

Alsager Gardens Association

Newsletter 24 – Autumn 2017

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

Officers - telephone code 01270

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Dear Member

Christmas is often a time to look back on last year. This time I have only one thing to report and then to next year.

Those of you who attended last year's show may remember the Mayor of Cheshire East Council, Cllr. Arthur Moran. Recently I asked him how he had enjoyed the show and he told me about speeches he had made since the show. His broad summary was that he had been to Tatton and the RHS show, he had been to the Cheshire Show and many other shows but in his opinion the best produce in any of the shows he had attended was at our show in Alsager. Well done to everyone concerned.

Next year starts soon and with it another year's gardening. We have bought our seeds and planned where to put them. Even now Garlic has been planted by some, Broad beans sown or even growing. Buds are showing on Black and Red currants. Strawberries have been tidied up awaiting their renewal. The asparagus hopefully will have resisted the frosts which have been early and hard.

Soon the bulbs will shoot in gardens and allotments. Snowdrops first, often in January followed by naturalised crocuses, daffodils and then Tulips. By then the days will be growing longer and the birds will start to sing.

In the evenings, work done, we can just stand in the garden or allotment and look around. In spite of weeds and weather we will realise why we "garden".

I wish all members a happy and productive new year.

Derek Hough – *President of the Gardens Association*

How is your order for seeds and hut products progressed?

To those members of the association that use the Trading Hut through the year and purchase seeds by ordering through me in October, can I offer my sincere thanks.

The profit we make through the year by providing, it is hoped, a service to members, by purchasing seeds, fertiliser and sundries at a very competitive price and helps towards the running cost of the association. As at least one member has told me the small weighed purchase of Lawn Fertiliser not only meets his need for a small lawn, but the cost was at least 50% cheaper than the garden centre. Many members after reading gardening articles or following a TV gardening programme are able to purchase the small quantities of specific fertilisers required, for example Bonemeal or Fish Blood and Bone suggested by experts. The association purchases all its fertilisers and potatoes from a local supplier in bulk at wholesale prices. A small profit is added to cover any spillage when weighing and to cover the cost of running the association, including for example any losses incurred in running the annual show. The next show will be held on 1st September 2018.

When members order seeds from us through The National Allotment Society (NGA) I record all orders and if you have an email address send a copy of your order back to you for checking. I do not normally check the accuracy of the numbers or price you have recorded on your order. This year on our order for over 800 separate seed packets, the supplier or myself were able to correct 6 seed numbers that did not exist in the catalogue. This was done by checking the page and the price of the seeds on the copy of your order.

The following year's seed catalogue is always available from the middle of August so is distributed to members at the show or from the Trading Hut. As a **NEW** service this year I have been informed, that in future if a member wishes me to order plants or garlic etc for delivery in the Autumn I can email the order when received, and include the cost when I send my first order at the end of October. Members this year who ordered plants, will know that they were delivered direct from the supplier.

It is very important I get the order off by the end of October. We obtain an extra discount and the order is delivered by the middle of November. If I delay the order till November, there is less discount and delivery will be in December. Plants ordered in particular for early delivery will be delayed till the following spring.

As you will appreciate with over 800 seed packets, it takes at least two days for me to sort and make up members, orders for delivery. Can I thank in particular those members who let me have (normally by email) their order from the middle of October. The earlier I receive orders the easier it is for me to collate them for sending to the suppliers.

Potatoes also need ordering by the end of October to ensure the item ordered is supplied. The local supplier will I hope, deliver in mid-January so ensuring no frost damage, they also supply the Onions and Shallots at a more competitive price (I suspect due to carriage charges) than NGA. Thanking you again for your purchases and good luck with your efforts in 2018. Any late orders by early January 2018 please

David Spall — *Trading Secretary*

Pruning Blackcurrants - Late Autumn to Late Winter

My blackcurrant bush was a disaster this yearand yes, I did net them. So, I asked my sister, a true allotmenteer who is growing her redcurrants and gooseberries as cordons, what could I have done wrong? Now cordons are all a bit too much effort for me, but she suggested it could be incorrect pruning.

