

Be Safe – Keep Safe!

Dear Members

We hope this bulletin finds you safe and well at a time during lockdown when further restrictions have been placed upon us to keep us safe.

The vaccine has now started to be allocated and this brings some hope that the pandemic will decrease and that we will start to get back to some form of normal life in the coming months. However we do not have any clarity on timescales with the latest announcement stating that there will be no relaxation of measures until at least 8th March when the schools may return.

We are planning to open the Trading Hut on a restricted basis as we did last year further details of this together with dates and time of opening will be provided in our next Bulletin. We also plan to go ahead with our AGM scheduled for Tuesday 9th March, but this will be a “Virtual” meeting held by Zoom. See further in this bulletin for details of when and how to join the AGM.

The AGA Executive Committee will continually review the restrictions and the regulations placed upon us on a month-by-month basis and as we receive information from the government.

In the meantime we will continue to send out these regular bulletins to update members of any changes that we are able to make as and when they happen.

Be Safe and Keep Safe!

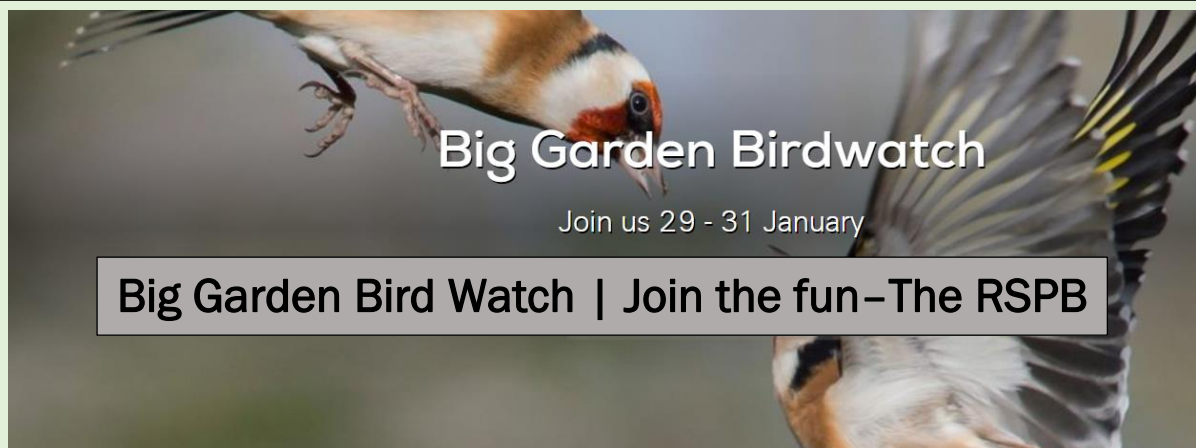
The AGA Executive Committee

Need to Contact Us?

Should you have any issues or if you are not able to attend to your allotment plot for an extended time, then please contact your site manager in writing 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 or 07976 978976 adrian_ford62@hotmail.com

or email the Secretary at alsagergardensassociationsecretary@outlook.com



Big Garden Birdwatch

Join us 29 - 31 January

Big Garden Bird Watch | Join the fun – The RSPB

The RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch takes place between 29 – 31 January. All you need to do is to set aside an hour to relax and record the birds that come and go in your garden. You will find plenty of [resources and everything you need to know](#) on the RSPB website which will help you to identify which birds visit your garden.

The Big Garden Birdwatch helps the RSPB to increase its understanding of the many challenges faced by British Wildlife.

The first Birdwatch started in 1979 and since then the numbers of house sparrow sightings have dropped by 53% and song thrushes have declined by 76%.

Can you help the RSPB by spending an hour to record the feathered visitors to your garden?

Go to **[Big Garden Birdwatch | Join the fun - The RSPB](#)**



Big Garden Birdwatch LIVE

New this year!

Our experts from across the UK will be bringing you photos, footage and facts about the birds they see, as well as answering any questions you may have. Plus, there'll be live quizzes, and familiar faces throughout the weekend – all set to make this the best Birdwatch ever!



Do You Need to Pay us?

If you need to make a payment to us for

- allotment rent.*
- annual subs*
- manure supplied on site.*
- purchase of supplies from the Trading Hut*

To minimise contact with cash and cheques and avoid personal contact, we are encouraging members to make payments direct into our bank account. This also means that our Treasurer does not have to make a journey to the Bank - the nearest branch being in Sandbach!

You can make a payment direct to our Bank Account as follows:

Alsager Gardens Association
Sort 60 01 12
Account 01020420

To help us identify your payment please remember to fill in the Reference Field- which has a maximum of 18 characters - as follows:

EXAMPLE

With A Williams as the Name and Cedar Ave as the Allotment Site and Plot number 30-1

- 1. For Allotment rent and Subs**
Your Allotment site + Plot number + Surname
Ced30-1Williams
- 2. For Manure on site**
CedManureAWilliams
- 3. For Trading Hut Payments**
TradingAWilliams
- 4. Subs**
SubsAWilliams

Please remember to also email

davidpitt4@sky.com

with the details of your payment!



SEED SCHEME

Our Trading Secretary, David Spall, has been working hard with our suppliers to try to fulfil all seed and potato orders.

Our suppliers have experienced staffing problems this year due to COVID 19, which has impacted on their ability to meet the dramatically increased levels of demand across the whole of the country.

