

Alsager Gardens Association

Newsletter 26 – Autumn 2018

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

Officers - telephone code 01270

President: Derek Hough 875144 email: - jenhough@talktalk.net
Chairman Adrian Ford 877363 email: - adrian_ford62@hotmail.com
Treasurer: David Pitt 878429 email: - davidpitt4@sky.com
Vice Chair: Pauline Hubbard
 email: - alsagergardensassociationsecretary@outlook.com
Trading Sec David Spall 874117 email: - d.e.spall@bopenworld.com
Membership Hilary Robinson 882818 email: - hilrobinson@hotmail.com

Dear Member

AUTUMN AND WINTER ARRIVE

This year Autumn has been and gone leaving winter for the next four months. As the old saying goes, “Two winters and one summer to come”. Autumn was great, the rain eventually came, and the fruit firmed up. What a crop of Apples! The Potatoes, at least on some plots, are superb but this may have been due to different varieties and cultivation methods. I grew “Desiree” as a main crop, a deep-rooted red variety which is much admired for its taste. Grown on my “No-dig” allotment which encourages a natural soil structure the results were the best ever. Although Desiree suffers from scab it does not affect the eating quality. We will have to wait for a report on storage. And so to winter. They say that there are two sorts of winter gardener, one who packs up the garden for the winter and hunkers down ‘til spring and the other sort who cannot resist being outside tickling about. The former has now put their tarpaulins down, put their slippers on and read their seed catalogues. The second sort have got their waterproofs and thermal underwear at the ready and look forward to any even half decent day to get outside. Green houses are cleaned, canes dried out, lawn edges trimmed, muck spread, plant pots seen to. I admit to being a tickler. Research has now shown that being outside in natural daylight helps people to stay happy and lively during the sad, dark winter days. So, Bonfire Night has passed, next is Christmas, and then.....Snowdrops. From early new year the little white harbingers of spring appear, then Crocus, Daffodils and Grape Hyacinths, Forget-me-Nots, Tulips and so on in quick succession. Then the old saying changes, “Two summers and one winter to come”. In the meantime, enjoy Christmas and New Year, and polish your spades ready for another gardening year.

Derek Hough – President of the Gardens Association

Page 1

Dates for your Diary

<p>Alsager Gardens Association AGM <i>come along and hear what goes on behind the scenes and how we have spent various grants on improvements</i> ALL WELCOME Seed potatoes and a small selection of seeds will be on sale</p>	<p>Tuesday 12th March 2019 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</p>
<p>Trading Hut See opening Hours and dates at the bottom of page</p>	<p>Opens Sunday 3rd March 2019 <i>Allotment Holders Rents due Payable at the Trading Hut</i></p>
<p>Allotment Open Days 11 & 12 May <i>Please attend but also bring any spare plants etc for sale</i></p>	<p>All sites will have a member to advise <i>The main event will be at Cedar Avenue site for plant sales, refreshments etc</i></p>
Snowdrop Walks – Rode Hall	2 nd February to 3 rd March 2019
Spring Harrogate Flower Show	25 th to 28 th April 2019
RHS Flower Show - Chatsworth	5 th to 9 th June 2019
Royal Cheshire County Show Cheshire Showground - Knutsford.	18th to 19th June 2019
RHS Flower Show - Tatton Park,	17 th to 21 st July 2019
National Allotments Week	13 th – 18 th August 2019
Southport Flower Show	15 th – 18 th August 2019
Nantwich Show	25 th July 2019
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

When sowing seeds and pricking out seedlings, please grow a few extra plants for the plant sales table at the Allotment Open Days (11-12 May) and at the Annual Show (7 September)

Please reserve the date for the AGM – note change of month

See the News Flash page 8 !!

The 67th Annual Show Saturday 7th September

Trading Hut opening Hours

Sunday Opening Hours	03-03-19 to 19-05-19	10.00 – 12.00 noon
(NB Note opening times)	26-05-19 to 27-10-19	10.30 – 11.30 a.m.
Wednesday Evening Opening	10-04-19 to 24-07-19	7.00pm – 8.00 p.m.