This is the advice she has given me which I intend to apply. Here's hoping this will improve my chances of a good harvest next year.

Key Points:

- With Blackcurrants the fruit is carried on the previous years or older wood. For this reason, it is important not to over prune or all the fruiting wood will be removed.
- Prune blackcurrants when dormant – from late autumn to late winter. Fruit forms on young wood, so when pruning aim to remove older wood to revitalize the bush, leaving the young shoots.
- Remove any branches or side branches that are close to the ground and thin out the centre of the bush so that light enters, and air can freely circulate.

Up to and including the fourth year after planting, remove weak, wispy shoots, retaining a basic structure of 6 to 10 healthy shoots. In year four, cut out about one-third of the older wood at the base. This will encourage and make room for younger, healthy wood. Also remove weak shoots and low ones leaning towards the ground

The pruning of red & white currants is similar, for details of this and how to grow your currants and gooseberries as cordons.... go to www.rhs.org.uk where you will find an abundance of useful information.

Pauline Hubbard – *web controller for AGA*

Many thanks to those who helped prepare for and organise our 65th Annual Show on Saturday 2 September. The produce was up to the high standard of previous years and there was a significant increase in the number of entrants and the total number of entries in individual classes.

Maintenance standards are improving at all four of our allotment sites and there are only a few plots still available for rent in 2018. At Lawton Road a new path has been laid from the gate to the toilet/tool store building using funds from our own maintenance budget. Two new sections of palisade security fencing at Lawton Road have been erected, paid for from the Alsager Town Council budget.

In my last report I outlined grants we have received towards our project to create raised beds for the disabled of £2,806 from the Big Lottery Fund, £1,000 from Cheshire East Council and £500 from David Wilson Homes. We have now also received £1,000 from Persimmon Homes and I have also submitted bids to many other construction firms building houses in the Alsager area as well as local and national charity organisations.

Using the funds available we have been able to start the project and four raised beds have been constructed at Lawton Road. We are now clearing two plots at Cedar Avenue in preparation for constructing three raised beds on each plot. Many thanks to all those who have helped so far with this work at Lawton Road and Cedar Avenue.

We will then have to fill each of the 10 raised beds with vegetable soil and lay all the concrete slabs needed round them and for the paths needed – a long and costly process. Hopefully by late Spring 2018 we will have completed these tasks at each site and we can start all the publicity needed to attract tenants with disabilities.

Keith Biggs ---Association Secretary, 7 Dunham Close, Alsager, ST7 2XR
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Work by volunteers at the Lawton Road site



If you think you can help work on the sites please see the article on page 7 from the Chairman or contact the secretary

Alsager Community “Grow Together” Project

We hope to establish a community allotment, to provide all the benefits of allotment gardening for community use. This will be for local residents who are interested in growing their own vegetables and fruit, wanting to learn some new skills, getting out in the fresh air and/or making some new friends. We hope to start in 2018.

Would you like to share your skills and help get the project going?

We need one or more gardeners with a bit of experience who can help by advising, encouraging and leading any less-experienced gardeners in the scheme. If you can spare a few hours on a regular basis, please contact Lisa Alcock, community development officer for Alsager, on 07817 958202 or drop into the Alsager Community Support Centre on the Fairview car park.

Alsager in Bloom

This year, Alsager received a GOLD award in North-West in Bloom, a fantastic achievement. As well as the overall award, we entered three areas in the Neighbourhood awards category. The two residential areas (Pine Court and Heath View) were awarded Advancing awards (equivalent to Silver) and Talke Road allotment site was given a Thriving award, equivalent to Silver Gilt!