Additionally a number of potato crops failed last year and this has reduced the varieties of seed potatoes available to us. David has been in contact with those members who have been affected and where possible an alternative has been offered.

We are hoping that you will receive your potato order within the next 2 weeks, but we are dependent on our supplier who has limited delivery capacity.

David Spall - Trading Secretary

63 Pikemere Road, Alsager,

Stoke on Trent, ST7 2SN

Tel:- 01270 874117

Email: d.e.spall@btopenworld.com

Dangerous Trees at Cedar Ave Removed

The Trees that run along the Valley Brook which have presented a Health and Safety hazard for many years, have now been removed and some reduced in height.

Three years ago one of the large trees that sat along the Valley Brook fell onto one of our allotment plots. Thankfully, it was during bad weather when there is little activity on site, and no one was hurt.

Due to bank erosion, further trees were also starting to lose their footing and their stability was in question. Even though the trees were leaning at a dangerous angle it proved difficult to get agreement with the responsible authority, Cheshire East, on any action.

The recently appointed Alsager Town Council Facilities Manager, Simon Wootten, quickly took up this long-standing problem. He raised it again with Cheshire East and provided a strong evidence-based report to support a plan of action. This together with discussion on site with the Cheshire East Officer and our site manager, provided further evidence which led to the agreement for the works which have now taken place.

We are very appreciative of this as it has been a great concern and an ongoing health and safety issue for several years.

We have sent our thanks and appreciation to both Alsager Town Council and Cheshire East.

The First Tree work undertaken in 2017 did not resolve the problem.



Hazard of leaning tree remained following remedial works in 2017 and it continued to get worse !



Tree work undertaken in January 2021.



Tree work undertaken in January 2021.





To Chit or not to Chit?

Hilary Robinson Writes ...



Normal advice is to chit your seed potatoes before planting them. The aim is to encourage the buds on the potato to start growing, giving them a head start when they are planted from March onwards.

Another advantage is, by taking them out of the bags and spreading them out, allowing light to reach each tuber, growth will be shorter and sturdier, avoiding a horrible tangle of pale, etiolated shoots, and netting.

However, according to expert James Wong, there is no scientific evidence that chitting has more effect on overall yield than the choice of varieties. Commercial potato growers don't chit – it would be too labour-intensive. They keep the seed potatoes in controlled, cool conditions until it's time to plant them.

It does appear that chitting may increase the number of large potatoes formed, as opposed to a greater number of smaller potatoes formed without chitting. But choosing a variety that crops well in your soil and conditions is perhaps more important.

If you decide to chit, mid-February is the ideal time. Spread your seed potatoes out in trays or boxes – egg boxes are ideal – one layer thick. The rose end should be uppermost. The rose end has most of the eyes or growth buds, and it's at the opposite end to the little scar where the stalk was attached.

Place them somewhere with good light, cool but frost-free. A windowsill in an unheated room or porch is ideal. Ideally, the shoots should be about an inch long at planting time.

Note that it is best to buy certified seed potatoes from a garden centre or seed merchant every year, because they will be certified as virus-free. The ones you can buy via Alsager Gardens Association fall into this category.

For more information go to

[If, Why and How to chit seed potatoes. \(simplyseed.co.uk\)](https://www.simplyseed.co.uk)

or

[To chit or not to chit potatoes? | Gardening advice | The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/gardeners/2017/feb/16/to-chit-or-not-to-chit-potatoes)

Hilary Robinson

Association News

AGM – Tuesday 8th March 8pm

It is now clear that a face-to-face AGM will not be possible until very much later this year, and this is not guaranteed. Considering this uncertainty we have decided that we will hold

A Virtual AGM.

Many organisations have undertaken virtual AGM's and Meetings during 2020 and the AGA Committee has been successfully using an application called ZOOM for its meeting since March 2020. This has not been at a cost to the association as ZOOM offer a free service for the first 40minutes.

However our AGM will exceed this free allowance so we will be using a monthly subscription going forward until we can return to face-to -face meeting. This subscription will allow us to hold an AGM, have the attendance of our members and the time needed to discuss the annual reports, the resolutions and make the appointment of the officers to our committee.

Of course the big downside of this is that we will not be able to partake in the refreshments usually supplied by David Spall – his ham sandwiches are now legendary!

Full details of the AGM, the agenda and reports will be sent out in advance of the meeting together with the ZOOM joining instructions.

ZOOM Virtual AGM

We recognise that although many members will be used to the virtual meetings by using facetime or other methods to keep in touch with their loved ones particularly during the last 12 months, there may be some that are not familiar with this type of technology.

The good news is that to join the meeting all you will need to do is to click the “Join Link” that we will send you. If you do not have the ZOOM app already loaded, then by clicking join you will be prompted to download and install ZOOM on your computer or mobile device. To enter the meeting you will be asked to enter the password we send you with the join link. when prompted.

However if you would like to familiarise yourself with ZOOM in advance of the AGM, or sign up for it as the free to use application then go to

<https://zoom.us/freesignup/>

You can also use the link below to download the application or to try a test meeting.

Before joining a Zoom meeting on a computer or mobile device, you can download the Zoom app from [our Download Center](#). Otherwise, you will be prompted to download and install Zoom when you click a join link.

You can also [join a test meeting](#) to familiarize yourself with Zoom.