



# SUNNYSIDE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

www.sunnysideallotments.org.uk  
email: info@sunnysideallotments.org.uk

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## Editor's Note

Well, a new year and the promise of another chance to succeed in germinating, planting out, weeding, watering and harvesting our own lovely veg!

May it rain when we want it to, and the sun shine thereafter!

Lots of interesting info in this issue - I hope you enjoy reading it.

Lin Phillips,

Editor, A18 lin@sunnysideallotments.org.uk 07835 623981

## Chairman's Notes

Once again, it's the start of a year and time to plan, and hope, for a better season. It's too soon to say whether warmer winters are here to stay and if gardening will be more productive. If the weather is not too bad and the ground not sticky, digging is a good way of getting exercise.

When the roadways are wet, please avoid driving on them. The Council is seeking estimates to improve the surface at the ends of A road and B road

There are now two refurbished sheds near the Grantham Mews end of B road and deposits of wood for tenants' use. Please resist the temptation of bringing more stuff to the allotment site unless you are sure it will really be useful to others. Too much time is spent by volunteers disposing of rotten wood and house clearance stuff such as doors.

Over the winter months, John Goffey organises volunteer tenant working parties to tackle jobs such as path repairs and coppice cutting. There are hazel pea and bean sticks available for collection on SSN. Coppice volunteers should just take some, and other tenants should make a donation to SAS funds.

Sadly, SSO tenant Joe Tattam passed away last year and his lawnmower repair skills will be widely missed. However, the family tradition of gardening continues with his grandson Sam.

Good gardening,  
John Eaton



Shoots of early rhubarb



Sam getting stuck in

### Working Parties Update

The communal areas of Sunnyside Old and New always need maintenance, and the work is provided by groups of tenants once a month during the winter months. Jobs include trimming back overgrown brambles on paths and on the car-park area of SSN, shifting the spreading piles of woodchip, coppicing the hazel bushes on Millennium and Jubilee coppices on rotation, and whatever else crops up.

We meet at 10:00am at the Tea Hut, armed with the tools for the day, and set off in pairs or small teams to tackle the tasks of the day. Volunteers are always made very welcome, and in fact it is usually quite an enjoyable way of spending a morning with others.

A lunch of hot soup and rolls is provided at the Tea Hut, so do come along, if only for a couple of hours. The remaining dates for this winter's programme are 9<sup>th</sup> February and 8<sup>th</sup> March.

John Goffey, B18 (Organiser of Working Parties)

### Inorganic Stuff on Allotments

No please! It may seem that some items of plastic, rubber, carpet or metal just might come in handy, and thus many a piece of what turns out to be junk accumulates on Sunnyside. It might even be useful for a time, but who will be responsible for removing it? Plastic bags and carpet in particular are liable to break down and enter the soil as tiny fragments.

The Committee has devoted hours to sorting and getting rid of such items left by departing tenants, so please remember: avoid bringing such treasures onto the allotments. Also, do have a good look around your own plot and take away any inorganic rubbish. Thank you!

### Your Current Committee Members

<b>Chairman:</b>	John Eaton	865307
<b>Secretary &amp;: newsletter layout and production :</b>	Jenny Sippings	865890
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Andy James	865061
<b>Newsletter Editor:</b>	Lin Phillips	862882

<b>Other members:</b>	Angela Wheeldon	874440
	John Goffey	864967
	Diana Ball	875277
	Geoff Halls	878176
	Kate Rankin	866827
	J eanne Woodcraft	872852

You can email any member of the committee by putting their first name in front of: @sunnysideallotments.org.uk apart from John Eaton who is: johne@ and John Goffey who is: johng@

### Christmas Drinks Event, Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2019

After a really wet and miserable month, the sky cleared for a brief period over lunchtime that day, and, as someone commented, the sun shone on the righteous!

About 50 tenants and friends enjoyed a very sociable gathering. The fame of this event has obviously spread far and wide, and we were delighted to welcome someone who had travelled all the way from Cornwall to be with us. We were pleased, too, to see several of our town councillors.

Thank you to all those who donated the wine and delicious food. It was clearly much enjoyed, as there was very little left over. And grateful thanks to those of you who helped before and afterwards, setting up, and clearing away. Especial thanks to Cynthia, our wine muller extraordinaire: it just gets better, Cynthia. It was obviously much appreciated, given that we managed to consume 20 bottles between us! The apple juice offerings were delicious, too. So, here's to next time – Happy New Year!

Angela Wheeldon, B15 Tea Hut



Christmas drinks by Jeanne Woodcraft



B Road in the frost - will we have any this year?

**Please Note:** To offset rising printing costs, an electronic version of future editions of the newsletter will be sent to all those people that supply an email address to Jenny Sippings – ([jennysippings@virginmedia.com](mailto:jennysippings@virginmedia.com)).

## Bumblebees

This time last year I finally decided to do something about my ignorance of bumblebees. There are 24 species in the United Kingdom, and other than pointing out a particularly big one, I didn't know my Common Carder from my Red-Tailed.

Happily, the Bumblebee Conservation Trust runs regular events on how to identify the most common 8, and if you're still keen, the next 8 and so on. Last summer I dragged my wife along to one such day event at Maddox Farm Organics down in Devon.

Even identifying 8 types is not straightforward when you consider the males, females and queens of any single species all come in different coats and sizes. Generally, the males are the ones with no pollen baskets and hairy legs; their sole purpose is to find a virgin queen, and they don't contribute to the colony. Consequently, they appear less busy, as feeding themselves is their only key deliverable on any given day. Females, on the other hand, have pollen baskets on their legs and fly from flower to flower with great purpose.

