

# Alsager Gardens Association

## Newsletter 27 – Summer 2019

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

Officers - telephone code 01270

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### Dear Member

#### THE SHOW.

The show is booked at the civic for 7<sup>th</sup> September. However, it does beg the question” What is a show?” Everyone seems to have one so what are they, what if anything are the benefits and why is the Alsager Gardens show so special.

My thought is that the origins, in our case, were that people who grew things and were proud of their work liked to show it off to their friends. When I helped to Show Sheep at Bakewell Show the view would come forward that “Yes that is good but not as good as mine.” After a few trips to the beer tent a rivalry would build up. So it seems sensible that before the show someone would be asked to act as a judge to decide what in his or her opinion was the best produce. This format has worked well for many a long year and at all sorts of shows and continues here.

So here we have it, gardeners will show what can be grown locally and a judge will decide which is the best. *What is the benefit of this?*

Firstly it brings people together to see what can be grown and to what standard. It should improve the standard of gardening. At our Show exhibitors will usually be available to answer questions.

Refreshments are provided so that people can talk to their friends and fellow gardeners. Older members will remember how, in their day, the onions were bigger; the runner beans were longer and straighter. Younger members will maybe learn something. The awards will be given and the raffle drawn.

So why is Our Show special?

I think mainly because, it is still a local show for local people. That said we do encourage others from close by to attend and show with some from as far away as Kidsgrove and Haslington. The friendly nature of Alsager people plays an important part in making the event such a success.

Hope to see you there

**Derek Hough - President**

### Dates for your Diary

RHS Flower Show Tatton Park, Cheshire	17 - 21 July 2019
Southport Flower Show	15 – 18 August 2019
Olive and Stitch Market, Alsager	Saturday 21 <sup>st</sup> July 2019
Nantwich Food & Drink Festival	30th August – 1st September 2019
<b>Annual Show – Civic</b> <i>Show entries to the secretary by 12 noon Thursday 5th September</i> Show Open to the public 2pm	<b>Saturday 7th September 2019</b> <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 28 <sup>th</sup> October	<b>Orders by Last week in October</b> NSLG Order catalogues and form available at the Show or from the Trading Secretary or Trading Hut
Harrogate Flower Show Great Yorkshire Showground Harrogate	13 - 15 September 2019
Alsager Gardens Association Committee Meetings, Guide Hut, Cedar Ave., Alsager	Tuesday 8.00 pm See dates on the web site <i>(Any member welcomed to join us)</i>

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

### The 67<sup>th</sup> Annual Show Saturday 7th September

**Please reserve the date – Good luck with your entries in all classes**

*As suggested on page 9 by the RHS to make **Great Britain Greener** the narrow grass strip at the back of the civic car park, just in front of the grassed playing area between the car park and Highfields Primary School has been seeded with wild flowers to make **Alsager** greener. Please refrain from walking on it till it is established.*

#### Trading Hut opening Hours

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

## Trading Hut Services – David Spall

**Being Trading Secretary** I try to help, following this email from Lynne McCabe it has resulted in PY Powder (pyrethrum as an organic spray) now being on sale in the hut –

Hello David, last Spring, my first on the allotment, I noticed some little shiny black beetles marching all over my apple tree and shredding the leaves. I picked them off and then googled to see what they were but couldn't find any reference.

The little blighters are back in force this year - not only on my apple and pear trees, but on all the allotments round about. Again, I googled and this time I found a Gardeners' World video with Monty Don and Andrew Halstead from RHS Wisley, describing the creatures. They are apparently a Blue Mint Beetle or a Moroccan Mint Beetle. Monty was annoyed that they'd eaten his Moroccan mint bushes to shreds. Apparently, they have only recently found their way to our shores and are working their way up the country. Andrew Halstead could only recommend pyrethrum as an organic spray - I haven't tried this yet, but I diligently pick them off my apple and pear tree every time. They don't seem to have made their way to Beechwood Drive yet. I just wonder if the apple leaves remind them of apple mint that they might be fond of?