Page 12

Cedar Avenue Allotments

Win RHS North West in Bloom Award

For more information go to www.northwestinbloom.com/2018bibawards

For the second year running, Alsager has been given a Gold award by the North-West in Bloom. This is a fantastic achievement by a group of volunteers, plus varied local supporters.

We have an annual grant from the Town Council, plus financial help from local businesses and what we can raise by fund-raising events. All sorts of local organisations get involved with the floral displays and other projects.

When judging day comes round in July, there are lots of nervous people stationed at different places in the town, waiting to talk to the judges and show off their pet projects.

The judges come from the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) who run the national and regional “In Bloom” contests. While welcoming the traditional floral displays, the emphasis has changed in recent years. More importance is given to *community involvement*, *environmental action* (such as helping pollinators) and *sustainability*.

The judging route this year included the following projects:

- The Community Orchard behind Leicester Avenue, which was planned by Alsager Urban Wildlife Initiative, and planted this year by a group of volunteers
- Cranberry Moss Local Nature Reserve, which has been transformed this year by the Friends group
- **Cedar Avenue allotments, including the community allotment and the raised beds for disabled access**
- Milton Park – the “End of WWI” Tree Walk, and the Pollinator Meadow
- Bank Corner/Town Square including the 6-tier planter, planted for pollinators
- “Medical Meadow” with the new Pollinator Patch
- Clowes avenue, then Excalibur School
- Alsager station, with the gardens tended by the Station Adopters
- It was a difficult year for projects such as the pollinator patches, but the judges assured us that conditions were taken into account, and everywhere was suffering the same problems. We were delighted to hear, at the end of October, that the town had again achieved a *gold award*, the highest level.
- As well as this, the following community awards were made:
- Level 5 (Outstanding) for the Railway Station
- **Level 5 (Outstanding) for Cedar Avenue allotments**
- Level 4 (Thriving) for Cranberry Moss
- Schools award for Excalibur School

So, a great year, thanks to everyone who contributed, including the ANSA gardeners. We’re always glad of help in so many ways, so just contact the Bloom via me if you can help with planning, photography, gardening, fund-raising ...

I must mention the wildly successful **sales of pollinator seeds**, which took place through the Gardens Association’s sales hut and other outlets. We plan to repeat the exercise next year, so help with weighing, packing etc will be welcome – even an odd hour will help – and any suggestions for further sales outlets.

Hilary Robinson (hilrobinson@hotmail.com)

Huge Planning Victory for Hedgehogs – and a UK First for Alsager!

By Cllr Jane Smith

Some good news! Alsager Town Council scored a ‘UK first’ and a lasting victory for hedgehogs in gardens in March when my motion to stipulate hedgehog-friendly boundaries in *all* new planning applications was passed.

Thanks to the motion, our Planning Committee will now explicitly request native hedging for boundaries in all new planning applications going forwards; failing that, any solid walls or fences must include wildlife tunnels enabling hedgehogs to pass from property to property in their search for food, mates and nesting sites. The stipulation will apply to all planning applications, from single dwellings through to large housing estates and employment land.

Wildlife ‘corridors’ are a key feature in any humane and sustainable planning system, and they are also important in our emerging Neighbourhood Plan. Hedgehog populations in particular have suffered terribly from solid boundaries around gardens, which mean they’re unable to move freely between open spaces, and in the UK we’ve lost an estimated one-third of our hedgehogs in the past decade alone.

Insisting on native hedging or wildlife tunnels will help generations of hedgehogs as well as other wild animals and birds, and it’s a small and inexpensive step but with a great impact (DIY tunnels involve removing a brick or part of a panel; commercially-available solutions cost around £5).

