diary

RHS Flower Show Tatton Park, Cheshire	19 - 23 July 2017
Southport Flower Show	17 – 20 August 2017
Annual Show – Civic <i>Show entries to the secretary by 12 noon Thursday 31st August</i> Show Open to the public 2pm	Saturday 2nd September 2017 <i>Why not try an entry - see the show schedule for classes.</i>
Collect and complete your NSLG seed order to the Trading Secretary by 29 th October	Last week in October NSLG Order catalogues and form available at the Show or from the Trading Secretary or Trading Hut
Nantwich Food & Drink Festival	1 - 3 September 2017
Harrogate Flower Show Great Yorkshire Showground, Harrogate	15 - 17 September 2017
Olive and Stitch Market	3rd Saturday of the Month
Alsager Gardens Association Committee Meetings, Guide Hut, Cedar Ave., Alsager	8.00pm Last Tuesday of the Month <i>(Any member welcomed to join us)</i>

Ramblings from the Chairman.

Welcome to this edition of the newsletter.

As the longest day disappears we look forward to harvesting the fruits of our labour.

This year's show looms on the horizon, so prepare your entries great or small for the first Saturday in September. Seed catalogues will no doubt be available to plan for next year.

Also take a look at our updated website, it contains lots of information. Thanks to Pauline Hubbard for no doubt many hours at the keyboard updating it. While on the subject, can I thank everyone who helps the organisation run as smoothly as it does. No matter how small your contribution.

Finally can I make an early plea for more help with the hut rota. We have a band of volunteers who staff the trading Hut. Unfortunately this has become depleted over the years. If you can spare some time on a Sunday morning, and perhaps a Wednesday evening on a rota basis then please contact me.

Until next time, happy gardening.

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HAVE YOU LOOKED AT OUR WEB SITE RECENTLY?

We are developing our web site! We hope this will be a place you can go and find all the information you need about the Association and the Allotments along with any up and coming Events, News Items and copies of relevant forms and documentation.

Do have a look at our **Gallery** where photographs of our recent and very successful open day and our allotments, can be seen.

We hope very soon to have the Show Schedule and Entry Form available on the web site for ease of reference and for you to print.

Go to www.alsagergardens.org.uk



Allium Leaf Miner – A new problem with leeks

I always used to grow some leeks in my small vegetable patch, starting them from seed in pots or a seed bed and planting them out to follow potatoes in my rotation system.

One year, my leeks nearly all died in the winter, turning to mush where they stood. I assumed they had been damaged by the cold weather, but that, in itself, was puzzling as leeks are one of the hardiest crops we can grow.

The next year, something very similar happened. I also noticed that in the autumn, the leaves seemed to have been attacked by something and partly eaten. It didn't look like typical pigeon damage, slug and snail, or caterpillar damage, but the leaves seemed to have been torn. Although the plants grew they were obviously suffering and once again, the winter cold seemingly turned them to mush.

I did a bit of research and asked some experts, and discovered that my leeks were being attacked by the Allium Leaf Miner, *Phytomyza gymnostoma*. It supposedly affects other plants in the onion family, but it doesn't seem to damage onions, chives, shallots or garlic in my garden. I suppose it might also affect ornamental alliums.

Allium Leaf Miner is a very small (3mm long) greyish-brown fly, active in spring and autumn. The adult fly pierces the leek leaves to suck sap, leaving lines of white dots that may be seen by close inspection. It then lays its eggs on the leeks.



embedded in the damaged stems.

Plants affected by Allium leaf miner tend to rot due to secondary infections from fungi and bacteria that develop in the damaged tissues. This is why the worst effect was winter rotting of my leeks, but the damage had been done months before.

Note that similar damage may be caused by the Leek Moth. Latin name *Acrolepiopsis assectella*, it is active April to October. Caterpillars of the Leek Moth cause similar damage, initially mining the leaves, then older larvae bore into stems and Phulbs. It has creamy white larvae up to 11 mm long, with brown heads and small legs. When ready to pupate they emerge from the plant and spin silk cocoons on the leaves. Adult moths emerge in autumn and overwinter in sheltered places.

Both these insect pests are relatively new to our area. They are spreading up the country from the south. Like many pests and diseases, it's not clear whether this spread is caused by climate change, or just by the increasing movement of plant material between countries and regions.

Control

With both the Allium Leaf Miner and the Leek Moth, there is no pesticide available for amateur gardeners to use on edible crops that will kill the insects. Being leaf-miners, the grubs are protected from contact pesticides inside the plant tissues. Neither is any biological control available at present.

