

Alsager Gardens Association

Newsletter 28 – Summer 2020

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

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Dear Member

The current government restrictions on meetings and events has prevented many of us from being able to follow our normal routine; socialising etc.

We all look forward to engaging with relatives and friends. This has certainly affected the ability of your committee to meet each month and we as many other organisations are holding virtual meetings using Zoom. The trading hut has had to be closed and the support it offers to many members in the way of fertiliser sales and information are sadly missing. As spring turns to summer, unfortunately the open day weekend and the local Annual Gardens Competition have become victims of the pandemic. No decision on the annual show planned for 5th September has been taken yet by the committee. Many members are I know still hoping to exhibit their efforts following the extra time some have been able to spend on the allotment or garden, an activity allowed and actively encouraged by the government.

The association has endeavoured by use of emails and the web site www.alsagergardensassociation.org.uk to keep members up to date on the latest legal advice from the NSLG. This reduced newsletter contains some urgent information and is an effort to remind members we are still functioning. David Spall – Trading Secretary

WE LIVE IN HOPE – the schools will be back

The 68th Annual Show Saturday 5th September

Good luck with your entries in all classes - Schedule as last year

Position vacant - Treasurer.

One of the longest-serving members of our committee has decided to hang up his hat.

Dave Pitt, our treasurer for almost the last 40 years has decided to retire from his position at the beginning of 2021. We owe him a debt of gratitude for keeping the Association financially stable during this time and look forward to his continued support of the Association. Dave will be able to support his successor for a handover period.

Therefore the committee is seeking someone to take on the position of treasurer. If anyone is interested in doing so, they can obtain further information from the committee or myself.

Stay safe, best wishes.

Adrian Ford Chairman 01270 877363 - 07976 978976

Managing Your Allotment Plot During Lockdown

Our allotments currently remain open and they are recognised that they provide a great way of both getting exercise and obtaining food during this crisis. However it is essential that no un-authorized people are allowed onto the allotment sites for the duration of this emergency so non- members of the AGA are not allowed on our Allotment Sites. Known co-workers are members so this is not a problem, but people who are not members of the AGA are no longer allowed on the allotment sites.

All members and those attending the allotment sites have been advised to follow the government recommendations on hand sanitation and social distancing. It is important these recommendations are followed,

We will be undertaking our general site inspection and annual risk assessment in the next week or so. If you are self-isolating or shielding and cannot go to the allotment to manage your plot then you need to make sure you inform us preferably by email, so that we can make allowances for your situation

If you need to Contact Us

Should you have any issues, or if you are not able you to attend to your allotment plot for an extended time, then please contact your site manager as follows: • Cedar Avenue Mike Hubbard 07979 968932 mrh712@live.co.uk

- Coronation Ave Mike Smith 877265 michael.smith619@btinternet.com
- Talke Road John Nixon 873445 nicojnixon12@talktalk.net
- Lawton Road Adrian Ford 877363 adrian_ford62@hotmail.com

or email the Secretary at alsagergardensassociationsecretary@outlook.com

Mare's tail or horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*)

Horsetail is easily recognised by its upright, fir tree-like shoots that appear in summer. This weed has never appeared in my garden but seems to be widespread on the Cedar Avenue allotment site. In spring, fertile light brown stems, 20-50cm (10-20in) tall, appear with a cone-like spore producing structure at the end of the stems. In summer, sterile green shoots develop into fir-tree-like plants, up to 60cm (2ft) tall.

The creeping rhizomes **may go down as deep as 2m (7ft) below the surface**, making them hard to remove by digging out. They often enter gardens by spreading underground from neighbouring land. They aren't easy to spot when digging, as they look like soil-coloured bits of old string, and break easily when pulled.

Removing horsetail by hand is difficult. Although rhizomes growing near the surface can be forked out, deeper roots will require a lot of excavation. Shallow, occasional weeding is not effective and can make the problem worse, as **the plant can regrow from any small pieces left behind**. For this reason I wouldn't put it in the compost bin. The council's garden waste bin is safe enough, as the contents are "cooked" as part of the composting process.

However, removing shoots as soon as they appear above the ground can reduce infestation if carried out over a number of years. So we have to learn to live with it, weakening its vigour by removing its green shoots whenever possible; also, being careful not to spread it by including bits of rhizome in with plants we may give away.

Those of us who grow plants for the Association's plant stalls must take care not to include bits of root from persistent weeds such as horsetail and ground elder. Particular care is needed when growing brassica plants for sale, e.g. cabbages, sprouts etc, as there is a risk of passing on clubroot if soil is used rather than sterilised compost.

Lastly, horsetail has been used in traditional herbal remedies since time immemorial, but I can't advise on that! Its tough green parts were also used as dish-scourers.

Hilary Robinson

ASIAN HORNET Endangering Our BEES!

They are thought to eat up to 50 bees a day and have a two-inch long sting that helps kill prey within minutes.

How to detect Asian hornets? Asian hornets have a number of distinct features to look out for, that will enable you to direct them. These include:

- a dark brown or black velvety body
- a yellow or orange band on fourth segment of abdomen
- yellow tipped legs

In addition to this, they are smaller in size than hornets native to Europe, and they are not active at night.

If you suspect you have seen an Asian hornet, you can report it via the app Asian Hornet Watch, which is available on both Apple and Android. Please include information on location, date and number of Asian hornets you have seen, as well as a photo if possible. This will help experts identify the insect. Do not try and remove a nest yourself as it is dangerous and should only be done by experts. When a sighting is confirmed, experts from the National Bee Unit (NBU) and the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) will work quickly to find and destroy any active nests in the area. If you suspect you have seen an Asian hornet you can report this using the iPhone and Android app 'Asian Hornet Watch' or by emailing alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk. for more information, www.nonnativespecies.org/alerts/index.cfm?id=4

