

Alsager Gardens Association

Newsletter 27 – Autumn 2019

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

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Dear Member

Here we are again. Christmas and the change of year is on the near horizon so, first of all, have a Happy Christmas and a fruitful New Year.

Nature however does not recognise these changes and just carries on. That having been said the weather is ignoring the rules and is not just carrying on. The rain was worse than anyone can remember with the flooding, particularly on the Cedar Avenue Site, beyond belief. Not only did the rain result in water-logged ground but the Valley Brook overflowed its banks. Wood in all its forms from chippings to planks was distributed through other parts of the Allotments. Not to be too down-hearted allotment holders were cleaning up within days and not a lot of crops were damaged.

Then came the frost. Keen enough with temperatures down to -5 Centigrade even inside my greenhouse. It has helped to dry the ground so spring will arrive and with it more experiences. One thing almost for sure is that things will warm up and days will get longer. The shortest day is almost with us and we can start to smile.

Last year's letter mentioned harbingers of spring and the first one has already appeared. A snowdrop plant in the front garden is well through and showing the white tips. Hyacinths outside are showing their new growth and the garden birds have reappeared although some never went away. There is a flock of redwing down the Salt Line and a fieldfare came into the garden to eat the last of the apples.

On the allotment there is little activity until it dries out a little then, plant the garlic, clear the old asparagus ferns, spread the muck and wait. Purple sprouting Broccoli is still to come when the leeks are finished and so we go on. Last year was a good year for me, will the new one be better or worse? One thing is certain, Time will Tell.

Enjoy your gardening.

Derek Hough – *President of the Gardens Association*

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SECRETARY'S REPORT AUTUMN 2019

Accessible Raised Beds

A grant from Tesco Bags of Help has enabled us to complete raised beds at all sites. We currently have a raised bed to rent at

• Cedar Avenue • Coronation Avenue • Talke Road • Lawton Road

The raised beds are good value at £10 per annum and have good access to facilities and wide paths making them suitable for individuals with mobility or other health issues or for community groups to rent on an annual basis, the criterion being that there is an identified need. We had also hoped to be able to put forward a bid to the Cheshire East New Homes Bonus Fund, but this has been delayed as part of the budget consultation. If the fund is available next year, we will put forward an appropriate project bid.

If you want to find out more information please go to our website or if you are interested in exploring this further please email

alsagergardensassociationsecretary@outlook.com

Cedar Avenue Allotments Car Park and Access to the Trading Hut

This area remains in a state of disrepair and this has been raised with the Town Council and the landowner who is Cheshire East.

The Town Council have established a working group aimed at identifying funding to improve the area. The first meeting of the group was on 18th September and from this a report went to the Planning Meeting on 8th October. At this meeting the Town Council confirmed the following P

PEC19/96 Joint Use Open Space at Cedar

To agree to the consideration of the provision of officer time to support a community funding bid subject to a case by case decision. To confirm that any successful community funding bid will qualify for access to grant funding of up to £10k per project from the New Homes Bonus Match Funding budget Full details of this can be found at

<https://www.alsagertowncouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Planning-Minutes-8th-October-2019-1.pdf>

The AGA is looking at funding streams for a project of work which would need approval from Cheshire East who is the landowner. As part of this myself (secretary) and Derek Hough (president of the AGA) met with the Head of Construction, **Prospect Homes** who are building the Hall Drive Park residential estate opposite the Cedar Ave allotments. We have outlined our Project and provided documentation asking for commitment and support or services and /or money!

The Funding Streams we have identified so far include bids to

- Customer and Communities Improvement Fund (CCIF) part of London and West Midlands Railways for which the outcome is awaited.
- McCarthy and Stone – outcome awaited

We had also hoped to be able to put forward a bid to the Cheshire East New Homes Bonus Fund, but this has been delayed as part of the budget consultation. If the fund is available next year, we will put forward an appropriate project bid.

The rules are reviewed regularly so plot holders are advised to read the document in full, available in the Policies and Documentation section on our website.

<http://www.alsagergardensassociation.org.uk/policies-and-documentation/>

Your attention is drawn to the **plot inspection process** which we have now documented. We will carry out up to 3 full site inspections on each site during the growing season. These will be between February and November. If there are any issues, then you will receive a written notice stating the issue(s) identified and the time in which you must remedy them. We will send the notice to the address or email address we have on record or we will post the notice on your allotment plot.

Policies and Procedures

The approved AGA Financial Police provides a clear and coherent process for handling money, it protects the association, helps to prevent cases of fraud and means the association is transparent. This is available to view on our web site.

Have you any unwanted paving slabs?