The Bloom group want to thank all concerned, including the areas mentioned above, and Cranberry School, Friends of Milton Park, the Wood Park group, the Manor House and of course the ANSA gardeners. The Bloom group has a standard to maintain now! New helpers are always welcome, either to get your hands dirty or to help with planning, photography, our portfolio, fund-raising ...

Please contact **Hilary Robinson** (882818 or hilrobinson@hotmail.com) if you'd like to get involved.

Ramblings from the chairman.

As another year draws to a close we can reflect on our gardening success of the last 12 months.

It's been an unusual year for growing. Our strawberries were still fruiting in November. A plot holder called me over earlier in the year to reveal a handful of sprouts ready for eating – it was August! Unfortunately, our overwintering onions only got planted mid-December just before the snow arrived.

The new raised bed plot on Lawton Road is almost complete. It just needs the slabs laying around it. A big thank you to all those who have volunteered and helped from all of the four (4) allotment sites in Alsager. Not forgetting my wife who kept the workers fed and watered with tea and cake on a number of occasions. The raised bed project continues with preparatory / clearance at Cedar Avenue. Talke Road and Coronation Avenue sites will be started in due course, funds and manpower permitting.

It was great to hear that Talke Road Allotment site has been awarded a Silver Gilt award after their inspection by the judges as part of the Alsager in Bloom scheme. Well done and keep up the digging and cultivation.

Finally, a big thank you to all those who volunteer to keep our sales hut running. Can I make a plea for more volunteers though, unfortunately our numbers are somewhat depleted.

For those of you who don't know, the hut is open from March to October on a Sunday for a couple of hours at the beginning of the season. This changes to an hour on Sunday and Wednesday evenings for the summer months. After mid-summer, it reverts to an hour on Sunday morning only. Each team works on a rota basis. So, the more teams of volunteers, the less occasions we all need to do. Even if you can only spare the odd day, we can use you as a reserve. Please contact me if you can help.

Happy gardening for 2018.

Adrian Ford – Chairman 110 Harpur Crescent, Alsager, ST7 2SY
Tel 01270 877363 email:- adrian_ford62@hotmail.com

Dates for your Diary

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| Late seed Orders Trading Secretary – Post or email | Orders to me by 16th January Phone if you need a catalogue |
| Alsager Gardens Association AGM <i>come along and hear what goes on behind the scenes and how we have spent various Grant on improvements</i> ALL WELCOME Seed potatoes and a small selection of seeds will be on sale | Tuesday 13th February 2018 at Alsager Highfields Foundation Primary School commencing at 8 pm the main entrance from the Town Car Park will be open Free Light refreshments will be available |
| Trading Hut See opening Hours and dates at the bottom of page | Opens Sunday 4th March 2018 <i>Allotment Holders Rents due Payable at the Trading Hut</i> |
| Snowdrop Walks – Rode Hall | 4 th February to 5 th March 2018 |
| Spring Harrogate Flower Show | 26 th to 29 th April 2018 |
| RHS Flower Show - Chatsworth | 6 th to 10 th June 2018 |
| RHS Flower Show - Tatton Park, | 18 th to 22 nd July 2018 |
| National Allotments Week | 13 th – 19 th August 2018 |
| Southport Flower Show | 16 th – 19 th August 2018 |
| Nantwich Show | 25 th July 2018 |
| Alsager Gardens Association Committee Meetings, Guide Hut, Cedar Ave., Alsager | 8.00 pm Last Tuesday of the Month (Any member welcomed to join us) |

**More hut helpers needed, if you will help please contact
Adrian Ford Chairman 01270 877363**

The 66th Annual Show Saturday 1st September

Please reserve the date

Good luck with your entries in all classes

Trading Hut Opening Hours

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| Sunday Opening Hours (NB Note opening times) | 04-03-18 to 20-05-18 | 10.00 – 12.00 noon |
| | 27-05-18 to 28-10-18 | 10.30 – 11.30 a.m. |
| Wednesday Opening | 11-04-18 to 25-07-18 | 7.00 – 8.00 p.m. |