She then followed this up with a RHS enquiry and the reply:

Dear Mrs McCabe,

Thank you for your enquiry to RHS Gardening Advice.

The beetles you found are similar in appearance to the blue mint beetle but are slightly smaller and flatter, they are the alder leaf beetle, *Agelastica alni*. This species was considered extinct in the UK with no records of it between 1946 and 2003. However, in 2004 larvae and adults were recorded in Manchester and it now appears to be spreading in north-west England. The beetle has also recently become established in southern Hampshire and Wiltshire where it is also becoming widespread. More information on this beetle can be found at <http://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?PID=850>

More information on the blue mint beetle can be found at <https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?PID=768>

Both the adult alder beetles and their black larvae feed on the foliage of alder and, less frequently, hazel, poplar and willow. Several other species of leaf beetle also feed on these trees. The adult beetles overwinter and lay eggs in the spring, with larvae present in May and June. In some areas this beetle has now become very abundant and can cause significant defoliation. It can be difficult to control them, particularly on taller trees. Fortunately, although the damage they cause can be unsightly, it is something that the trees will survive and the beetle does not usually require control.

We'd like to let you know that from, **1 May 2019**, our email service for members is moving to a new Online Gardening Advice Service. Just fill in the simple form, add photos where you need to, and submit to the team. You get the added bonus of seeing all your new questions and answers in one place for future reference. Simply go to [rhs.org.uk/myadvice](https://www.rhs.org.uk/myadvice) and use your My RHS account to get started.

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,- Dr Magdalena Boshoff -Scientist - Plant Health

Hilary Robinson has added this information regarding her garden

"Having never seen these beetles before, this year I have found them in my garden on Apple and Rowan trees, in mid-April, when the Alder trees were barely starting to break their buds. I wonder whether the warm spell encouraged the beetles to come out of hibernation early, and finding no alder leaves to feed on yet, they are making do with other hosts?"

Local News of a place worth planning a visit

The RHS Chatsworth Flower Show took place this year 5-9 June. Two good friends of mine, Mary and Colin Bielby of Audley entered the Radio Stoke Competition to design a garden for this event and they won! They were invited to Radio Stoke to talk about it and that was broadcast a few weeks ago. Their design takes the form of a Coal Miner's garden, from 100 years ago. It will include cottage garden flowers and suitable veg for stews, lobby and the like. Their idea came from the fact that it was 100 years ago last year, January 2018, that a terrible mining accident occurred at the Minnie Pit in Audley. Over 150 men and boys were killed and it devastated the village of Halmerend. It was almost 12 months before all the bodies were recovered, the accident is thought to have been triggered by a faulty safety lamp. RHS students will build the garden, under Colin and Mary's supervision, and the RHS will pay for the content of it. I am very excited for them, and proud of their achievement. So, if you go to Chatsworth this June, do look out for Colin and Mary's garden.

## Pollinators Under Threat

Many of our food crops such as apples, pears, strawberries, raspberries and tomatoes, as well as many wildflowers need visits by insects to transfer the pollen between plants leading to fertilisation and the production of seeds and fruits. Some flowering plants are pollinated by the wind, but the majority rely on insects and without them plants would fail to produce seed and fruit.

From an allotment perspective, runner beans have an 85% dependence on pollinators, cucumbers 65% and fruiting trees, such as apples, pears and plums have between 65% and 85% dependence.

Pollinators of crops and wild plants such as bumblebees, moths, butterflies, hoverflies, lace wings and honeybees are threatened by the spread of pests and diseases, land use intensification, habitat destruction and climate change.

It is feared that about two thirds of pollinators are in marked decline and that 25% are threatened with extinction.

## What Can You Do to Help?

As gardeners and allotment holders we can each play our part in helping to halt this decline.

- We can grow nectar and pollen rich flowers as companions amongst our allotment produce such as nasturtium, sweet peas and marigold.