I also think this is a really good example of how real change can be effected for animals even at the most local level of politics. I believe that other animals need a voice representing them in human decision-making, since so many of our activities adversely affect their habitat and lives. Hedgehogs have suffered so much from rampant development, so it’s only right that we include some meaningful mitigation in our planning system and I was really proud to be able to make this change which will benefit generations of hedgehogs and other animals in our area.

Since March, we’ve been approached by over 30 other councils across the UK wanting to follow suit; Cannock Council has already passed a similar motion having borrowed our research and wording. Alsager has been

mentioned in very positive terms in both The Daily Telegraph and Gardener's World who have written about the hedgehog's motion, and I was invited to present to Natural England's Crewe HQ on the subject. We've also received lovely messages of support from organizations and individuals including The British Hedgehog Preservation Society, The Mammal Society and wildlife author Hugh Warwick.

If any AGA members are installing wildlife tunnels in their gardens or allotments, please note that they can be 'mapped' at www.bighedgehogmap.org where they will join over 6,000 other logged tunnels across the UK.



Hedgehog photo British Hedgehog Preservation Society



Wall Tunnel



Pre-bought hedgehog panel from Hogholes

Gardening in a time of climate chaos

We're accustomed to hearing about Climate Change. Now. However, it appears that "Climate Chaos" and "Climate Breakdown" are more appropriate terms. We all need to change and adapt our habits, both to minimise the carbon emissions we personally cause, and to prepare for the changes which will be necessary in a changed world.

Here are some brief points relevant to gardening, to reduce our carbon footprint, decrease pollution and adapt our gardening practices to work with nature.

1. Minimise mains water use by storing rainwater; using grey water for watering; mulching; growing more drought-resistant plants. Remember that mains water requires energy to process and distribute.
2. Make your own mulch for free by composting green waste and shredded paper etc. You will also save the CO2 emissions needed to collect the contents of your garden waste bin.
3. Also collect autumn leaves and make leaf mould. This can be done in a separate container or in refuse bags with holes pierced. We are starting to collect leaves in situ in Alsager's parks, to feed the trees and shrubs, instead of wasting a valuable resource.
4. Try and buy plants grown locally, rather than those imported from abroad. The advantages include the reduction of "plant miles" and associated emissions, less likelihood of importing pests and diseases, support for the local economy, and less shock to the plants, so they should establish more readily.
5. Choose plants to help pollinators, which will then pass on the benefits to our own crops, plus farmers and nurserymen, and benefit wildlife generally. Insects and other invertebrates provide food for birds and animals higher up the food chain. The RHS website lists plants which are "Perfect for Pollinators".
6. Grow some wildflowers, let a small patch of lawn grow long, provide a small pond, a log pile etc. All these will sustain wildlife.
7. Avoid the use of peat in composts, fibre pots etc. Peat is extracted from wetlands which are a valuable habitat for rare plants and animals, and, once destroyed, take thousands of years to regenerate if they ever do. Also, peat has a vital role in filtering water and reducing flood risk. Finally, peatlands are a massive store of carbon, which gets released to the atmosphere as peat decomposes when used in composts or as a soil conditioner.
8. Similarly, digging and turning over the soil breaks down the natural soil structure, kills the vital soil micro-fauna and causes release of carbon locked in to humus etc. Where possible, minimise digging, and use green manures to protect soil from degradation over winter.
9. Practise sustainable planting, as many parks departments are now doing. For instance, grow perennial flowers instead of annual bedding which is changed twice a year. Annual bedding requires far more input in terms of plants, heating, pots and trays, delivery miles, disposal of spent plants, etc.
10. Similarly, where possible grow perennial vegetables. Most fruit crops are perennial, of course, including strawberries and rhubarb as well as tree and bush fruits. Most familiar of the perennial vegetables is perhaps asparagus, but there are dozens of other perennial vegetables, and taking advantage of these varieties will save you time and energy

throughout your gardening years, in addition to promoting a healthier garden ecology. Other perennial vegetables include globe artichokes, Jerusalem artichokes, Chinese artichokes, sorrel, chives, Welsh onions, wild garlic, perennial rocket and seakale.