The worldwide decline of bees is well known, and much of the effort to arrest this has been concentrated on honeybees. In actual fact, honeybee numbers are not in danger, but bumblebees are in trouble. Habitat loss, pesticide use, disease, other invasive bumbles, and climate change are all contributing factors. They are especially vulnerable to the latter because unlike honeybees, only bumblebee queens survive overwinter. This means that their populations vary depending on the weather at the time of year queens are being reared. The long, hot, dry summer of 2018 was particularly tough for bumbles, meaning fewer queens were created and around to start nests in 2019.

As allotment holders, we should really care about bumblebees, because - unlike honeybees - they pollinate tomatoes, cucurbits and strawberries. They're also able to fly in colder temperatures than other pollinators, thanks to their coats and a heating and transmission system which allows them to warm their chest muscles up for flight without having to flap their wings. This means that early season bumblebees might be busy pollinating members of the Prunus family (cherries and plums) when other pollinators are still asleep or hunkering down for warmth.

We can help out on our allotments by planting out high-nectar, long-flowering flowers like Oregano and Agastache Foeniculum (Anise Hyssop). Meadow flowers like Sainfoin, Wild Teasel, Cornflower, and Viper's Bugloss are all extremely beneficial. Creating nesting habitats is harder, as bumbles are fussy (they do like a former mouse-hole), but allowing some wild areas, particular on banks, can help.

Also, we can source plants from garden centres that do not use neonicotinoids, and avoid using pesticides and insecticides ourselves. Neonicotinoids have been shown to alter the behaviour of bumblebees in a damaging way. The University of Sussex recently found, in a survey of plants from garden centres labelled 'bee friendly', only 2 from 29 which did not contain *at least one* sort of pesticide!

You can learn more about the lifestyles of bumbles through the work of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, and participate in a number of nationwide monitoring schemes that they run.

Henry Ashton, N10

## Tenancy Changes

Welcome to:

A5

Leanne Parry

A14

Chris & Olivia Bertham

B15A

Angela Whyte

Goodbye to:

A1B

Kerry Ewing

N30, N31B, N65, N66

Kitran Eastman

N31A

Rebecca Stern

N52

Chris & Olivia Bertham



All ready for spring



Standing guard over winter greens



Don't forget to check out our Facebook page, where members are increasingly posting great photos and comments on their successes (and challenges) on their plot.

Please join our group for allotment gardening chit chat.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1466477513362340/>

### **Just got a plot? Tips for new plot-holders in Spring**

Get toolled up – a basic kit would include a spade, fork, trowel, hand-fork, hoe, watering can and secateurs, plus shears or a strimmer to keep your paths tidy.

Check how the sun tracks across your plot, and where shade from fruit trees will fall, before identifying the best place for permanent plants like soft fruit, as well as sun- and shade-loving crops.

You can check your soil, but most Sunnysiders will tell you that they have chalky or alkaline soil – so brassicas, for instance, will do very well, but blueberries will need to be in a pot with ericaceous soil.

Clear small sections at a time, wear strong footwear when working the soil, and check that your tetanus jabs are up to date! (Every 10 years is recommended).

Set up a compost heap; much of what you grow, and most annual weeds, can be composted to provide a rich mixture of nutrients for your plot, when they are rotted down (but not pernicious weeds like dandelions and nettles). Details of composting can be found online.

Brush up on your knowledge by reading or going online for lots of useful information and advice. Read up on crop rotation before you make your planting scheme. As a member of Sunnyside Allotment Society, you are a member of the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners, and their website is full of good tips. (Contact Jenny Sippings for the password).

Chat to your plot neighbours; they will know what grows well on Sunnyside, and may well have some spare seedlings or plants to share with you.

Starting in spring means that you can grow most things from seed, either directly in the soil as it warms, or by starting seeds in a greenhouse or on a windowsill.

And finally, be prepared for a mixture of results, with amazing crops of some veg and disappointment with others. You're not alone! Each year is unique, with its weather conditions, your time availability, and just plain luck, and every gardener has a few surprises, every year.

Good gardening!

### **Membership of Sunnyside Allotment Society**

If you haven't paid your £4.00 Sunnyside Allotment Society subs yet this year, please do so as soon as possible. In order to be included in this year's membership, payments must be made by May. Either give it directly to Andy, our treasurer, or leave it in an envelope for him in the tea hut (B15).

#### **Allotmenters' Liability Insurance**

SAS is a member of the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (their website contains a lot of useful information for gardeners – contact Jenny Sippings for the password.) Membership of the NSALG now includes allotmenters' liability insurance, so all paid up members of SAS are eligible to contract in to the free allotmenters' liability insurance scheme. This scheme offers £50k liability cover to any member plot-holder accused of accidentally causing injury or damaging property.

This cover is well worth the cost of SAS membership in itself. In addition, SAS members can participate in our autumn group seed-ordering scheme with King's Seeds, which offers considerable savings on the annual cost of seeds.

The Sunnyside Allotment Society works on your behalf, co-ordinating work to maintain the communal areas of the site and hosting the annual Open Day and other events. SAS is also required to report to the Council on matters of vacancies and waiting lists, and represents the interests of tenants at regular Council meetings. Members also receive this exclusive quarterly newsletter! .



Subs for 2020 (£4.00) can be sent with this slip to Andy James (4 Field Way) or left at the tea hut on B15. (Cheques payable to Sunnyside Allotment Society please).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Plot Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_ cash/cheque (please circle)