Avoid disturbing or destroying hibernating insects and think carefully about the use of pesticides as they also kill the beneficial insects

- Create a continuous supply of nectar and pollen rich flowers by growing more early and late flowering over the whole of the season.
  - Spring - Wallflowers, spotted dead nettle, native primroses
  - Summer - Hollyhocks, chives, borage, marigolds, open centred dahlias
  - Autumn - Sunflowers, nasturtium, single flowered dahlias
  - Winter - Winter flowering shrubs and bulbs such as aconites and crocuses

If you want to create your own “Pollinator Patch” and at the same time help to keep our butterflies and bees busy during the fruiting and flowering seasons, small packets of Pollinator seeds are available during spring from the Trading Hut to purchase at a nominal price

Pauline Hubbard -Vice Chair

*With acknowledgement to RHS and National Allotment Society websites*

For more information go to:

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/science/conservation-biodiversity/wildlife/perfect-for-pollinators>

<https://www.nsalg.org.uk/>

#### Some of the recommended Companion Planting and Pollinators

<b>Alliums</b>	Carrots – Deter carrot root fly Tomatoes – Deter Aphids Roses – Deter Aphids Fruit Trees – Deter some pests of some trees
<b>Basil</b>	<b>Cucumbers</b> - Deter White fly Tomatoes - Deter White fly Peppers - Deter aphids and flies
<b>Dill</b>	Brassicas – Attracts pollinating and beneficial predatory insects Deters – aphids
<b>French Marigolds</b>	Potatoes – Deter Eelworms Sweetcorn - Deter White fly and aphids Melons - Deter aphids, beetles and flies Attract – Bees for Pollination
<b>Nasturtiums -</b>	Brassicas – Attracts cabbage white butterflies away from crops Cucumbers Deter cucumber beetles and attract predatory insects Attract predators that control pests
<b>Rosemary</b>	Brassicas – Deter cabbage butterfly Beans – Deter bean beetles Carrots – Deter carrot fly Strawberries – Deter worms Aubergine – Deter garden moths Attract – Predators that control pests such as aphids Attract Bees
<b>Thyme</b>	

## Open Days 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> May 2019

We held our 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Open Days Event on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> May. They proved to be a real community event with attendance very high as people flocked to see us in the warm sunshine! Visitors of all ages took a guided tour of the allotments provided by our members and were able to view the produce on the allotment plots



The vegetable and plant stall were once again “a huge success” taking over £440 profit this year.

Led by our own specialists Hilary Robinson and Lesley Quartermaine, with help from Elanor Mitchell and Jenny Goldstraw, they were happy to explain the detail of some of the more unusual and interesting plants which had been grown by our gardeners. Fresh rhubarb was handpicked during the day and available for sale along with other produce! Thanks to everyone who donated their seedlings and vegetable plants. Our plant stall is now well known at this event and our Annual Show and really is a key attraction to bring in the visitors.







Visitors enjoying a peaceful stroll around our Cedar Avenue Allotment Site



**An extensive range of plants for sale at the Plant Stall**

Visitors took the opportunity for a cup of tea and a slice or two of homemade Victoria sponge cake, Chocolate Malteser cake, flapjacks and fresh cream jam scones, just part of the extensive range of cakes we had available and expertly baked by our members. The cakes were so yummy – our refreshment stall doubled their takings this year with a profit of £192. Thank you everyone, our home-made cakes are another big attraction to entice people in on the day



***Hustle and Bustle at the Refreshments Tent and Margaret Brooks, Jennifer Langton and Judith Ford who organised the cakes and refreshments***

### **Tombola and Book Stall**

As in previous years we ran a very successful Tombola. Mike Brooks did a splendid job as “Tom” and generated a good amount of business from the people attending the event. We also ran a “Gardening and Cookery Book” stall for the first time this year which was very successful adding a further dimension to our annual event.

Thanks go to all those members who donated various books and prizes. As this was such a success, we will try to run this again next year, subject to the availability of books of course!