However, horticultural fleece or fine mesh will prevent the egg-laying females getting to the leeks. Crop rotation is important, otherwise insects emerging from any pupae in the soil will be able to locate suitable plants for egg-laying with ease.

Inspect foliage for the net-like, silk-wrapped cocoons of Leek Moth and squash them. As I only have a small vegetable patch, rotation distance is limited and I decided not to grow leeks for a few years. However, last year I planted a few leeks in a container in my front garden, and these appeared unaffected.

Hilary Robinson (with acknowledgements to the RHS web-site)

Alsager's other gardening groups – an update

Alsager in Bloom has been organising the filling of hanging baskets and free-standing plant containers as usual.

We have also had a planting day with the cubs in May, in the B boys garden and the flower bed opposite Shady Grove Stores. We've also liaised with the primary schools who design, decorate and plant large pots. As usual we have planted runner beans to

grow up the trellis at the side of the public toilets on Crewe Road; the crop will be available to the public too.

We are preparing for the visit by the RHS judges in mid-July. The itinerary must be tightly planned to fit everything in in the two hours allotted. We are always in need of help, whether it be fund-raising, liaising with other groups such as schools, deciding on themes and projects, planning and tending beds, producing the portfolio of photos and articles, etc. If anyone could spare some time just contact the group via Hilary Robinson.

Alsager Urban Wildlife Initiative is also working along the "Homes for Nature" thread, improving planting for wildlife and pollinators. A small wildflower meadow has been sown in Milton Park, near New Milton House, and at the time of writing is coming nicely into bloom. Its colourful flowers



will attract pollinators and butterflies; well worth a visit over the next few months. Thanks to the Guides and Brownies for helping with the seed sowing, and to Rich and Dan Pailin from CountryWide Landscapes for preparing the bed.

The Wood Park Group, working with the Radway Residents Group and Alsager Urban Wildlife Initiative, planted 420 trees in March. These were small whips, available free from the Woodland Trust, and mainly native species suitable for hedging, wildlife and foraging.

Again, we had so much help from local residents, children from Highfields School, Scouts, Air Cadets, and many more. There have been losses due to the dry weather and some vandalism, but we should be able to fill some gaps in the winter.

We've persuaded ANSA to stop mowing some parts of Wood Park as the first stage in creating a wildlife meadow. Future projects include more planting, potentially a Community Orchard, and improvements at the entrance to the park.

Meanwhile, Alsager Sustainability

Group continues to run its Swap Stall (pictured above) between March and September or October, at the monthly Olive and Stitch Market. We give away surplus seeds, plants etc and accept any donations of similar items, anything garden-related, that we can pass on to other gardeners. We can also advise on home composting, give you a map of local cycle routes,



promote Love Food Hate Waste and discuss a multitude of other Sustainability issues!

Volunteers will be welcomed in all these areas, and many others in and around Alsager.

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SECRETARY'S REPORT SUMMER 2017

Many thanks to those who helped organise our Open Days in May. We had reasonable weather on the two afternoons and the plant stall, refreshments, tombola and raffle at Cedar Avenue were very popular. We were also able to allocate allotment plots at two of our sites.

At present we have a few plots available at Cedar Avenue, Lawton Road and Take Road. Please contact me if you, or anyone you know, would like to start cultivating a plot.

Work has started on the improvements to the paths at Cedar Avenue- many thanks to Colin Cartledge and his team for the work they have completed so far near the entrance gate and the toilet.

We have known for some time that my bid to the Big Lottery Fund for a grant of £2,806 towards the cost of path improvements and the provision of raised beds for the disabled at Cedar Avenue and Lawton Road has been approved. However, we have not been able to publicise it until the Big Lottery Fund issue a press release after the election. We have also been successful in obtaining grants from Cheshire East (£1,000) and David Wilson Homes (£750) towards the projects.

We are funding the provision of a new path at Lawton Road from our own maintenance budget and this work should be completed in late June/ early July.

In their budget for this year Alsager Town Council are funding two new sections of palisade security fencing at Lawton Road and the firm undertaking this work are starting on 3 July.

It will be several months before the raised beds for the disabled will be ready for use but if you know of anyone who is disabled-young or old- who might like to be involved in cultivating such a plot please ask them to contact me.

As I write this in late May/early June I have just dug my first early potatoes (Rocket-sown on 6 March) and picked my first bunch of sweet peas. I hope you have success and enjoyment in your gardens and allotments in the weeks to come and I hope you will support this year's Annual Show --- back to our usual Saturday date on 2 September.

A great deal of information about our Association and its activities can now be found on our website - many thanks to Pauline Hubbard for all the work she has done to bring about these improvements.

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