We still require paving slabs for a range of projects on our allotments. If you have any, please contact Mike Hubbard on 07979 968932.

Pauline Hubbard – *Vice Chair*

Allotment Rules - Part of Your Tenancy Agreement.

Plot holders will with this Newsletter receive a copy of the plot rent invoice for 2020. The approved rules for all allotment holders are available on the web site <http://www.alsagergardensassociation.org.uk/policies-and-documentation/>

David Pitt - *Treasurer*



Cheshire Wildlife Trust

Have you seen reptiles on your allotment?

Reptiles are suffering global declines and many are threatened with extinction. In the UK, the picture is not quite as bleak – yet – and we want to keep it that way but we know very little about where they live so it is difficult to protect them or to help them spread.

Species we are looking for



Grass Snake



Common Lizard



Slow worm

Grass snake: usually greenish in colour, with a **yellow and black collar**. Our longest snake, but don't worry if you find one - it's harmless!

Common lizard: brownish-grey, often with darker spots down the back & sides. May be mistaken for a newt but have scales and are faster

Slow-worm: smaller than a snake and has **smooth, golden-grey skin**. It is actually a legless lizard, not a worm or a snake!

Looking for reptiles:

Where: Look under cover items where they warm up such as mats, plastic sheets, logs and stones. Look in your compost heap for grass snake eggs and slow worms.

When: British reptiles usually hibernate in winter and are not usually seen unless the weather is warm. In March to October look especially during a warm spell following several days of cold weather as being cold-blooded reptiles have to bask to warm up.

More information and advice: <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/wildlife-explorer/reptiles> <https://www.froglife.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Reptile-survey-booklet-3mm-bleed.pdf>

Please email any sightings to Andrea Powell: apowell@cheshirewt.org.uk

Photos are the most useful plus species, number, size, behaviour and where seen.

You can also let us know by post to Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Bickley Hall Farm, Malpas, Cheshire, SY14 8EF or phone 01948 820728.

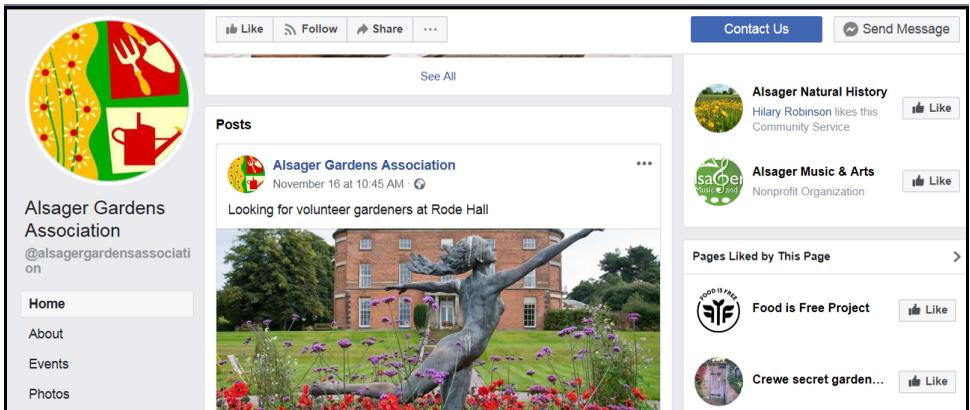
Thank you for your help!

Why not visit our Website

You can find us at www.alsagergardensassociation.org.uk and our website contains the following :-

- Details about all our allotments sites and locations in Alsager
- Details about our trading hut opening times and what is on sale
- Events
- Photographs and galleries
- Minutes from committee meetings and newsletters
- Policies and documents including our rules and constitution

We also have a facebook page, why not take a look, comment or follow.



Ramblings From the Chair.

Welcome to this edition of our newsletter.

As we are all aware the weather has been somewhat **WET!** We are usually praying for rain to keep our crops alive but we were blessed with far too much this year especially towards the end of the growing season. When the waters recede it will allow us to get back to preparing for next season. Although as popular as ever in Alsager, there are some plots/accessibility raised beds available. Please pass on the message to family and friends etc. As 2020 approaches and we look forward to another growing season we can reflect on another good year for our association.

The open day in May was well attended with lots of tea and cake consumed, plants and books sold, and tombola prizes won.

The show, our 67th, which is an achievement in itself was again a great success. This was also well attended including by the deputy mayor of Cheshire East and the chair of the town council. The displays of flowers, fruit and veg were a riot of colour. The mouth watering cakes, jams and preserves were well in evidence, as was the intricate detail involved in producing the many craft entries. Prizes were won and the cups presented to the winners. The best gardens and allotments in Alsager were honoured with certificates and prize money from the town council's gardens competition.