***The raised beds at Cedar Avenue are now fully planted and their tenants will soon start to harvest the rewards of their efforts.***

### **International Composting Week**

This year the association co-ordinated our event with ANSA Environmental Services, and welcomed ***Patti Pinto*** and ***Dick Wheeler***, part of the **Waste Reduction Volunteers** group co-ordinated by ANSA. They were speaking to our visitors about recycling, home composting and food waste reduction “Composting is excellent for the garden or an allotment **and is simple to do.** Not only does it reduce waste, but it creates a concoction that turns into humus, the best soil builder around! Gardeners can then improve their flower garden with



**compost**, top dress the lawn, feed growing veggies, and much more!” This added a further dimension to our event and proved to be of interest to a number of visitors.



*Patti Pinto Volunteer - Composting at Home! – Mike Brooks AKA “Tom Bowler Part of International Composting Week*



For more pictures of our Open Days go to  
[www.alsagergardensassociation.org.uk](http://www.alsagergardensassociation.org.uk)

### SECRETARY’S REPORT SUMMER 2019

In our last Newsletter I reported on the construction of the accessibility raised beds at Cedar Avenue. Since then we have made further progress. The central path leading from the main gate to join up with the rear of the allotment is now in place and has been welcomed by all using the site, particularly those having to take heavy loads from the main gate to the plots furthest away from the car park.

Our volunteers have also now completed the fence next to the toilet block and more work is being undertaken on the area next to the raised beds to provide a shelter and a level space for joint occupation. Thank you, guys and a special thanks to Stephen Beattie for all his hard work - well done everyone it looks great!

**TALKE ROAD.** We have now completed work on the two accessibility raised beds at Talke Road. These were completed ready for our Open days on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> May. This work has been paid from the community grant received from **the Tesco’s Bags of Help** award.

Thanks goes to John Nixon, Tomo, Stuart and the guys at Talke Road for clearing and preparing the area ready for the construction of the beds. It involved lots of digging out of well-established shrubbery and trees, so it wasn’t easy going- again a big **Thank You**. The representative from Tesco’s called in on our Open Day to have a look at the raised beds and see what we have been able to do. He was really impressed and commented as to how different the area looked further enhanced by the planting up of a “Flower Barrow”.

He congratulated everyone on such a major achievement!

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Talke Road Allotmenters on the Open Day & New Raised Beds at Talke Road

**CORONATION AVENUE** – The accessibility raised bed at Coronation Avenue is planned for completion later in the year. In advance of this Mike Smith, the site manager, has already marked out, weeded and prepared the area ready for the construction. Many thanks Mike. Mike Smith has also made the committee aware of the problem of the overhanging trees that adjoin the boundary at the rear of the site. We have taken this up with the Town Council and discussion has taken place with Cheshire East, who are the landowner of Cranberry Moss and have responsibility for the trees. The Town Council have offered to pay towards the cost of remedial action but as yet Cheshire East have not agreed with the action we wish to take. Further discussions are underway. We have identified the need for a paved area near to the gate linked to a central path to the toilet building, like the one at Cedar Avenue, as a priority. However, we require over 100 paving slabs size 2’x2’ (600x600mm) to be able to undertake the work.

*If you know of any “Pre-Loved” slabs needing a new home, please contact Mike Hubbard on 07979968932 who is co-ordinating the collection.*

**THE TRADING HUT** – for those of you who regularly visit the hut you will have noticed it has recently been painted. We have used anti-graffiti paint so any artistry should be able to be wiped off with ordinary water. We have added a new sign so along with the recent new security door our Hut is looking very smart!