11. Also grow vegetables and salads that can be allowed to self-seed, such as Strawberry Spinach, Corn Salad (Lamb's Lettuce), Land cress, Rocket, Miner's Lettuce or Winter Purslane, Spring Beauty (*Claytonia sibirica*), Nasturtium.

12. Reduce plastic use. This doesn't mean that we must throw away plastic pots, seed trays etc. In fact we should get the most use we can from them, and only when they are too broken for further use, recycle or discard them. Unwanted but still usable items can be brought to the Trading Hut for re-homing. For future purchases, various types of reusable or bio-degradable items are now available.

13. Minimise use of artificial fertilisers (mainly made from fossil fuels) and pesticides, which inevitably damage the delicate balance of nature. We must cherish our creepy-crawlies and our weeds, which support wildlife such as butterflies. Most market gardeners now practise Integrated Pest Management to solve pest problems while minimizing risks to people and the environment. Growing conditions and biological controls are used to minimise pests, with pesticides very much a last resort.

Remember that every portion of fruit, vegetables or salad that you grow and eat is reducing food miles and carbon emissions. Home-grown flowers and pot plants, too, are reducing the amount of imported produce. So, keep up the good work.

Please send any useful tips, questions or comments on this article to me on the Alsager Sustainability Group's Facebook page, or via my e-mail at hilrobinson@hotmail.com

Hilary Robinson (hilrobinson@hotmail.com)

Our 66th Annual Show

A BIG "Thank You" to you all from the AGA Committee.

It seems such a long time now since we had our Annual Show and that very hot weather that we experienced during the peak of the season. Despite the high temperatures the produce on display was exceptional and the show was a great success with an estimated footfall of over 220 people attending throughout the day.

The Tea and Coffee area was buzzing all day with some lengthy queues to get to the fantastic refreshments and superb cakes! Not good for the waistline but I couldn't resist such yummy home-made produce.

The Plant stall was equally successful and as always had some exceptional plants at bargain prices, some of which are now happily planted in my garden. The final event of the day was the raffle with many great prizes which were donated by our members and sponsors.

The success of the show is as a result of the hard work, the giving up of your time and the many contributions of cakes, plants and raffle items from you, our members.

Without you it would not be such a great success.

A BIG "Thank You" to you all from the AGA Committee. You can now find photographs of the day's event on our web site taken by Muriel Dale who we thank

Go to www.alsagergardensassociation.org.uk

Page 6

Keeping Our Constitution, Rules and Polices up to Date and Our Annual General Meeting

Since 2011, driven by Keith Biggs, the committee has been very successful in securing funding for our Accessibility Project. Over these seven years, we have been able to raise over £40,000 and this has been used to improve our allotments with the introduction of modern accessible toilets, paving and our raised beds. We have also received financial support from Alsager Town Council, who have contributed to the Accessibility Project and have improved our infrastructure providing the security fencing we now have in place at all sites.

It has been evident in putting forward bids for funding, to both large and small organisations, that they wish to see a range of policies and procedures in place to demonstrate we are a sound organisation in which to invest.

As a result, we are committed to update and improve our Policies, Procedures and the underpinning Documentation that is available to our members.

Our *Constitution* needs to be revised to reflect the objectives we are striving to achieve and the wider role we are now active in as an association. This is demonstrated by our accessibility project. The revised constitution will be presented for approval at our **Annual General Meeting which will be held on Tuesday 12 March 2019 at Alsager Highfields Foundation Primary School at 8pm.**

We already have a *Safeguarding Policy* in place which we will update early next year. We also now have a *Health and Safety Policy* and an associated completed Allotment Site "*Risk Assessment*" from which we have produced a "*Health and Safety Guide for Plot holders*".

We have agreed to write an *Equality and Diversity Policy* and will also work to produce a written financial procedures document. Other policies will be developed as necessary and as time allows, but we need to have these key documents in place as soon as possible.