All this is only possible because so many of you put in so much time and effort to make it the success it has become. May I thank you all, no matter how small your contribution may be, it is much appreciated and long may it continue. **Thank you.**

On a separate matter, can I ask if there are any of you who would be willing to volunteer to help at our trading hut at Cedar Avenue if you don't already do so. The hut is situated on the land next to the Cedar Avenue allotments. It is open on Sunday mornings for an hour or two (at the beginning of the year) from March to October and an hour on Wednesdays in the summer months.

We have a small dedicated group of volunteers, which sadly has become somewhat depleted over the years, who work in teams of 3-4 on a rota basis. The more volunteers we can have, the more teams we can create and hence spread the workload further. At the moment each team mans the hut every 5th week.

No retail or gardening knowledge is necessary. Even if you can only help on an occasional basis we can keep you in reserve to help as and when needed. So, if you can help please contact me, my details are on the front page of this newsletter.

Happy gardening

Adrian Ford – *Chairman*

Soil Degradation

In May 2019, a [landmark UN report](#) revealed that nature is disappearing globally at rates unprecedented in human history, with grave impacts now likely on people around the world unless we can unlock transformational change.

What the headlines didn't focus on was the report's urgent warning on soil, that thin layer over the Earth's surface on which all terrestrial life ultimately depends for food.

The devastating assessment from [IPBES](#), the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, concludes that healthy soils are essential in the fight against climate change. It states that urgent action is needed to prevent irreversible soil degradation which is impacting the well-being of at least 3.2 billion people and pushing the planet towards a sixth mass species extinction. Delaying action will only make the necessary steps more expensive and more difficult, as well as putting our futures at risk. Soils hold three times more carbon than the atmosphere. We simply cannot halt climate change without halting soil degradation.

Intensive farming has neglected soil, applying ever higher levels of fertiliser, which itself releases greenhouse gas nitrous oxide, while also allowing soil to degrade and release carbon. Meanwhile, the Royal Society is telling us that soils should be our top priority alongside tree planting for absorbing carbon out of the atmosphere. We must act now, and the solution is clear. Organic farmers have on average 44% higher levels of carbon in their soils, and a growing number of conventional farmers are also leading the way in a transition to 'agroecology', which means working with nature, not against it, by using natural systems first and chemicals last. We gardeners can increase the humus content in our gardens and allotments too, by using home-made compost or peat-free soil conditioners, and reducing the use of artificial fertilisers. We need to join the dots between climate, soil, public health and the natural world.

Useful websites are Garden Organic, the Soil Association, the Royal Society, and the RHS.

Hillary Robinson – *Membership*

Dates for your Diary

<p>Alsager Gardens Association AGM</p> <p><i>come along and hear what goes on behind the scenes and how we have spent various grants on improvements</i></p> <p>ALL WELCOME</p> <p>Seed potatoes and a small selection of seeds will be on sale</p>	<p>Tuesday 11th February 2020 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 1st March 2020 <i>Allotment Holders Rents due Payable at the Trading Hut</i></p>
<p>Allotment Open Days 9 & 10 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>
<p>Snowdrop Walks – Rode Hall</p>	<p>1st February to 1st March 2020</p>
<p>Spring Harrogate Flower Show</p>	<p>23rd to 26th April 2020</p>
<p>RHS Flower Show - Chatsworth</p>	<p>11th to 14th June 2020</p>
<p>Royal Cheshire County Show Cheshire Showground - Knutsford.</p>	<p>16th to 17th June 2020</p>
<p>RHS Flower Show - Tatton Park,</p>	<p>24th to 26th July 2020</p>
<p>National Allotments Week</p>	<p>10th – 16th August 2020</p>
<p>Southport Flower Show</p>	<p>20th – 23rd August 2020</p>
<p>Nantwich Show</p>	<p>17th & 18th July 2020</p>
<p>Alsager Gardens Association Committee Meetings, Guide Hut, Cedar Ave., Alsager</p>	<p>8.00 pm Normally Last Tuesday of the Month. Confirmed on web site (Any member welcome to join us)</p>

**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 (9 -10 May) and at the Annual Show (5th September)

Please reserve the date for the AGM – note back in February

The 68th Annual Show Saturday 5th September

	Trading Hut opening Hours	
Sunday Opening Hours <i>(NB Note opening times)</i>	1-3-20 to 17-5-20	10.00 – 12.00 noon
	24-5-20 to 25-10-20	10.30 – 11.30 a.m.
Wednesday Opening	8-4-20 to 22-7-20	7.00 – 8.00 p.m.