### **CEDAR AVENUE – Car Park**

When visiting the Trading Hut or the allotments you cannot fail to experience the poor state of the car park which has been raised as a matter of concern by many of our members. We have reported this to the Town Council and discussions are underway with the landowner which is Cheshire East. As soon as we have an update, we will post the information on the website

### **FUNDING APPLICATIONS**

Your committee is continuing to seek and identify any funding streams that we can apply to, to finance our programme of work. We will be applying to the New Homes Bonus second year awards, writing to any builders with new programmes in our area and trying again with the “National Lottery Awards for All” in our endeavour to obtain funding or resources.

If you are aware of any potential funding streams available or can help put funding applications together, please email me at

[alsagergardensassociationsecretary@outlook.com](mailto:alsagergardensassociationsecretary@outlook.com)

Pauline Hubbard  
Vice Chair and Secretary

## Ramblings from the Chairman.

As we pass the longest day of the year we can look back at the first half of the growing season.

The weather has been a mixed bag, with recently lots of rain and the threat of thunderstorms. I haven't seen any anyway.

On our plot this year we have been trying the 'no dig' method of cultivation. At the end of last year the plot was dug over in readiness. Around the raspberries and other fruit bushes we laid some bark as they are a more permanent fixture of the plot.

Around the potatoes we have been using our grass cuttings from home as a mulch, although I wouldn't do this if I had used a lawn treatment that suggests that you don't compost them. It appears to have worked well. The only problem we have had is a lack of supply of grass cuttings. To 'dig or not to dig' that is the question. Some may say it's lazy, it certainly keeps the weeds down. Another one of those debatable topics of growing.

Perhaps we will expand the system next year to the rest of the plot. Just need a bigger lawn for more grass cuttings.

Anyway must get back to weeding the rest of the plot.

Happy gardening.

**Adrian Ford** – Chairman 110 Harpur Crescent, Alsager, ST7 2SY  
Tel 01270 877363 email:- [adrian\\_ford62@hotmail.com](mailto:adrian_ford62@hotmail.com)

## Current RHS initiative - Let's get Greening Great Britain!

We're encouraging everyone to grow *even more* plants in *any* setting across Great Britain, they're vital for the environment and our health.

### Why are we doing this?

The RHS and our powerful gardening army of some 500,000 members, have been showing just what's possible when people join together to develop and create green spaces that benefit wellbeing, wildlife and communities.

Imagine how much positive change we could create if even more of us decided to get 'Greening Great Britain' today!

*"Our RHS members are active gardeners, and their efforts have exceeded our expectations. The amount of plant diversity added each year is immensely positive for wildlife, the environment, cooling local areas in summer, flood protection, air quality improvement, noise reduction and wellbeing."*

Sue Biggs, RHS Director General

## Beaumaris Allotments Visit:

Following our attendance at the National Allotment Society AGM in Llandudno, Adrian and I had the opportunity to visit Beaumaris Allotment site. We were welcomed by their Chair, Vice Chair and PR/Publicity Officer. The Site is situated in a beautiful location in the picturesque town of Beaumaris on Anglesey and set on the banks of the Menai Strait, next to the UNESCO heritage site of Beaumaris Castle with views over the Snowdonia Mountains.



The site is a mix of full and half plots and around 50 plot holders and families, they grow everything from traditional fruit and vegetables, plants for natural dyes, flowers for cutting and one even has a vineyard. The site has a full programme of social events including their BBQ, the BAAFTAS (Beaumaris Annual Awards For the Allotments) and the Allot Fest.

They celebrated their centenary last year and they also enjoyed their first highly successful National Garden Scheme weekend where they welcomed over 400 visitors and raised money for Beaumaris Lifeboat. They have been recently filmed for BBC Gardeners' World broadcast on 17 May 2019 available on BBC iPlayer (episode 11).

We sampled some of the excellent white wine produced by Keewan's Vineyard



'Plot' - Chateau Anker Est 2004. The wine was great and very impressive, my favourite being the second pressing of the grapes.

We had a great time chatting to plot holders in the sunshine and sharing ideas and tips.

If you have the opportunity when you are on your holidays, visiting family or friends in other parts of the country why not visit another allotment site and see what they are doing.

Judith Ford

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