As part of this process we have rewritten the *Allotment Rules*. This document forms part of the tenancy agreement going forward. For those members that are plot holders a copy is attached with this Newsletter. This is an important document which gives clarity on a range of issues and questions asked of us in managing the Allotments.

Page 7

This Includes;

- *We have confirmed that hosepipes may be used on sites but have put in place some restrictions to ensure water is used wisely*
- *We have clarified the timescales required and financial impact relating to notice and failure to give the required notice to terminate an allotment tenancy. This has been a significant problem at all sites*

Plot holders are advised to read the document in full as the Allotment Rules form part of the tenancy agreement.

To improve communication at all Allotment sites we plan to install a notice board at each site and post important documents as appropriate. The Notice Board will to be located on the Toilet building.

All documents, policies, procedures and plot holder's guidance will be published and available on our web site to read or print. Go to

www.alsagergardensassociation.org.uk

Should you have any questions on this please have a quick conversation with your site manager who will be able to help - or you can direct your question by email to the AGA Secretary at

alsagergardensassociationsecretary@outlook.com

NEWS FLASH!!!!

We are delighted to announce that our Accessibility Raised Beds project application has been successful, have just heard that we have bagged **£3260** from **Tesco's Bags of Help community grant scheme**.

Bags of Help is run in partnership with environmental charity Groundwork, and sees grants raised from the sale of carrier bags awarded to thousands of local community projects every year. Since launching in 2015, it's provided more than £63 million to over 20,000 local community projects.

Shoppers voted us as FIRST in our local Tesco stores. We still have paperwork to complete before the money is released but following confirmation of this, we will be able to commence the final phase of our project and construct the two Accessibility Raised Beds at Talke Road and the one at Coronation Avenue.

Thank you to everyone who voted for us.

Pauline Hubbard – Acting Association *Secretary*

UPDATE ON OUR ACCESSIBILITY RAISED BEDS PROJECT

Well done Everyone and Thank You All for your help and support in making this happen.

Cedar Avenue Allotments which is phase 2 of our project was completed in early September with the construction of three Raised Beds which are located close to the existing car park and the main entrance, making them specifically suitable for wheelchair users or individuals with mobility issues.

These beds provide users with easy access to the toilet building and the water standpipe. We have two tenants for these with the remaining bed still available to let ready for spring planting.



Cedar Avenue Accessibility Raised Bed with a view showing the new path

Our final work at Cedar Avenue is to join up the path from the toilet block to the current path which takes you to the far end of the site near to the football field. This is planned for completion this year subject to weather conditions.

Talke Road and Coronation Avenue

Following Cedar Avenue and subject to grant or award funding being available, the third phase of the project is to provide two further accessibility raised beds and associated paving at our Talke Road site and a single bed at our Coronation Road Site. Hopefully we will raise enough funds to see completion of the raised beds at these sites thus making Alsager Allotments Accessible for All.

