Alsager Gardens Association Newsletter 23 - Summer 2017

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

	OII	icers - tel	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:- davidpitt3@sky.com
Secretary: Keith Biggs	Keith Biggs	879816	email:- biggskj@onetel.com
Trading Sec	David Spall	874117	email:- d.e.spall@btopenworld.com
Membership	Membership Ms H Robinson	882818	email:- hilrobinson@hotmail.com

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

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. U 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.

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

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.atsagergardens.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.

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As with many insect pests, it's useful to understand its life history. It has two generations a year. Adult females lay eggs in March-April. The second generation repeats the process in October to November, and this is when most damage is done.

The maggots hatch and bore into the host plants to feed. The larvae are small, white, apparently headless maggots without legs, and make tunnels in the foliage, stems and bulbs of their host plants.

After a counter of weeks, they are fully fed, and number. Most

After a couple of weeks, they are fully fed, and pupate. Most pupate in the stems, but some of the brown pupae may end up in the soil. Cylindrical brown pupae may be found

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 Pbulbs, 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'hoys 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

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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, planting 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 Palin 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.

Hilary Robinson Membership Secretary 30 Heathend Road, Alsager, ST7 2SQ Tel: 01270 882818 Email:-(hilrobinson@hotmail.com) Page 5

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 Talke 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.

Keith Biggs — Association Secretary 7 Dunham Close, Alsager, ST7 2XR Tel 01270 877363 email: biggskj@onetel.com

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Dear Member

Allotment and Leisure Gardeners year. I intend on your behalf to again purchase seeds from the National Association of Can I thank you and all those members who also ordered seeds from the Association last

quality is superb and the number of seeds per packet excellent value for money The NAS Seeds are very competitively priced and a comprehensive range is on offer, the

PLEASE take Copies of the Seed Catalogues and order form for NAS at the Annual Show Plus Potato List

The prices of the NSLG seeds are as printed in the catalogue

There will be a small additional charge to cover seeds unsold at the end of the season. I will as in previous years be ordering a small stock of seeds etc. for sale in the trading hut

order to complete the necessary paperwork to achieve the maximum discount for the up order in January 2017. Will members please let me have their order by 29th October in I intend to post the order for the NAS seeds on Monday 30th October 2017 with a follow

Completed orders should be returned to me at the above address or sent by email

which our normal local supplier is prepared to order. This year following a request for specialty potatoes I have produced a long list (4 pages)

THESE ALSO HAVE TO BE ORDERED BY THE END OCTOBER.

Orders MUST be with me by the 29th October at an estimated cost of

£3.30 per 2.0 Kgs bag expected the same cost as last year.

dispose of unsold stock again this year) [I will again be having a small stock of potatoes for sale in the hut this year as we had

I intend to stock a few bags of the following varieties in the hut for sale to members

First earlies Aaron Pilot, Home Guard, Winston

Second earlies

Desiree, Maris Piper, Valor

Prices will be £3.50 per 2.0 Kg for hut sales

gardening for 2018 Many thanks to you for your custom this past year and wishing you a good year's

David Spall - Trading Secretary

Tel:- 01270 874117

(d.e.spall@btopenworld.com) 63 Pikemere Road, Alsager, Stoke on Trent, ST7 2SN

I will collect the money when the orders are delivered which should be early December

(Cheques Alsager Gardens Association)

(0.45) and of course your address and if you have one an email and telephone number. Product code (eg 10502) Page number (2) Quantity required (1) Unit Cost (0.45) Total cost PS If you need to email your order to me for NAS (Word file is ideal) If you would include

Strawberries

it's time to lift the netting and let birds have the rest! season when most of the crop has gone and only small and/or misshapen fruits are left so neighbors and then frozen the rest to eat during the lean winter months - it is the time of Having had a bumper crop of strawberries, eaten many, given some away to grateful

of row, applying it carefully between the plants and washing it in afterwards Sprinkle a handful of general fertiliser and one ounce of sulphate of potash to each yard old leaves and runners. This sounds extreme, but it improves the health of the bed by cut all the fruited plants down to about three inches above the ground, cutting off all the removing potential sources of disease, and also exposes pests for birds to deal with. But what's next for the strawberry plants? After fruiting use shears or large scissors to

come to the end of their fruiting life! biggest, healthiest runners down into pots, ready to replant when they are large enough. If you need spare plants to replace old ones or to extend your strawberry bed, propagate You'll have spare plants for free or new ones to make a new bed when your current ones your own. Just leave a few "parent plants" unclipped at the end of the rows and peg the

sell them at the show or allotment open days. plants, do not forgett at any time if you can save spare plants for sale the Association can If you pot extra runners you can save them for the next allotment open day to sell as

Pauline Walsh — Web controller

Financial matters - from the Treasurer

a much improved response from members paying their allotment rents. I am pleased to report that following my appeal in the Autumn Newsletter there has been

All rents are now paid and there only a handful of unlet allotment plots.

rents promptly. cultivated and worked. Many thanks to the majority of members who pay their allotment Adrian Ford for their efforts in ensuring allotment rents are paid and plots are properly I would like to thank Keith Biggs our secretary, in particular and also John Nixon and

Subscription and Allotment Rents for 2018. Finally, I hope to be able to advise you in the Autumn Newsletter of the Association helped on the Allotment open day this helped to boost funds by over £500. generally very competitive. Big thanks also to all those members who gave plants or Please keep using this facility to help the Association, you will find our prices are I am pleased to report their appears to be an improvement in sales at our trading hut

Best wishes to all members and good gardening

David Pitt - Treasurer

Wednesday Opening Sunday Opening Hours Trading Hut opening Hours 5-3-17 to 21-5-17 28-5-17 to 29-10-17 12-4-17 to 26-7-17 10.30 - 11.30 a.m. 7.00 - 8.00 p.m. 10.00 - 12.00 noon

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