Come and view on the Association open days 11th and 12th May

Vegetable Planting Schedule

This gardening calendar is intended as a guide for vegetables

Month	What to sow / plant	To do on the plot	What's in season
January <i>Time to start planning</i>	Rhubarb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete winter digging Clean greenhouse Order seed 	Sprouts, cabbage, leeks, parsnips, chicory, celery, kale
February <i>The coldest month of the year</i>	Early lettuce, cabbages, salad onions, carrots (under cloches), cauliflowers (in a heated frame)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dress beds with lime where cabbages, sprouts, cauliflowers and broccoli are to be sown Order asparagus plants and prepare the bed Chit potatoes 	Sprouts, cabbage, leeks, parsnips, chicory, celery, kale
March <i>Start of the gardening season</i>	<p>Outside: Broad beans, spinach, early peas, cabbage, sprouts, parsley, onions, carrots, shallots, salad leaves</p> <p>Under glass: Tomatoes, chillies, aubergines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dig soil as winter crops are lifted and dress with superphosphate and potash (leave for 2 weeks before next sowing) Chit potatoes 	Late sprouts, spring greens, broccoli, chicory, kale, early salads (from frames)
April	<p>Outside: Potatoes, broad beans, spinach, peas, cabbage, sprouts, cauliflowers, onions, parsnips, chicory, beetroot, salad leaves, harden off plants sown in frames</p> <p>Under glass: Runner beans, courgettes, cucumbers, melons, <u>pot</u> on tomatoes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare trenches for runner beans and chicory Lift and divide herbs Clear the last sprouts Hoe between rows to reduce weeding later 	Late sprouts, spring greens, broccoli, chicory, kale, early salads (from frames)
May	<p>Outside: Maincrop peas, French beans, Savoy's, carrots, parsnips, beetroot</p> <p>Successional outside: Beetroot, salad leaves, spinach</p> <p>Under cloches: Sweet corn, runner beans, marrows</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cut asparagus shoots from plants more than 2 years old Thin out early sowings of beetroot, cauliflowers, lettuce Protect tops of early potatoes from late frosts Mulch between rows of peas and beans Dress beds intended for carrots, parsnips and beetroot with superphosphate and potash 2 weeks before sowing 	Winter cauliflower, sprouting broccoli, kale, early salads
June	<p>Outside: Cauliflowers, cabbage, early sprouts, marrows, courgettes, sweet corn, carrots, tomatoes, runner beans</p> <p>Successional outside: Beetroot, peas, salad leaves, spinach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove early broad bean tops to reduce blackfly attack Earth up potatoes Hand weed between onions and shallots Dry off garlic Liquid feed onions, root crops and cauliflowers 	Broad beans, spinach, garlic, carrots, radish, salad leaves, cauliflowers (overwintered in frame)

Month	What to sow / plant	To do on the plot	What's in season
July	<p>Outside: Early peas to follow maincrop variety (may produce a late but small crop), spring cabbage for overwintering, leeks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feed, stake and side shoot tomatoes Feed marrows, courgettes and cucumbers Water, particularly in dry weather Earth up potatoes Dry off garlic Train cucumbers, pinch out tips when fruit is set 	Beans, peas, early potatoes, garlic, cabbage, cauliflower, salad leaves, beetroot, globe artichoke
August	Leeks, late cabbage, winter salads (corn salad, land cress, winter radish), Florence fennel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pick runner beans frequently Thin maincrop beetroot, carrots, turnip Pinch out tomato tips when 4-6 trusses have been set Dry off shallots 	Beans, peas, maincrop potatoes, shallots, courgettes, tomatoes, chillies, cucumbers
September	Winter lettuce, spring cabbage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bend onion tops over to encourage ripening Lift maincrop potatoes to prevent slug damage Earth up leeks to protect against wind damage Dry off shallots and onions Turn compost heap 	Runner beans, late peas, sweet corn, marrows, tomatoes, cucumbers, chillies, aubergines, salad leaves, salad onions, onions, potatoes, beetroot, carrots, parsnips, turnips, squashes, pumpkins
October	Winter lettuce, garlic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cut down peas and beans, leaving roots in the ground to return air-borne nitrogen to soil Store away canes and cloches if not in use Earth up leeks to protect against wind damage Dry off onions Dig ground as it becomes vacant Turn compost heap 	Early sprouts, cauliflowers, parsnips, carrots, beetroot, squashes, pumpkins, spinach, lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, chillies, aubergines, salad leaves
November	Peas (hardy varieties, in soil not prone to waterlogging) Broad beans for over wintering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dig ground as it becomes vacant Remove yellow leaves from sprouts Check stored crops for signs of damage Clear away remains of summer crops to compost heap Turn compost heap 	Parsnips, carrots, swedes, turnips, sprouts, cabbage, kale, onions
December	Shallots (" <i>plant on the shortest day, harvest on the longest day</i> ")	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare ground for next year Add manure or compost to beds Force rhubarb Sterilize greenhouse tomato soil if it is not being changed Check stored crops for signs of damage 	Sprouts, winter cabbage, leeks, parsnips, onions, kale